Introduction

"I want to marry my first love because I want to be with someone who knows me very well. I want to be with someone who understands what it means when I cringe or flinch. I want someone who has memorised me. Someone I've been through everything with. Someone I love with every inch of my heart."

That's what the naive me used to say. I didn't see myself with anyone else but my first love, Alex Meje. The love I had for that guy was different. Some people might call it "pure", because I loved him wholeheartedly without knowing of heartache. I loved him purely, innocently and naively. After all, he's the one who taught me everything about love...well, up until he showed me what heartbreak is when he chose to break my heart into a million pieces.

My name is Someleze Ndlovu but my friends call me Soso. I'm 21 years old and I'm

originally from Zwide, Port Elizabeth but I'm

currently based in Alice, doing my third year at the University of Fort Hare. I could have studied at NMU but I chose to come here because I was following Alex. See, I met Alex when I was still doing grade 12. It was during the March 10-day school break, I was at Spur in Summerstrand with my friends when he and his friends came to sit at a table next to ours. He was busy chatting up a storm with his uptown friends, more like f-boys, not paying any attention to us. But my eye just didn't want to leave him. Gosh he was so attractive and so handsome. He was lightskinned and clean shaven. His hair was also given a clean cut. I kept stealing glances at him even though he wasn't even paying attention to me. Oh my God his pink lips were so appetising. Not to mention his killer smile that would make my stomach plunge every time he let it out. But the fact that I was so aware of him, of every little thing about him, was unsettling. It was definitely a new

experience for me. A new experience that I

didn't know how to handle. I had never met a guy who made me feel this way before. In fact, I had never allowed myself to feel anything for a guy. I had never allowed any guy to come close. I was 18, but I'd never had a boyfriend before. My friends were dating, but no, not me. Why? Well, my mom had me when she was only 17 years old and the man that had made her pregnant, I won't even call him my father, wanted her to abort me. But when she refused, he dumped her and she never saw him again after that. She was doing grade 12 but she had to quit school and take care of me. Things weren't easy but her mother (my grandmother) who was also a single parent, working as a staff nurse, tried to provide for all of us - that's me, my mom and her brother. My mom only managed to go back to school and finish her matric when I was 5. After that she started doing odd jobs so she could help granny put food on my plate and clothes on my back. We were

surviving, but when I was 10 things got more

difficult because that's when my grandmother passed away. And that meant my mom now had to raise me all by herself. She had dreams but because she had to provide for me she had to put them on hold for a while. She only managed to go to university when I was 15, doing distance learning through UNISA because she couldn't quit her job as a receptionist at a certain law firm in town. I knew just how much she was trying her best to be the best mother and to provide for me, so I didn't want to repeat her mistake by having a boyfriend and end up falling pregnant as a teen thereby adding to her responsibilities. I just wanted to focus on my books and make her proud.

But when I saw Alex I threw all that caution out the window. I just had to talk to him, I wanted him. So when they got up to leave, I also got up and intentionally bumped into him but made it look like it was an accident. Stupid I know, but I wanted him to notice me. And he did. After apologising, we talked a little and exchanged numbers. The following

day he called me and came to see me in my hood, driving a red VW GTi. To cut the story short, by the end of that week we were already dating, even though we were so different. I was 18, he was 21. I was still in high school, he was already in varsity doing his third year in Computer Science at the University of Fort Hare. We were from two completely different backgrounds. I was from a poor family in the township whereas he was from a wealthy family in the burbs - in Summerstrand. I knew all about poverty, he on the other hand was a spoiled guy born with a silver spoon in his mouth. But all that didn't mean anything to me, I loved him. The following year I followed him to Fort Hare. When I was doing my first year he was doing his Honours degree. He loved Fort Hare so much that he didn't want to go study anywhere else. After the Honours year he went ahead and did his Master's degree. And

in all the years our relationship was good, great actually. Well, up until he showed me another side of him, 3 years and 3 months into our relationship. The guy treated me like thrash. But you know what they say: one man's trash is another man's treasure. Hi. My name is Soso and this is my story. Please share and invite your friends to like the page. Please, guys help a girl out. I'm new to this writing thing.

#1

"I never knew love would hurt this bad. The worst pain that I ever had." - Trey Songz

"That's it for today. And don't forget, I need your assignments in by next week Monday." That's our new lecturer, Doctor ummh...what did he say his name was again? Ugh! I don't remember, I wasn't really listening. In fact, I hardly heard anything he

said in the entire 45-minute lecture. All that's

been stuck in my mind is Alex. Alex has been distant lately. We no longer spend much time together. Even when we're together he's never there, he'd be with me physically but emotionally he'd be somewhere else. If I could say I know what's going on I'd be lying. And asking him doesn't get me answers either because every time I ask he just gets annoyed and tell me that I'm imagining things. Today is Monday and we were supposed to spend the past weekend together but on Friday he told me that he was going away, visiting his sick uncle in Grahamstown. As the supportive girlfriend that I am I understood. But getting him on the phone the entire weekend has been a hassle, his phone would ring unanswered and even when he answered our conversations would be short and cold. That hurt me, I don't want to lie. But I believed him when he said it's because he was busy over there. Then last night, knowing that he's back I called him, wanting to see

him, but he told me he couldn't see me because he wasn't feeling okay, that he had a

terrible headache. I said okay and hung up but deep down I couldn't shake the feeling that he was lying. My sixth sense is telling me that he's cheating on me but I just don't want to accept it, I don't want to believe it. I've been sending him WhatsApp messages since morning asking how he's now feeling, but he hasn't replied to any of those messages. They've been delivered but the ticks show that he hasn't opened them yet. That's a little comfort to me because at least I feel like he's not ignoring me, maybe he's busy or still sleeping since he said he wasn't feeling okay last night.

The lecture is over so I take my bag and hurry to the exit. I really need to see Alex, I need to talk to him. I've been wanting to see him since morning but because I had two morning lectures and a Microbiology assignment to finish up and submit before the Biochemistry class, I became too busy to go see him. But now that I have just stepped out of my last lecture, I have time to go see him and find out what's going on. If I had airtime I would be calling him because calling him via WhatsApp won't do, but I have 0.00 airtime balance. So the only way is to go straight to his room at res.

But as I walk out the class and down the short passage, my friend, Thuso, calls me. I stop and turn to her. Honestly, I had forgotten about her. All I want is to get to Alex.

-Thuso: "Haybo, girlfriend, I've been calling your name. Why are you leaving me behind?" Thuso has been my best friend since the first year. We're both doing the same degree, B.Sc, and we're majoring in the same courses we're triple majors. The girl's so different from me because she's out there, she's outgoing, loud and a party freak but I love her anyway. -Me: "Sorry, chomi, I didn't hear you. I'm in kind of a hurry, I'm on my way to see Alex." We make our way to the elevator together. -Her: "Alex, yah nhe. But chomi, when are you gonna open your eyes and see that this guy is cheating on you?"

-Me: "Do you have any proof that he's cheating on me?"

-Her: "I don't need proof. The signs are there but you're choosing to ignore them. Chomi, but why are you doing this to yourself?"
-Me: (pressing the elevator button) "Please not this again, Thuso. Please."

-Her: "Okay, I'm done sounding like a broken record. I won't say anything

anymore...Anyway, have you noticed how hot Doctor December is? That man is flames, chomi, I tell you."

-Me: "Doctor December? Who's that?" -Her: (rolling eyes) "Our new lecturer, duh." -Me: "Oh, his name is December. And he's hot, you say? I'd be lying if I said I've noticed that. I just miss our old professor."

Our old professor went to retirement just

after we finished writing our June exams. And now that he's gone this new guy has come to fill the vacancy. This is the second week since the second semester began but this was our first lecture with this new guy, last week he wasn't here so we had no classes for this course. He's new but I can tell you this: I already don't like him. He hasn't done anything wrong shem, in fact I haven't even had time to listen to him or to check him out, it's just that I miss our old professor and I hate that this guy has replaced him. -Thuso: "You miss that old man? Girl, you can't be serious. December is flames, I wish all our courses could be taught by him. I wouldn't mind listening to his sexy voice all day and everyday."

-Me: "You're crazy, you know that? And I know you, Thuso, you'll soon be throwing yourself at him. But please don't do that. The guy's too old. You're only 21 for goodness sake." -Her: "Old? Have you looked at that guy, S? He's not that old. And, oh my God, he's so handsome."

-Me: "Whatever...This elevator must be broken or something, it's not coming up. Let's take the stairs down."

-Her: "You take the stairs, I'm not going. I want to see Doctor December first so I'm going to his office right now."

-Me: "Have you even been listening to me? Stay away from that man. He's our lecturer for goodness sake."

-Her: (laughing) "Relax. I'm just gonna ask him to clarify some things for me regarding the assignment."

Clarify some things? Yeah right. I know Thuso, if she wants a man she makes sure that she gets him. And it doesn't matter how old he is, as long as he's hot. It's not that she likes to be 'blessed', no, she doesn't care about the money because she's from a rich family in Mpumalanga. It's just that she can't resist good-looking men. And she doesn't have a problem jumping from one man to the next. I just leave her there and walk away. I don't mind taking the stairs, it's the second floor anyway.

But before making my way to Alex's room I need to go check him at his department. He works from there everyday, from morning till after hours. Yeah, he's serious like that about his Master's thesis.

So I make my way to his department but they tell me that he hasn't come in today. Oh my poor baby, now I'm sure he's still not feeling okay. He's probably sleeping in his room by now. So I pass by the student centre and buy him some pain tablets then make my way to his room. I get there and knock but nobody answers. I peek through the keyhole and there's no key. Okay, maybe he's in the bathroom or somewhere nearby. And I'm going to wait for him inside. So I take my bag off my shoulder and look for the key inside. Yes, I have a key to his room. I stick it in the hole and turn it. The lock opens and I turn the handle and push the door open.

OH MY GOD, WHAT?!!!! What am I seeing before my eyes? Alex in bed, banging another woman. Oh my God, no! I can't believe this. Is this what he's been doing behind my back? Is this why he's been so distant lately? This is why he's been ignoring me. Was he even in Grahamstown this past weekend? Was his uncle even sick? Jeez! I've been a fool. He's really cheating on me, he's cheating on me. Thuso was right, signs were there but I didn't want to see them. And I was also not expecting to see what I'm seeing now. What is Alex doing to me? Why?

I stand by the door, stunned, as the bag that I've been carrying slips right off my grip and falls on the floor. Hearing the door open and my bag falling, Alex stops what he's doing and turns to look at me. I can see it in his eyes that he's shocked to see me here. -Him: "Soso? What are you doing here?" Is he really expecting me to answer that? Really? I can't answer him even if I wanted to. I can't even shout. I'm too shocked to say anything. I just turn around and run out of there, leaving my bag behind. I run all the way down the stairs to the ground floor and out the exit. Gosh, what just happened? What did I just see in there? I'm not feeling myself and I can't fight back the tears running down my cheeks. It hurts. It hurts so bad. I've never been this hurt in my entire life. I feel like a dagger just went through my heart. And I can't stop crying and running. Where am I even going though? I don't have a room in campus, I never got one from the very first year. I'm renting a backyard flat in town, well it's Alex who has been renting the room for me. I can't go all the way there now, not when I'm like this. So I go straight to Thuso's room, hoping that she's already there. And thank God, I find her in.

-Her: (seeing my tears) "And then? Why is the Tyhume River overflowing?"

Tyhume. That's the local river. And Thuso thinks this is funny. Fuck, she's annoying the hell out me. Can't she be serious even for a second?

-Me: (throwing myself on her bed) "This is not funny, Thuso."

-Her: "What happened? It's Alex isn't it?" I tell her everything.

-Her: "I hate to say it, chomi, but I told you. I told you that the jerk's cheating on you and that you should walk away. If you had listened to me you wouldn't have seen what you've just seen."

Seriously? Does she have to be like this at a time like this? This ain't no time for 'I told you so'.

-Me: (angry) "Thuso, please, stop with that. Not now. Not now."

-Her: "Okay, that was insensitive of me. I'm sorry. I'm really sorry, chomam. But it's gonna be okay. You better believe that. Okay? The only fool here is Alex, not you. He's gonna regret doing this to you, mark my words. Karma's a bitch."

She hugs me. And I keep crying on her shoulder. Lord, what did I do to deserve this? Why would Alex do this to me? I loved...no I love him so much. I love him. Was I no longer enough for him? Was I no longer good enough? Then why didn't he just tell me? I can't stop crying. And the more I cry, the more I hurt. Thuso is not saying anything, she just keeps brushing my back, comforting me. But eventually she speaks.

-Thuso: "Okay, chomi this is enough. You've cried enough and it's time to wipe those tears now. It's 13:45 and we have a practical session at 2. So we need to get going." -Me: "I'm not going. I just want to sleep." Seriously I don't feel like going anywhere or speaking to anyone. Let alone being in a lab with the other students. But Thuso isn't about to let me have this. She pushes me back and looks me straight in the eye with a serious face.

-Thuso: "Oh hell no, Soso, you're not doing this. You're not gonna feed stress by burying yourself under these covers. You're not gonna let that dog, Alex, win. You're gonna go clean your face up, put my make-up on and walk out of this room with your head held high. Do you hear me?"

I nod.

-Her: "No, say it. You're not gonna fall apart. Say it."

-Me: "I'm not gonna fall apart."

-Her: "Louder."

-Me: (laughing now) "I'm not gonna fall apart."

-Her: "There you go, girl. You never missed a class or a practical session before and you ain't about to start now. Especially not because of Alex. We came to Alice to slay, babe...academically. So we ain't gonna let no

jerk fuck that up. We ain't letting no guy

disrupt our academic excellence. Okay?" -Me: "You're right, chomi. You're right." I get up and go to the bathroom to clean up my face. I come back and Thuso does my make up then we leave for class even though I don't have my books with me or even my lab coat. Everything is in the bag I left on the floor of Alex's room. But it's cool, Thuso gives me a new book to write on and I'll share a text book with her when necessary. So we go. I'm still not feeling okay but I have no choice but to go to this practical session.

When we get to the lab we find the other students already there. And just after we've sat down, Dr. December walks in.

-Thuso: (whispering) "Look at him, look at him, chomi. He's hot, agree with me." I look at him, noticing his features for the very first time. Yeah, Thuso was right, this guy's not old. He's tall with a lean muscular frame and broad shoulders. I suppose he's attractive in a hard athletic sort of way. And I have to

admit, he looks good in that short-sleeved black shirt that matches his pants. He's lightskinned and clean-shaven, although I doubt he would ever be able to erase that dark shadow on his jawline. His haircut is a little long for my liking. But he evidently ticks all the right boxes as far as Thuso is concerned. And then he starts speaking. Mhh his voice is deep and dark. I just can't deny it's sexual appeal. He looks like a real gentleman. But I quickly swallow my words when he looks straight at me, speaking to me.

-Him: "Miss, what's your name?"

-Me: "It's Ndlovu, sir. Someleze Ndlovu." -Him: "Miss Ndlovu, why aren't you wearing a lab coat? You can't be in my lab without a lab coat so please go get it. Now."

-Me: "I'm sorry, sir. And I can't go get it, I'm not staying around campus, I'm staying in town."

Hell, there's no way I'm going to Alex's room to get my bag. Not today.

-Him: "Then you can't be here."

-Me: "Sir, I'm sorry, it won't happen again." -Him: "Miss, please leave my lab this second." Jeez! Does he really have to be this harsh? What is he even doing here? I mean the lab assistants are here for conducting the practical session, he didn't need to be here. I quickly get up and walk out, leaving Thuso behind. This man is really making me so angry right now. Does he really have to be this strict? I really don't need this, not now, not when I'm already this hurt. Immediately when I get outside I just let my floodgates open. Dammit, I'm angry! I'm so fucking mad. I'm mad at this Doctor fucking December. I'm mad at Alex. I'm mad at everyone and everything. Can this day possibly get any more worse?

About five minutes later I'm still standing outside the lab crying. Then I hear that deep voice behind me.

"Miss Ndlovu."

I know that it's Doctor December. I quickly wipe my tears then turn to look at him. -Me: "Sir?"

-Him: "Have you been crying?"

No, I've been laughing. Duh, ain't it obvious? I just shake my head no.

-Him: "Come with me."

He leads the way and I follow him to his office. We enter and he shows me a chair to sit before he goes round the desk to sit down on his chair.

-Him: "You said you're staying in town?" -Me: "Yes, sir."

-Him: "When you left your flat this morning coming to campus you knew that you have a practical session this afternoon and that you're gonna need a lab coat, right?" -Me: "Yes, sir, I did. I'm sorry, it's just that I..." -Him: (cutting me off) "Please don't give me excuses. Listen, Miss Ndlovu. I like order. Order and discipline. If you ain't disciplined you're ain't gonna last long in my class. You get that?" Hello! Where are we? High school? I know what's expected of me and I know that I'm responsible for my own education. I just said I was sorry and that it won't happen again. So what's with the lecture?

-Me: "I'm sorry, sir. It won't happen again." -Him: "Damn right it won't. Now go back to the lab and do your experiments."

-Me: "Oh, thank you, sir."

I get up and hurry to the door before he changes his mind. But before I walk out he stops me.

-Him: "You said you're staying in town. Where exactly in town?"

-Me: "Odendaal Street, sir. Entla kwe stishi (north of the train station)."

-Him: "Uh, we're in the same area. I'm renting a house in Stock Street."

-Me: "Is it?"

-Him: "Yeah. So come to me after the practical session, I'll give you a lift home." Okay, but ain't that a little inappropriate? -Me: "Thanks, Doc. But I'll be fine. I'm not gonna be needing a..."

-Him: (cutting me off) "When a person offers to do something nice for you, Miss Ndlovu, don't question it, just be appreciative. You'll leave the lab at 5 o'clock and it's winter, it gets dark pretty early. You won't be safe on foot. So just do as I say."

-Me: (embarrassed now) "Thank you, sir. I'll be here after the practical."

And with that I quickly walk out of his office and back to the lab.

#2

"My heart is hoping you'll walk right in tonight and tell me there are things that you regret. 'Cause if I'm being honest I ain't over you yet." - Niall Horan

As my bestfriend, Thuso has always cared and worried for me, but never as much as she

does now, and I understand why. This is my

first heartbreak by a guy, she on the other hand has had her fair share of heartbreaks in the past. Which is why she now no longer gives her heart to a man, any man. She shuns love, she says it's overrated, even uses the word "romantic" as a sign of disapproval. However, she still can't resist hot men and she can't stay away from d*ck. So instead of a boyfriend she has fuck buddies.

Seeing how invested I was in my relationship with Alex, she'd always tell me to be careful, saying opening up your heart to love is always a recipe for heartbreak. But how can one ever be careful and be on guard when it comes to love? I loved Alex and I couldn't tone down my love for him. I loved him with everything that I am, and I couldn't act as if I didn't see a future with him. Call me stupid, but the honest truth is I still love him and I still want him in my life. Which is why him not reaching out to me to apologise after I've caught him red-handed with another woman hurts me more than finding out that he's been cheating on me.

As we walked out of the lab after the practical session, which, to me, seemed like it dragged forever, Thuso had her arm around the back of my neck. Then with a warm smile she asked me to not go back to my flat in town but to spend the night in her room. I understand that she did that out of worry and she didn't want me to be alone, but the truth is, being alone is exactly what I wanted, what I needed. Plus, I had already agreed to catch a lift home with Dr. December. I told Thuso about that thinking she'd be disappointed but to my surprise she smiled in excitement. My crazy friend was actually seeing this as an opportunity. Jovially, she asked me to use the opportunity to suss December out and get her anything and everything she could use to seduce him because apparently when she tried in his office earlier he couldn't read the signs. Yeah, Thuso is crazy like that and she knows no shame. I just laughed and walked

away from her to Dr. December's office. I

found his office door open and him sitting behind the desk with his chair and himself facing to the side. Standing by the door, I opened my mouth to tell him that I had come as he had asked me to, but he quickly put up a finger, stopping me. Clearly he had seen me out of the corner of his eye. He then swung his chair around to face me, and it was only then that I realised that he was actually on the phone.

-Him: (into phone) "Okay, baby, I'll see you both on Friday...Of course, of course, you don't even need to ask."

He had this big goofy smile on his face as he spoke. Of course the guy has someone in his life, probably married, I thought to myself. My eye quickly went to his ring finger. There was no ring but a line that showed that a ring used to be there. This guy is really married, I was now assured. Thuso sure as hell doesn't stand a chance with him, he's already taken, I said to myself. I know that even though she doesn't have a problem opening her legs, she doesn't do married men.

-December: (into phone) "Okay, baby. Love you."

He hung up then looked at me.

-Him: "Oh, you're already here."

-Me: "Yes, Doc. Are you ready to go or should I wait for you?"

-Him: "Just take a sit for a minute. There's an email I wanna send before I leave."

I sat on the chair and let my eyes wander

around his office as he was busy on his

computer. The office was clean and

organised, unlike when it was used by our old professor. That's something admirable, I had to admit. Then my eyes landed on two photos on his desk. Both were of a cute little girl, maybe 8 or 9 years old. That must be his daughter, and it's the wife and the daughter that he's going to see on Friday, I thought to myself.

He finished sending the email then he got his bag and we walked out. Even though I was a bit reluctant at first, I now had to admit, Doc really came through for me by offering to give me this ride home. Usually, when I finish up late in campus Alex would drive me to my place or I'd spend the night in his room at res, depending on the day. But now that we're no longer on the same page I was going to have to walk to town, but December had just saved me the walk.

The drive in his spotless, charcoal Mercedes Benz AMG was kind of awkward at first. I mean I don't know this guy, plus he's my lecturer, so what was I to say to him? What could we possibly talk about? But as we were driving out of the campus main gate he broke the silence by asking me to take a CD wallet out of the glove compartment then look for Beyonce's Lemonade CD and put it on. Okay, he likes Beyonce's music. Me on the other hand I like Beyonce the person. Her music? Not so much. And, I must say, I got surprised to know that there are people who still use CDs, but I guess as long as they are still in the market people will continue to buy them. Yoh, I wouldn't even know what to do with a CD, I don't have anything that plays a disc. Anyway, I got the Beyonce CD and put it on. But I couldn't stop flipping through the CD wallet, wanting to see more of his taste in music. It was mostly Hip Hop and R&B until a pirated CD of Søren Bebe sprung up.

-Me: "Søren Bebe? You have his CD?" -Him: "You know him?"

-Me: "The Danish guy that's one of the leading pianists and composers in the European scene of jazz and contemporary music? Of course I know of him."

-Him: (smiling) "You do. No kidding." -Me: "Andithi since 6 years ago which is the year I started doing professional ballet, he's been releasing albums with music for ballet and contemporary dance classes. Well, that's how I got to know of him and started following his YouTube channel. Back home I was doing ballet and we were mostly using this guy's music in our classes. Actually, it's my childhood friend, Amanda, who pushed me to sign up for the classes at this ballet school in town. And her parents started paying for the classes up until I left and came here."

I was now babbling. I guess I was finally free to talk because at least we now had something to talk about.

-Him: "Oh, you were a ballet dancer? My 9 year old daughter is also a ballerina. I actually took that CD from her. The guy's music helps me sleep and I also use it when I meditate." Oh, that was really his daughter that I just saw in those pictures.

-Me: "Oh, you have a daughter. That's nice." But from the look of it, he didn't want to dwell much on the subject. He quickly changed it.

-Him: "You said back home. Where's home?"

-Me: "P.E. But after high school I chose to come here."

-Him: "You just had to choose a small town. Why though? Ugh, don't answer me. I'm also here, aren't I? All the way from Jo'burg."

-Me: "You're from Jo'burg? And why did you come here? Tired of big cities?"

-Him: "A friend of mine got me this job. First job as a lecturer. And it's the only one I could get."

-Me: "First job as a lecturer? What were you doing before you came here?"

-Him: "I was a medical doctor, actually. A surgeon."

-Me: "What? From being a surgeon to being a full-time lecturer? I don't get it."

He kept quiet. I could swear I saw a wave of pain washing over his face. And when he eventually spoke I could hear that pain in his voice too.

-Him: "I can't kill anyone as a lecturer."

-Me: "What do you mean?"

-Him: "Okay, it's time to change the subject."

Oops! What was I thinking interrogating him like that? Just because he became nice and offered me a ride home doesn't mean he's now my friend, he's still my lecturer.

-Me: "Ummh...I'm sorry, Doc. I shouldn't have overstepped my bounds."

-Him: "It's okay... I need to pass by Debonairs for some pizza. You don't mind, do you?" He asked not even looking at me.

-Me: "No. Of course not."

I was now shrinking on my chair, feeling bad and embarrassed by mouth. Jeez!

He pulled up at Caltex garage, where Debonairs is, then got his wallet out of the car's centre console storage.

-Him: "Don't you want to get anything?" -Me: (with an awkward smile) "No, no, I'm fine."

-Him: "You sure? Not even at Fresh Stop?" -Me: "Yes, it's okay, Doc. I'm good." I really didn't want to buy anything. But even if I did, I didn't have any money. The second semester's money from my sponsor hasn't come through yet. And the one I got from my mother when I left home the weekend before last is now gone. I had to do my hair and buy some groceries. A girl's gotta look good and eat too.

Taking his debit card out of the wallet, Doc just nodded then got out of the car, leaving the wallet on the seat. Being curious is part of being human. I just couldn't resist opening that wallet. The first thing I saw inside were two passport size photos of his daughter, the one I'd just seen in the photos in his office. Ncooh, he really loves his daughter, I said to myself. But where's her mother? I pulled the photos out and under them I found a photo of a very pretty ligh-skinned woman. This must be the wife, I said under my breath. "My poor friend is going to be so disappointed."

I found myself saying that out loud. Next, I took out his ID card. And apart from seeing that his first name is actually Thando, I also saw his date of birth and realised that he's 31 years old. Yes, he's not that old but he's still way too old for Thuso. Ten years older, to be exact. But, knowing her, she was going to ignore that. The only problem is that this guy is married, or at least I think he is. I had done enough snooping around for one day. So I quickly put everything back inside then put the wallet back on the seat. I was about to recline my chair and relax when a painful reminder crept up to my head, reminding me that this was not the car that I'm used to, that it was not Alex's car and I couldn't just do whatever I liked in it. Alex?

Just thinking about him was enough to make me die a little inside. And soon I found tears trickling down my cheeks. What broke my heart more was the fact that he still hadn't called me. I thought by now he'd be bombarding my phone with calls and texts apologising. But clearly I was too hopeful. The way I love him, if he could just call or come to my flat and tell me that he regrets what he did and that he's sorry I would not think twice about forgiving him. That's all I need from him.

Seeing Doc coming back, I quickly wiped my tears off and pulled myself together. He was carrying two large pizza boxes and two 2l bottles of Coke which he put in the back seat before getting in behind the wheel.

-Him: "I got you what I got for myself. I hope you like Cram-decker."

Ncooh, he's nice, I said in my heart. Really, I wasn't expecting him to get me anything. -Me: "Oh, that's what you got for me? It's actually my favourite. Thank you, Doc. Thank you so much."

If there's one line I hate the most has got to be "Thanks, but you didn't have to." If the person has already made an effort to do something nice for you the least you can do is give them a sincere thanks and end it there, no need to make them feel like their effort is unappreciated.

So I thanked Doc with a smile on my face even though I doubted that I'd be eating any of that pizza. I was too stressed to eat anything. That's me, when I'm stressed I lose appetite.

He nodded with a smile then drove up to our residential area while talking about the course he's teaching. Before he went to drop me off at home though, he passed by his house, well the house he's renting, just to show it to me. And I realised that on foot it's only about 5 minutes away from where I'm staying. Very close. He didn't get out of the car or even stop, he just pointed at the house then drove past and made a turn into my street. I showed him my landlord's house and he went to drop me off at the gate. I thanked him once again then got out with the things he'd bought for me. -Him: "You have yourself a nice evening. See you in the morning. I'm gonna give you a lift to campus."

Really? He's going to drive me to and from campus everyday now? I asked myself, but I didn't dare ask him. I just smiled awkwardly then walked away. I must say, I find Doc mysterious. I don't even know why but as far as I'm concerned he's a jigsaw puzzle that I need to solve.

Please don't forget to like, comment and to mention your friends.

#3

Someleze

Happy and worry-free, that's how everyone around me looked. It was now Friday just after 16:00 and I was sitting outside the Chemistry building after our practical session

waiting for Thuso. When we were walking out

of the lab she'd asked me to go wait outside in the sun while she went to discuss her assignment mark with our Chemistry professor. I must say, the weak July sun felt good on my skin but what didn't feel so good was watching other campus students looking all happy around me. They were going up and down, some laughing, others smiling, generally looking happy. Oh God, how I envied them. Happiness had deserted me ever since Alex dropped me like a dirty rag. As I sat there I remembered what had transpired between me and him on Tuesday when I went to get my bag from his room.

I had to go get my bag early in the morning because it had my books, iPad and my labcoat and I couldn't go to class without those. But if I'm being frank I went there largely because I wanted to see Alex himself, hoping that we'd get to talk. With that hope I made my way to his room, and by 7:45 I was knocking on his door. He came to open already dressed to go out, to his department I assumed.

"Someleze, what are you doing in my space this early?"

He asked looking me straight in the eye. As harsh as his words sounded, not a trace of feeling grazed his face. No anger. Not even the slightest irritation. And I couldn't tell which hurt me the most: the sharpness of his words or the blankness on his face. It's like he didn't care. He wasn't the Alex I used to know, and he was treating me like he didn't know me either. It was at that moment that a sinking feeling gripped me, a realisation that there was no salvaging our relationship, that his love for me was totally gone.

-Me: "I'm here to get my bag."

My voice came out as a whisper. I was so hurt and I felt like the hope I had when I came was now being sucked out of me. Coming for my bag was the only reason I could tell him. Seeing that he had zero interest in talking with me I couldn't tell him that the major reason I came was because I wanted us to talk.

Without saying anything more, he stepped aside allowing me to walk inside. As I stepped inside, my eyes immediately landed on this dark, natural beauty sitting at his desk eating cereal - his new woman, the one I had found him banging the day before. So whatever they're doing is serious, I whispered in my heart. The realisation of that made my stomach turn and I was suddenly tongue-tied. I just stood there like a statue, staring at the woman who had now taken my spot in Alex's heart.

"Here's your bag, you can leave us now. And I'd really appreciate it if you could never come back. Oh, and I've taken back my key." The bastard that I had naively been thinking was my soulmate said handing me my bag. His cold voice made my blood boil, and I couldn't keep my cool anymore.

-Me: "How dare you, Alex? How dare you treat me this way? After everything we've

been through together, is this what you do to me? I've been nothing but a good woman to you, dammit. Why are you treating me as if I've done you wrong? Huh? Couldn't you at least have the decency to let me know that you now wanted to move on without me?" I quickly turned to his girlfriend who was now up from her chair, looking at me.

-Me: "And you? Did you know that he had a girlfriend before you opened your legs for him?"

-Her: "Bitch, please. Just do yourself a favour and leave before you embarrass yourself. Is it that hard to accept that the guy doesn't want you anymore?"

Embarrass myself? I sure was embarrassing myself, wasn't I? But with her tone this bitch was pushing me to embarrass myself even further. With anger of a maniac I charged forward, ready to slap her stupid face. -Me: "Who are you calling a bitch, huh? Who are you calling a bitch?"

I was screeming with fury, and my hand landed so hard on her cheek. She staggered but came back with her own hot slap across my face. Oh hell no she didn't. I let my bag land on the floor as I charged forward with all my might, ready to tear the bitch apart. I had my hands around her throat when I felt Alex's rough hands grab me from behind. He roughly pulled me away from his skinny woman and threw me on the floor. I landed so hard on my butt and hit my head on his bed. That hurt, but Alex didn't care. I would never forget the look he had on his face. He was looking at me with so much anger and disgust.

-Alex: "What the fuck do you think you're you doing, Someleze? What the fuck do you think you're doing?"

I was now crying, tears of anger more than those of pain.

-Him: "You say you want me to spell things out for you, right? Well, I'll do that. Right now. What you and I had is over. I'm now with lviwe, I love her and if you ever lay your hands on her again you will regret it. You hear me? Now just get up and get the fuck out of my room with the little dignity you still have. I don't ever wanna see your face again." He was so angry and he didn't even give a fuck about how I would get up from that floor. At that point I was going through a number of emotions at once - hurt, anger, disappointment and most of all, humiliation. I had never felt so humiliated in my life. What was I even thinking pulling a stunt like that? I should have just took my bag and left quietly. Alex is a bastard that didn't deserve me right from the beginning. I slowly got up and picked up my bag. Without saying another word, I

walked out of his room and started wiping my tears as soon as I noticed several pairs of eyes looking at me in the corridor. Other students in his corridor were now standing outside their rooms wanting to see what was going on. They had obviously heard the commotion and were now curious. I was so embarrassed as I rushed down the stairs and out the exit. If only the earth could just open up and swallow me.

As I was now sitting outside the Chemistry building I hadn't seen Alex since that incident but the scars he left in my heart were still fresh and still hurt like hell. But I had accepted the fact that I now had to learn to live without him.

Doc on the other hand was being nice to me. Ever since he gave me a lift home on Monday he had been giving me lifts to and from campus everyday. Our drives were now no longer awkward. I was getting more and more comfortable around him and I was actually enjoying our conversations. We'd talk about a lot of things and he was always interested in knowing more about me even though he wasn't revealing much about himself. Today I wasn't going to catch a lift with him though because he'd left early around lunch time saying he was going to East London to

pick up some people from the airport. His wife and daughter, I assumed. That was okay though because I wasn't going to my flat anyway. It was a Friday and I was going out with Thuso and two other girls from her res who were our friends, Bonolo and Yonela. I'm not a person who likes clubbing too much but I'd go boozing with Thuso and others on some weekends. Sometimes I'd go out with Alex, his friends and their girls, but now that was never going to happen again.

Here I was now, sitting in the sun waiting for Thuso so we'd go to her room to eat and freshen up before one of his fuck buddies, an accountant from King William's town, takes us to this hip and happening place in East London. I was so looking forward to that. Dancing and getting wasted was exactly what I needed to forget about my pain, even though it was only going to be temporary. If only Thuso could just hurry and come out. Why was she not coming out anyway? I checked my watch. Jeez I had been waiting for her for about 30 minutes. What could be taking her this long? I asked myself as I got up and walked back inside the building, to Prof's office. I had to go check what was taking so long. But when I got there I was surprised to find out that Thuso hadn't even been there.

Thuso

Being the only child of a well-off couple had me spoiled. My father is an industrial engineer who owns his own engineering company and my mother is a lawyer. Back home in Nelspruit we live a very comfortable life and my parents always make sure that I get everything I want. I guess that's the reason why I don't, and never have, responded well to not getting what I want, including a man. I know that for years I have been afraid of love because of my past experiences but right now I think I really really like Doctor December. I don't know what's so

different about him but the more I see him in class the more I long to be with him, not just for sex but to be really with him. Which is why it pisses me off that I can't get him. I tried to work my magic, which always works with men, but it didn't work with him. All he gave me was an earful, telling me to stop embarrassing myself and respect him as my lecturer. He was so cold, with no feeling at all in his voice. Then he asked me to leave his office at once. I had never felt so humiliated in my entire life. With my knees trembling, I made my way to the door and walked out. But I wasn't about to give up. I asked Soso to help me get him but she came back saying the guy has a woman, probably married. That's bullshit, I can see now that she actually wants him for herself. The kind of relationship they have is not that of a student and a lecturer. Since Tuesday they've been coming to campus together and also leave together in the afternoon. They even have each other's

cellphone numbers. What the fuck is that? That makes me sick, seriously. Soso says there's nothing going on between the two of them but I'm not stupid, I can see the way December looks at her. I really thought Soso was my friend. She knows that I like Doc but she's now taking him away from me. How could she? How could she do that? I've been there for her, supporting her through this breakup with Alex, and now this is what she's doing to me? What kind of friend is she mara? Today she heard me talking with one of my FBs (fuck buddies) on the phone about hitting East London tonight and without even asking she assumed that she was coming with us. Oh fuck no, there's no way in hell I'm going to let my backstabber tag along. But I couldn't tell her that because I don't want her to know what I think about her until I give her the taste of her own medicine. So I just asked her to go wait outside while I go talk to our Chemistry professor but that was a lie, I walked straight out the back exit and went to

my res. By the time she realises that I'm gone it will be too late, I would have already left the campus. If I was her though I'd brace myself because she won't like what I have in store for her.

#4

I put you on top. I claimed you so proud and openly. And when times were rough, I made sure I held you close to me." - The Weeknd

Alex

Soso was right, she has been good to me. She gave me her heart even when her friends warned her against it. I couldn't blame them for warning her though, I understood why. I was a 21-year-old fuck boy at the time, I was only catching to release not to put in my bucket. But she actually changed me into one

of the good guys. She loved me past that

stage and made me see what's really important. She made me her number one, practically putting me on top in her list of priorities. And when I was going through a rough patch she was there for me. She showed me love and support. The woman always had my back ever since she came into my life, something that made me fall hard for her. Because of that I also made it my priority to have her back too, to be the man she deserved. We were really good together, but there's just one department Soso's failing in, and that's the bedroom department. When I met her she was still a virgin and I practically had to teach her everything. But that's just the thing, that "everything" basically means "not much". Soso doesn't want to be experimental in bed, she's not open-minded like that. As absurd as it sounds, to her trying new things in the bedroom means she's becoming a slut and she's not down for that. With her it's missionary all the way, and

sometimes she wouldn't even want to give it

to me...at all. It really gets boring and frustrating but she doesn't seem to get that. I'm a man, I love sex. And I love it wild and steamy, something I never got from her. Don't get me wrong, I loved her, I really did, which is why I've stuck it out for 3 whole damn years. But I just couldn't take it anymore. To me, sex, intimacy, is just as important as love in a relationship. If it's not there that means there's no relationship. They say in a relationship communication is key, but in ours communication never worked. I've always been straight with Soso, I'd tell her what I want but that would go through one of her ears and out the other. Three years and three months into our relationship and yet she was still doing the same whacky job in bed. She wasn't willing to compromise to make me feel good, so I just had to move on. A guy can only take so much, seriously. Hurting her wasn't something I'd planned but I just had to put my own needs

first. Knowing how she always wants things to be spelled out for her, I wanted to tell her that our relationship has run its course but I just couldn't bring myself to do it until she found out on her own. That actually made things easy for me. Now I won't have to break the news to her. And I can be with Iviwe in the open, without hiding anything. I met Iviwe at Spar three weeks back. I wasn't even looking for anything but sex from her, I just needed to release. At first she played hard to get but a couple of days later she was

naked in my bed. And I must say, she's a total opposite of Soso. Damn! The girl's got moves in bed, she knows how to make a guy feel good and lose his mind. I found myself wanting more and more, and before I knew it I had developed feelings for her. And I now no longer had space for Soso.

Iviwe is the same age as me, she's 24. She's new in town, from Mthatha. She was studying medicine at WSU and now she's doing her community service at Victoria hospital in

Alice. She's sharing a space with three more

doctors at the doctors' accommodation at the hospital, which is why she has to come to me at res whenever we want to be together. Today is Friday and she left for Mthatha early in the morning, visiting her family. So here I am now, in East London at this club called Pulse with my boys, Sivenathi and Siyamthanda. I've come to just unwind and have a good time. It's been a tough week. Master's degree is not a kid's play, I tell you. My supervisor wants me to be done with my dissertation by October if I want to graduate in May next year. So I've been pushing hard all week and now I just want to unwind. But these two East Londoners I'm with have come here for easy p*ssy. Me? Nah, I'm not down for that, I can wait for my woman.

It's now just before midnight, my boys and I are tipsy but they don't want to leave without cheap skirts. The only thing I'm thinking about is hitting the pillow, alone, but I can't leave without these two because from here we're all going to Siya's home right here around Arcadia.

I'm standing with them, their eyes busy searching for their next preys, when someone grips my shoulder from behind. I turn to see her in a short, tight red dress and a denim jacket in this chilly night. Jeez, does this mean Soso is here too? I hope not, because the last thing I need tonight is drama.

"TK. What's up? You came alone?"

I asked already annoyed. TK is Thuso Kwena but some people, including myself, call her TK.

-Her: "Soso is not here if that's what you're asking."

She says close to my face. The music is blarring and the crowd is rowdy so I don't really blame her. But what unsettles me is the way she keeps licking her lips and tracing her fingers down my chest with one hand while brushing my head with the other. If I didn't know better I'd say she's flirting with me but she wouldn't do that, would she? I mean she's Soso's best friend for crying out loud.

-Me: "Do you mind taking your hands off of me now?"

I yell so she could hear me through the music. But she doesn't seem to be hearing me, or she's just acting.

-Her: "What?"

Again she's close to my face, too close for my comfort.

-Me: "I said, do you mind walking away and leaving me with my boys?"

I said raising my voice even higher so she could hear. But instead of backing off and walking away, she smashes her lips onto mine. And before I can even react she starts sucking on them.

Someleze

It's now Sunday and I haven't spoken to Thuso since Friday. After she just ditched me like

that I sent her a WhatsApp message asking what was going on. And she replied with a

pathetic excuse, saying her "man", Mr Accountant, didn't want her friends to tag along. That he just wanted the night to be about them. Ugh! I mean theres nothing wrong with that, I would have understood if she had just told me. Why hide it and choose to ditch me instead? I really hate what she did, and it pissed me off. I haven't contacted her since Friday and she hasn't tried to contact me either. I really don't have time for her games, I've got a lot to deal with as it is. I'm stressed as fuck as I'm sitting here, I don't know where I'm going to get money for rent this month. Month-end is on Tuesday and I'm going to have to pay. With what money? Gosh, this is messed up. And my landlord is strict, she expects her money on the last day of each month, not a day later. My sponsor hasn't paid yet and I know that my mom doesn't have that kind of money right now. Hell, she doesn't even know that I'm renting a flat off-campus. I never told her that I never got a room at res from the very first year because I knew that she was going to tell me not come to Fort Hare at all if I didn't have a place to stay. All the bursaries that I had applied for had still not responded at the time and I knew that she couldn't afford to rent me a flat on top of everything else that she was already doing for me. I couldn't even suggest that to her. So I kept quiet and Alex promised

to rent the flat for me. But now that me and him are over, that agreement is over too. I'm practically on my own now.

I'm now sitting on my bed, having just finished typing my assignment that's due tomorrow - December's. No matter how stressed I am I could never abandon my studies. This is my final semester for this degree and I have to pass all my modules and graduate next year. I have to make my mother proud no matter what. She also graduated from UNISA last year and earlier this year she got a more stable job as an HR assistant. I was so proud of her and I want her to be proud of me too.

I have to admit though, I feel lonely as fuck as I'm sitting here. There's no Alex, no Thuso, just me. I decide to binge watch some series on my laptop. But as I'm still watching, around 13:00, my phone rings and I see Doc's name on the screen. What? Why is he calling me? I mean, we are not exactly friends, he only took my number so he could call me when he wants me to come catch a lift with him. So why is he calling me now? I mean it's a Sunday and I thought he was with his family, his wife and kid. I believe he's married even though he no longer wears a ring. These guys ain't loyal, they have a tendency of taking their rings off just so they would seem single. So you can never really know.

I pick up, curious.

-Me: "Hello."

-Him: "Hey, Soso. Are you busy?" Soso? Doc has never used my first name before. He's never called me Someleze, and now he's jumped all the way to Soso? Wow, what a jump?

-Me: "Ummh...no. I'm not busy. Why?"

-Him: "I'd like to see you. Do you mind coming outside?"

-Me: "No. I'll be there now-now."

With that I hang up. I'm really curious to know what he wants. I'm wearing grey sweat pants and a white, long-sleeved T-shirt. So I just put on my white Adidas slides and tie my weave into a messy bun. Then I treat my lips with some lipgloss before stepping out of my door.

I unlock the small gate and walk out while he's standing on the street. The gate locks itself behind me and as I'm putting my pendant back on my neck he suddenly speaks, he couldn't even wait for me to get to him. -Him: "You just can't go out without that pendant, huh. It's always around your neck. What, is it a lucky charm or something?" I laugh as I come to stand before him. -Me: "What? No. It ain't no lucky charm. I actually got this from my grandmother when I was 7, on my first day in school. She didn't want me to lose my house key so she gave this to me so I could keep the key inside. It accomodates two keys and I've been keeping my keys in it ever since. Old habits die hard, I guess."

-Him: "They do, don't they?"

He says smiling. Gosh, he's got a beautiful white set of teeth. Every time he smiles or laughs they just brighten his face. Oh, and I couldn't miss just how different he looks today. It's the first time I see him wearing a completely casual outfit. He has on blue ripped jeans, white Nike sneakers and a crispy white muscle fit T-shirt showing off a dusky tattoo of some predatory winged beast etched around his left upper arm. And his hair cut that was a little too long for my liking is now cut short. He looks so sexy and attractive. So yummy. But I'm trying to be detached about it. Why am I feeling this way about him all of a sudden though? Jeez! This is so inappropriate.

-Me: "You said you wanted to see me?" -Him: "We can't stand on the street like this. Mind coming with me to my house? Plus, there's someone I'd like you to meet."

Someone he wants me to meet? His wife? But why? I ask myself silently inside, but outside I say:

-Me: "Okay, we can go. Besides, my landlord doesn't want me to bring men around her house. Even my boyfriend...I mean my exboyfriend, would just drop me off at the gate

and leave. He never went inside."

He chuckles, then:

-Him: "Well, let's go then."

Woah, what did I just do? What was I thinking telling him about my boyfriend? My mouth though.

Anyway, we make our way to his house that's just around the corner of the street.

"I see those tears in your eyes. I feel so helpless inside. Oh love, there's no need to hide. Just let me love you when your heart is tired." - Gavin James [Alan Walker]

Someleze

On our short walk to his house, Doc and I couldn't talk about anything else but the assignment that is due tomorrow. He asks if I didn't experience any problems when doing it. Problems? Oh hell no. I don't mean to brag but when it comes to the brain for books I'm gifted. So instead of experiencing difficulties with the assignment I quite enjoyed working on it the entire week. It pushed me to read more on some topics that I previously had limited knowledge on. I believe that's the purpose of assignments anyway. And I also believe that I've nailed it. But I'll just have to wait and see what mark Doc gives me. We walk through his gate and I can't help but

notice how clean the yard is. I've always known this house even though I didn't know the person who was living in it before Doc came. I used to pass by it almost everyday and it was never this clean. But I'm not surprised, I've already noticed that Doc is a neat freak. I can't help but wonder what other department is he a freak in though. We walk into his lounge and just like the outside, it's nice and clean. He offers me a sit and I sit on the edge of the couch. I feel a little uncomfortable and anxious at the fact that I don't know who I'm here to see. But the stupid me isn't even asking, I just sit down and wait.

-Doc: "Can I get you anything to drink? Water, juice, wine, beer..."

-Me: "Water is fine, thanks."

He nods and walks out to the kitchen. A moment later he comes back with the glass of water and a coaster. I drink then put the glass on the coaster on the coffee table. But now I just have to ask...

-Me: "So, who am I here to see?" He just smiles and go to stand in the passage before calling out...

-Him: "Lathi! Come, baby."

And bam!!! Not one but two cute little girls show up. What? I don't know how or when I got up from the couch but I was now on my feet, surprised. So the girl I saw on the two photos in his office AND in his wallet was not the same girl, they are actually a set of identical twins. And now I'm guessing when he said "I'll see you both on Friday" he meant the two daughters, not a wife and a daughter. Oh wow!

With visible love, he wraps his arms around them as they all come to stand by the coffee table.

-Him: "Girls, this is sis' Soso, daddy's friend." Friend? Okay, we're already there now? It's good to know. -Him: "Soso, these are my two princesses. This one here is Lathitha, Lathi for short. She's the ballerina I was telling you about and I really wanted you to meet her before she leaves. They're going back to Jo'burg tomorrow... Anyway, this one over here is Lilitha, we call her Lily. She doesn't do ballet. She thinks..."

-Lily: "Ballet is stupid."

She finishes the sentence with some attitude that I find kind of cute. I can see that she thinks she's older even though she's just 9. She's a little diva. And Lathi clearly doesn't find her attitude cute at all because she quickly retaliates.

-Lathi: "No, you're the one who's stupid, Lily. You just like acting like you're smarter than me. But that's just another sign of stupidity." -Lily: "What did you just say? Say I'm stupid one more time, Lathi, and I'll slap you." -Lathi: "Do that and daddy will show you flames." -Doc: "Okay, girls, cut it out now. We have a guest, remember?"

-Them: (in unison) "Sorry, daddy."

Awww they are so cute. And I can't help but laugh.

-Doc: (to me) "They're like this, always at each other's throats."

-Me: "They're so cute and adorable, Doc." Then I quickly turn to the girls.

-Me: "It's nice to meet both of you, girls. And you have cute names, I must say. They are not as cute as your faces though."

They smile and come to me for hugs. Awww my heart just melts as the three of us hug. -Them: (in unison) "It's nice to meet you, sis' Soso."

-Me: "So, Lathi, you really like ballet, huh?" -Lathi: "A lot. I want to be a famous ballerina when I grow up. Daddy tells me you also do ballet."

-Me: "That's right. But it's been three years since I put on my ballet shoes. I'm sure we can teach each other some moves though." -Lathi: "I'd love that."

Lily rolls her eyes.

-Me: "So, Lily, wena what do you like?"

-Lily: "I'm smart so I like mind-challenging board games, like chess."

-Me: "Really? I love those too. Chess is my thing... What about scrabble? Don't you like that?"

-Lily: "I love it and I'm good at it."

-Me: "Well, maybe we should play together sometime and see how good you are."

-Lily: (excited) "I'm game. Can we play now?"
-Doc: "No, no, baby, a little later. Okay? Right now daddy and sis' Soso need some space.

Y'all go back to your bedroom, I'll call you out later. Alright?"

They nod and run out, back to their bedroom. -Me: "You have adorable kids there, Doc. Seriously."

-Doc: "Thank you. But please call me Thando out of campus." He says taking my hand and pulling me down to sit back on the couch. Am I seeing things or this guy is trying to make a move on me? -Me: "Your girls' mother? Where's she?"

Thando

My name is Thando December, a 31-year-old Jo'burger, born and bred. I have a younger sister, Anathi. She's all grown up but in my eyes she'll always be my baby sister and I love her to bits, I even carry her picture in my wallet. She doesn't like the fact that I baby her though because she's 28 years old, married, and has a two year old son. Just like her, I was also married. Well, up until 6 months ago. I met Busie, my ex wife, 11 years ago. I was doing my 4th year in Med school, she on the other hand had just graduated in Business Management and was now working as an intern in my father's construction company. I was there to see my father when I saw her. We hit it off almost

instantly and a year later she was pregnant. In August of the following year, just two days before my own birthday, she gave birth to our adorable twin girls. That's the best gift she could ever have given me. Those girls are the best thing that has ever happened to me, they are my life. Unfortunately, I can no longer say the same about Busie. After the birth of our girls our relationship became stronger but we only got married 3 years ago. Reason being I was still busy with my studies. After I was done with my community service I went back to school to specialise in Surgery. And it was after my final year that I could finally marry her. However, only a year into our marriage cracks started to show. Perhaps I was the one to blame for that because I wasn't always around for my wife and our girls. Medical life is not very flexible. I worked 12-hour shifts at the hospital, and sometimes I would have to stay longer until the work is

done. I couldn't just take off in the middle of an emergency even if my 12 hours were over.

That meant my family couldn't always rely on me to be home in time for dinner or to be around for every ballet show, spelling competition or birthday party. Sometimes I'd be home during the day after working a long night shift and my wife and kids would have to adjust their routine to make sure I can get some sleep. Oftentimes I'd have to work on holidays and we'd have to celebrate the holiday as a family on a different day or they would just have to go on without me. It was really hard to plan things. My wife would do her best to make leisure plans with me but she couldn't ever really know exactly what time I'd get home because she could never know when a surgery may run long or an emergency might happen. Even when I'm home I'd have to split my time between her and our twins. The truth is, I hardly had time for her and I guess that took a toll on her because she seeked comfort in another man's arms. It was on Worker's Day last year that I found out that she was cheating on me. She

had lied to me and said she was going to Sun City with her colleagues for a team building but that was a lie. I saw her with another man at a restaurant in Bryanston, giggling like a school girl. I was so angry but I didn't say anything, I just went home and confronted her when she came back. Realising that she had been busted she couldn't deny it, she only begged for forgiveness. And because I wanted our marriage to work, and to provide a stable home for our daughters I forgave her. At least she was remorseful, I thought. After that we tried to work on our marriage, I tried to make more time for her but it all came crumbling down when her mother was brought into our hospital after a terrible car accident. We were short-staffed, there were no enough surgeons, and even those that were around were busy operating on other patients. Busie's mother needed an emergency surgery or she was going to die. I

was still a surgical registrar, I couldn't perform a major surgery without a senior surgeon present but this was my mother-in-law and for her to survive she needed the surgery pronto. So as the doctor and a concerned sonin-law I took it upon myself to try and save her life. But that didn't quite happen, something went wrong and she died on my operating table. Busie never forgave me after that, she still blamed me for her mother's death even after the hospital cleared me after a week of suspension. Even today she still says I killed her mother, that if I didn't perform that surgery myself her mother would still be alive. I heard that from her so many times that I also ended up believing it even though somehow I know that it wasn't my fault. The hospital also cleared me because they could see that it wasn't my fault, but in Busie's eyes I'm still guilty. To make matters worse, she asked for a divorce after that. But if you ask me, I think she was no longer feeling me and she just used the

whole thing as an excuse to get out of the marriage. I think she was now feeling that other guy, I don't think they even ended what they were doing even after I had caught them together.

I just felt so defeated when she asked for a divorce. I was so hurt but I didn't contest it, I just signed the damn papers and gave her what she wanted. One thing I know is that you you can never force a person to love you when they're no longer feeling you. Because the divorce was uncontested it got finalised pretty quickly. Now she's got sole custody of our kids and all I got from the agreement are holidays and weekends with them. But that's okay, at least I still get to spend time with my little girls. However, I just couldn't stay in the medical profession anymore or even in Jo'burg. I just had to leave even if it's just for a year or two. A part of me believes that it's that profession that ruined my marriage. And now I just want to live, and work 9 hours a day like most people.

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When I saw Soso without a lab coat in my lab that day I instantly thought she was one of those rebellious, undisciplined students and I don't want that in my class. Like I told her that day, I like order. In my entire life, in everything that I do, I like order. So I wasn't going to have her disrespect me in my lab. But when I found her crying outside I felt bad. And as I was talking to her in my office, I noticed something familiar in her eyes, a pain that I know very well. A pain of being dropped by the person you loved. That's a familiar territory to me and I know that look. Just 6 months ago I was also there. It hurt so fuckin' bad. I even kept wearing my ring even after the divorce, I just couldn't bring myself to taking it off until only a week ago when I came to Alice.

I could see the pain and the hurt in Soso's eyes and I regretted giving her a hard time.

And all I wanted was to make up for that so I offered to give her a ride home. But the more I talked with her the more I enjoyed being around her. I'm sure she's 20 or 21 but what I noticed about her in our conversations is that she's quite mature, she's focused and she knows what she wants in life. She's got some serious smarts too and that to me is not just attractive but it's also an aphrodisiac. It doesn't help that she's got a pretty face and a body to die for either. Damn, the girl is hot. Every time I'm with her I feel like ripping her clothes off and invade her right there in my car, but I'd never do that. I think I really like her and most of all I respect her. If we do this, I want us to do it the right way. Considering the fact that she's 10 years my junior and I'm her lecturer, I know that it's inappropriate. She might see it that way too and by making a move on her I might ruin the close relationship we already have. That makes me kind of anxious. But I want to love her.

She tries to hide it when she's with me, but I can still see the pain in her eyes. What she doesn't know is that she doesn't have to hide it from me. I can see it anyway and I just wish she could let me love her past it and let me take off the weight on her shoulders, because she walks around like she's carrying the weight of the whole world.

I look at her sitting next to me on the couch. There's that look of innocence in her eyes. As cute as that is though, if she ends up with me she's going to have to lose it. She shifts uncomfortably on the couch. It must be the fact that I'm holding her hand. I let it go and shift away from her. The last thing I want is to make her feel uncomfortable like I'm some pervert. I want to slowly ease her into the idea of being with me. I want her to get to know me first.

-Me: "Their mother and I are divorced." I answer her question looking at her. The reaction on her face is priceless, almost

relieved. What, did she think I was still married?

#6

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"Ubusy uyangilandela. What do you want from me? Uyangi'charmer na? Just stop it's not working. Angifuni wena, ngifuna lomngane wakho. Suka wena..." - Karabo

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"There's eleven of you in this class but I only got 9 assignments. If the remaining two don't submit before 2 o'clock, which is in the next 40 minutes, they'll simply get zeros. And remember this counts towards your DPs...Y'all can go now."

Doc says slightly irritated after our class with him. I can't help but look at him in a different way now that I spent a day with him yesterday. I don't know whether I'm seeing things or I'm being forward but I think he's got a thing for me. Or maybe I'm wrong,

maybe he's just being nice and trying to make

a friend since he's got no friends in Alice. But why would he want to be friends with me, his student? Ugh, I don't know. But what I do know is that I had a great time with him and his girls yesterday. Contrary to what I initially thought of him, he's so much fun. I got to learn that about him yesterday. We all had some crazy fun in his house. I got to act crazy and laugh like there was no tomorrow, something I haven't done in a while. It really became a good day, I caught a break from my worries and I only got to go back to my flat after dinner, which the four of us cooked together. I really don't know how I feel about the whole experience though or what I think about him having a thing for me - if that's even true. It turns out I was wrong about him having a wife though. My initial reaction to that was that of relief, I'm not even sure why. But a huge part of me got relieved to know that he's not taken. However, when he told me everything about his ex-wife, I actually felt sorry for him. Thing is I could relate. I know how painful it is to be dropped by someone you love, I'm currently going through that myself. At least for him the pain has already subsided, for me it's still fresh and I don't see me getting over it any time soon. Even if Doc really had feelings for me I doubt I would go there. He's really attractive, I can't deny that. And I also have to admit that since the moment I saw him waiting for me on my street yesterday seeing him makes me feel some type of way. But I'm not ready to go there yet. Putting the fact that he's my lecturer who's way older than me aside, my heart is not yet ready for another relationship or whatever it would be. Alex has hurt me so bad that I don't see myself with another man any time soon. I never knew love could hurt this much, and now I'm scared to love again. Plus, it's my friend who wanted Doc first. That considered, I need to do the right thing. I

need to tell her that my initial assessment

was wrong, that the guy is not married. What she does after that is up to her.

I've been trying to talk with her since morning though, but she's not giving me a chance. I don't even know why. After our first class I went to her but she said she had an important call to make and that I should go ahead to our second class without her. And I did. Then after our second class she said she couldn't talk because she had to go finish up December's assignment and submit. Knowing how important our studies are I gave her the space and just went to the computer lab. Now that this is our last class I need to talk with her. But before we talk about Doc's marital status, I need to address the shit she did to me on Friday. She needs to know that I didn't like it.

I get up from my chair before her and walk out with the other students.

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I get outside and turn my phone on as I'm waiting for her to also come out. I don't even know why she remained behind though. Maybe she wants some time alone with Doc, I don't know. As soon as my phone is on, WhatsApp messages start pouring in. I open the app and the first messages I go to are Thuso's. I'm curious to see what she just sent me. And it's pictures. Wait, pictures of what? I can't believe my eyes. Her and Alex cuddling in bed, half naked. What the hell? Thuso and Alex? Oh hell no! Why would she do that? When did they even do that? The bitch is supposed to be my friend. Why is she even sending me these pictures anyway? What is

she trying to achieve?

I'm now fuming and I'm about to walk back into that class and ask her to come outside when I see her walking out.

"What the hell is this, Thuso?"

I ask with my phone screen up to her face so she could see what I'm talking about, not that she doesn't know it though. I only notice that I'm screaming when everyone around turns to look at me. Jeez! But I couldn't care any less, I'm boiling with anger. And what makes me even more angry is the fact that Thuso is the picture of calm through all of this. If I wasn't on campus I swear I'd slap that smug look off her face right now.

-Her: "You know how it feels like now, huh? Yeah, that's exactly how I felt too when I found out that you want for yourself the guy I asked you to help me get. It doesn't feel so great, does it?"

-Me: "What the hell are you talking about? What man? I don't want any man for myself, you know that, Thuso, you do. You know that my heart is still hung up on Alex, and you go and do this with him? How could you? How could you?"

I'm now crying with anger and hurt. I don't even care about those who are staring - the other students and the staff members of this building. -Her: "You better keep your voice down,

people are staring. And please don't act holy and dumb with me, you know exactly what I'm talking about. You started this even though you were supposed to be my friend." Okay, I've had it with this girl. I thought she was a balanced adult upstairs but clearly I was wrong. I wipe my tears as I turn to walk away from her. But she just can't let me go, can she?

-Her: "One more thing, Soso."

I turn to face her.

-Her: "We both know that you've been living off of Alex and now that he's gone you're gonna need this money for rent tomorrow." She says throwing several hundred rand notes at me. What the hell? How could she? How could she embarrass me like this? And the worst part is that Doc is now standing at the door of our class, looking at us. I might not care about what other people think about me but I sure care a great deal about what he thinks of me. I don't even know why is that, but I just do. He stands there looking at us then turns and lock the class without saying a word. I remain where I've been standing, like I'm glued to the floor as I watch him walk away. As soon as he disappears down the corridor, I get out of that trance and turn to leave too. I hurry down the stairs, leaving Thuso's money right there on the floor. She must be crazy if she thought I was going to take that money. I still can't believe she did all this to me. What's happened to her? To her head?

Thando

I'm still inside the class when I hear some commotion outside. I don't know what it's about but as I walk out I find Soso being humiliated by her so-called friend in front of several pairs of eyes. She's throwing money at her. I'm not sure what exactly this whole thing is about but I can feel my temperature rising. How could Kwena do whatever this is here? As a lecturer I know that I should stop this, they shouldn't be doing it here. But the way I'm angry I know that if I say something it won't be nice so I just keep quiet and walk away after locking the class.

I walk into my office and plop down on my chair. I swing the chair round and round, thinking about Soso. I can't help but feel worried about her after what I just saw. She must be feeling so humiliated wherever she is right now. And what's that about her needing rent money?

My train of thoughts gets derailed by a soft knock on my open door. I turn around to find Kwena standing there. I feel irked instantly as I wonder what she must be here for. She better not be here to pull the stunt she pulled last week, seducing me in my office. -Me: "Kwena, what can I do for you?" She closes the door and walk towards my desk slowly and seductively. -Her: "Please, you can call me Thuso. No need to be formal with me."

She walks around my desk to sit right in front of me, making sure that her tight and short skirt moves up to reveal her thighs. This girl doesn't give up, huh.

-Me: "What do you think you're doing?" -Her: "Oh, please, I know you want this as much as I do. And please don't give me that you're my lecturer and I'm your student speech again. I know that you don't have a problem tapping your students' asses." What is this one talking about? Does she think I'm sleeping with Soso? Yah well, I'd gladly choose her friend over her crazy ass at any day. If, I mean when, I cross the line and sleep with a student it would never be with her, it would be with someone I really like, and that's Soso.

I get up from my chair and go stand at a distance when I find her hands all over me.

-Me: "Kwena, you better get the hell out of my office now if you don't want the faculty dean to know about this harassment." -Her: "Harassment? Well go to the dean but you better make sure that I don't get there first to report you for sexual misconduct. You're the one sleeping with the student. You're the one who's sleeping with Soso. And I'm sure that you're gonna give her an A in that assignment and that she's gonna pass this course with a distinction because you're fucking her."

#7

"I hope you can't sleep and you dream about it. And when you dream, I hope you can't sleep and you scream about it. I hope your conscience eats at you and you can't breathe..." - Eminem

. . Thando "Are you okay?"

I ask after taking a glance at her. She looks so vulnerable and so fragile on the passenger seat. I wish I can take the pain away from her. It's been at least 5 minutes into our drive home and she's hardly said a word since she got in the car. I'm worried about her and I can't hide it.

-Her: "Yeah, I'm fine."

Her voice cracks. I can see that she wants to cry but she covers that by turning away from me, to look out the window.

-Me: "You're a lot of things right now, Soso, but fine ain't one of them. Look, I don't mean to pry but it's obvious that you're not okay. Wanna talk about it?"

-Her: "No."

Her answer is that short. But I've asked knowing very well that she won't open up easily. One of the things I've learned about her is that she's an introvert. But I'm not going to let her drown in her pain alone. I'm going to ease her into opening up.

-Me: "My little sister always tells me that I'm a good listener. You can also try me, you know. A problem shared is a problem halfsolved, I believe that's what they say."

-Me: "Maybe that was true five decades ago. But not anymore. Nowadays, a problem shared is a problem multiplied."

I compress my lips trying to suppress my laughter at the sound of that.

-Me: "It depends on who you're sharing your problem with."

-Her: "Exactly. I'm not sharing my problems with my lecturer."

She says looking at me as if to make sure that I notice her lack of interest in talking with me. -Me: "I'd like to think I'm more than just your lecturer, Soso. I'd like to think I'm your friend. You can tell me anything."

She turns to look out the window again. I know that's an indication that she's not going

to talk. So maybe in order for her to open up I should also do the same.

-Me: "I know that this is about what happened earlier between you and Kwena. I'm not exactly sure what that was about but I know this: the girl wants me and I think she sees you as a threat because she thinks you and I are sleeping together."

She quickly turns to look at me. The reaction on her face says she didn't know that I know. -Her: "She says I'm taking you away from her. I mean, how absurd is that? I honestly don't know what's wrong with her, but she retaliated by sleeping with my boyfriend...umh I mean my ex-boyfriend. I just broke up with him and she went and slept with him because of something that's

only happening in her head."

She's talking fast and by the time she finishes she's already crying. And I can tell that it's tears of pain mixed with anger. She feels betrayed and she has every reason to feel that way. I can't stand to watch her cry like this, the first thing I want to do is to pull over on the side of the road and pull her into an embrace. To comfort her. But I quickly decide against it. I know she'll be uncomfortable and I don't want that. Like I said, I want to take baby steps, to ease her into the idea of being with me slowly with no rush.

So I just hold her hand and focus on the road. -Me: "I'm sorry. I really am...But if they could do something like that to you maybe you're better off without them. They both didn't deserve you from the very beginning. Your exboyfriend didn't deserve your love and Kwena certainly didn't deserve your friendship. The problem here is not you, it's them. They don't have hearts, and maybe they deserve each other."

She takes a moment then nod.

-Her: "Yah, maybe they do. I just can't believe that I've lost both my boyfriend and best friend in just a space of 7 days. But who needs nutcases like them anyway?" I see a subtle smile on her face as she pulls her hand out of mine. I can't help but let a smile too. She gets a tissue out of her bag to wipe her tears.

"How did you know that Thuso wants you though?"

She asks after wiping her tears away.

-Me: "She didn't exactly hide it on the very first day of meeting me. She went to my office after the class and practically threw herself at me. When I told her off I thought she'd never do it again, but boy was I wrong. She did it again today after causing that scene with you in front of the class. And this time she upped her antic. Even said she'd go report me that I'm sleeping with you and I'm doing you favours academically if I don't want to be with her."

-Her: "What? That's crazy."

-Me: "Tell me about it. She was dirty dancing on top of my desk when the two students who didn't submit their assignments came to submit. I was standing by the door trying to get her to stop what she was doing when those girls knocked. They knocked once and I just pulled the door open, allowing them to come in before Kwena could stop what she was doing or even pull her skirt down." -Her: "What? You did that?"

-Me: "That psychologically disturbed girl needed to be stopped, Soso. And I needed witnesses when I tell the department about her harassment. As it turns out I'm not the first lecturer to get that from her. When I went to tell the HOD he told me that last year he also received a similar complaint about her from another lecturer. However, they didn't follow up on it because there was no proof. But this second complaint now means it's true and he said they're gonna call us in tomorrow. I don't know what they're gonna do though and I honestly don't care as long as the girl is gonna stop her nonsense and refrain from tainting my name." -Her: "Yoh... I didn't even know that she did something like this last year. She's been my

best friend for 2 years and 7 months now but clearly I didn't know her at all."

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I'm now pulling up in front of her gate. But I'm not about to let her get out of this car before I ask about the rent money issue I heard earlier.
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-Me: "I heard Kwena saying you're in need of rent money for tomorrow. Is that true?" She looks down, and she can't hide embarrassed she is. What she doesn't know is that she doesn't need to feel that way with me.

-Me: "Come on, you can tell me."

She just nods, still looking down.

-Me: "How much is it?"

-Her: "It's only R800 but my mom doesn't have it. And I couldn't take Thuso's."

-Me: "I do have it. And I can give it to you right now."

She looks up, probably to tell me that she's fine and that she'll make a plan. I know how women are. But I can't let her do that. I know that she needs this money, and I can't let her compromise herself to get it. I open the centre console storage and take out my wallet. I take out five 200 hundred rand notes and hand them to her. But she hesitates. -Me: "Please just take it. It's a loan and you can pay me back when you can. Okay?" She slowly stretches her two hands and accepts it.

-Her: "Thank you. And I promise I'll pay you back next month."

Honestly, I don't need the money back but saying it's a loan was the only thing I could say to make sure that she doesn't feel like a charity case. I heard Kwena saying she's been living off of Alex, and I assume Alex is the exboyfriend, and now that he's gone she's got nothing. Well, she has me. I'm willing to help her until she gets her life in order.

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Doc gives me the money. I feel so embarrassed by the whole situation but I accept the money because I really need it. Tomorrow's month-end and I'm going to have to pay. I thank him for the second time and he just smiles and lean over to open the door for me.

-Him: "See you in the morning."

I nod then step out of the car. I'm really thankful to him, he just saved my ass. Knowing my landlord, she was going to kick me out if I didn't pay.

Doc drives off and I'm walking to my gate when I see Kevin walking out of our neighbour's gate. Kevin is a guy that's in the same group as me. He lives in a neighbouring township called Hillcrest. The township has a high population of Coloureds and he's one of them. I can't say he's my friend, I just know him. He's dating my neighbour's daughter and every time we see each other we exchange greetings and talk about weather and stuff like that, nothing serious. But now that I'm seeing him, I need to have some kind of a serious talk with him. He works at a nearby Engen filling station and I need to find out if they don't need any extra pair of hands over there. Yes, Doc has come through for me this month but I don't expect him to do the same thing for the next 5 months. Not forgetting that I still need to pay him back. And even if I tell my mom about the rent, I know that she can't be able to add R800 to the money she's already giving me every month. She's just

bought herself a mini car and she's renovating our four-roomed house back home and adding two more rooms. So I really need to toughen up and get myself some kind of a job, anything to pay the bills.

"Hey, Kev."

I greet first as he approaches.

-Him: "Soso. How's it going?"

-Me: "It's not going at all, man."

I walk over to him and go straight to the point.

-Me: "You don't happen to know of any open vacancies at your place of work, do you? I'm in serious need of a job, buddy. I'm drowning."

-Him: "Money's tight?"

-Me: "That's what I'm trying to tell you."

-Him: "You must be lucky, hey, because one of my fellow petrol attendants quit yesterday so they need a replacement."

-Me: "For real? Then I need to go talk to them, don't I?"

-Him: "You sure you're ready for that kind of job though? Not to mention the fact that you still have classes to attend."

-Me: "Right now I'm down for anything, Kev. As long as it pays the bills, man. Besides, this won't be my first time working as a petrol attendant, I worked as one during my matric year back home, to make ends meet. As for my classes, well, I'll make a plan."

-Him: "Well, in that case I'm gonna pass by on my way to work in the morning to get you. Okay? I'm gonna talk to them on your behalf first but you're still gonna have to bring your CV."

-Me: "Of course. Thanks, Kev. See you in the morning then."

-Him: "7 o'clock."

-Me: "Sure. Thanks again."

He nods then walks away.

I'm so excited right now. God and the Ndlovu ancestors must be with me. I walk to my gate smiling. I open and go in.

As for both Alex and Thuso? Well, I hope what they did to me eats away at them everyday and they can't forgive themselves. How could they do something like that? They are both trash maan.

In the morning my alarm wakes me up for my morning jog. I switch it off then say a short

prayer for the day ahead before climbing

down the bed. I make it then put on my jogging clothes. When I'm done I hit the road. There's nothing more refreshing than a morning jog. It's a good "pick-me-up". Thirty minutes later I'm back in my flat to get ready. I go take a shower then I put on navy chino pants, white shirt, a navy blazer and navy flat Ginger Mary shoes with laces. I know that it's just a vacancy for a petrol attendant but I should put a little effort in my appearance. I tie up my hair in a neat bun and my make sure that my make-up is on point. In a hurry, I then eat my cereal and drink some cheap juice I just mixed. As I finish the glass, my phone rings. It's Doc. Oh boy, I forgot to tell him that I'm not catching a lift with him this morning. He's probably going to give me hell for not telling him before he drove up to get me.

I grab my bag and rush out. I find his car parking in front of the gate as usual. I walk over but as I'm about to hop inside, I see Kevin approaching in foot. I signal for him to wait for me then I get inside Doc's car.

"Morning, Doc."

I greet as I pull the door closed.

-Him: "Morning. But I thought I asked you to call me Thando off campus."

-Me: "That's gonna take some getting used to. Trust me."

-Him: "You look...umh, different. I've never seen you going to campus looking like this." He says evidently dodging my statement.

-Me: "That's because I'm not going to campus right now. I have some kind of an interview or I'm still going to look for a job, I'm not sure which one is it. But I'm going with that guy standing over there."

I say pointing to Kevin who's waiting for me not far from the car.

-Him: "A job? Where?"

I tell him.

-Him: "You sure you wanna do that? Soso, I believe this is your last semester, you do not wanna find yourself distracted." -Me: "I know, but I'll manage. I don't have a choice, I need the money. And it's honest living."

-Him: "Oh, okay then. I can only wish you the best. I hope you get it."

I can see that he doesn't like this and honestly, I don't even know why. Too bad he doesn't have a say in it.

-Me: "Thanks, Doc...I mean, Thando."

He just smiles lazily.

-Him: "I better get going. See you later?" -Me: "Later."

I open the door and get out of the car. God, I hope I get this job.

#8

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"Right now, I'm in a state of mind I wanna be in like all the time. Ain't got no tears left to cry. So I'm pickin' it up, pickin' it up." - Ariana Grande 8 days later

"So you're asking me to do your shift?" Kevin asks after wiping the fatcakes oil off his hands. It's Wednesday evening and we're sitting outside the food shop at this Engen service station eating fatcakes, the only food we can afford. I'm sitting opposite him at one of those outside wooden tables with two attached benches. Yeah, I got the job and this is my 7th day in it. I started last week Tuesday, the very same day I came to ask for the job. I work 12 hour shifts from 18:00 to 6:00 in the morning, 4 days a week. It's tough having to work through the night then go to school during the day, but I'm making it work. Hell, I made it work during my matric year, I was working but I still managed to get 5 distinctions. So, I'm making it work even now, as draining as it is. And the fact that I don't have a boyfriend that demands my time helps too. But Doc doesn't like that I have this job, he says I'm overworking myself and that my studies are going to suffer. It's really nice to

know that he's worried about my school work

but he really doesn't need to. I know myself, I know my capabilities. Attending 3 classes a day and 3 practical sessions a week is not a lot of work. I can make it work, in fact I'm already making it work. I go attend my classes and take a nap on Doc's couch in his office in between them, then come to work in the evening. And I no longer wait to catch a ride home with him in the afternoon if I don't have an afternoon practical session. I just take the 25-minute walk from campus to my flat immediately after my last class so I could get some rest before my shift starts. I'm writing two tests next week but I'm not worried, I know that I will pass. I know how to manage my time and I don't wait until the work piles up before I study. I study everyday, I even bring my books with me to work and

make sure that I do some studying in between my fuel pump times. Growing up poor toughens you up, and it makes you hungry and determined to turn your life around - but only if you know what you really want in life, and I do.

-Me: "Please, Kev. I will owe you one if you do this for me."

I say, begging. Kevin and I are becoming better friends now that we work together. And right now I'm asking him to stand in for me tomorrow since he'll be off. Tomorrow is the 9th of August, I'm not going to school but I can't come to work either because Doc has invited me to his birthday party that's going to be hosted in East London, in his friend's house. The same friend that helped him get the lecturing job. He's also a lecturer at Fort Hare, but at the East London campus. I really can't disappoint Doc by not going, not after he asked me so nicely. The theme of the party is black and white. It's going to be a very sophisticated, classy and formal birthday party, and all the invited guests are asked to bring their plus ones. But the birthday boy doesn't know anybody in Eastern Cape except for the friend who's hosting, so he's asked me

to be his plus one. The purpose of the party, in his part, is not only to celebrate 31 years on this planet but also to meet new people and make some friends in the province. All the invited guests are people that are known by his friend, Bhongo, and not by him. But him being the birthday boy means all eyes are going to be on him, so he can't just show up alone.

But it doesn't look like Kevin is going to do this for me. He hears me begging but he doesn't answer. He just takes our 2l of Coke on the table and pours some in his Styrofoam cup then drink thirstily.

-Me: "Buddy, please. I've even bought the gift already, I can't miss the party."

I've noticed just how much Doc is obsessed with time and prides himself with his elaborate watch collection. So I've ordered him this stunning personalised watch box online, and asked them to personalise it with just his initials in a monogram. I really liked the box when I saw it. It can hold up to 12

watches and it will let Doc display his

collection. It cost me R820, which is almost all the money I earned for last week's work. We get paid weekly here and Monday I got my last week's pay which was just R1,126. It's a ridiculous pay for all the long hours we work but at least it's something. After getting it I went to pay Doc that R800 he loaned me but he refused to take it back, so I just decided to buy him something with it. It's going to be delivered tomorrow, that's what they said and I hope they stick to their word because I'd hate to go to the party empty handed. -Kevin: "Fine, I'll take your shift but on one

condition. That you take most of my cars tonight and let me take a nap."

-Me: "Sure. You got it."

-Him: "Good. And you can start right now. With that GTi that's just arrived."

I turn and look at the red GTi. Oh damn! I know it. It's Alex's. He's come back to filling up here now? The last I checked he was a Caltex petrol with Techron kind of guy, ever since a Caltex service station opened in Alice. Jeez! I can feel my stomach turn at the thought of seeing his face.

-Me: "No, Kev, that's one car I can't take. I know the owner, it's the ex I was telling you about. Please, just go pump for it." -Him: "Then I'm not doing your shift tomorrow."

-Me: "Okay, fine, I'm going."

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I walk over to Alex's car feeling uneasy but I make sure to pull myself together. I can't be bringing my drama to work, I need to treat him like any other customer.

"Evening, sir. Which medicine does your car take?"

I ask as civil as possible as I look at him through the rolled down window. His reaction when he sees me is that of shock. He was definitely not expecting to see me working here. -Him: "Soso? You work here now?" The shock on his face quickly gives way to pity. Fuck him, I don't need his pity. Hell, I ain't pitying myself either. And I'm not at all embarrassed by the fact that I work here. It's honest living, I earn my own money, I ain't dependant on my rich folks to fill up my pockets like him.

-Me: "Yes, I do. Now back to the petrol. Which one do you need?"

I say as calmly as I can.

-Him: "You know the petrol I use, Soso. And I've been calling your phone for days now." -Me: "I know."

That's true. He first sent me a WhatsApp message Tuesday last week, saying "Can we talk?" I didn't reply I just blocked him. Since then he's been calling me everyday but I never pick up. I honestly don't know why he keeps calling me and quite frankly, I don't care to know. He's the one who left me and not the other way round. I don't have anything to say to him, our time to talk expired the moment he decided to treat me badly in front of his new woman.

-Him: "You know. Then why don't you pick up my calls?"

-Me: "I don't pick up because I have nothing to say to you, Alex. Now the petrol. How much?"

I say grabbing the pump.

-Him: "Five."

-Me: "Is that litres or hundreds?"

He rolls his eyes. This guy can be really dramatic, yoh. And right now he's annoying the hell out of me but I still manage to keep my cool.

-Him: "As if I would buy 5 litres. That's hundred."

He says with this annoying tone. This guy can be so full of himself nhe. I don't answer, I just pull the pump to his car's petrol tank and pump the petrol. When I'm done he hands me six 100 rand notes.

-Me: "There's an extra hundred rand here." -Him: "It's your tip, take it." Ey hayi iyandiqhela le ndoda. [This man is fucking with me]. Who said I'm his charity case?

-Me: "No, thank you, Mister. I'm good." I throw the R100 on the passenger seat and walk away to the cashier with the R500. I see him drive off as I'm standing at the cashier window. Nx! I'm only letting my anger show now as I cuss under my breath. Tshini bawo uve kusthini na lo? And whatever he's got to say to me he better keep it to himself. I cried for him and right now I'm over that, I'm picking up my life and things are looking good for me. I really don't need his drama. I walk back to the bench but before I could even reach it my phone rings. It's Yonela, one of the girls that was friends with us, from Thuso's res. I answer knowing very well that she's going to talk about Thuso.

-Me: "Yonela. What's up?"

-Her: "Hey. Been calling you. Why ain't you taking my calls?"

-Me: "Been busy. What's up?"

Seriously, what does she want from me? She

wasn't exactly my friend, she was Thuso's. I only got to know her and Bonolo through Thuso. And now that Thuso and I had a falling out, I never expected them to side with me but their friend, Thuso. So I just made things easy for them by staying away.

-Her: "It's about Thuso. She really wants to talk to you, Soso. She's realised her folly and she wants to make peace with you. Would you consider meeting up with her tomorrow and talk things through?"

Talk things through? They both must be on crack.

-Me: "No, I ain't gonna do that. And I gotta go, I'm busy."

This girl better get her boujee ass off my phone.

-Her: "Busy with what? Soso, please."

-Me: "I'm at work, Yonela. Some of us need to work to make a living, you know."

I hang up and hurry to attend to another car. Seriously, I don't have time for anything that's got anything to do with Thuso. I'm done with her. Every time I see her in class I just ignore

her and do my thing. And she's never tried to come to me and apologise, so why now? She can go to hell for all I care, Alex too. She must just be glad she never got into serious trouble for seducing a lecturer and trying to taint his reputation. The HOD just told her to stay away from Doc outside of the lecture room. And that if she ever need to see him for academic purposes in his office she should go with another student. That was all.

"Tell me, when's that guy going to tell you that he likes you?" I hear Kevin's voice behind me as I finish pumping the petrol into this second car. -Me: "Are you talking to me, Kev?" -Him: "Of course I'm talking to you." He says as I collect the money from the car's driver. -Me: "And what guy might you be talking about?"

I ask as I walk over to the cashier. Kevin walks behind me still talking.

-Him: "Thando, your lecturer. That's who I'm talking about."

Kevin knows Doc because sometimes he comes to see me at work.

-Me: "Thando? Kevin, are you high or something?"

-Him: "Don't tell me you haven't noticed that the guy has a thing for you."

I talk to the cashier then turn to Kevin.

-Me: "You're seeing things, that's all I'm gonna tell you."

We then both walk away from the cashier window to the bench.

-Him: "I'm a guy, Soso. I know what I'm talking about. I can see the way the guy looks at you."

He says sitting down on top of the table.

-Me: "No, maan, Kevin, there's no such thing.

Doc would never have a thing for a student.

Besides, if he really liked me he would have said something by now."

-Him: "Maybe it's because he knows that you just came out of a relationship and he wants you to get over that first. But one thing I know is that he wants to tap that ass."

-Me: "Yuck! Kevin, you're disgusting... Let me go attend to that car."

It's going to be a long night, I tell you. I walk away, leaving Kevin laughing. I know that Doc is my lecturer and that I'm not yet ready to date, but if I'm being honest a part of me wishes what Kevin just said could be true. A part of me is hoping that I haven't been misreading the signals I've been getting from Doc. That he really likes me. But from the way he dealt with the whole Thuso thing I doubt he'd go for a student.

#9 [Extra long]

"Know you're wonderin' why I been calling. Like I got ulterior motives. Know we didn't

end this so good, but you know we had something so good. So I'm wonderin, can we still be friends?" - Justin Bieber

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The next day I'm woken up by the ringing of my cellphone. I grab it from the bedside pedestal and answer it without even opening my eyes. As it turns out it's the courier guys, delivering my package. I jump out of the bed immediately after hanging up and put on a robe over my PJs. Then I put on my morning shoes before walking out the door to sign for the package at the gate. Upon getting it I return to the flat excited. But jeez! I wonder what those courier guys must be saying about me wearing PJs around 13:30. If only they knew the kind of life I'm living though they would understand. I had a very long night at work last night and the minute I came home this morning I just threw myself on the bed and slept like a corpse. But now it's time to get ready for the party. I quickly make my bed and sweep the floor. When I'm done I go brush my teeth then make myself some eggs to eat with the bread I bought yesterday. In a hurry, I eat then wash the plate and the pan. It's now 14:00 and I only have an hour to get ready for the party. It only starts at 18:00 but there's still that drive to East London so Doc said he'll be here to fetch me at 15:00. We need to get there before any of the guests arrive so we can get to welcome them. And Doc being the perfectionist that he is, he says he also wants to make sure that everything at

the venue is the way he wants it to be before the guests arrive.

I quickly get his gift out of the plastic it's packaged in and it's exactly what I ordered. Satisfied, I put it in a black and white polka dot gift box that I bought on Tuesday. Inside the box I also put in the card that I had already written. Then I go take a shower. Because the water is cold and I'm also running late, I don't take much time in there. I shower quickly then step out. After lotioning I put on a white half sleeve maxi sheath evening gown that's got a long slit that runs up to my thigh

on the left. Then to accentuate my curves and to add a little bit of colour on the dress, I put on a gold metal belt that cinches my narrow waist. Then I slip on matching white flat sandals onto my cute feet, I'm just not down for wearing heels all night in a party no matter how formal it is. Besides my dress is floor length so not everyone will get to see my feet. After making sure that my make-up is on point and that my hair is tightly tied into a neat bun I finish the look off with a white elbow length sleeve faux fur bolero jacket. In the invite it has been specified that men should wear all black and women should wear all white. So I got to stick to the theme too. Luckily, I had brand new white clothing items in the flat's built-in closet. I bought them last semester using my bursary money because I was invited to an all white formal party in Nelspruit by Thuso. But she changed the

theme at the last minute so I never got to wear these clothes before today.

I put on my perfume that I always save for special occasions and then I'm good to go. Doc calls saying he's waiting for me at the gate. I get my silver clutch back and the gift box then I'm out the door. When I get outside at precisely 15:00 I find Doc waiting by his immaculate car. Mmmmh, this sight. I know that he always looks handsome but today he looks even more handsome and sexier. Instead of a black suit he's wearing a navy blue one with a white button down shirt and black leather derby shoes, no tie. He's the birthday boy after all, he couldn't wear like the rest of the male guests. Damn, he looks like some kind of a model with one of his hands tucked in his pocket and him leaning against the driver's side door of the car. Gosh, I have to admit I've never known such a disturbing man or one who wears his sexuality so easily. Latey, I'm always aware of

it, always aware of him, even though I never want to admit it.

"Wow! You look amazing."

He remarks smiling so brightly. I swear I've never seen such a big smile on his face before, and it sends a shiver up my spine.

-Me: "Thank you. You look great too."

I say as I come to stand before him.

-Him: "Is this mine?"

He asks referring to the gift box in my hand. -Me: "Yep. It's nothing fancy, as you know I don't have much green. But I hope you'll like it."

-Him: "Hey, it's the thought that counts.

Thank you for getting me something. I can't wait to see what it is."

-Me: "But you can only open it with the other gifts at the party. Not now."

-Him: "Fair enough."

He says with a smile. Then he reaches for my free hand and walks me gently to the passenger side of the car. Oh my, his cologne, is intoxicating. It's not the one he usually

wears, this one is new and it's mesmerising. I

just want to bury myself in his chest and take it all in, but I wouldn't dare do that. The man's my lecturer. He gets my door and helps me inside then walks round to get in the driver's side. He starts the car and as he puts the gear to 1 his hand bushes against my arm and my body ridiculously responds to that slight sensation. My mouth goes dry, I just can't help it. I don't know but I want to touch him. Every nerve in my body is on high alert, responding to his sensual appeal. The goosebumps that are running down my arms and legs are a silent acknowledgement of the effect he has upon me. I have to admit, I've never experienced such an awareness of my own body, this shameless desire to give myself to a man, not even with Alex. Or Doc himself before today. "Come on, Soso, pull yourself together, girl." Inside, I repeatedly say to myself.

On the way I am so tense I can hardly hear anything Doc's saying. My mind is fighting these weird feelings that I'm feeling for him right now.

I get a hold of myself when his phone rings. It's in the cup holder of the centre console and I can see the name of the caller on the screen - Anathi. When he sees it too he just ignores it.

-Me: "Aren't you gonna answer that?" I ask curiously.

-Him: "No. That's my little sister. And I know what she wants and she's not getting it." I knew that he has a little sister but I didn't know what her name was until now. -Him: "She wants to take my other car that's in our parents' garage and use it now that she's still waiting for her insurance claim after smashing her own car into a lamp post. I've already told her not to take the car, but she

just can't stop begging."

-Me: "But why don't you want her to use it."

-Him: "Anathi's a bad driver. Who's to say she won't wreck that one too? I love her, I really do, but I can't help her on this."

-Me: "You sure do love her. Your face always lights up when you're talking about her." -Him: "She's the only sibling I have, that's why."

-Me: "I'd love to see her someday."

-Hlm: "I have her pictures on my phone. I can show you how she looks."

He takes his phone which has now stopped ringing and thumbs it. Then he shows me Anathi's picture and tells me to swipe through to see more.

I know this woman, I say to myself as I look at the pictures. It's the same woman in the photo I saw in his wallet, the one I thought was the mother of his kids. I smile to myself because this means he's not still hung up on his ex-wife. Him keeping what I thought was the picture of his ex-wife was kind of unsettling to me, if I'm being honest. Speaking of hix ex-wife, his phone in my hand rings again as I'm still checking out Anathi's pictures. It says Busisiwe on the screen and I know that that's his ex-wife, he'd told me her name.

I quickly give it to him, wondering what they could be talking about when they call each other. When he sees who's calling, he quickly grabs the phone out of my hand and answers. -Him: "Busie. Please tell me you haven't changed your mind... What? You can't do that...Busisiwe, you're really testing me right now. You better make sure that my kids are on that plane to East London tomorrow if you don't want to see me react badly."

I can see that he's pissed but he's really trying to control his temper with each word he speaks.

-Him: "I couldn't be with them on their birthday two days ago, so this long weekend is my chance to be with them. Don't fuck with me." The he hangs up, pissed as fuck. I won't dare ask him anything, this is personal. I just look out the window and start a conversation about the Middledrift small town that we're now driving past. Surprisingly, he replies. And then we converse about a lot of different things until we get to East London.

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. By 16:55 we're in front of this beautiful house in the neighbourhood of Beacon Bay. After speaking through the intercom the gate opens and Doc drives in and up the driveway. "Is this your friend's house? And what did you say his name was again? Bhongo?"

I ask open-mouthed at how magnificent the house is.

-Him: "Yes, it's Bhongo. And no, the house is not his. He lives in an apartment close to his workplace. The house is his parents' but they live in Jo'burg and only come here once or maybe twice a year. His father is my father's business partner."

He says as he pulls up in front of the double garage. Then he gets out and goes round to get my door. I feel like a princess right about now. He gets my hand and helps me out and we walk to the front door hand in hand. But before we get to the door his friend comes out to welcome us, with a woman I assume is his girlfriend by his side. They are already dressed up in their bests and they look great. "The birthday boy is in the house. How's it going, bro?"

This guy says exchanging a hand shake with Doc, before they hug in a brotherly manner. -Doc: "And he's here with a beautiful arm candy. Her name's Soso. Soso, this is my friend Bhongo and his fiancée, Zizo."

-Me: "It's nice to meet you guys. And you both look great."

I say extending my hand to Bhongo. But he doesn't accept it, he comes for a hug instead.

-Bhongo: "It's nice to meet you too, Soso. And welcome to our humble abode."

Humble? This house is anything but humble, I say to myself. Zizo then comes for a hug too. -Zizo: "You look good, girl."

She says with a smile. I'm not a very good judge of character but in my eyes right now Zizo seems nice.

-Me: "You're too kind. Thank you." We all get inside the house and wooow the decor in the huge elegant main room, where the party is obviously going to be at, is amazing. It's black and white, according to the theme, and it's clear that it got done by professionals. Everything is done to the tee. Doc would be crazy if he would want to change anything here, I say to myself. This is what I call class. There is long table and proper seating arrangements are made for each guest. As I count the seats I realise that 26 guests are expected. I hope they are all nice, I pray inside. The last thing I need is to be in a party with spicy women who specialise in throwing shades.

Doc gives everything a green light and I put the gift box I came with on the gift table in the corner. The waitresses serve us champagne before we proceed to the patio at the back of the house where the party is going to start at. We sit there around a lit fireplace, chatting and listening to music while making this very big 31st birthday "candle". We're making it by gluing long matchsticks onto a piece of wood to form the number 31. It's huge but by the time the first guests arrive we're already done with it. Soon more guests come through, everyone with their plus ones. We welcome them and they all seem nice, I haven't gotten any bad vibes yet. The waiters serve champaigne and finger foods. But there's still 6 more guests yet to arrive. And when they do, God I lose my mind when I see who they are. It's Alex and that girlfriend of his, I can't even remember her name but I think he said it's lviwe. Then his

two friends, Sivenathi and Siyamthanda and

their plus ones. What the hell? Bhongo knows these people? Doc and I are standing amidst the guests in the patio but I can feel the knots forming in my stomach as I look at them walking in following Bhongo and Zizo who had gone to welcome them at the front of the house. I wasn't expecting to see Alex's face here, especially not with this woman. Yes, I no longer want him but he was my first love and I just broke up with him a little over two weeks ago so feeling hurt and angry when I see him with another woman is expected. I'm very much aware, yes, that he's now with this Iviwe chick but I just don't want to see them together holding hands and acting all lovey dovey in front of me.

"Oh Lord, no, not Alex."

I find myself saying that out loud as they walk in.

"Is one of them your ex?"

Doc whispers close to my ear when he hears what I'm saying. Gosh, the feeling of his warm minty breath on my skin doesn't only calms me down but it also makes me feel all tingly. My breath gets suspended for a moment before I manage to pull myself together and answer.

"Yes. The one with a tinted fade."

-Him: "Look, I'm gonna need you to remain calm and act as normal as possible. Don't let him get under your skin. Tonight is not about him, it's about having fun, okay?"

-Me: "Okay."

-Him: "That's my girl. Now let's go greet them."

He takes my hand and we go over to them. I must say, I'm feeling quite bold with him by my side.

Alex flushes when he sees me, probably because I have another man next to me. A real man at that. I stick to what Doc said, I force myself to remain calm and greet them with a smile.

-Alex: "Soso? I wasn't expecting to see you here." His voice is whispery, almost inaudible. I can see that he's not feeling himself.

-Me: "Likewise...Iviwe, you look good."

I say without losing my smile.

-lviwe: "Thanks."

She says with an attitude. She can go to hell, but I don't say that out loud. Doc and I just move along to greet Sive and Siya as well as their partners. Leaving Alex standing there like a statue.

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Now that the guests are all here the party officially begins. And the match candle we've created has to serve as the party starter. Doc takes my hand and asks me to help him light the multiple matches on the "candle". I smile shyly then follow his lead. I must admit, I've never heard of a match birthday candle before today, it was Zizo's idea. She said it's a fun way to give credence to the milestone birthday being celebrated, first birthday Doc celebrates after the divorce. And I must say, it

became incredibly exciting to see the matches all light up together. There's also some cheering among the guests as they all light up. Everyone is cheering but Alex. Seeing me with Doc is killing him and frankly I like it. Now it's time to move the party inside to the main room. Upon stepping inside the warm airconditioned room, as the ladies we all lose our jackets and coats. My deep v-neck dress is showing off my cleavage and I can't help but notice that Doc can't take his eyes off of it. And that makes me blush.

We all go sit at the long table. And I realise that Doc and I will be sitting across from Alex and Iviwe. I feel almost immediately but there's no changing the sitting arrangement. Doc notices how tense I am as I sit down after he pulled the chair out for me and that pushes him to whisper close to my ear once again after he's seated. -Him: "Remember to remain calm and collected, okay? If you do, I'll buy you glass shoes. Cinderella's."

He whispers with a teasing tone. This one is funny. What? Cinderella shoes? I can't help but giggle at the sound of that. Doc whispering so close to my ear and me giggling sends Alex straight to the world of the crazy. I can see him shifting uncomfortably in his chair, his teeth clenched. This is killing him and that makes my heart smile. I got him. The proceedings go on. More champagne is served and we all make a toast to the birthday boy before digging in to the delicious fancy food served by the waiters. Everybody at the table is having a conversation with the others, but no not Alex. His girlfriend keeps trying to get him to talk but I can see that he's not in the mood. Me on the other hand I'm having myself some fun and that's destroying him.

A little later, I feel the need to pee and I ask for a bathroom from Zizo who's sitting on my right. She tells me that it's upstairs, third door on the right. I get up and go. I do my thing then wash my hands. But as I'm about to walking out, I meet Alex in the passage. He's followed me. What the hell does he want? I try to get past him but he blocks my way. "What are you doing, Alex? What do you

want?"

-Him: "You're sleeping with that guy now, Soso?"

-Me: "Who I sleep or don't sleep with isn't any of your business, Alex. Just move out of my way."

I answer as calmy as I can forge it.

-Him: "I'm sure you're wondering why I've been calling you in the past few days. I don't want us to get back together, Soso. I don't have any ulterior motives. I just hate how I ended things with you after such a long time together. I'd like us to be civil with each other, to be friends. For old times sake." Friends? Is he listening to himself? -Me: "Alex, I don't need a friend like you in my life. Or one like Thuso for that matter. I know that you two slept together."

-Him: "About that. Soso, I was at a club, drunk and Thuso came onto me. It was a once off mistake, I swear. She knows that too."

-Me: "Alex, I'm not asking. I don't care who you sleep with. You shouldn't care who I sleep with either. If you wish to continue sleeping with Thuso you should because I'm done with her as a friend."

-Him: "Soso, you know that I won't do that. Listen..."

But he doesn't finish because Doc is now here, talking behind him.

-Doc: (to me) "Hey, baby. Is everything okay?" Baby? Okay, I get it, he's saying that just to spite Alex. Right?

-Me: "Yeah, yeah, everything is fine."

I say as he comes to stand very close to me. Gosh, any moisture there's been in my mouth dries at the predatory gleam in his eyes as he pulls me close to his chest. The feel of him, the smell of him, the raw male power of his nearness, is enveloping me in an unfamiliar haze of longing. And then his lips brush my neck and I feel as if my body is burning up. His hands move to my waist and he pulls me even closer to him. I'm not exactly sure what's going on but damn, every nerve in my body tingles in anticipation of his kiss. And like I've anticipated he presses his lips on mine. I find myself parting my lips for his tongue to move in to my mouth. And it does. I swear wetness is now exploding between my legs as his tongue caresses mine. It's as if he's possessing me, and I don't want him to stop. I've even forgotten about Alex who I'm sure is still standing exactly where he was, watching us. When Doc pulls back, I feel almost dizzy with longing. I'm not even sure if my legs would carry me if he lets go of me so I hold onto him some more. He puts his finger on my chin, lifting my face so my eyes could meet his. -Him: "I've been missing you downstairs. Let's go join the party."

He says with his deep, sexy voice. -Me: "Sure."

I say after swallowing some of my saliva, still longing for his kiss. He takes my hand and we walk down the passage and down the stairs. Leaving Alex pulling statue of liberty right there in the passage. As we walk down the stairs I can hear the music downstairs blaring. I want to talk to Doc about what has just happened but he's not giving me a chance to because he can't stop talking about what could be going on downstairs. When we get there we find everybody off the table, most of them now gathered on the dance floor dancing to "Ntombi" by NaakMusiQ ft Bucie, while the remaining few are just watching and clapping. The way they're dancing it's like the piece is choreographed and I like it. -Doc: "Let's join them."

Oh hell yeah, I looove this song so I'm up for the dance. My heart is still excited about that kiss and that excitement is now going down to my feet as I dance. The party is now on. Yeah, this night is about having fun and I intend to enjoy every minute of it, but I'm not going to get drunk. Alex can go to hell.

#10

"Go on, go on, come on leave breathless. Tempt me, tease me, until I can't deny this loving feeling. Make me long for your kiss." -The Corrs

•

5 weeks later

It's Sunday afternoon. Doc and I are in East London having just dropped the twins off at the airport. This was their first visit after they visited during that long weekend 5 weeks ago. I guess after hearing how pissed Doc was on the phone that day, their mother decided to let them visit. Awww, how I love them. We really click. And they've been asking if I'm going to be their second mommy. Yoh, imagine being a mom to two 9 year olds at

my age. No, that's never going to happen.

Especially because their dad and I are not even together, we're just friends. Yes, that's what he said after that kiss at the party, that he was only helping a friend get back at her ex - and that's me getting back at Alex. Really? That's all there was to it? You can imagine how disappointed I was, but I sucked it up like the big girl that I am. Doc would never go for someone like me anyway, I was crazy to even think that he's interested in me, I kept saying to myself.

Did he really help me with Alex that night though? Absolutely. He drove my entitled ex totally insane. I'm telling you, the open bar at the party came in handy for Alex that night. He made sure to swim in the booze before dragging his flamingo - Iviwe, out the door. Leaving the party early around 22:00. He clearly couldn't stand seeing me with another man and looking all happy. But that was his problem, not mine. I won't lie though, seeing him making a fool of himself before he scurried to the door made me smile with

satisfaction. I felt like I had gotten my revenge. Doc really made that night comfortable and a lot fun for me but how I wish we could have something more. What is absolutely amazing about this guy, except for his looks, is that he has this incredible ability to reel you in. He's different. He has his own ideas, his own way of looking at things. He knows what to say and how to say it. He makes you feel like there's absolutely nothing you can ever say to him that would offend him, hurt him, or make you any less than what he already thinks of you. I have a certain level of trust with him. Maybe too much. He never goes back on his word, and I have to admit, I sometimes do. And I've also noticed that he has the ability to see right through me. But why can't he see that I want to be with him? Or maybe he does see it, but he's not pursuing me because he's simply not into me. Well, I kind of accepted that weeks back. I swallowed the bitter pill and moved on. It's

probably for the best anyway because this

guy is still my lecturer, I keep convincing myself. As for Alex? Well, I haven't seen him since the party. And I can tell you this much, I'm so over his ass. My life is going well right now. I'm doing good at work, and my work is not interfering with my studies. I'm doing just as good, in fact great, in my studies. I'm passing all my tests and assignments. On Friday we're closing for the September break, and I want to leave for home early on Friday then come back on Monday. I work from Monday to Thursday so I will use the weekend to go see my queen - my incredible mom. I really miss her, I can't lie. But for now here I am, chatting about general stuff with Doc as we drive from the airport. -Him: "It's a hot Spring day. When was the last time you went to the beach?" He asks looking at me as we are waiting for the red light to turn green at the robots. -Me: "Yoh, a while back. Around March, I think. Why asking?"

-Him: "We're in East London and it's a hot day so let's drive to the beach." It's really hot, so feeling that cooling sea breeze on my skin sounds like a great idea right about now.

-Me: "I'm game. Let's go."

He drives us to Gulu Beach. I swear I thought I knew all the East London beaches but boy was I wrong. I've never seen this one before today. But Doc on the other hand clearly has been here before, probably with Bhongo. We get out of the car and walk down to the water. I must say, I find this beach peaceful. It is quiet, I only see a few people around, I guess it also helps that it's off-season. We're guaranteed many uninterrupted hours of chilling here, I say to myself. "The water is inviting, let's go in." Doc says as we are standing on the shore, with our slide sandals off. -Me: "Go in? With our clothes on? We didn't bring any swimwear, remember?"

-Him: "We can always go skinny-dipping." He says chuckling.

-Me: "As if that's possible."

-Him: "I don't mind getting WET and so do my leather car seats. I'm going in."

He says with a sly smile and putting emphasis on the word "wet". What, did he do that on purpose? I wonder. He doesn't wait for me to say anything, he quickly takes his T-shirt off and drops it on the sand. I find myself gawking as I'm taking in his bare muscular upper body. Gosh, shivers glide down my spine at the sight of those sexy abs. He's so fuckin' sexy and I can't help but notice how smooth and unblemished his skin is as my eyes go all the way down his chest to his waist. All I want is to touch him, to feel his naked skin against mine. Oh Lord no, I'm not supposed to be feeling this way about my lecturer, I harshly remind myself. His hands move to the button of his shorts. No, no, no,

is he going to unbutton it and take the shorts off? No, he better not do that. The last thing I need is to see him in his boxers. He'd be practically naked and I can't take that. But thank God, he doesn't take his shorts off, he just pulls them up a little. Then he lifts his eyes only to find mine staring at him. -He: "And why are you looking at me like that?"

I only realise that my breath has been suspended all this time when I have to draw a gulp of air into my labouring lungs before answering.

-Me: "I...ummmh...I'm sorry, I was just admiring your tattoo. What is it? A pelican?" I say, lying. Referring to his tattoo that is now fully exposed, wrapped darkly around his upper arm. I have to lie because I'm now embarassed by the fact that he's caught me staring.

-Him: "No, this is a nighthawk. I had it done while I was still in high school. My father didn't approve, but it was too late then to do anything about it."

He answers without paying much attention to my eyes. Then he quickly turns away from me and runs eagerly into the water. Leaving me standing there. I watch as he submerges his shoulders to dip his head below the surface of the water. Then he comes up and turns to look at me.

-Him: "Come on in. The water is not that cold."

He says shouting at me as he moves deeper into this body of water. Is he serious? I can't get in that water with my clothes on. Unlike him, I mind getting wet. Besides, there's no way I'm going to be in the water with him half-naked. No!!! But hey, it's not his fault that I'm reacting to him. This guy is naturally unconventional, naturally uninhibited, the kind of man I have never had dealings with before.

He keeps calling me in and I finally give in. I get into the water but when it reaches my

waist I stop and call him to come to me instead. I just can't go any further. When I see him approaching, I walk back but he soon catches up to me before I can even reach the shore.

-Him: "You're such a baby. You're scared of water?"

He says as he comes to stand in front of me. -Me: "I'm not scared of water, I just don't want to be wet all the way up."

I say in my defense. The water is now below my knees. But I quickly feel uncomfortable when Doc's eyes go down on me to look below my waist. Naturally, I, too, take my eyes down there. And when I see what he's seeing I grow even more uncomfortable. The white short jumpsuit I'm wearing is now wet and its delicate fabric is now clinging onto my flesh, exposing my thighs and my V area. Embarrassed, I desperately try to peel the fabric off my skin but when I look back up, Doc cups my face and smashes his lips onto mine. I want to ask what he's doing but my

body betrays me. It reacts to this kiss and I don't want him to stop. I respond by kissing him back and wrapping my arms around his neck. Damn, this guy is such a good kisser. I've never been kissed like this by another man before in my life. But then again he's the second man to ever kiss me. His lips work their magic on mine and his tongue is doing unfamiliar things on mine. And when his hands move down my waist to grab my wet ass I feel hot liquid coming out of me down there. Oh my. This kiss is heated. And for a moment there I think we're going to have sex right there in the water. But he pulls back, leaving me breathless, then he tells me that we have to go. What? I'm wet and frustrated right now. But I understand, we can't do that here. We walk out of the water. He grabs his T-shirt and puts it on, then we both grab our footwear and walk back to the car. But what frustrates me the most now is that on our way back to Alice Doc doesn't at all talk about

what has just happened between us. He's

talking about everything else but that, or even us. What is this guy doing mara? Does he enjoy tempting and teasing me then leave me all wet and frustrated? Does he want me to be the one to say something or run after him as I long for his intoxicating kisses AND MORE? Yoh, he's irritating the hell out of me, but I don't dare say anything. I just spend the two hour drive in a state of raw confusion.

#11 coming up around 11.

#11 [18S]

Warning: This episode contains EXTREME sexual content. Please don't read it if you're gonna want to report it.

"I'm seeing the pain, seeing the pleasure. Nobody but you, 'body but me, 'body but us, bodies together. I love to hold you close, tonight and always. I love to wake up next to you." - Zayn

We get to Alice around 18:00. And instead of driving past his house to drop me off at my place, he opens his gate with a remote and drives in. He parks in front of the garage and looks at me.

-Me: "Please don't tell me you're expecting me to walk home in this damp jumpsuit." -Him: "I won't tell you that."

He gets out of the car and comes to get my door. I climb down, confused. He wraps his arm around my neck and leads me to the front door without saying anything. It's only when we get inside that he shows me why I'm here. He suddenly crashes his mouth onto mine, crushing me in his embrace. Again, I don't ask, I just respond hungrily, leaning into the kiss. This guy knows that I can't resist him, that's probably why he's doing this to me, toying with my feelings, I say in my mind. But

still, I don't stop. I hope he doesn't stop

either. Soon he scoops me up, carries me through to the bedroom and dumps me unceremoniously on the bed. There is a sparkle in his eyes and his smile is like sunshine as he gets on top of me. He starts by kissing my lips softly but soon he deepens the kiss. I am totally unprepared by the sheer scale of my physical response to this. I am afire. We're finally doing this. In my head, skies are blue, the sun is bright and birds are singing. He's sucking and nibbling at my bottom lip and my heart pounds faster as I heat within. And soon I feel a familiar moistness between my legs. This guy manages to make me come just by kissing me, this is so new to me. He trails kisses down my neck and then, struggling with the buttons of my jumpsuit he literally rips it off. Then he gets up and climbs down the bed. As I'm still wondering what's going on he scoops me up and lands me on my feet on the floor. He slips my jumpsuit off my shoulders then down, he

pulls it all the way down together with my panties to drop them around my feet. I quickly pull my feet out, discarding the items on the floor. Then he unclips my bra, leaving me completely naked. I should be selfconscious right about now but for some reason I'm not. For a moment he stands back, just looking at me, then he comes to unclip my weave and pulls it tumbling down over my shoulders. I try to help him take his T-shirt off but he takes over by roughly pulling it up over his head before discarding it onto the floor. I lie down on the bed waiting for him to finish undressing himself, because clearly he likes doing it himself. He shucks off his damp shorts together with his boxers, leaving himself completely naked too. Oh my, I gasp as I see how big he is. Gosh, can I take that d*ck in? But nonetheless I still want him. Lying on my back, he climbs on top of me.

Damn, I want his naked skin and the smell of his maleness over me. He starts kissing me again, slowly. His lean muscled naked body

smells so delicious even though he had

dipped in salty water. I have always loved this scent of his and now that it's this close to my naked body it feels like my personal property. I automatically arch my stomach and hips up to him as he plants kisses between my breasts, down my belly and beyond my body. He cups one of my breasts and starts sucking and nipping at my puckering nipple. His other hand slips between my legs, pausing briefly to ply my thighs apart, his fingers stroking the delicate inner skin. He finds me already wet as he uses his fingers to part my labia, exploring my swelling nub. A couple of fingers inside my wet p**sy for a moment gives him more juice to lubricate me, making my clit more slippery and easier to work. And I can feel it growing harder and harder under his fingers. He is gentle and tender, working to arouse me even more, and he's succeeding. I curve and strain to meet him, my ardour becoming hard to control. Gosh, I am so ready for him to enter me now. But no, not yet. He

slides down, now his eyes directly above my open legs, my p**sy open for his inspection.

Knowing myself I should be shy right now, but no, I'm not. I just want him to do me. He goes down with his mouth, perusing my p**sy lips like a gourmet, tasting and licking, flicking at my clit with his tongue, working circles around it and gently nibbling with his teeth. I swear I've never felt so much pleasure in my life, and my loud moans are an indication. I am dripping wet now, my breath ragged and broken. My juices trickle and he licks them away. He tongues my entrance, probing first lightly and then more deeply. His face presses close to me, drinking my depths as I judder and squirm, fighting the impulse to buck my hips. My face flushing, sweat trickles down between my breasts. I scream, losing my mind. Through my growing euphoria he stops and raises his head away from my p**sy, still on his knees below me. I watch his erect long cock quivering and I can't wait for it to enter me. He leans forward and pulls a drawer of

the bedside pedestal, coming out with a pack of condoms. He puts one on. Then lowering himself, he lies full length atop me, the tip of his cock brushing my p**sy. He holds there, not entering, but teasing and arousing, knowing very well that I want him to plunge inside me. Pressing lightly in, he then withdraws, instead kissing me, open mouthed, one hand kneading a breast and tweaking the nipple. No, this man is killing me, I can't take it anymore.

-Me: "Please just get inside me already. I want you inside me. Please."

I say, begging for it, with my voice trembling. This is new to me, I've never begged for a d*ck before. But then again this entire experience is new to me. I've never felt anything like this with Alex.

-Him: "All in good time."

He whispers in my ear. And he continues his plying and rolling of first one nipple, then the other. I am wild with desire. Every time his cock leans in towards my entrance, I rock my hips towards him, trying to swallow him into my depths, but always he withdraws, leaving

me shaking with anticipation. I am yearning to have him fill me, aching to have his entire length fill me. My juices are flowing freely and the bed covers are damp below me. Sweat glistens on my chest and my skin is now slick. Finally, when I think he's going in. He stops and whispers in my ear.

-Him: "We can't do this. It's wrong."

What the hell? This man can't be doing this to me again. Jeez, I feel like I might actually pass out right now.

-Me: "But how can it be wrong if we both want it?"

-Him: "You sure you want it?"

-Me: "Of course."

I really don't care what happens tomorrow, I want him now.

He gets off me, climbs down the bed then pulls me by my hand.

-Him: "I want you on your hands and knees on the bed."

He says gently. What? He wants to take it from behind? I've never done that before. Alex tried so many times to have us do it but I'd always refuse. But funny enough, now I obey. I don't know why, but I want to experience this with him. Maybe it's because he's already given me so much pleasure that I didn't know before and I now want more. I quickly kneel down on the bed and rest on my elbows, head well down so that my big butt can be presented for him as he stands on his feet on the floor behind me. But clearly I have not done it well enough because he comes and helps me arch my back then his hand gently presses my head down on the bed. My legs are splayed, but he still forces my knees a little further apart then opens my pussy wider with his fingers. Oh no, I tremble. And I quiver in anticipation of his d*ck inside me. But

instead he uses his hands to caress my butt.

As I'm still enjoying that, a hard smack across one of my butt cheeks comes. I jump in pain but he doesn't stop. With every slap he makes, the next one becomes harder but honestly I don't want him to stop. I can feel the pain but at the same time I'm feeling the pleasure. I don't know but this excites me, it turns me on some more, and my screams and moans are an acknowledgement of that. A tingling sensation spreads all over my body with each smack. I'm screaming and moaning in pain and pleasure. I swear if these house stands weren't so big our neighbours would hear my screams. My juices are flowing and I'm screaming and cursing, using words that I didn't even know I knew. I'm becoming a slut now aren't I? But I don't care. He's rotating between my butt cheeks with hard slaps then occasionally reward me with gentle caresses over the sensitive areas. Then he directs his member into my awaiting wet p**sy entrance. I quiver. First the head goes in, then he continues to thrust forward, slowly. I let a little moan of pain. This guy is big, it's difficult for him to go all in even though I'm this wet. He continues to push himself in gently, bit by bit, occasionally stopping to let me adjust. Then finally, the walls of my hole expand wide enough to take him all in. He starts off with slow, gentle thrusts.

"Damn, baby. You're so fuckin' tight. Hot too." He says in between his moans. He's moaning loudly than I would expect from a guy. But you know what, that turns me on. I gasp and grunt as his groin slaps loudly against my ass, with him moving faster inside me. And my juices quickly build up inside.

"Go faster, baby. Faster."

I'm telling him exactly what he wanted to do because before I can even finish speaking he's already picking up the pace, going in and out harder and faster. His fuck tool hitting spots that have never been touched by any man before. My moans of pleasure are now rising to a crescendo. I don't even know what I'm saying with my mouth. And soon I explode in a crazy orgasm that I've never felt before. He keeps moving inside me, prolonging my climax as I shudder and scream.

Barely does my orgasm subside than he pulls out and turns me around so I can lie on my back. Then he instructs me to go all the way on the bed to lean against the pillows with my back. I do as he says.

"Spread your legs."

He instructs a little harsh now but I easily obey. But clearly I'm not doing what he wants. He climbs on the bed and lifts both my legs by the knees, pushing my feet all the way back to hit the bottom of my butt. Soon I find both my legs being spread and parted at the knees, lifting me from the hip and displaying my p**sy that's wet with my own cum. He steps back allowing his eyes to feast on my splayed wet vagina. Being me I should be embarassed, but I'm not. The whole thing just makes me hot for him all over again. I have barely come down from the waves of the last orgasm but already I feel my body's response to him as he sticks two fingers inside me while kneeling by my open legs. He grabs a small pillow and pushes it under my hips to support me. He adjusts the pillow under my

hips, forcing my back to arch and pushing my hips higher, my dripping hole even more exposed.

"That's more like it."

He says before going down on me with his fingers again. His fingers part my p**sy lips, stretching them wide. His face is now so close to my private, I can feel his warm breath over my swollen and pulsating labia. Then his tongue curls around them, over and around, continuing on to my entrance where he pushes in, licking me inside. The pressure of his face against me tells me he is licking as deep as he is able, probing with the tip of his tongue, tasting my juices. His whole mouth fastens around me, and he starts chewing at my me, tongue working me all the time as I moan and scream to the exquisite pleasurepain of it all. He keeps at it and this time the part-moan-part-howl that comes from me is loud and long. Mercilessly he wraps his mouth around my clit, sucking hard on it. I struggle trying to escape the sensation overload, but at the same time glorying in it. His mouth clamped over me, tormentingpleasuring me is irresistible. From within, orgasm swells and rises, then when I'm about to explode in his mouth, he stops and withdraws, leaving me shaking and shuddering. Why the hell did he stop? I was about to cum. My p**sy is hot, drenched, engorged and I am desperate to have him

inside me. I look up at him, my eyes full of lust.

-Him: "Do you have anything to say?" Heeh, this one likes to hear me beg, huh. And if it's begging he wants, he's gonna get it because I really want him in. -Me: "Inside me. I want you inside me. Please."

-Him: "What do you want inside you?" He asks stroking his d*ck.

-Me: "I want your d*ck inside me now. Please."

-Him: "And then? What do you want it to do to you?"

I am half-crazy with lust. I can barely think straight.

-Me: "I want you to fuck me. Please just fuck me."

My goodness what am I saying with my mouth? What am I turning into? But hey, I really want him in. Frantic with arousal, crazy with lust, I just want him to plunge his cock inside me and pound away at my core. As if to say your wish is my command, he sets the tip of his rigid penis at my p**sy entrance. As he touches me, my inner muscles convulse at the thought of this thick shaft penetrating me. -Him: "Watch me, baby. Watch me." Obediently, I look up into his face. -Him: "No. There."

And he eye-points south, to where his massive cock is brushing my entrance. -Him: "You said you want me to fuck you. Now watch me fucking you." He orders. I drop my gaze and he leans in, pushing slowly inside me. An inch. Two inches. Four inches. His thick shaft, wide against my hole, stretching me open. He penetrates me slowly and I tremble. He breathes heavily as he goes deeper inside me. Oh my, he feels so good inside me. I shut my eyes in pleasure.

-Him: "No, no, keep your eyes open and look down there, remember?"

I do as he says. His own hips quiver, and then with a gasp, he plunges the rest of the way inside me and starts moving faster, his balls banging against me. I am slick and slippery. There is no resistance as he pumps into me, hard, meeting my inner walls. Almost instantly my climax starts to gather again and I moan, then yell as he pounds inside me to a slow rhythm now. Deliberately he times each

stroke, and I watch as he thrusts his cock deep into my core, my p**sy welcoming him as he bangs hard into me. Again and again, I watch as he sheaths himself in me, thrusting in deep, as far as he can go against my inner walls. I gasp and scream. I fling my head back and scream to the ceiling, but he grabs the back of my head and pulls me forward. -Him: "Watch I said!"

He says fiercely. I watch as his cock fucks my slick hole. Then, my orgasm rises quickly, engulfing me in spasm after spasm of pleasure. I don't care anymore, I scream to the ceiling as I explode. And soon after me, with a gasp, his eyes shut tight and he shudders into orgasm, groaning as his hips buck, his cock pressing deep inside me. His chest heaving, he collapses onto me and simply lies there as I run my fingers on his sweaty back. For a moment we lie there, unmoving, my mind full of glory. Then he rises and pulls his now flaccid member out of me and pulls the condom out. He climbs down the bed and makes his way to the bathroom, coming back with a wet towel that he uses to clean us both. Climbing on the bed again, he pulls me to lie on his chest as he lies on his back. But I just have to interrupt this moment and ask something.

-Me: "Thando?"

-Him: "Yes, baby."

-Me: "What just happened? What's happening between us?"

He gently rolls me off of him. Then, with a serious face, he takes my chin in his hand and looks deep into my eyes.

-Him: "Okay, I'm gonna talk about me, about my own feelings...Soso, I love you. I know that I probably shouldn't, but I do. I've tried to fight it and I also tried to wait until you're completely healed and also out of varsity, but I just couldn't do it anymore. I'm falling in love with you everyday, Someleze. All I want is to be with you. I want you close to me like this every night. And I want your face to be the first thing I see every morning. I love you." God knows I've waited for weeks to hear him say something like this. But now that he's saying it, I wonder if he means it. It sounds somewhat corny, almost unbelievable. And I don't even know how to respond to him. All I do is kiss his lips.

#12

"I just wanna dive in the water with you. Baby, we can't see the bottom. It's so easy to fall for each other, I'm just hoping we catch one another." - Cheat Codes

. Hours later I wake up in Doc's arms, with the

bedroom lights still on. I look at him and smile to myself. Damn, this man does things to me. I'm looking at his handsome face but he can't even feel my stare, he's deep asleep and with good reason. After the first round we took a little rest then went for round two. The second round was more intense and it lasted longer, leaving both of us drained. After it, we cuddled on the bed wanting to catch our breaths before we could go take a shower then go to the kitchen to get something to eat. But then I saw Doc pulling the covers up and soon exhaustion must have tugged us into oblivion. I don't even know how long we have been out for, all I know is that I can't spend the night here. I have to sleep in my own bed so I can wake up and get ready to go to campus for my classes in the morning. So, I slowly remove Doc's arms around me. Then I climb down the bed, slowly, careful not to wake him. Furtively, I move around the bed to pick up my clothes from the floor. But can I really walk back home now? What time is it anyway? I don't know because my phone is not with me, I left it in Doc's car when we came in, his is there too. So I move to the dresser to see if I can't find a wristwatch to check the time. And instead of finding a

watch I find watches. Twelve of his

wristwatch collection displayed in the watch box that I gifted him on his birthday. A smile finds its way to my face at the sight of this. Yes he told me that he really liked the gift but I wasn't sure if he really meant it, I thought he was just being polite. But now that I'm seeing it put into use I believe what he said, and it makes me smile. Today was my first time entering his bedroom, which is why I never got to see this before. And earlier I was too horny and in the zone to notice anything in this room.

All these watches are functioning and I can see that the time is 22:55. It's not very late, I can still walk home. Besides, home is only 5 minutes away. So I tiptoe out of the open bedroom door, with my clothes in my hands. I only put them on once I get to the lounge. My jumpsuit is torn at the front where there used to be buttons, but it's at night anyway and this is a quiet neighbourhood so chances are I won't meet anyone on the street. I clutch the

torn fabric together on my chest with my

hand and I go grab my slide sandals that had come off and dropped on the lounge floor when Doc scooped me up and took me to the bedroom earlier. I put them on then quickly walk out, making sure to open and close the front door slowly. I leave without my phone, but thank God my keys are always around my neck. I could take Doc's car keys and go get my phone from his car but the sound of the car door would most likely wake him up because his bedroom is next to the front of the garage where the car is parked, and I don't want to wake him. So I just go jump over the brick wall and head home without the phone.

. I get to my flat and the first thing I do is to hit the shower. My entire body is sticky with all that sweat that's already dried up on my skin and I smell of sex. I let the shower water cascade down on me. Feeling it sluicing all

that sweat from my skin feels good, I must say. I feel tired and a little sore down there but otherwise wonderfully happy. I had the most amazing sex with Doc and honestly I can't wait to be with him again. Before him I naively thought I knew all I needed to know about sex but he made me see that I was wrong. He gave me pleasure that I never knew I could ever feel. He did unfamiliar things to me and also had me do things I didn't even think I would ever do. To me, going crazy in the bedroom was the definition of the word "slut" and I didn't want to go there. I was all about simple, conventional sex, nothing more. But Doc made me lose all that. He made me see what I was missing out on. Having sex with him was very different. He made it so easy for me to lose myself to him. The whole thing seemed so natural. In the second round he made me do even more things that the old me would never do, but I effortlessly obeyed. Some of the things I did

he didn't even ask, I just did them

instinctively. I've changed with just one sexual encounter, haven't I? But what can I say? The guy inspires creativity in me. And he made it easy for me to let him have his way with me. I wanted him to have me any way he wanted and take the greatest pleasure in me. Oh my, just thinking about it makes me feel all hot right now. It sends electric waves throughout my entire body. Soon I find myself sitting down on the shower floor with my legs wide open. I'm playing with myself, thinking of Doc. The images of his cock sliding in and out of my wet vagina are circling in my head and I'm moaning like a little bitch, my fingers deep inside me. I'm wet, juices are running out of my pussy and soon I cum uncontrollably over my hand. I don't remember the last time I got myself off, but it was definitely before I had a boyfriend. Ever since I met Alex I never saw the need to self-service. Even when alone and thinking of him, nothing would propel me to play with myself. But it's now different with

Doc. Just thinking of him makes me wet and I can't help but finger-fuck myself.

After I reach the climax, I sit there panting. Then I get up and finish taking my shower. Soon I'm climbing onto my bed with my PJs on and I immediately drift off to slumberland with my heart smiling.

. In the morning I hear a knock at my door as I finish getting ready to go to campus. I go open wondering who it could be because only three people are living in this yard; and that's me, my landlord and another guy tenant that's now away with work. My landlord also leaves for work early in the morning, around 6:00, and now it's just before 7:00. So who could it possibly be? It can't be Doc either because all the gates are locked. I open the door and I find my landlord standing there. Oh, it's her. Why is she still around? And what does she want from me so early? Oh God, I hope she's not here to give me a lecture about coming home late last night. She probably heard me when I opened the gate so late at night, and knowing her she would want to lecture me because she always acts like my mother. But I never complain because I know that she does that because she cares. -Her: "Morning, Soso."

-Me: "Morning, Ma."

-Her: "Are you ready? Come I'm gonna give you a lift and drop you off at the campus gate. I'm on my way to King William's Town." -Me: "Oh, really? Thanks. Let me go get my

bag."

I say with a fake smile. Jesus knows I don't want to catch a ride with her, I want to go with Doc, but I can't tell her that. She's the kind of woman you don't say "no" to. Plus, in her mind the poor woman thinks she's helping me, so there's no need to make her feel otherwise. She never sees me catching a ride with Doc because she leaves for work very early and only comes back home after

18:00. So she still thinks I walk to campus and now she's trying to save me that walk. I go grab my bag and walk out to join her in her car. But now I'm worried about Doc. He's going to come here to fetch me and I'd be gone. What's worse is that he won't even be able to call me because my phone is with him. I can't tell my landlord any of this though, so I just get in her car and we drive off. Indeed, she drops me off at the campus small gate then drives off without having had given me any lecture along the way. Thank God, she obviously didn't hear me come in last night. But now I'm worried about what Doc is going to say.

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My first lecture is at 8:00 and I still have time to kill, so I go sit on the benches by the library, absorbing the early morning sun while I study. By 8 I go attend my class, and the next one. The second one ends at 9:40 and after it I make my way straight to the library to study as I wait for the third and last one at 12:35. I probably should be going to Doc's office to see him and explain everything but hey, I'm writing a Microbiology test on Wednesday so I have to focus on what comes first - my books.

By 12:30 I'm rushing out of the library going to my class. The building is only a short distance away from the library so I know I'm going to make it there before the class starts. This is Doc's class and I must admit, I'm feeling a little anxious about seeing him again after what happened between us last night. When I get there I find all the other students, including Thuso, already standing in front of the lecture room, waiting for Doc to come and open for us. They always make sure to be early for Doc's class because they know that he don't play, he likes punctuality. In fact he likes order in general, and he made that clear to all of us.

Just a moment after I've arrived, at exactly 12:35, Doc arrives and greets us. He steals a glance at me as he opens the classroom, and my heart skips a beat. Gosh, am I going to hear anything this guy says in this class? We all step inside and I go sit on my chair. Doc starts teaching but, just as I thought, I ain't hearing a thing he's saying. I see his lips moving but I don't hear a word he's saying, all I'm thinking about is how those lips taste, how he used that mouth down on me yesterday. I can't stop thinking about how he sucked my p**sy, how his tongue worked my clit before letting it go deep inside me, fucking me with it. He's now using his hands, explaining what he's teaching. But all I see is those fingers inside my pussy, rubbing hard against my inner walls. I'm thinking about how he made me scream as he f*cked me senseless. Gosh, all these thoughts are making me wet down there. I keep shifting uncomfortably on my chair, squeezing my thighs together.

He occasionally looks at my direction, with a serious professional look. But yours truly is not returning the same courtesy. I keep blushing like a school girl with a crush every time he looks at me.

Then I see the other students getting up from their chairs and I realise that the lecture is over. Is it already over? I ask myself a rhetorical question. Honestly, to me, that 45 minutes felt like it was just 10 minutes. I still wanted my eyes to feast on him. Damn, I could watch him all day and still want more. Jesus, I think I'm in love.

Seeing the other students ready to leave, I also get off my chair and follow them to the exit.

"Ndlovu, please remain behind."

Doc says with a stern voice that he always uses with his students. And he's calling me with my surname. He sure knows how to do this "acting professional" thing.

"Okay, sir."

I say, trying to be serious too. Then I walk over to him as the other students leave.

-Him: "What was that?"

-Me: "What was what?"

-Him: "Baby, listen. You can't be doing that in class. Okay? You can't be blushing and acting like a moonstruck schoolgirl. This is a professional space and we got to be professional in it. Okay? In here, you are nothing but my student, and I'm also nothing but your lecturer. Okay?"

He says with a calm voice, but I can hear the seriousness in it.

-Me: "I'm sorry, it won't happen again." I say embarrassed now. He's right though I need to get hold of myself, I can't be acting like this in class. Plus, I can't be thinking about other things during a lecture. I need to focus, I need to pass.

-Him: "It really shouldn't happen again. And now let's talk about why you chose to sneak out of my house last night." -Me: "I'm sorry but I couldn't sleep over. Not when I had to get ready for my classes this morning."

-Him: "I understand that but you should have said something to me."

-Her: "I thought you wouldn't want me to go. But I now realise that I just acted stupid."

-Him: "Soso, I respect you so please respect me too. Okay? Talk to me about these things."

This is better, I thought he'd be mad.

-Him: "And your phone's with me. Come and get it from my office."

He says collecting his stuff. Then we both walk out to his office. I walk in first then stand by the door, then he also walks in and close the door - but not locking it. Moving over to his desk, he retrieves my phone on top of it then walks back to me. He comes to stand so close to me, the phone still in his hand. -Him: "Now, tell me, why didn't you come catch a ride with me this morning? Do you know that I waited 10 minutes outside your gate? And I couldn't even call you because you decided to sneak out of my house last night, leaving your phone behind." He's speaking so close to me, I can feel the hotness of his breath on my skin. That, combined with his scent and the raw male power of his nearness, envelop me in a haze of longing. All I want is to just grab him and kiss him.

-Me: "Thando,...umhh I mean Doc, I'm sorry. Thing is my landlord offered to give me a ride and I couldn't turn her down. I'm sorry." I say with a trembling voice, after exhaling. -Him: "And what's wrong with your voice?" Heeh this man? He knows exactly what's happening to me, he just wants to hear me say it. Well, I won't, I'll just show him. I quickly wrap my arms around his neck and kiss him. For a short moment there he responds. But then he pulls back and take a step back. -Him: "Baby, remember what I said in that lecture room."

-Me: "Professionalism. Yeah, I heard you."

But seriously what did he think would happen with him standing that close to me? -Him: "Yeah, that. We'll continue with this after hours. Okay?" I nod then he kisses my hand before handing

me my phone. I take it then walk out of his office.

. But as I walk out I find Thuso standing outside. I'm wondering how long has she been standing there, or how much she's heard, but I don't say anything. I just walk past her and down the corridor, picking up the pace.

"Someleze Ndlovu."

She says behind me and that's when I realise that she's following me. I don't answer her, I just keep walking. Soon I feel her hand grabbing my arm roughly from behind. -Her: "Someleze Ndlovu, I'm talking to you." I stop and turn to her angry. Yanking my arm off of her grip, I feel like slapping her but I won't do that.

-Me: "Thuso Kwena, what do you want from me? We don't speak to or with each other, remember?"

-Her: "So you really are sleeping with December, aren't you?"

-Me: "You're delusional."

I say in my defense. But I know that it's true and she knows it.

-Her: "We both know that's bullshit. I've been watching you in class today, blushing like a lovestruck teenager. I saw your look, and I know that he's slept with you."

-Me: "Don't you have anything better to do than watching and following me, Thuso?" -Her: "See? You're not even denying it. You and December are both hypocrites. You know that? You, Soso, were busy telling me to stay away from December because he's my lecturer but here you are now, sleeping with him. Is he not your lecturer? He, too, was busy saying he would never sleep with a student. Even went to report me to the HOD saying I was harassing him. What is he doing with you? Aren't you his student? You can both deny it all you like but I know that I was right all along. You two are sleeping together. Now tell me, who's a fuckin' slut, Soso? Huh? You're fucking your lecturer, mzalwanekazi." There's a crazy leer in her eyes and she's not speaking, she's shouting. But at least we have no audience to hear this, the corridor is clear. One thing I'm getting from all that she's saying though is that she didn't hear anything Doc and I were saying in his office just

minutes ago. If she did she would be telling me about it right now.

-Me: "I'm not denying nor confirming any of what you're saying, Thuso. You know why? Because I don't owe you anything."

-Her: "You know what? We shall see what will happen next."

-Me: "And what's that suppose to mean?"

I can't help but feel like that's a threat. What is she going to do? Just weeks ago she was saying she wanted to make peace but now here she is, threatening me.

-Her: "What's that suppose to mean? Nothing, nana, nothing."

She says with this annoying smirk on her face. Then she saunters off. I stand there for a moment wondering what could be going on in her mind. But then I brush that off and walk away, to the library again. I have 25 minutes to study before I go for a practical session at 14:00, so I rush off. Every minute counts, hey.

. I walk out of the lab after the practical session at exactly 5 o'clock and I make my way to Doc's office for a ride home. I find him already waiting for me and we leave. On the way he's still in the lecturer mode and all we talk about is academic stuff. I'm not complaining though because I enjoy having serious talks with him. This guy is an intellectual and he feeds my mind. I always absorb a lot from him, I even call him my walking encyclopedia - but he doesn't know it.

We get to my place and he pulls up at the gate. Then he looks at me as if to say "now we can talk about us."

-Him: "I thought you decided to sneak out last night because you were regretting what happened between us."

-Me: "What? No."

-Him: "So no regrets? You're sure this is the right thing for you? You and me, I mean?" -Me: "Of course, I'm sure."

I say with decisiveness, as much for myself as for him.

-Him: "But you didn't reply to what I said to you yesterday. I told you that I'm falling in love with you and you said nothing. What, you don't feel the same way? Or am I coming too strong? Am I overwhelming you? Trust me, I didn't mean to..."

-Me: "Baby, no. Stop."

I say, interrupting him.

-Me: "I know that I didn't say anything yesterday but it wasn't because I don't feel the same way you do. Thando, I think you already know that I'm falling in love with you too. It's just that I'm scared, scared to have my heart broken again."

-Him: "You think I'm gonna break your heart?"

-Her: "Baby, listen. I know what I want, and that's you. I know that our relationship is not exactly ideal, whatever that means, but I wanna do this with you. I wanna dive in the water with you even though I don't know what's waiting for us down there. You have fallen for me and I'm also falling for you, so why not? We're both falling for each other, but I just hope we'll catch one another. I don't want to get hurt, Thando. I don't think I can take another heartbreak right now." -Him: "Do you think I might hurt you?" -Me: "I can't know that now, Thando, can I?" -Him: "Sthandwa sam bona, I don't plan to hurt you. When I say I love you, I mean it. Trust me, I don't just use that word lightly. I don't plan to just have fun with you and then move on, Soso. I don't."

-Me: "That's good because I don't want to hold back with you, Thando. And if I give everything, then, well, I'll be very vulnerable. And I..."

He doesn't let me finish, he takes my hand and put it over his heart in mock sincerity. -Him: "It would take a very stony hearted man to hurt you, baby. And I don't think I'm that kind of man. Well, I know I'm not. And anyway, I'm sure you can feel my heart beating, so it can't be all stone."

He's laughing. And I can't help but laugh too as I punch him playfully.

-Me: "Hey, I'm being serious here, don't be playing now."

Now his facial expression changes to being serious.

-Him: "I mean it though. I won't hurt you, Soso. I hope you know that I'm not your ex. Just like I also know that you aren't my ex. Just because your ex hurt you doesn't mean I'm gonna hurt you too."

I just lean over, pull him to me then kiss him senseless.

-Me: "I love you."

I whisper close to his mouth after pulling out from the kiss. God, I love him. I really do.

-Him: "So, am I gonna see you tonight?"

He says in a sexy bedroom voice, as we're still in that position. Yoh, tonight? I draw back and sit up straight on my seat.

-Me: "I'd love to, baby. But you know that I can't. I'm working tonight, babe. You know that I have just over 30 minutes to eat and freshen up then go to work."

He blows out a breath then turns away from me to look out the window. I can see that this is frustrating him. -Me: "I can see that you don't like this. Trust me, I don't like it either but I don't have a choice. A job is a job."

-Him: "It's okay, you can go."

He's still looking out the window.

-Me: "Baby, come on. Don't be like that." He turns to look at me.

-Him: "Like what? I said it's fine, baby. It really is. You can go."

He tries to smile but I can see that he's forcing it. He's not fine with this and it's evident. I don't like seeing him like this but I don't have a choice, I really have to go. I peck his lips then get out of the car. But as I walk towards my gate I can't stop wondering: how is this really going to work if I work nightshifts 4 days in a week?

#12

"I just wanna dive in the water with you. Baby, we can't see the bottom. It's so easy to fall for each other, I'm just hoping we catch one another." - Cheat Codes

Hours later I wake up in Doc's arms, with the bedroom lights still on. I look at him and smile to myself. Damn, this man does things to me. I'm looking at his handsome face but he can't even feel my stare, he's deep asleep and with good reason. After the first round we took a little rest then went for round two. The second round was more intense and it lasted longer, leaving both of us drained. After it, we cuddled on the bed wanting to catch our breaths before we could go take a shower then go to the kitchen to get something to eat. But then I saw Doc pulling the covers up and soon exhaustion must have tugged us into oblivion. I don't even know how long we have been out for, all I know is that I can't spend the night here. I have to sleep in my own bed so I can wake up and get ready to go to campus for my classes in the morning. So, I

slowly remove Doc's arms around me. Then I climb down the bed, slowly, careful not to wake him. Furtively, I move around the bed to pick up my clothes from the floor. But can I really walk back home now? What time is it anyway? I don't know because my phone is not with me, I left it in Doc's car when we came in, his is there too. So I move to the dresser to see if I can't find a wristwatch to check the time. And instead of finding a watch I find watches. Twelve of his wristwatch collection displayed in the watch box that I gifted him on his birthday. A smile finds its way to my face at the sight of this. Yes he told me that he really liked the gift but I wasn't sure if he really meant it, I thought he was just being polite. But now that I'm seeing it put into use I believe what he said, and it makes me smile. Today was my first time entering his bedroom, which is why I never got to see this before. And earlier I was too horny and in the zone to notice anything in

this room.

All these watches are functioning and I can see that the time is 22:55. It's not very late, I

can still walk home. Besides, home is only 5 minutes away. So I tiptoe out of the open bedroom door, with my clothes in my hands. I only put them on once I get to the lounge. My jumpsuit is torn at the front where there used to be buttons, but it's at night anyway and this is a quiet neighbourhood so chances are I won't meet anyone on the street. I clutch the torn fabric together on my chest with my hand and I go grab my slide sandals that had come off and dropped on the lounge floor when Doc scooped me up and took me to the bedroom earlier. I put them on then quickly walk out, making sure to open and close the front door slowly. I leave without my phone, but thank God my keys are always around my neck. I could take Doc's car keys and go get my phone from his car but the sound of the car door would most likely wake him up because his bedroom is next to the front of the garage where the car is parked, and I

don't want to wake him. So I just go jump over the brick wall and head home without the phone.

I get to my flat and the first thing I do is to hit the shower. My entire body is sticky with all that sweat that's already dried up on my skin and I smell of sex. I let the shower water cascade down on me. Feeling it sluicing all that sweat from my skin feels good, I must say. I feel tired and a little sore down there but otherwise wonderfully happy. I had the most amazing sex with Doc and honestly I can't wait to be with him again. Before him I naively thought I knew all I needed to know about sex but he made me see that I was wrong. He gave me pleasure that I never knew I could ever feel. He did unfamiliar things to me and also had me do things I didn't even think I would ever do. To me, going crazy in the bedroom was the definition of the word "slut" and I didn't want to go there. I was all about simple, conventional sex, nothing more. But Doc made me lose all that. He made me see what I was missing out on. Having sex with him was very different. He made it so easy for me to lose myself to him. The whole thing seemed so natural. In the second round he made me do even more things that the old me would never do, but I effortlessly obeyed. Some of the things I did he didn't even ask, I just did them instinctively. I've changed with just one sexual encounter, haven't I? But what can I say? The guy inspires creativity in me. And he made it easy for me to let him have his way with me. I wanted him to have me any way he wanted and take the greatest pleasure in me. Oh my, just thinking about it makes me feel all hot right now. It sends electric waves throughout

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-Her: "Are you ready? Come I'm gonna give you a lift and drop you off at the campus gate. I'm on my way to King William's Town." -Me: "Oh, really? Thanks. Let me go get my bag."

I say with a fake smile. Jesus knows I don't want to catch a ride with her, I want to go with Doc, but I can't tell her that. She's the kind of woman you don't say "no" to. Plus, in her mind the poor woman thinks she's helping me, so there's no need to make her feel otherwise. She never sees me catching a ride with Doc because she leaves for work very early and only comes back home after 18:00. So she still thinks I walk to campus and now she's trying to save me that walk. I go grab my bag and walk out to join her in her car. But now I'm worried about Doc. He's going to come here to fetch me and I'd be gone. What's worse is that he won't even be able to call me because my phone is with him. I can't tell my landlord any of this though, so I just get in her car and we drive off. Indeed, she drops me off at the campus small gate then drives off without having had given me any lecture along the way. Thank God, she

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-Me: "You're delusional."

I say in my defense. But I know that it's true and she knows it.

-Her: "We both know that's bullshit. I've been watching you in class today, blushing like a lovestruck teenager. I saw your look, and I know that he's slept with you." -Me: "Don't you have anything better to do than watching and following me, Thuso?" -Her: "See? You're not even denying it. You and December are both hypocrites. You know that? You, Soso, were busy telling me to stay away from December because he's my lecturer but here you are now, sleeping with him. Is he not your lecturer? He, too, was busy saying he would never sleep with a student. Even went to report me to the HOD saying I was harassing him. What is he doing with you? Aren't you his student? You can both deny it all you like but I know that I was right all along. You two are sleeping together. Now tell me, who's a fuckin' slut, Soso? Huh? You're fucking your lecturer, mzalwanekazi." There's a crazy leer in her eyes and she's not speaking, she's shouting. But at least we have no audience to hear this, the corridor is clear. One thing I'm getting from all that she's saying though is that she didn't hear anything Doc and I were saying in his office just

minutes ago. If she did she would be telling me about it right now.

-Me: "I'm not denying nor confirming any of what you're saying, Thuso. You know why? Because I don't owe you anything."

-Her: "You know what? We shall see what will happen next."

-Me: "And what's that suppose to mean?" I can't help but feel like that's a threat. What is she going to do? Just weeks ago she was saying she wanted to make peace but now here she is, threatening me.

-Her: "What's that suppose to mean? Nothing, nana, nothing."

She says with this annoying smirk on her face. Then she saunters off. I stand there for a moment wondering what could be going on in her mind. But then I brush that off and walk away, to the library again. I have 25 minutes to study before I go for a practical session at 14:00, so I rush off. Every minute counts, hey.

. I walk out of the lab after the practical session

at exactly 5 o'clock and I make my way to Doc's office for a ride home. I find him already waiting for me and we leave. On the way he's still in the lecturer mode and all we talk about is academic stuff. I'm not complaining though because I enjoy having serious talks with him. This guy is an intellectual and he feeds my mind. I always absorb a lot from him, I even call him my walking encyclopedia - but he doesn't know it.

We get to my place and he pulls up at the gate. Then he looks at me as if to say "now we can talk about us."

-Him: "I thought you decided to sneak out last night because you were regretting what happened between us."

-Me: "What? No."

-Him: "So no regrets? You're sure this is the right thing for you? You and me, I mean?" -Me: "Of course, I'm sure." I say with decisiveness, as much for myself as for him.

-Him: "But you didn't reply to what I said to you yesterday. I told you that I'm falling in love with you and you said nothing. What, you don't feel the same way? Or am I coming too strong? Am I overwhelming you? Trust me, I didn't mean to..."

-Me: "Baby, no. Stop."

I say, interrupting him.

-Me: "I know that I didn't say anything yesterday but it wasn't because I don't feel the same way you do. Thando, I think you already know that I'm falling in love with you too. It's just that I'm scared, scared to have my heart broken again."

-Him: "You think I'm gonna break your heart?"

-Her: "Baby, listen. I know what I want, and that's you. I know that our relationship is not exactly ideal, whatever that means, but I wanna do this with you. I wanna dive in the water with you even though I don't know what's waiting for us down there. You have

fallen for me and I'm also falling for you, so why not? We're both falling for each other, but I just hope we'll catch one another. I don't want to get hurt, Thando. I don't think I can take another heartbreak right now." -Him: "Do you think I might hurt you?" -Me: "I can't know that now, Thando, can I?" -Him: "Sthandwa sam bona, I don't plan to hurt you. When I say I love you, I mean it. Trust me, I don't just use that word lightly. I don't plan to just have fun with you and then move on, Soso. I don't."

-Me: "That's good because I don't want to hold back with you, Thando. And if I give everything, then, well, I'll be very vulnerable. And I..."

He doesn't let me finish, he takes my hand and put it over his heart in mock sincerity. -Him: "It would take a very stony hearted man to hurt you, baby. And I don't think I'm that kind of man. Well, I know I'm not. And anyway, I'm sure you can feel my heart beating, so it can't be all stone."

He's laughing. And I can't help but laugh too as I punch him playfully.

-Me: "Hey, I'm being serious here, don't be playing now."

Now his facial expression changes to being serious.

-Him: "I mean it though. I won't hurt you, Soso. I hope you know that I'm not your ex. Just like I also know that you aren't my ex. Just because your ex hurt you doesn't mean I'm gonna hurt you too."

I just lean over, pull him to me then kiss him senseless.

-Me: "I love you."

I whisper close to his mouth after pulling out from the kiss. God, I love him. I really do.

-Him: "So, am I gonna see you tonight?"

He says in a sexy bedroom voice, as we're still in that position. Yoh, tonight? I draw back and sit up straight on my seat. -Me: "I'd love to, baby. But you know that I can't. I'm working tonight, babe. You know that I have just over 30 minutes to eat and freshen up then go to work."

He blows out a breath then turns away from me to look out the window. I can see that this is frustrating him.

-Me: "I can see that you don't like this. Trust me, I don't like it either but I don't have a choice. A job is a job."

-Him: "It's okay, you can go."

He's still looking out the window.

-Me: "Baby, come on. Don't be like that." He turns to look at me.

-Him: "Like what? I said it's fine, baby. It really is. You can go."

He tries to smile but I can see that he's forcing it. He's not fine with this and it's evident. I don't like seeing him like this but I don't have a choice, I really have to go. I peck his lips then get out of the car. But as I walk towards my gate I can't stop wondering: how is this really going to work if I work nightshifts 4 days in a week? #13

"You told me not to worry 'bout those guys, those guys. You told me that you left it all behind, behind. It's a lie, a lie." - The Weeknd

Someleze

4 days later

"C'mon, you know that I love you too. You're my ride or die, you know that and so does everybody else...Okay, see you soon." I end the call, smiling.

"Was that the good doctor?"

I hear Kevin's voice behind me as I put the phone back in my pocket.

-Me: "The good doctor?"

I'm too exhausted to laugh but I still manage to let out a lazy chuckle.

-Me: "Don't be crazy wena. That was my mom. I'm gonna be with her this afternoon. And I can't wait."

It's knock off time and I grab my bag ready to go home. Yes, I haven't stopped working and Doc just has to accept it. Kevin who seems too energetic for someone who's just pulled a night shift gets his bag too, then we walk out of the locker room.

-Him: "Oh, nice. I thought you were talking to your boyfriend."

-Me: "My boyfriend? Who said Doc is my boyfriend, Kev?"

I haven't yet told him that Doc and I are now seeing each other. In fact, I haven't told anyone. Not that I have many people to tell though, considering the fact that I'm in shortage of close friends. Thuso was my only close friend in Alice and now that she's turned psycho on me Kevin is the only person I now consider a friend in this small town. But anyway, who needs a handful of friends when only one can turn on you and make you regret the day you decided to let them into your life and call them your friend? I really thought Thuso was a true friend, someone who'll always have my back, someone I could always count on. She was the last person I thought would turn on me, but she did. Even now I can't help but suspect that she's up to something. The girl has turned into something

I can't even describe, and I can tell that she's hell-bent on making my life miserable. On Tuesday I told Doc about the threat she made but unbelievably enough, when Doc called her in and asked her about it she unshamefully denied that those words even escaped her mouth. Freaking unbelievable. So right now, her next move is still a mystery to me as is to Doc. But Wednesday afternoon I saw her hopping onto the City to City bus at

the campus main gate and I'm sure she was heading home. We're only closing today so I don't know why she left for home early. But whatever her reason, I was just glad I won't have to bump into her even if it's just for a few days. One thing's for sure though, whatever she does she won't get anything she can use from me and Doc because we're now always extra careful on campus, in fact we don't do anything until we're out of those gates. I don't want anyone to know that there's something going on between Doc and I, I'm even feeling uneasy about telling Kevin even though he's not even a UFH student. -Kevin: "Who said he's your boyfriend? Well, I don't need anyone to tell me that, Soso. I have my own eyes. They could see that the guy is into you, remember? And even now they can see that he's hit that base camp."

When he says the last part he throws a glance at my behind.

-Him: "I saw how you were around each other yesterday when he was here."

-Me: "You're very observant, I must say. But don't you be looking at my butt, okay?"

I'm now pushing him forward as we leave the service station.

-Him: "Chill. Asanda's butt is enough for me."

Asanda is his girlfriend. My neighbour's daughter.

-Him: "Besides, I wouldn't want to get on the good doctor's bad books, hey. I wouldn't dare mess with his woman."

He adds as we cross the main road about to take the foot path that crosses the railway line and enter my quiet neighbourhood. It's a shortcut that we always take in the morning when we are together. But when he's not on my shift Doc always comes to fetch me, even though my flat is less than 15 minutes away. -Me: "Doc's woman huh."

I smile as I repeat what he's just said. I don't know but the sound of that makes my heart skip a beat. I'm really smitten, aren't I? But I don't want to dwell on that.

-Me: "Let me give you a little piece of advice, Kev."

He looks at me obviously thinking I'm going to say something serious.

-Me: "You better focus on your relationship with Asanda and forget about mine, alright?

And still on that, you two should stop disrespecting her parents' house, hey. Sleeping with her in her parents' house ain't cool. Don't you think?"

I laugh at how disappointed he is. This isn't what he was expecting. Opening his mouth, I know he's going to throw dagger words at me but he doesn't get the chance, my phone rings and I put up a finger to stop him. I take the phone out of my pocket to answer it. The number I see on the screen is unfamiliar to me but I answer anyway. Curious to know who's calling me this early.

-Me: "Hello."

-Caller: "Can I speak to Someleze?"
-Me: "Yes, this is she. Who am I talking to?"
-Caller: "This is Busisiwe. The mother of Thando's kids."

What? Why is she calling me? Where did she even get my number? What does she want? But whatever she's going to say it's not going to be pleasant. I can already tell by the tone of her voice.

Alex

I'm putting my laptop in my bag ready to leave for my department when the ringing of Iviwe's phone suddenly stops me. She's in the res kitchen opposite my room, washing the bowls we just used for breakfast, and she's left the phone on the desk. More often than not, when we're together she gets these phone calls that she never takes. When I asked her about them she said it's an ex that is refusing to get the message, and a few guys that she used to casually hook up with. She went on to tell me not to worry about those guys because whatever she was doing with them is now over. She made me believe that she's left all of that behind, and that she's now serious about our relationship. But here we are, 9 weeks into our relationship and the calls still haven't stopped. In her defense she

always says the same thing that they are

simply refusing to get the message. I know of guys like that, so at first I never thought much of it. Thing is I've grown to trust lviwe and believing what she says is never difficult for me. When not at work the woman is always with me, so I have no reason to not trust her. But now that her phone is ringing and she's not here I can't help but be curious as to who the caller is. I quickly grab the phone and check the screen. It's an unsaved number, and that makes me even more curious. I know that it's wrong to answer another person's phone but curiosity is taking the better of me right now. I take a deep breath then answer. -Me: "Iviwe's phone, hello."

-Caller: "Who's this?"

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-Me: "Alex. And who are you?"

-Caller: "Alex, just give my woman her phone. Get Iviwe on the phone now." I know that it's short but I'm extremely tired, I had a very long day at work. I apologise.

#14

"Been sitting eyes wide open behind these four walls hoping you'd call. It's just a cruel existence like there's no point hoping at all. Baby, baby, I feel crazy, up all night, all night." - Zayn

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Someleze

Doc flashes his smile as he opens his front door for me. I always find his smile beautiful and intoxicating but not today. Right now all I want is for him to confirm or deny what Busisiwe has just told me. He needs to tell me who he really is.

-Him: "Morning, babe. I really didn't think you were gonna come here straight from work."

Having just gotten out of bed, he's wearing

only PJ pants, no top. In a normal day his exposed sleek and toned sexy upper body would turn me on, I would find it irresistible, but no, not today. Today the sky is cloudy and I can feel a storm brewing on the horizon. He gives me a hug as I step inside. And in my mind I'm sure he would appreciate a hug back but I honestly don't have the strength to return the gesture. I just keep my arms down and that causes him to draw back in some alarm. He gazes at me with anxious eyes. -Him: "Baby, what's going on?" -Me: "We need to talk."

I say going deeper into the lounge, leaving him standing by the door. He then follows me and comes to stand in front of me as I stand by the coffee table with my arms folded. -Him: "Please don't tell me they've fired you. They can't fire a pretty face like yours." He says jokingly, obviously trying to suppress the sense of trepidation he now must be feeling inside. I mean, men tend to think when a woman says "we need to talk" that means it's about to hit the fan. Well, in this case, that's probably exactly what's about to happen.

-Me: "Is there something you're hiding from me, Thando?"

My voice is controlled despite what I'm feeling inside.

-Him: "What do you mean?"

-Me: "Is there something you think I should know about you? Like the rape charge that was lodged against you."

He sits down rather abruptly on the arm of the nearest couch. Evidently, discovering that I know about this is a shock to him.

-Him: "Who told you about that?"

He's prevaricating and that's making me angry, but I still manage to keep it together. -Me: "Thando, please. I just came out of a 12hour night shift. I'm exhausted, I'm sleepy and I'm irritated. So please don't play games with me." The look in his eyes says he still wants to prevaricate but one look at my grim face warns him not to lie to me, but to tell me the truth as it is.

-Him: "Okay, I'm gonna tell you everything but first I want to know who told you about this."

-Me: "Your ex-wife did. She just called me on my way from work."

-Him: "But how did she get your phone number? I'm 100% certain that she didn't get it from my girls. They don't have it and I specifically asked them not to say anything about you to her."

-Me: "I don't know where she got it from, Thando. All I know is that she has it and she just called me warning me about you. She said, and I quote, 'Don't think you're the first young girl to have him inside you. He's not going to just screw you in bed, he's going to screw your life too. He's gonna hurt you.' That's what she said. What did she mean by that, Thando? What did she mean?" -Him: "Please sit down and we'll talk."
-Me: "I don't wanna sit down, Thando. Just please tell me what I want to know."
-Him: "Someleze, just sit down."
This time it sounds like an order.

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Then he adds.

-Him: "I have no intention of discussing anything with you hovering over there like Marley's ghost, Soso. Sit down."

There's a pulse beating at his temple. I can tell that he's angry. And for a moment I wonder if he's going to force me to obey him. But I should have known better because, instead, he just gets off the arm of the couch and sits on the couch itself before patting next to him as an invitation for me to come and sit. Squaring my shoulders, I go sit next to him. -Him: "Thank you. Now listen. I..." -Me: "Are you angry at me?" I just have to ask before he can even finish what he's about to say. I mean, if there's anyone who should be angry here it's me, not him.

-Him: "Of course not. I'm angry, yes. But not at you, I'm angry at Busisiwe...Now as I was saying. First of, Busie had no business telling you about me, unless she has her own agenda. I hope you can see that. Second, what she said is not true. I love you, I care about you and I would never hurt you. Lastly, the rape charge against me was dropped because it was a lie right from the beginning." He's speaking with a calm and collected voice. -Me: "Did you or did you not force yourself on a young girl when she didn't want to sleep with you? Did you or did you not screw up her life?"

-Him: "I did not. A - Tasha was not a young girl, she was 25. B - I didn't screw up her life. If anything, she's the one who tried to screw up mine."

-Me: "Please elaborate, and fast."

-Him: "Tasha was a nurse at the hospital I was working at. She always had a thing for me but from day one I made it clear that she needed to stop because I was a married man. But then this other night last year something happened. I was going through a rough time. It was just after I'd discovered that Busisiwe was cheating on me. Things weren't okay at home and yah, something happened between me and Tasha, but it was consensual. I know that this is gonna sound cliché, but, baby, it's true. It was a moment of weakness on my part and it never happened again. But that's exactly what drove Tasha over the edge. She wanted us to have an affair, I didn't, she got mad and decided to file a sexual harassment suit against me at the hospital. Everyone at the hospital knew that it was bullshit though, but they had to comply. The management tried to diffuse the situation by asking me to take a short leave from work - it wasn't a suspension, it was a leave. Then they

transferred Tasha out. After that I thought the

whole thing would blow over. But then she started coming up to the hospital; threatening me, saying that she was going to ruin me. And she tried. She went to open a rape case against me, but it didn't stick. You know why?"

-Me: "Because you bought your freedom.

That's what your ex-wife told me."

-Him: "Don't tell me about Busisiwe. Listen to what I'm telling you. It didn't stick because I hadn't done it. I didn't rape that woman, Soso. I didn't do it."

-Me: "So why the hell didn't you tell me any of this?"

-Him: "I wanted to. I really did, but every moment seemed like the wrong time." -Me: "Are you kidding me right now? I consider this serious, Thando. You don't keep something like this from me. And you had all the time in the world to tell me when this whole Thuso thing started happening. You could have told me that something similar to it had happened in the past but you chose to keep quiet. Why? Only you knows. Or may it's because you really did it. Maybe you did force yourself on that woman."

-Him: "What? Soso, you can't be serious right now. Please take that back."

I just stare at him not saying anything.

-Him: "I'm telling you what happened, and you don't believe me? Soso, I would never do something like that. I would never force myself on a woman. Any woman. You know that, don't you?"

-Me: "Actually, no. I don't."

With that, I get up and make for the door. But as I'm about to open it, I feel his hand grip my waist then he turns me around, pinning my back against the door.

-Him: "Soso, please don't walk out on me. Not like this, sthandwa sam, not like this."

He beseeches as he closes the gap between our bodies. He presses his naked body against me then bends and puts his lips close to my ear. I suck in a breath, not sure what he's planning to do. But he only speaks softly close to my ear.

-Him: "Can't you see that this is stupid, babe? Can't you see that this is exactly what Busisiwe wanted? She and I are no longer together, but she doesn't want to see me happy. That's the only reason why she did this. And right now you're playing right into her hand."

Even though I'm trying to resist him my uneven breathing gives me away. Gosh, I hate that he has this effect on me even though I'm mad at him.

-Me: "Thando, please let me go. I can't do this right now. I need some space to think." It takes all the strength in my body to be able to push him off of me. Then I open the door and walk out. I really need some time to digest all of this before I can talk to him again. And I need to be objective.

It's Friday, the last day of the third quater in the varsity calendar and we were both supposed to be on campus. But we'd agreed that we won't go. We'd planned to spend some time together before he drives me home to P.E this afternoon. We really needed that since we never got to spend some quality time together since that blissful night that I cut short on Sunday. Reason being the school and my night shifts. But right now, with the way things are, those plans are ruined.

. . Thuso

Growing up I had anything and everything I needed, except for one thing - attention from my parents. They were always busy with work and barely had time for me. The only attention I got and cherished was from boys and the other kids at school. I was very popular and everybody wanted to be friends with me. That really felt good, but things changed when I had to move to this new school during my grade 11 year. Nobody

cared about me there because there were

girls who were way better than me. Ain't nobody cared about giving me that attention that I used to feed so much on. So to feel important again, I decided to befriend girls who were way below me. They valued and worshipped me, making me feel that sense of importance once again. I would also find a way to seduce my way to any boy I liked but things wouldn't last and I would end up getting hurt. That's when I first realised just how much love can hurt. And I can safely say the whole thing accounts for my current "promiscuous" ways.

As for friendships, I still continued befriending folks a status below me, just like Soso. Feeling important and superior has always been my drug and Soso fed my addiction. However, I hated the fact that she's better than me academically. To be on her level I have to work twice as hard. But I have to admit, that also came with its advantages. It pushed me to work extra hard than I would normally do - it still does, and as a result I've been passing all my modules with flying colours.

I found a way to measure up to Soso in the only area that she beats me in - academics. What I can't take now is the fact that she managed to get the man I wanted, a man I happen to really like. Nobody does that to Thuso, and definitely not someone like Soso. I had to do something about it. But the last thing I want is to get December into trouble, I really care for him, I just want her and Soso apart. If I can't have him, little poor Soso can't have him either.

I started stalking his Facebook page, trying to find anything I can use to get Soso to leave him. I found old photos of him with a woman that I concluded, from the pictures themselves and the comments, that it's his wife. I checked her out but because of her privacy settings the only thing I found is where she works. I didn't know if she still worked there though, I just hoped she did because I really wanted to talk to her. When I go home I always take a bus to Jo'burg

then my father would send a driver to fetch me from park station. This time around I thought I should stick around Jo'burg a little longer. I wanted to take a chance and visit this Busisiwe's workplace to tell her about her husband's disgusting behaviour in Eastern Cape. But to both my surprise and frustration, I discovered that they are no longer married. I can never understand why some women still retain their ex's surname after divorce. What is that? How the fuck was I supposed to know that they're now divorced when she's still using the stupid "December" last name? I was so fuckin' disappointed. Especially because it was after I'd already made my case that she told me that they're actually divorced. What I found weird, however, is that she still went ahead and asked for Soso's contact numbers. Honestly, right now I'm confused. I don't know what she's going to do or what she's already done with that number, she didn't share that information with me even though I

asked. I'm now home but I hope she will finish my mission for me.

. . Thando

Like a 16-year old who's just fallen in love, I keep checking my phone hoping to get a call from Soso or even just a message. She left for home on Friday without even telling me that she was now leaving. She'd asked for some space and I tried giving it to her. I didn't contact her on Friday but on Saturday I just couldn't hold back. I called her three times but she didn't pick up. On Sunday I sent her two WhatsApp messages but she just read them and never replied. Today it's Tuesday, she was supposed to come back yesterday for work but she didn't. I went to check her at the filling station but they told me that she'd called in sick. I was not just disappointed, I was hurt. I know that our relationship is still

relatively new but I feel like I've known her all my life, and her being away from me is killing

me, especially because we didn't part on good terms. It's crazy and I don't know what's happening to me, but ever since she left all I seem to think about is her. I even stay up at night with one thing stuck in my mind - her, thinking about her and hoping that she'd call. But she never does. Yesterday I kept hoping that she'd call and say she's at my gate and that I should open up, but that call never came. I don't know which one hurts me the most; the fact that she thinks I'm a rapist or the fact that the damn lie is possibly killing her wherever she is. I want to keep calling her phone until she picks up or until she comes back home so we could talk, but at the same time I don't want to seem like a desperate, pathetic fool. So what do I do? This whole thing is a torture to my soul, I can't just sit here and wait for her to come back home next week. By home I mean here, with me. I need to see her and I need to see her today. I

can't go on like this anymore. And there's no point hoping that she'll call because it doesn't seem like she will. The only thing left to do now is to go to her. How will I get to her though? I don't even know where she lives, I only know the name of her township, and I've never even been to P.E before. So where will I start? But Kevin might know something, he's her friend.

I quickly get up, grab my car keys and leave my lonely house. Getting inside my car, I drive out straight to Soso's workplace hoping to find Kevin there. But if he's not there I'll ask them for his phone number and hope to God that they give it to me. However, chances are he doesn't even know Soso's home address in P.E. It's clear as day in my head that this is a long shot but I just have to try. I can't wait till next week. I can't live like this anymore, this whole thing is driving me crazy. I'm tired of sleepless nights. I need to talk to Soso and make things right today. This whole thing has just made me realise just how much I love her, how much I want her next to me and how much I don't want to lose her. I've got it bad, Bhongo said yesterday when I was telling him, and he was right. Then again, that's the kind of man I am. When I love, I love really hard. What's ridiculous is how people tend to think it's only women who are capable of that kind of love. It's really absurd. Men can and do love just as hard as women.

I pull up at the filling station and I immediately spot Kevin talking with one of the petrol attendants. Thank God, he's here. When I see him walking away from the guy he was talking with, I hop out of the car and make my way to him.

-Me: "Kevin."

He turns to me and I greet him already offering my hand for a handshake. He quickly accepts it with this silly smile on his face. This guy is weird.

-Him: "Damn, you look like hell."

-Me: "Hell is where you'll go if you keep greeting people with that line."

He laughs.

-Him: "Sorry, bro. Can I help you with something?"

-Me: "As a matter of fact, yeah. You don't happen to know where Soso stays in P.E, do you?"

-Him: "Ummmh...I don't know the house number but I know that she said it's in Zwide 4, Ngwekazi Street. I only know that because I was telling her that I used to visit some friends in Qeqe Street, and that's when she told me that she's also in the same area. Why are you asking? You're going there? I heard she called in sick yesterday. How's she doing now? I tried calling her but she's not taking my calls."

Oh, my calls are not the only ones being ignored. That probably should be a relief, but it's totally not. I'm now extremely worried about her.

-Him: "Don't you want to come with me and find out for yourself? She's your friend, right?" I'm now taking advantage of this situation. He's going to be my GPS. The last thing I need is to get lost in a township I don't even know, it's not safe out there. Besides, he's not in uniform, meaning he's not on duty. -Him: "Ummmhh...okay, cool. I'm not on duty so we can go. But I better be here in the morning. I have a shift." -Him: "Of course, you'll be here. Let's go." He follows me to my car and we drive off. God, I hope we find Soso home. As for

Busisiwe, I won't even call her and ask about the mess she's caused. I won't waste my breath. And I can't be telling her that she's succeeded in causing me pain.

#15

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"Where else can I go? Chasing you, chasing you. Memories turn to dust, please don't bury us. I got you, I got you." - Beyonce [Naughty Boy]

Thando

Three and a half hours after we left Alice, Kevin and I find ourselves standing on the doorstep of this humble house that's under renovation in Zwide. Bringing Kevin along has been advantageous because he knows this neighbourhood. He gave me directions up until we got to Soso's street, then we started asking around for Soso. As expected, in a neighbourhood like this, where everybody knows everybody, people knew exactly who we were looking for. In fact, it's the first person we asked that pointed us to this house. The second person was just for confirmation. So here we are now, standing on the doorstep, hesitating to knock. Despite my own determination to come here, I have to admit to a feeling of apprehension because I have no idea what Soso might be thinking at this moment.

So this is where Soso lives, I muse, trying to suppress the sense of trepidation I feel at

invading her space without an invitation. And what if she really doesn't want to speak to me again? Considering the fact that she's been ignoring me for days, thinking like this isn't exactly a stretch. Still, I haven't driven all this way just to turn back. I have to see her; I need to see her. She has to know, she has to believe that I didn't do what Busisiwe told her I did. Dear God, does she really think I'm a rapist? Thinking about this again is enough to make my stomach turn.

-Kevin: "Dude, you better knock."

He says after we've been standing here for a moment too long. He's right, I have to knock. I take a deep breath then I do what's necessary, but no one answers. I knock again. Still nothing. There's an eyehole in this door, and I wonder if Soso is staring at me through it right now, trying to decide whether she wants to speak to me or not. And then the fact that she doesn't live alone but with her mother comes to my mind. Yes, I know that it's around 15:00 on a Tuesday and her mother is supposed to be at work still, but what if she's home? What would I say to her? When I hear a key turning in the lock I feel a wave of perspiration break out on the back of my neck. I've never been this nervous in a long time, I now realise. The things we do for love though. Soso has really messed with my mind.

The door opens a few inches and I glimpse a woman who looks just like Soso, only a little older, hovering just beyond the threshold. Oh gosh, this sure is her mother. And I can tell from her face and the robe and sleepers she's wearing that she's been sleeping. Now I understand why she took too long to answer the door and I feel bad that we've woken her up. My goodness, what am I even going to say to her? I haven't exactly thought of that. -Her: "Hello. Can I help you?" I'm nervous but I won't let her see that. -Me: "Hello. My name's Thando and this is Kevin. We're Soso's friends from Alice. Is she...?"

But she doesn't let me finish.

-Her: "Soso's friends. Oh, come on in." She sounds exactly how she looks, tired and kind of ill. She opens the door wider then steps to one side to allow us through the doorway. Kevin and I step inside this small living/dining room. This space is cramped, way smaller than my lounge in my rental house in Alice, but what's great about it is that it's spotless, very neat. My eyes are wandering around the room as this woman leads us to the couches. Then they land on this big, framed photo on the back wall. It's of Soso in a school uniform. Awww, she looks so cute.

"That's Soso when she was in matric."

I hear her mother's voice and I realise that I've been standing still, almost hypnotised, as I'm staring at the photo. -Me: "Ummmh...it's hard to tell that it was taken only three years ago."

I say after clearing my throat. I don't even know what I'm saying, I just said the first thing that came to my mind, not wanting her to know what I'm thinking about her daughter. I doubt she would ever approve of me. Her daughter dating a man ten years older than her, I really don't think she would like that. Especially considering that she herself is 38 years old, only 7 years older than me. Yeah, I just did the math in my head from what Soso told me, that her mother had her when she was only 17. But I must say, she doesn't look 38 at all, she looks a lot younger than that even though her face is this weary. -Her: "You can both take a sit. And tell me what you'd like to have to drink." -Me: "Just water will be fine. Thanks." I say as I sit down.

-Kevin: "I don't suppose Soso's sister keeps beer in the fridge, so I'll just have water too." He knows very well that Soso doesn't have a sister, he knows that this is her mother but he's trying for humour. Soso's mother tries to laugh but it doesn't quite come out, I can see that she's really not feeling well. Which explains why she's not at work.

-Me: "Actually, I'm her mother... Let me go get your water."

. Once she disappears into the kitchen I quickly think of what I'm going to say. Then, with my voice down, I tell Kevin to keep quiet and let me do all the talking. The last thing I want is for him to slip up and talk about things Soso doesn't want her mother to know. Things like her having a job, or her living off-campus. Where's Soso anyway? I thought her mother would have called her to come out by now. Her mother comes back with our water. Kevin and I drink. -Her: "Thando and Kevin. Both your names come up more often in my conversations with Soso lately. Nothing much though, just the mentioning of your names in passing... But I must say, I expected to see someone a bit younger, Thando."

She says the last part looking straight into my eyes, with her sitting on an opposite couch. Her eyes are unreadable. However, I can't help but think she suspects that I'm seeing her daughter. I feel like she can tell. But still, I'm not going to give myself away.

-Me: "I'm a postgraduate student, doing my doctorate in Biochemistry. I know Soso because I frequently help her with her studies, the Biochemistry course in particular. I help her with assignments, studying for tests, stuff like that. Even now I'm here because she told me that she wants to do her honours in Biochemistry next year, and there's this scholarship that I asked her to apply for. I thought the deadline was next week but it turns out it's this coming Friday, so I just had to come to make sure that she finishes filling out the forms."

-Her: "I see. But why did you come here? Soso is in Alice."

-Me: "Alice? No, we haven't seen her on campus since Friday when she left saying she's coming home. And she's not answering her phone."

-Her: "Yes, she did come home on Friday but she left the very next day. She said she had a lot of studying to do before the last quarter begins."

Evidently, Soso lied to her mother. I know for a fact that she's not in Alice. When I went to her workplace after 18:00 yesterday they told me that she called in sick, so from there I drove straight to her place. I rang the intercom at their small gate, which funny enough is the only intercom they have, and her landlord answered. I asked if Soso was in and she told me she hasn't come back from home yet. So if she's not in Alice or here, where could she be? I can feel my anxiety rising now. A lot of things are going through my mind and I'm no longer feeling myself. But I soon calm down when her mother, who also looks just as worried, offers to call her and ask her whereabouts. She dials her number and puts the phone on speaker for all of us to hear. On the third ring, the call gets answered.

"Queen of my heart."

It's Soso on the other end of the phone and I can tell by her jolly voice that she's fine wherever she is. Then where the hell is she? -Her mother: "Baby, where are you?" -Soso: "In my room. Are you okay? You don't sound so good."

-Her mother: "In your room at res in Alice?"
-Soso: "Of course, mama. Where else?"
-Her mother: "Your friends, Kevin and Thando are here. They say they couldn't find you in your room."

-Soso: "What? Thando is there with you right now?"

I can hear the shock in her voice.

-Her mother: "That's what I just said. They came all the way here to look for you. Soso, is everything okay? Why couldn't they find you in Alice?"

-Soso: "Ummmh...yes, everything's fine, mama. Just tell them that they'll find me in Alice. But sorry, I gotta go now. I have a lot of books to study."

-Her mother: "But make sure to call me later, baby. Okay? I love you."

-Soso: "I love you too, Ndlovukazi."

They hang up. I can't believe I came all this way for nothing. I also can't believe that I was worried for nothing. I don't know where Soso is and I don't know why she's lying to her mother, but what I do know is that I don't like this one bit.

-Her mother: "Well, you've heard for yourselves. She's in Alice."

-Me: "Yeah. It seems like we came all this way for nothing. But it's okay. Thanks for letting us in. We'll be on our way now."

Kevin and I get up to leave.

-Her: "I'm sorry you wasted your time. And thanks for caring about my daughter. Drive safe."

She says looking at the car key in my hand. She's got this tiny smile on her face that's reminding me so much of Soso. I can now see where Soso gets her beauty from, from her mother.

That smile quickly fades though, this woman is in pain, I can tell.

-Me: "Thank you. But I don't think we can just walk out of here and leave you alone even though we can see that you're not well. Tell me, is there anything we can do? I can even take you to the doctor."

-Her: "That's nice of you but no, I'll be fine. It's just headache... Hell, who am I fooling? It's not just any headache. It's the mother of all headaches. It's so severe that I couldn't even go to work today."

-Me: "Wait. I think I have painkillers in my car. They are very good, I'm sure they'll help you. But do me a favour, don't take too much, they are very strong. Just one is enough, then another after 6 hours."

-Her: "I'd very much appreciate them. Thank you."

I walk out to my car that's parked on the side of the street, just in front of this gateless yard. I get the painkillers then come to give them to her. I smile at how appreciative she is, she really reminds me of Soso. We wish her well then Kevin and I leave. When we get inside my car I can see that Kevin wants to ask a lot of questions. I mean, the guy came here thinking Soso was sick, only to find out that's not true. That she's not even here, and I as her boyfriend don't know anything about it. I know that his first questions would be around that but I really don't have the energy for him. When he opens his mouth, I just put up my hand as a sign to say "not now". And we drive off in silence.

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Someleze

After I end the call with my mother I find myself pacing up and down this flat. I really didn't think Doc would go all the way to my mom's house.

-Me: "My mom just called. She says Thando is there, like there in her house. Can you believe that?"

I tell my friend, Amanda, as she walks through the front door carrying the takeaways she went out to collect from a restaurant down the road.

-Her: "Your mother's house as in in P.E?" She asks as she puts the takeaways on the coffee table before plopping down somewhat ungracefully on the only couch this flat has. Amanda is my childhood friend from P.E. She's the one whose parents were paying for my ballet classes. We both wanted to get out of P.E after matric, so when I chose to go to Fort Hare she came to study at the University of Johannesburg. She stays in a two-bedroom flat in Melville, sharing it with another girl who's also a student at her campus. It's a nice flat, and I've also been it's occupant since Sunday. Saturday morning I called Amanda and asked her to please accommodate me because she's the only person I know in Jo'burg. And fortunately for me she easily said yes when she heard my reason for the visit, and the fact that her flatmate is home for the September break also helped. So when I left home on Saturday I didn't go to Alice but I took a bus to Jo'burg, determined to find the truth about Thando myself. Like I said I wanted to be objective about the matter. I couldn't just simply believe Busisiwe but at the same time I couldn't just dismiss what she told me. With the same breath, I couldn't just take Doc's side of the story simply because he's my boyfriend, but I couldn't just dismiss it either. I had to be in the middle until I find

the truth for myself.

When Busisiwe talked to me she said she was warning me against the sexual abuser Thando

is. Coming from her, that was questionable but I just had to listen. Her tone wasn't of someone who cared about me either, and I knew very well that the whole thing wasn't about me but it was about Doc - her differences with him. With that in mind, however, I couldn't just dismiss what she was telling me. Reason being I didn't understand why she would want to feed me lies when she knew very well that I'd ask Doc about it. This is a woman who knew very well that I had no reason to believe her, so I didn't understand why she would want to waist her time calling me just to tell me lies. From the word go, it was clear to me that her motives for "warning" me weren't pure. I knew that she was probably trying to break Doc and I up, for her own reasons, but that certainly didn't mean that what she was telling me wasn't true. My response to her was a simple, "I really don't know why you decided to tell me this, but you know what? None of it matters to me", then I ended the call. That was a lie

though, all of it mattered to me, quite a bit actually. I found the whole thing very disturbing, and in my head I knew that the story couldn't entirely be a fabrication. As I made my way to Doc's house I was already not feeling myself. And what made me angry

not feeling myself. And what made me angry even after he had given me his side of the story was the fact that he only gave it to me after I had heard about the whole thing from someone else and not from him. I mean, the guy knows exactly how I feel about the rape issue. Even if it was just an accusation against him he should have told me about it, just like I also told him about my own experience regarding the subject. It didn't exactly happen, it almost did, but I still shared that with him.

My grandmother had two children - my mother and her brother who's two years older than her. But you'd never hear me talking about my uncle, and that's because

we're estranged. He's no longer in my life or that of my mother because the bastard tried to rape me. I was 11 when it happened. My grandmother was already deceased and my mother was working so I'd be home alone with my uncle after school until my mother comes back from work. This other day my uncle came into my bedroom and started touching me inappropriately. He didn't take it all the way that day but I still told my mother about it. Did she believe me? Not at all. In not so many words she accused me of being a bad child, telling me that her brother would never do something like that to her child. She made me feel bad for speaking up so much that I even told myself that if it happens again I won't speak up, that I won't tell anyone. It didn't get to that point, however, because she got to believe me, almost too late though, the whole thing had already escalated. She got to believe me only when she came back early from work and found me struggling to get off

of my uncle's predatory grip. He had already ripped my panties off, ready to force himself

on me. If she didn't come home early that day I would have easily became another statistic. So, I know how it feels like to not be believed when you make your case as far as the rape subject is concerned. I know how it feels like to see a man who violated you roam the streets freely. My uncle didn't get to penetrate me but he still violated me, and it drove me crazy that he never did time for what he did to me. Him not doing time doesn't mean the incident didn't happen, it just means the case got dismissed due to "lack of evidence". I shared this story with Doc, I opened up to him, and I believe that's when he should have opened up to me too. The fact that he didn't is exactly what made me angry and made me say things I didn't mean to say. His lack of disclosure made me think things I didn't want to think about him. I thought, if he was really innocent of the crime then he would have easily told me about it.

But I wasn't going to fully jump to conclusions until I could get all the facts regarding the matter. Considering the fact that Busisiwe is not a reliable source, I wasn't about to be 100% sure of what she told me. But at the same time I wasn't going to blindly take Doc's side of the story just because I love him. I let love blind me once and I wasn't about to let that happen again. People warned me about Alex's fuckboy ways but because I was so head over heels in love with him I never heed any of their warnings, and as a result I got burned. This time around I've told myself that

I'm going to do things differently. This is a very serious subject to me and I wasn't going to just let it go. I wasn't going to continue sleeping with a man who's possibly a rapist. What I needed was some time away from him, some time to digest the whole thing in peace without being influenced by him. And when I did, I knew exactly what to do next. I knew that I had to come to Jo'burg to get the answers for myself without him even knowing, and I knew exactly where to start at the hospital where he used to work. He's mentioned its name to me on more than one occasion before, so I just Googled it and found its address. And now here I am, in Jo'burg, and I can safely say, with Amanda's help who showed me my way around, I've gotten all the answers that I needed. I can't even say how much of a relief it is to know that Doc really didn't do what Busisiwe said he did.

-Amanda: "How did he even know your home address?"

-Me: "I'm sure he got it from Kevin. That's why I was ignoring his calls too. I knew that whatever I tell him he'll tell it to Thando if he asks. I don't know but it's like he idolises the guy."

-Her: "And I can see why. Thando seems like a great guy, chomi. And he really loves you. I mean for him to try to track you down and drive all the way to P.E when you were ignoring his calls tells it all. No man has ever done something like that for me...I think you should call him, you know. And put the poor guy out of his misery."

-Me: "Out of anger I said something I shouldn't have said to him, Amanda. I made him feel like I didn't believe him. I hurt him. I don't even know what to say to him over the phone, I just want to get on that bus home this evening and talk to him face to face tomorrow."

-Her: "Way I see it, what you said doesn't even matter to the guy anymore. He just wants you to talk to him."

Just then my phone rings. And it's him. -Amanda: "If that's him you better take the call, babe. Now you know that he was telling you the truth, that he didn't do that disgusting act, so talk to him."

I take a deep breath then answer.

-Me: "Hello."

-Doc: "Soso, where are you?"

-Me: "I'm coming home to you tomorrow and we'll talk then."

-Him: "Where are you now?"

-Me: "Baby, we'll talk tomorrow. I love you." And like that I hang up, then I turn to Amanda who's looking at me with raised eyebrows. -Her: "Don't look at me like that. Just eat then take me to Busisiwe like you promised. I need to see that bitch before I leave this city."

#16

"I'll let you look inside me, through the stains and through the cracks. And in the darkness of this moment, you see the good and bad. But try not to judge me, 'cause we've walked down different paths." - Thompson Square

"You sure you don't wanna skip that part? Do you really wanna meet up with that bitter snake?"

Amanda asks as she feasts hungrily on the fried chicken she just came in with.

-Me: "Busisiwe doesn't live in Alice, Amanda. She didn't know anything about me and Thando, and she certainly didn't know my phone number. Somebody obviously fed her that information. Someone who doesn't want to see me and Thando together. Even though I already have an idea who it is, I want Busisiwe to confirm it. Then I'll take it from there."

-Her: "I hear you. Now sit your butt down and eat. We still have time."

-Me: "I don't have appetite, you know."

I exhale then plop down on the couch next to her. She stops eating then looks at me.

-Her: "Worried about what Thando will say when you tell him that you looked into a portion of his past?"

-Me: "I'd be lying if I said I'm not."

-Her: "You don't need to be worried, babe. If Thando is as mature as you say he is then he'll understand why you had to do this. Babe, you couldn't just take his word, just like you couldn't just take his ex-wife's. You had to get the facts and make a decision based on that and that only - not on what Busisiwe told you or what Thando himself told you. If you ask me, you did a right thing. Most women stay in bad relationships because they believe everything their men tell them, they let the love they have for these men keep them from seeing the truth. And you know what happens in the end? They always get burned. Love is a beautiful thing, it really is, but when you let it blind you then it's no longer love but stupidity. I'm sure Thando will understand. I mean, you didn't take the allegations and use them to break up with him. No, you didn't overreact like that. You only asked for some

time out and you used that time to find the truth. And that to me is maturity at best." -Me: "You think?"

-Her: "No, I know. Soso, you don't know this guy, you just met him, so to check him out when allegations like this popped up is very much justifiable. Those allegations were too serious to be ignored. You couldn't stay with a man who's possibly a rapist all in the name of love. If you did, I was gonna know that common sense has definitely deserted you. That you're no longer thinking but you're letting Thando's demands on your senses, and on your heart, reduce your brain to a

quivering lump of mush."

At this point I just can't help but smile. I really needed to hear this.

-Me: "Thanks, chomi. I really needed to hear that coming from someone else's mouth. Really."

-Her: "I believe that's what friends are for, to always keep us on the right track. To guide us back when we're stepping off of it, and to applaud us when we're keeping not only our feet on it but our minds too. We've been friends since childhood, Soso, and there's a reason for that. I love you, babe, and I want to see you making right choices in life. But I must say, I'm still a little mad that you didn't tell me about Thando right from the beginning." -Me: "I know, I know. And once again, I'm sorry. The truth is: you're are always a voice of reason in my ear, Amanda, and I thought if I told you about Thando you'd only want to lecture me on how wrong it is to sleep with a lecturer. I thought you weren't gonna approve."

-Her: "But, babe, you know me when it comes to love. I love love. The only three questions I was gonna ask you are the same questions I asked when you finally told me on Saturday: do you think he's the right guy for you? Is he treating you well? Are you happy? That's all. Babe, there are no rules when it comes to love. Love is what it is, pure and simple. The only problem is when we let it blind us." -Me: "Believe me, I now know that I was wrong for keeping the whole thing from you. Will you stop being mad if I hug you?" I ask giving her puppy dog eyes. As usual, she melts and opens her arms for a hug. We hug, giggling. I really love this one. I just hate that

she now lives miles and miles away from me. And I had to end up with people like Thuso. -Her: "Now you better eat."

She says as she pulls back from the hug. After this talk I sure have my appetite back. We eat. Then I go freshen up and pack my bag. I'm meeting up with Busisiwe in a hour then at 19:00 I'm catching a bus back to Alice. Earlier I called Busisiwe on the same number she called me with the other day, I told her that I'm in town and then I requested a meeting which she easily agreed to. I really don't know what she thinks the purpose of this meeting is or maybe she's hoping to use it as an opportunity to feed me more lies about Doc, I don't know. All I know is that she's going to be disappointed. She said to meet her at this certain restaurant in Braamfontein after work, so that's where Amanda and I will be heading.

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By 17:00 I find myself walking through this not-so-glamorous restaurant in Braamfontein. I don't know Busisiwe but I don't take her as someone who'd be a regular at a joint like this. Perhaps she chose it because it's close to her place of work. In any case, I'm here now. And I find myself chuckling at how stupid I probably look as I walk in alone with my eyes darting around. I'm walking in alone because I asked Amanda to remain outside in her car. Yes, she's got wheels, a VW Polo TSI. Her parents are well off, they all left my township years ago and moved to the suburbs but Amanda and I still remained friends. She didn't change and become a nasty bitch just because her parents' financial luck had changed. She's a sweet soul, and so are her parents. When she and I were still living in P.E. full-time, her parents would tell me to also get myself something I like every time they give Amanda a card to go shopping. They are also the ones who paid for my driving lessons

and made sure that I get my driver's licence when I was 18.

My eyes wander around the reastaurant looking for this Busisiwe that I don't even have a picture of. There aren't a lot of people in here though, so I quickly see a lady sitting alone at a table in the corner. I keep my eyes on her wanting to see if she would respond. And she does. She gestures for me to come. And I walk over to her.

-Me: "Busisiwe?"

-Her: "You must be Someleze."

Target acquired. I take a seat opposite her. She's beautiful, that's no lie, too bad I can't say the same about her heart though.

-Her: "So, why did you want to meet with me?"

-Me: "Straight to the point, huh. I like that. Especially because I don't intend to waist my time or yours either. I wanted us to meet for the same reason you called me the other day

- Thando. The common denominator."

A waiter comes to get our orders. I just order some orange juice, and Busisiwe asks for a refill of the cocktail she was having. I wait for the waiter to walk away then I turn back to Busisiwe.

-Me: "But first things first. Who gave you my phone number?"

-Her: "I'm not giving you the name."

-Me: "See, I already know that it was Thuso. So why don't we just cut the crap? We both don't want to waist time, right?"

-Her: "If you already knew then why are you asking me? That Thuso girl did me a favour." I just got my answer. Thuso, that bitch really doesn't know when to stop, does she? -Me: "I was only asking because I thought you were gonna give me misinformation. Like you did on the phone the morning you decided to call me."

The waiter arrives with our drinks then walks away.

-Me: "As I was saying, I know that you told me those lies knowing very well that they were lies. Yes, they were based on something that actually happened, but they were still lies. They were lies right from the very beginning, from when the whole thing happened last year."

She shifts on her chair. I on the other hand it's like I'm glued onto this chair, I'm sitting up straight, not moving, watching any and every reaction from this woman.

-Her: "It's Thando who told you that and you believed him?"

-Me: "Actually, no. I heard this from the horse's mouth, a reliable source, Tasha herself. And that made me wonder, what exactly is it that you were hoping to achieve when you told me those lies? What, don't you want Thando to be happy? You're the one who divorced him for goodness sake and you moved on with your life. So why don't you want him to do the same? Do you still want him, perhaps? Do you regret divorcing him? Are you gonna be a persistent problem for us?"

Nobody is fighting or shouting here, we're just talking woman to woman. For a long moment, she regards me in silence. I don't know what she's thinking, or maybe she's picking the next words to come out of her mouth very carefully in her head.

-Her: "I don't want Thando. And this wasn't about him, it was about you."

She says eventually.

-Me: "I don't follow. What do you mean about me? You didn't even know me."

-Her: "That's right, I didn't know you but I knew of you even before Thuso showed up at my workplace."

-Me: "Knew of me how?"

-Her: "My girls. From their very first visit to Alice they couldn't stop talking about you when they came back. It got worse when they visited the second and the third time. All they came back talking about was you - aunt Soso,

'daddy's friend'. They still can't stop raving about how cool you are. How much they love spending time with you, and how much you show interest in their lives. Something they say I don't. They are even calling you their second mommy, can believe that? And they say next year they want to go live with their father so they could get to spend time with you. And they mean it. I've been fighting with them over this for a while now and they now see me as a monster mom. Do you know how that makes me feel? Being resented by my own kids because of some little girl that just came out of nowhere? Those are my kids, not yours. Stop playing mommy to them. That's why I don't even like it when they visit their father. You're the problem."

Oh wow. I'm speechless right now. I didn't know that this is what this whole thing was about. But didn't Doc say he specifically asked the twins to not talk about me to their mother? I'm sure he did. But hey, kids are kids, nothing is a secret to them.

-Me: "So, you thought if I'm no longer in Thando's life your kids would want to stay with you? You thought they'd start seeing you as a better mother? I doubt it. The problem here is not me, sisi, it's you. The girls like Alice, they like spending time with me because I give them something you don't love and time. Maybe if you can stop being too obsessed with your job and your man and start focusing on the kids you claim to love then their trust in you and their love for you would be restored. Stop fighting me because I haven't done anything wrong. If anything, you should be happy I love your kids. Not all women show interest in their men's children. In fact, they even go as far as mistreating them. But I don't. Busisiwe, I'll tell you this: I love your kids and I also love Thando. There is nothing you can do to change that. The only thing that needs to change here is you.

Change the way you do things and your kids will stick with you."

I'm done talking. I take the first and the last sip of my juice then a R50 out of my purse and put it on the table. Without saying anything more I get up and walk out of the restaurant. My mission in Jo'burg is done.

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By 18:15 I'm standing in a queue at the City to City offices at Park Station to have my ticket printed out since I booked online. After I get it I say my goodbyes to Amanda. We hug and kiss then I go stand in line to board the bus. I'm very grateful to Amanda, without her help I wouldn't have been able to pull any of this off.

By 06:00 in the morning I'm already in Alice. I get off the bus and, walking like a zombie, I make my way to my flat with my weekend bag slung over my shoulder. I don't want to waist time, I want to talk to Doc as soon as possible but I'm too tired and sleepy to push any sense out of my mouth right now. So I go straight home and throw myself on the bed after changing into my PJs.

The alarm I'd set wakes me up around 11:00 and I go take a long relaxing shower. I stand there and let the water cascade down on me. It's a very relaxing feeling, and I feel like it's washing away every bad thing I've experienced in the past two months. And by that I'm specifically referring to my heartbreak by Alex. I don't know, but as I step out on the mat that's sitting on the slippery porcelain tiles of this bathroom I feel like a brand new person. More than I've ever been before, I'm so sure about my relationship with Thando. There's not a single shred of doubt in my mind that I want to be with him. I just hope he still wants to be with me too. After drying and lotioning my body, I put on blue denim bum shorts, a white vest and a pair of flat strappy sandals. It's too hot outside to wear much. I leave my weave

untied and my only concession to make-up is a subtle lip gloss to give my lips a smooth finish.

Then taking a deep breath, I leave my flat going to Doc's house. Along the way, I just can't deny the feeling of apprehension that keeps growing inside me with each step I take. What if Doc gets mad? Being the kind of man that he is, I'm scared to see him mad, I have to admit.

A few minutes later, I'm standing in front of his gate. There's no intercom here so I call his phone so he could open the gate. Without saying much he hangs up then opens the gate. I make my way to his front door, my growing anxiety levels going higher as I get closer. Before I can even knock the door opens, and I take a look at the man who's come to mean so much to me in just a short period of time, as he stands there with a grim expression on his face. He's wearing light blue jeans, a crispy white button up shirt, and black shoes. Oh my God, he's on his way out, I say to myself nervously.

-Me: "Hi."

-Him: "Hey."

I can't even ask how he's hanging because it's evident that he's hanging very low. He's so down you can pick him up from the floor, and that makes me nervous.

-Me: "Can I please come in?"

He steps to one side allowing me to step inside.

-Me: "Can we talk? Or you're on your way out?"

-Him: "No. I just came in. It's Wednesday and I have a job, Soso. Just because our students are on a break doesn't mean we are too." -Me: "Oh yah, I forgot. That means I almost

-Me: "Oh yah, I forgot. That means I almost didn't find you in."

-Him: "Yah."

-Me: "Why did you come back early?" -Him: "I wasn't feeling okay. Just like I wasn't yesterday when I drove all the way to P.E to look for you...Come take a seat." He leads the way to the couch, and we take a seat next to each other. I can feel moisture leaving my mouth as I'm looking at him just staring at me. He's not saying anything and his stare is turning me into a nervous wreck. Gosh, where do I even begin?

-Me: "I'm sorry I made you feel like I didn't believe you when..."

But he cuts me off drily.

-Him: "Where were you, Soso? You weren't home and you weren't here either." He's actually making things easier for me right now, now I can go straight to the point. -Me: "I was in Jo'burg. I wanted to find out what really happened between you and Tasha so I went there looking for answers. I'm sorry, baby, but the fact that you kept such a thing from me made me doubtful. You know how I feel about that subject but you still didn't share your story with me even when you had every chance to. You kept it from me until I had to hear it from someone else. How do you think that made me feel? It made me angry and doubtful. But I didn't want to just crucify you based on that, I had to get all the facts first. I wasn't just going to take what Busie said or what YOU said either. I needed to find the truth for myself so I could make an informed decision."

He keeps quiet, just staring at me. His eyes are unreadable. I don't know what's going on in that smart brain of his and I'm dying to hear his thoughts coming out of his mouth.

-Him: "So, in search of the truth you went to Jo'burg to dig into my past?"

He says, eventually.

-Me: "I had to."

-Him: "And what did you find?"

-Me: "That your version of the story was true. I spoke to your ex-colleague, Benni. I even spoke to Tasha herself, she's back at the hospital, I'm sure you didn't know that. She told me the whole story and how bad she

now feels about the whole thing. How

ashamed she is... I now know that you were telling the truth. And I'm sorry I couldn't just believe you at first, but I'm sure you can understand why. I couldn't believe Busie, and I couldn't believe you either. I just had to find the truth myself. I know that you're probably mad that I invaded your privacy by digging into your past but, baby, I had to. I did it because I love you. I did it because I wanted our relationship to have a better shot. I swear if I didn't our relationship was going to crumble, right from the base. I could have just dismissed what Busie told me and choose to take your side of the story. But believe me the whole thing wasn't gonna leave my mind. I was gonna keep wondering if you really told me the truth. I was gonna keep wondering if you really didn't do it. You would be sleeping next to me and I would be awake, staring at you with question marks in my head. It was never going to go away. Every time we make love I was gonna wonder. I was gonna wonder if you didn't use that same dick to inflict pain on another woman. From there, I'm telling

you, our relationship would go downhill. Cracks would start showing and in no time it would come crashing down. Because of something that's not even true. That's why I needed to get to the bottom of this whole thing. That's why I needed to get answers from a different party. I was trying to save us, our relationship. Because I love you, Thando. I do. And I didn't want to lose you over something I'm not even sure of. I had to do this. For my own peace of mind and for our relationship. I really hope I'm not gonna lose you because of it though."

Tears are now trickling down my cheeks and I can't fight them. Doc is looking at me this whole time. His eyes now shadowed with emotions I can't even begin to fathom. -Me: "Please say something."

He just pulls me to him and kisses my lips sofly. I don't have time to think I just respond. The kiss is slow and passionate. Our tongues dance to a single rhythm as they caress each other. Soon I'm losing myself to him but he pulls back. He wipes away my tears with his hand then look deep into my eyes -Him: "I love you. And, baby, I'm not mad." -Me: "You're not?"

-Him: "Not even close. In fact, what you did just made me respect you even more. You're willing to love but not blindly. I find that admirable. It's a trait that most of us don't have."

Really? He's not mad?

-Him: "I totally understand why you did what you did. I'm the one who pushed you into doing it. If I'd told you about the whole thing sooner you wouldn't have found a reason to doubt me. I shouldn't have waited until you could hear it from someone else. And for that I'm sorry. To tell you the truth I was embarrassed by the whole thing and I thought if I told you you'd think less of me." -Me: "What? No, that wasn't going to happen. Baby, I know that you aren't perfect just like I

ain't either. We both did things we're not

proud of in the past. Those things are in our past but if you see that they can affect our future together then I need to hear them. I need to hear them from you first, no one else. Hearing them from someone else is what will make me doubt you even when you're telling me the truth. Thando, I know that before we met we walked down different paths, we did different things with different people. I would try not to judge you for those but if they are important for me to hear then I need to hear them from you. Let me in, let me see what's inside you, flaws and all, the good and the bad. And I promise to also do the same." -Him: "You got it. I promise."

#17 [18S]

Warning: This episode contains EXTREME sexual content. Don't read if you're quick to click the "Report" button. "Sweet baby, our sex has meaning. Know this time you'll stay till the morning. Duvet days and vanilla ice cream. More than just one night together exclusively." - Zayn

Thando

"I'm really happy you came back home." I say as I hug my baby from behind. She's standing by the sink, drinking water from a glass. I guess the serious talk we just had has left her dry-mouthed.

-Her: "Did you think I wasn't gonna come back to you? Baby, in your heart I'm home." Even though hearing her say that makes my heart smile, I don't reply. I just plant soft kisses down her neck. With the strap of her vest slipped lower, my breath moistens her bare shoulder, and I let my teeth graze her skin. I nibble at her neck, pulling a pearl of soft skin into my mouth and suckling greedily. Soft moans keep escaping her mouth making my member grow hard. Soon, I can tell that

she can feel my hard on rubbing against her butt. Her grip around the glass tightens as her body also tightens in response to my sensual seduction. She puts the glass in the sink then turns around to face me. Her innocent, loving eyes gaze into mine and I can feel my heart beating faster. It's safe to say I'm madly in love. Not in my wildest orgasms, though, did I think I'd move on so quickly after my divorce, not to mention with a woman who's a decade younger than I am. But meeting Soso has made me realise, once again, that love can hit anyone and at any time. Her level of maturity and her wisdom are what attracted me to her the most, and today she has just made me realise that they are also what will keep my heart glued to hers for years to come or up until life happens.

I can see that she turned around to say something but right now I don't want to talk. I just pull her fully into my arms. My mouth finds hers almost of its own volition. With one hand behind her head, and the other pressing her close against my aroused body, I take possession of her lips with heated urgency that betrays my hungry need. She winds her arms around my neck and let me deepen the kiss. Wedging one leg between hers, I let her feel my erection, drawing one of her hands off my neck and down to me so she could shape my pulsating length.

"Baby, I need this."

I mutter, my breathing laboured.

"I need it too but first we need to talk." She whispers. Dammit, can't it wait? But maybe it's my erection that needs to wait. It's painful but it will subside. Besides, we have the whole day together. I stop and pull back. -Me: "What is it?"

-Her: "I know that we mean a lot to each other. Hell, we even travelled to cities we both had never been to before just to fight for our love. But there are two people who aren't so happy about our union." -Me: "Who? Your ex-friend and your mother?"

-Her: "My mother? What? No."

-Me: "No? Oh, that's a relief. You know, even though I didn't find you home yesterday, I'm still glad I drove to P.E. I got to meet your mother who happens to look just like you. And I think she has your heart too or you have hers, something like that. What I'd like to know though is what she thinks of me. I don't know but I think she knows that there's something going on between me and you."

. -Her: "My mom is not stupid, of course she knows. She saw right through your lies. Apparently you cooked up some story about you being my friend who's a postgrad student in my faculty. You should have heard us laughing at that story last night when I was on the bus. She didn't sound so good when she called earlier so when I was on the bus I called her wanting to know if she was okay. And you know what she said? She said, 'I wasn't okay but I am now. Your boyfriend, Thando, gave me these really good painkillers and they did me good.' Apparently, you gave yourself away by the way you looked at my picture on the wall of our lounge."

-Me: "I did, didn't I?"

-Her: "You can imagine how shocked I was that she knew, I was nervous too. I thought she was gonna give me an earful about dating an older guy, but no, she didn't. Instead, she started making jokes about the story you told. She actually likes you. You managed to win her over with your good heart."

-Me: "For real?"

-Her: "Yeah. So you don't need to worry about my mom. The person we should be worried about is your ex-wife. I asked to meet up with her yesterday before I left Jo'burg." -Me: "You did what?"

I don't think I like the sound of this.

-Her: "It's not what you think, and I'm sorry I

did it but I felt like I had to. I asked to meet up with her because I wanted to talk to her woman to woman. I wanted to know who gave her my number and what she was hoping to achieve by feeding me lies." -Me: "And? What did she say?" -Her: "Thuso tracked her down and gave her my number because she obviously wanted her to be the one to do the scut work of breaking us up. And Busie was up for the challenge. Not because she wants to hurt you but because she thinks I'm not only taking her former spot in your life but I'm also taking her current spot in the lives of her kids." -Me: "What? What kind of insanity is that?" -Her: "I don't think it's insanity. I actually felt sorry for her, you know. When I looked at her I saw a woman who's scared of losing her children, Thando. She says they no longer want to live with her, that they want to come live with you so they can get to spend time with me. Apparently, in the three visits they

already prefer me over her. Because,

according to them, unlike their mother I show interest in their lives. They now even consider me their second mother, a second mother that's way cooler than their actual mother. Now, I don't have a child but I'd like to think no mother wants to hear her children say that. That's why Busie has been giving you problems every time you want the girls to visit. Thando, I honestly get where she's coming from even though I don't agree with how she went about dealing with the problem. Instead of fixing her relationship with the girls she tried to remove me from the equation. She thought if I'm no longer in your life then the girls won't have a reason to want to come stay with you. That's where she went wrong. I believe if she becomes a better mother, the girls won't want to leave her. What, didn't she discuss this with you?" -Me: "No. She never said anything to me, neither did the girls. This is stupid, I mean what she did. There's no doubt that I love my

girls but I'm still not ready to live alone with them. That's why I never fought Busie when she wanted full custody. Even now, there's no way I was gonna take them. There's no way I'm gonna take them from her even if they want me to."

-Her: "See? This is why communication is important. She went low, to unbelievable lengths trying to prevent a disaster that's not even coming. Kanti if she had just simply picked up the phone and talked to you about the whole thing she wouldn't have acted so stupid, as you put it."

I really can't understand how Busisiwe's brain works sometimes.

-Me: "I'll talk to her."

-Her: "You do that and I'll handle Thuso." With that she walks away. I watch her walk out of the kitchen and I smile to myself. Damn, where has she been all my life? I really love how she uses her thinking organ.

Someleze

Doc really needs to talk to his ex-wife. The last thing I need is for her to pull another stunt again. The next one may not be cheap, it may really destroy my relationship with Doc and I don't want that. As for Thuso, I'll see what to do with her.

I leave Doc standing in the kitchen and I walk back to the lounge. I take off my sandals and lazily throw myself on the couch, I doubt I'm even still in the mood for sex. But Doc is obviously not planning to let it go. He walks in and finds me sitting on the couch thumbing my phone. Taking it off my hand, he puts it next to his on the coffee table then he sits next to me and starts kissing me. I already know myself by now, I simply can't resist Doc's long and drugging kisses. In a moment I'm back in the mood. But he slows down and pulls back.

"I missed you."

He whispers close to my mouth.

-Me: "I missed you too."

-Him: "How much? Tell me."

-Me: "So much that I'd sort myself out every time I think about you. Especially when I got back to my flat the night you gave me you." Then I blush, realising what I have just blurted out. A rainbow of expressions crosses his face; surprise, shock and then a sunrise of sensual pleasure. He tilts his head, and then, taking my hand, he presses it against his groin, moving it over his member, showing me what is required of me. Through his jeans, I can feel his cock stirring into life. He leans closer into me, his voice low and breathy by my ear.

-Him: "So, you missed me and you fucked yourself instead?"

I'm a bit shy now. I don't let words come out of my mouth, I just nod. He presses my hand down against his growing erection.

-Him: "I want you to say it."

-Me: "Yes. I fucked myself, thinking about you."

-Him: "And?"

This is weird to me but at the same time it's exciting, so I go ahead and tell him.

-Me: "I wanted you there, inside me. But you weren't there, so instead, I sat naked on the floor of my shower and got myself off." -Him: "How? What did you do? Tell me in

detail. I want to know."

I am unused to this, and I'm not quite sure what to say, so I hesitate.

-Him: "Baby, I want to hear it. I want you to tell me, detail by detail, how you fucked yourself."

Hehe, am I really doing this?

-Me: "I spread my legs, and I played with my clit."

As I say this, his cock jumps under my hand. I feel it straining for escape. As well as I can through his jeans, I work him with my fingers. Just then, his phone on the coffee table rings. I stop, thinking he'd want to take it, but no, he ignores it and presses my hand again, hard down on his cock. Seeking permission in his eyes, I unzip his jeans and release his now throbbing erection.

-Him "I'd have you hard down on that, sucking me off, but I still want to hear your story."

-Me: "I played with my clit. I rubbed myself, and tweaked and flicked. And all the time I was thinking of you, with your mouth around me, lapping at me and making me wet." With the tips of my fingers, I work the head of his penis, licking my fingers to make it as good as I can for him. I have to admit, I've never done anything like this before but now it's starting to come naturally.

-Me: "I made myself really wet. I was ready for you, and I wanted you. I wanted you to lick me out and then fuck me brainless."

I feel that my fingers are not slippery enough on him. My man's dick deserves better than this, so for a moment I bend over, taking him in my mouth, licking and moistening the tender skin, at the same time, continuing to slide my fingers up and down his length. Down there, I can feel my own panties moistening. I stop and look at him, continuing with the story.

-Me: "I used my hand and I finger fucked myself. I was ready to be fucked properly I wanted to feel you deep inside me, but you weren't there. So I used my fingers instead." He pulls me closer so he can kiss me, tasting himself in my mouth, as I continue to hand fuck him. His dick is now slippery, and I am becoming uncomfortable in my now soaking panties.

His phone rings again. I see his eyes roll skywards.

"Fuck! I gotta take it, babe."

Hell, not just like that. I lean over him and lick his dick clean and dry, enjoying the taste of him and letting him see me lick my own lips clean. Then with a little difficulty, I tuck his dick away, so he could answer the phone. When I'm done, I leave him there and move to the kitchen. I really need some water, plus I need to give him space to talk on the phone.

. Some moments later, he walks into the kitchen and finds me leaning on the kitchen island. He comes to stand before me. -Him: "Now baby, you were explaining to me how you handle yourself alone."

We are still at that? He takes my hands, pulls me to him then whirls me around to pin me on the wall that was behind him. One hand grabs me by the wrists, gathering them and raising my arms above my head, pinning me to the wall. The other hand heads south, and he unbuttons my shorts. Then, not too gently, he pulls them down together with my panties to pool around my ankles. I quickly step out of the shorts and my noticeable damp panties, before kicking them to one side. Doc's hand then quest right up my now bare thighs and end up between my legs. His finger slowly makes its way into my awaiting wet p**sy. Automatically, I spread my legs to give him easy access. He reaches in and up, straight inside me. I hear his grunt of satisfaction to find me already dripping for him.

"Now, if you please, continue with your tale." He says his face close to mine. His warm breath on my skin turns me on even more. -Me: "I screwed myself with my fingers, hard."

Two of his fingers plunge into me and I yelp. -Him: "Like this?"

-Me: "Yes, oh God yes."

He stabs into me again, spreading his fingers as he goes, thumb outside, pressed on my clit and I start to whimper in arousal.

-Him: "You like that?"

I am breathless and gasping.

-Me: "Yes.... Yes."

He continues to work me, his thumb rubbing my clit and I need to cum.

-Him: "You want more?"

-Me: "Yes. Please, yes. Please let me cum."

He leans even closer, whispering into my ear. His fingers still working me, but slowly. -Him: "I forgave you that one time. But in future, never ever leave my bed without letting me know. If you didn't leave, you weren't gonna need to self-service. You get that?"

-Me: "Yes, yes."

His fingers freeze. I am on the edge of orgasm, brinking the precipice and shaking with anticipation. I need to cum.

-Me: "Please don't stop. Let me cum, let me cum."

-Him: "Promise me that you won't leave me again."

-Me: "I promise, I promise."

His fingers working my g-spot, he drops to his knees, splays my p**sy lips with the other hand and wraps his tongue around my clit, flicking and tasting me. Instantly I orgasm, pleasure pulsing electrically through me as I moan ecstatically, gushing hot over his fingers. "Spread your ankles further apart."

He commands and through a euphoric haze, I obey, trembling uncontrollably as he licks my clit and p**sy clean. My hips bucking, I want to give at the knees, let my weight slide down to the floor, but he still has several fingers inside me. I can't take no more.

-Me: "Oh God! Stop, please stop. Please stop."

He stops then sit back on his haunches, looking pleased with himself.

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Then he gets up and walk on reverse to go lean on the kitchen island.

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-Him: Come here."
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I probably look stupid with just my vest on. But who cares? I walk over to him then stand obediently before him as he tilts up my chin to kiss me on the mouth. Then gradually he turns me around to be the one against the counter. -Him: "Take your top and bra off."

I don't know but simply hearing him say the words excites me and I feel that inner warmth rising again. I pull my vest over my head and drop it on the floor. Then I unclip my bra then discard it to the floor too. He takes a moment to look at me naked.

-Him: "Undress me too."

With pleasure darling. I slip each shirt button slowly free, and then his cuffs, kissing the flat muscles of his abdomen as I do so. Soon his shirt falls to the floor. Unbuckling his belt and unzipping his jeans I am growing steadily wetter as I feel his already bulging erection. As I slide down his jeans together with his boxers, his hands push me down from the shoulders into a kneeling position. Then, gripping my head from the back, he pushes my face towards him as his other hand guides his penis into my mouth. I don't need more encouragement, I lick off the twinkling droplet from the tip, loving in the salty-sweet taste of his pre-cum. As my tongue and lips

wrap around the head, his shaft twitches under me and I revel in the odd feeling of power it gives me to obey this man, to do his bidding in everything. My mouth filled, I glance upwards to see him standing straight, head up and back, hands clasped behind his head.

-Him: "Baby, pay attention to what you are doing."

He says, and compliantly, I suck and lick his cock, feeling it pulse as I trail the tip of my tongue around the rim of the head, first flicking quickly, then making long sweeping strokes of my tongue, from the base of his shaft, full length to the crown, savouring his trickling juices as his lust rises.

I hear him take a gasp above me.

-Him: "You're so good at that, baby. So good." Really? But it must be true because I can feel his moans and groans of pleasure. To be honest, I wasn't even sure of what I was doing. I never gave any man a blowjob before, Alex's dick doesn't know my mouth. -Him: "Continue. But in a minute you are going to stand and I'm going to fuck you senseless."

At his words I flood and gasp, feeling wet heat dribble down inside my thighs. He chuckles as he hears me gasp. And suddenly he gently pushes me off of him. Then he bends, grasps me by the waist and lifts me up, depositing my naked ass on the lower side of his kitchen island.

-Him: "Spread them."

He says, forcing my knees apart, and making me lean backwards to support myself. -Him: "Lie down."

He says, gently pushing me flat, back down onto the marble surface. Then he kicks his shoes off and chucks his boxers and jeans completely to the side. After that, he pulls me at the hips until his cock kisses into the entrance of my p**sy. He thrusts in for a moment, then stops.

-Him: "Not wet enough."

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I am not sure what he means by this, as it seems to me that I am already swollen and slippery for him, but he drops down and plants his mouth squarely over my p**sy, thrusting in with his tongue, twisting and probing, drinking my juices. Involuntarily I heave and gulp, arching my back to raise my hips to him, locking my ankles behind his head to open myself fully to him. I don't want to make a lot of noise but as his lips purse over my clit, I cannot help myself. I groan and writhe at the exquisite fire stabbing up through my core. His teeth nibble gently at my bud, then his tongue circles it, flicking and manipulating it until my p**sy juices gush out onto his mouth. He doesn't stop. He licks deep, over my p**sy lips, trailing through my cunt and lingering deliciously as he drinks from me.

-Him: "Wet enough now I think."

And he rises to his feet. Standing, his erection is huge, he probes with the tip at my entrance, once, twice, thrice as my p**sy twitches and jumps in response. Then he thrusts headlong, deep inside me, hard, stopping only as he strikes my inner walls. I scream in response, my cunt throbbing to his rhythm as I try to tighten p**sy and belly muscles around him. I can barely think as he plunges inside me, again and again, but I know that I want him there and that I want him to take the greatest pleasure in me. He pounds away inside me, gentle at first, then he increses the pace. Lying flat-backed on the stone surface there is little I can do beyond my screaming, rising unbidden from my depths; a deep, primal response to the earthquake of the flesh I am experiencing at his bidding. My hips try to gyrate in time to his thrusting, but with no give to the stone surface I cannot really move at all, only quiver below him as he plunges inside me, again and again, harder and harder.

I feel the stone slab slick under me, and I begin to slide over the slippery surface. But he seizes me at the hips, holding me steady as he continues his pounding inside me, ball deep, and then out completely, to his full length in and then out again. Breathing is difficult as I pant uncontrollably between screams, my heart pounding and my pulse racing. I feel the rise of orgasm within me, the tension building and my belly muscles clenching as it builds. Convulsed in a paroxysm of ecstatic joy, I try to lean up, to embrace the sensation, but his hand flat between my breasts, he pushes me down again on my back, holding me pinned as climax takes me. I am unconscious of anything but the release as my pulsating cunt sends violent waves of pleasure through my stomach and thighs. I do not know if I scream or gasp or cry, only that I lie helplessly writhing, speared by Doc. He doesn't stop moving, I can feel the growing throb and cadence of his rising climax. His own hips start

to quiver, and then, as I feel he is about to

spurt inside me, he pulls out and shoots onto my tummy in a creamy cascade. He finishes his climax over my stomach, his stream surging over to my belly button. Finally, with a heave, he takes a step back from me and stands there breathing deeply, arms akimbo. Sated and exhausted, I lie there, my panting subsiding. After a moment he comes over to me and looks at me in the eye.

-Him: "Baby, you feel good. Really good." And he leans over, kissing me deeply on the mouth and then the breasts.

-"Him: "Come on, let me help you down." And he picks me up from the marble and places me carefully on my own two feet. I wobble a little, a bit unsteady after the internal pounding he just gave my still swollen p**sy and clit.

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Seeing that I'm wobbling, he picks me up and carries me to his bedroom, then to the ensuite bathroom and into the shower. He turns the water on, feeling the temperature. When it's fine we start taking the shower together. In fact, he washes me up, my back, front, down there, all the way to my feet. It feels good being treated like this, I must say. Then turning the water off, he carries me out of the shower. He only puts me down on my feet when we are out, in front of the mirror. He leaves me there going to grab a towel. I examine myself in the mirror. I have really changed, haven't I? It's not a physical thing that I can see in the mirror, but psychologically I know that I'm a different person. The things I do aren't things my old self would do.

On my shoulder, I can see the bite mark Doc left on me earlier. I run my finger over it and I feel a tingling sensation right down to my toes. Doc comes behind me with two towels. He hands one to me so I can dry myself as he dries himself with the other.

Then we walk out of the bathroom and into the bedroom. He pulls fresh boxers out of a drawer in the closet, and puts them on as I sit on the bed, naked. He pulls out two T-shirts, he puts one on and gives the other to me. I put it on as big as it is on me. He then climbs onto the bed and pulls me to him so I can sleep on his chest as he lies down on his back. -Him: "I want to spend the rest of the day with you. And I'd like you to spend the night. I want you to sleep here, next to me, till the morning this time around. No sneaking out at night as if you were my one night stand. Our sex has meaning, babe. We're together. We're in love. I need to feel that. I need to wake up next to you in the morning." -Me: "I am gonna spend the night, babe. I want that too. It's Wednesday today and I'm not going to work for the rest of the week. I'm only going back on Monday. So I'll be all yours till then."

-Him: "What if you don't go back at all?"
-Me: "What, you want me to quit my job?"
-Him: "Yeah. Soso, I'm your man. Let me take care of you. Anything you need I'll provide.
You don't need to work."

Data is a problem. Yesterday it ran out when I was still typing. Vodacom chows data like Doc chows p**sy.

#18

"If you really wanna know, ask how many nights I've been thinking of you, zero, zero. I gave a hundred percent but all I got from you, zero, zero." - Chris Brown

Thando

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5 days later - Monday
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After our hot steamy session with my baby last night not a word was muttered, our arms wrapped around each other as we drifted into a deep, relaxing satisfied sleep. I'm only waking up now, and, checking the time, I realise that it's 5:05. I never set an alarm, my body is accustomed to waking up around this time. I roll over to look at the woman sleeping next to me and I smile to myself. Lord, how did I become so lucky? I ask myself that question everyday. Soso is perfect in her imperfections and I consider myself lucky to have her. Having her next to me all night, every night, and waking up next to her every morning in the past 5 days has been nothing but bliss to me. And the sex? Out of this world. We share the most sensational sex, the kind I haven't had in a very very long time. I

know that we go wild with the f*cking, and that's exactly how I like it, but it always feels more than just f*cking. It's the closest thing to a spiritual experience I've ever known. I'm 31 but I doubt I've ever felt like this before. The first time I went inside her, I knew that I've never felt that instantaneous recognition of something stronger than myself. Damn, just thinking about it is enough to make my body stir. She gave it all to me last night but I still want her. Gosh, I have the uneasy feeling I'm never going to have enough of her. I asked her to quit her job last week but she didn't give me a straight answer. She's supposed to go back to work tonight and I don't know if she will, but I'd prefer it if she didn't. The way I'm so attached to her is nowhere near being funny. I don't think I can ever be able to sleep without her next to me. And I don't like that she's exhausting herself working at that filling station. She doesn't need to do that anymore, I'm here and I'll take care of her, I want to. All she needs to do is focus on her studies,

mostly, then on me.

As I'm still lying here figuring a way to convince her to quit her job, I hear her moaning in her sleep and I can feel my erection stirring up. She's on her side, her back to me, completely naked, in fact we're both naked. I turn my physical attention to her, kissing and nuzzling the back of her neck.

She acknowledges me by moaning and by stretching her hand behind her to stroke my mounting erection, only to release it and press her ass into my cock. Damn, what is this girl doing to me? I just want to feel myself inside her right now, but she rolls over to face me. I love how she opens her eyes in the morning, slowly and sexily. Looking into my eyes, she smiles. Whenever I see her smile like this everything seems alright, the world becomes a better place. Her smile always manages to shoot past my eyes and straight to my heart. It warms me up inside and I can't help but smile too.

-Me: "Morning, sleepy head."

-Her: "Morning, sthandwa sam. Sleep well?"-Me: "The sleep that really good sex gives you."

She laughs. I mean it though. She comes closer and kisses my lips. I kiss her back, long

and hard, with our hands feeling each other's bodies. Neither of us minds the morning breath of the other, and that's what happens when you really love someone. Soon, I feel her hand gently sliding up my thigh and her warm, soft fingers start caressing my balls. I reach over with my hand between her own thighs and straight up to her p**sy. I let out a

groan of satisfaction when I find her already wet and my fingers easily slip between the lips of her p**sy as I push two of my fingers up inside her. We start gently masturbating each other and soon I can feel that we're both losing ourselves in heightened arousal at each other's touch.

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I roll over on top of her, kissing her on the lips before moving down to her breasts. The moans she's letting out are sending me over the edge. Soon, I'm kneeling between her knees and I gently lower myself onto her. She's so wet that my cock easily slides inside her without any effort. I lie on top of her with my arms hooked under her shoulders and slowly push deep inside her while we kiss passionately, exploring each other's mouths with our tongues. Ever so slowly, I pull out again until the head of my cock is just inside her and very slowly push back in again. Each time I push in, she moans softly and push her hips up to meet mine. We keep this up for several minutes before I have to pull out and take a break, delaying my climax. I'm all for soft love-making in the morning, and I like to take my time. I sit astride her for a while, caressing her breasts with my hands until the urge to cum subsides a bit. Then very carefully, I enter her again and start slowly pushing in and out of her while I support myself with my hands. With my back arched, I push deeper into her and each time I'm deep inside her, I move from side to side slightly. This seems to get her really excited and she

puts her hands around my buttocks to pull me

in even further. After a few more minutes of this, I have to pull out again and wait until the desire to cum subsides before easing myself back inside her yet again.

We manage to keep this up for 25 or 30 minutes before our passion starts to become too strong. My thrusting begins to quicken in pace and my baby starts moaning more loudly. I can feel the tension starting to build in my cock and I start moaning as well. My thrusting becomes faster and stronger and each time I push deep inside her our pubic bones grind together. Finally, I reach orgasm and call out as I pump semen into her. At the same time my baby is screaming to the ceiling.

"Yes, yes, yes, ooooh, that's it, I'm cumming, I'm cumming!"

And she archs her back as she reaches orgasm. I lie back down on top of her for a moment, catching my breath. Then I pull out and we both roll over, still facing each other. We lie like that in each other's arms for some time, kissing each other softly.

-Her: "I love you, Thando."

She says with her eyes shadowed with so much emotion. I know, this woman really loves me. And I love her too, maybe more than she even knows. I kiss her again, pouring my entire soul into the kiss. Going deeper, I let my mouth communicate my true feelings without uttering a single word.

-Me: "I love you too, sthandwa sam." I say, finally.

-Me: "So much. It's only been a couple of weeks but you already have a permanent place in my heart, and that's because you mean a lot to me. My...my worst fear is losing you, Someleze. I know that I have a baggage my kids, my ex-wife. But please, I want you to know that I'm really working on making sure that none of that comes between us." -Her: "I know. I know. And I promise you, I'm not going anywhere. Boy, you're stuck with me." She says brushing my cheek. Then she pecks my lips. The love she has for me is undeniable.

I just hope the mother of my children won't pull another stunt to ruin us. I talked to her and put her in her place. She seemed to understand as we discussed a way forward, and I'm really hoping that things will remain that way.

Speaking of children, I really don't think I want another child in my life. I don't think Someleze is ready for that either. After what happened on Wednesday, me hitting it raw, I saw how worried she was as we cuddled on the bed. I thought she wasn't on any contraceptive and that maybe she was worried that she might fall pregnant even though I'd pulled out but no, she's got the Nexplanon implant so that meant she was worried about something else. I, too, don't know what I was thinking. Yes, I know my HIV status but I didn't know hers. She was worried about the same thing too, infections, I figured. So the next morning I talked to her about it and we decided to go for testing together at my GP's office. We're both clean and that's a comfort to the both of us. But we've been using condoms even after we got those results, well up until now. And I must say, I enjoyed coming inside her. I wish we could do it again or just lie like this forever but duty calls. I pull away from her and climb down the bed. We are running late, we have to get up and get ready to go to campus. I have to go to work and she has classes too, the September break is now over. Picking her up from the bed, I carry her to the bathroom and we take a shower together, something I really enjoy. It's no secret that we both want to make love again under these jets of water but we can't, we'll be late. We step out and quickly get ready. Yesterday Soso came with a bag of fresh clothes to change into this

morning, so we both start getting dressed. Soon, we are dressed and we make the bed

together before going to the kitchen to have

breakfast - just muesli and fruit salad. Then we get our bags and leave the house to the car. I get her door and help her inside before going round to get inside next to her. -Her: "Baby, the door is not properly closed." I pull it closed then turn to her with a smile. -Me: "We both know that we're sleeping together. Hell, we just did it 2 hours ago. But, sthandwa sam, make sure that other people on campus don't read that from your body language. Okay? Remember, from this moment until we come back home I'm not 'baby' or 'Thando', I'm 'Doc' or 'sir', alright?" She just bursts out, laughing. I find myself laughing too.

-Me: "Ndlovu, I mean it."

-Her: "Yes, sir. I know."

Then we kiss, still laughing. Before driving off. I just love how crazy she can be sometimes.

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Someleze

My spiritual and emotional connection with Doc has strengthened dramatically in the past few days. We connected on the deepest human level. Right now, I can say with no hesitation in my voice that I am totally happy. I feel like Doc has been sent to heal and mend my broken heart. And he's been doing a great job at that, in fact I think he completed his mission a while ago. What he's doing now is a bonus. I've never been this happy in my entire life, even when I'd just fallen in love for the very first time I wasn't like this. Yes, I was happy, very happy, but not this much. Doc is everything a woman could possibly want, or at least I think so. I'm not sure what other women want, I'm only sure about myself, and I know that Doc is everything I want in a man. I really love him, but if he thinks I'll quit my job because he wants me to, he's Big-Mac'ing in his dreams. I don't want to depend on a man financially ever again. I've been there

before and it didn't end so well. So nah, he's just going to have to forgive me, this is one request I cannot honour. I enjoy working and earning my own money, there's no way I'm going to drop that. Knowing the kind if person he is, he's not going to be happy about my decision but he's just going to have to accept it.

It has been a long day, and concentrating in his class has been a mission for me, I have to admit. I kept thinking about the things he does to me when we are alone, and the fact that he was buried deep inside me this very morning didn't make things easier either. But I really tried to focus until it was over. Now it's the afternoon and I make my way to his office so we can drive home together. I find him sitting behind his desk, talking on his cellphone with who I think is Busie. They've been talking a lot lately, since last Wednesday when she called as I was busy hand-fucking her ex-husband. I never get jealous of the calls because I know that they are discussing

their children, their co-parenting duties. As for Thuso, I don't know what she's up to wherever she is. I thought I was going to see her in class today but she wasn't there. Maybe she's still not back from home but as soon as she gets her behind back here we'll face each other.

I sit down on the chair and wait for Doc to finish his conversation. And when he does, he gathers his stuff and we walk out to his car. We drive home talking about nothing else but Biochemistry. This guy is really feeling this course and yours truly is absorbing as much information from him as she can - all of this will come in handy come test or exam.

As usual, he only starts a conversation about us when he parks in front of my gate.

-Him: "Baby, please tell me you're not going to work tonight."

Dear God, this is the conversation I've been dreading.

-Me: "Sthandwa sam, I know that you want me to quit because you think I'm overworking myself and because you also want me to have more time for you. That's nice, it's really nice but I can't do it, babe. I can't quit my job. Hayi kabi, baby, but I don't want to be financially dependent on a man. It's not you, it's me. I just wanna do my things when I want to and not wait for you to give me money when you feel like it."

-Him: "You won't wait. I will give you money and if you still need more when it runs out, you'll just have to ask and I'll give it to you. Baby, I just want you to focus on your studies. I don't want you to be distracted. And I'm not gonna lie, I do need to spend more time with you but I won't be able to if you keep working these night shifts. Please, babe, just do this one thing for me."

I hear him, but really, there's no way I'm doing this. Yes, I know that he's not Alex. What Alex did he probably won't do. But I don't want to find out. Alex didn't notify me when he was about to do it either, he just did it. I just can't repeat the same mistake twice. Being cautious never hurts anyone. To keep my relationship with Doc green, I think umntu nomntu makatye kweyakhe ipokotho.

-Me: "I'm sorry, baby, I can't. I need to do this for myself. Please understand. Just this once." -Him: "Fine. Go."

He says with a voice laced with irritation. -Me: "Thando, come on, don't do that. This is one area we need to compromise on. We'll still see each other on weekends - from Friday to Sunday. That should be enough." -Him: "I can't continue talking about this now, Soso. Please, just open the door and get out." Yoh! I open the door and get out, just as Alex's car pulls up behind Doc's.

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What the hell does he want? Can't he see that I'm over his black ass? He gets out and comes to me as I walk towards my gate. I'm already irritated as it is and he's about to make things worse. -Him: "Soso, can we talk?"

Not wanting drama and avoiding to cause a scene, I stop and turn to him.

-Me: "Alex. What do you want?"

-Him: "I want us to talk. Please."

I look over at Doc who now starts his car and drive off. I take a moment just watching his car until it disappears around the corner. Then I turn to Alex.

-Me: "Alex, talk. I don't have the luxury of time. I have to be at work in less than an hour.

-Him: "Then I'll take just a few minutes of your time. Can we please go talk in my car?" -Me: "Fine. But you better make it snappy." I walk with him over to his car and we get in. I'm only agreeing to this because I'm curious to hear what he has to say. Plus, I can't be standing in front of my gate with a man, my landlord doesn't like that, so the only way was to come talk with him in the car. "So?"

I say after we've both settled on our seats.

-Him: "Firstly, I wanna say I'm sorry. I'm sorry about the way I treated you. You didn't deserve that, MaNdlovu, you didn't." -Me: "Oh, you do know that now, huh. What made you see it?"

-Him: "Life."

-Me: "Life?"

-Him: "Yeah. I made a mistake by letting you go, Someleze. A terrible mistake. I thought I was doing the right thing for myself but now I'm regretting the decision I made. Iviwe is not the woman I thought she was. She..." -Me: "Woah! Yibambe apho ke bhuti. Andinamdla wokwazi ngawe nolviwe wakho. Wakhetha yena kunam mos so... [Hold it right

there. I'm not interested in knowing about you and your Iviwe. You chose her over me so...]"

-Him: "I made a terrible mistake by dropping you for her, Soso."

He turns and looks straight into my eyes. -Him: "I miss you. I really do. Lemme go straight to the point. Would you please consider giving us another chance? Please. I still love you, Soso. And I'm sorry." Hehehe, karma takes no time, huh. Iviwe must have showed him flames, and now he's thinking of me. He must think I'm stupid, hey. As much as I'm enjoying this, though, I don't have time to entertain him.

-Me: "The answer to your question is no. Alex, if you really want to know, I don't miss you at all. I don't think about you at any time of the day...or night. You are a closed chapter in my life. A chapter that would never ever get to see the light of day again. I thought we were solid, you know. I thought what we had was important to you as much as it was to me. But boy was I wrong. You turned around and walked away with your love without even telling me that you were doing it, or even why you were doing it. I cried, thinking and praying that you'd come back to me but you didn't. You just humiliated me in front of your woman instead. I was left dealing with that kind of pain when you were busy enjoying

life. And now you have the nerve to come here and tell me this? Are you alright upstairs? The woman that you left me for has probably done to you what you did to me, and now you're coming back to me? What do you think I am? A consolation prize. I gave you my all, Alex, but you chose to hurt me in return. So, no, just because you miss what we had doesn't mean I do too. I thought you were the one then, before you hurt me, but not anymore. As I'm sure you already know, I moved on with my life, Alex. And right now, I don't need you anywhere near me. Go to the woman you thought was better than me and stay away from me."

With that I get out of his car and walk away, leaving him with his face buried in his hands. Tshini nkosiyam singaphela. He thought I was still thinking about his ass? Oh hell no. I got over him, and quicker than I even thought I would. He still loves me? Well, he can take his stupid love and shove it.

I need to go get ready for my shift.

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Hehehe, I really don't know if I should be offended or what by those who think I'm a teenager. What are you guys trying to say about me? Those who think I'm 30 and above, I'm taking that as a compliment. Well, I'm actually a 28 year old, married and childless woman, who was once the 21 year old Soso. Let's just say, as the first time writer that I am, I thought I should start writing with what I know - it's easier that way. Now let's just leave it at that.

#19

"And now I'm missin' your love, I'ma roll up. I'm faded once again, I don't know where I am. But I just know I'm driftin' far from you. I'm tryna keep my head strong, but my heart won't just let me grow away from you." -Chris Brown [G-Eazy]

Someleze

With my head down and hands tucked in the pockets of my uniform pants, I drag my feet outside after clocking in at work. I haven't even started putting in the hours yet but I'm already tired. I had a long day on campus, and the fact that Doc and I only slept after 00:00 last night doesn't help either. He was right though, I'm exhausting myself by working here. But I'd rather be drained than be financially dependent on him. I don't want to be "blessed".

"Finally, she's back."

Even though I only see his feet standing in front of me under my work baseball cap that I've pulled down to just above my eyes, I know that it's Kevin, I know his voice. Raising my head, I look at him and smile.

-Me: "Hey, buddy."

Even though we chat via Whatsapp, the last time I saw Kevin was that morning before I went home to P.E. After I came back from Jo'burg on Wednesday last week I didn't see him because I didn't come to work at all last week. I took the entire week off because I was "sick". I even have a doctor's certificate. Doc had his GP write it for me when we went there for HIV testing on Thursday - at a cost of course.

-Kevin: "Glad you're back, buddy. This place wasn't the same without you."

-Me: "What would you do if I were to not come back at all?"

-Him: "What, you're thinking of quitting?" -Me: "My man wants me to."

-Him: "You're now admitting that the good doctor's your man?"

-Me: "Because he's the one who admitted it to you first when you two drove to P.E together."

-Him: "He's a great guy. But why does he want you to quit?"

-Me: "Says I'm overworking my body. And he also wants to spend more time with me."

I say, leaning on the wall behind me. And Kevin follows suit.

-Him: "Isn't he right though? Aren't you exhausting yourself? School, work, boyfriend. Ain't that too much?"

-Me: "It probably is...God, please tell me why did I choose to be a triple major at varsity." I groan as I cover my face with both my hands.

-Him: "Triple major?"

As I remove my hands from my face I remember that Kevin's never been a varsity student, so he wouldn't just understand. -Me: "Majoring in three courses. To complete my degree I was required to have just two majors and drop the elective course at second year level. But I chose to take it to third year level for my own benefit. I like all three courses; Microbiology, Biochemistry and Chemistry. I didn't want to drop any of them, so here I am now, drowning in a load of school work. And then there's this job and a man on the side." -Him: "It really sounds like a lot. But if you quit will Thando give you the money you're earning here?"

-Me: "That's what he says. Says whatever I need he'll provide. But I don't want that, I don't want to be financially dependent on a man, Kev. I want to continue making my own money. But Thando's not having any of that. He's sulking as we speak because I've chosen to come here, because I'm refusing to quit... Tell me, Kev. Am I doing a wrong thing? If you were me what would you do? Would you quit?"

-Him: "You don't know how much I would love to have a girlfriend like you. Someone who doesn't want to clean my wallet. Someone independent. Thando should be happy you're not after his money. He should appreciate the fact that you want to be independent and respect you for it. But I also understand where he's coming from. So, with that said, I can't answer your question. This is something you and your man should sit down and talk about, find a common ground. It's imperative that..."

But he doesn't finish. We both get distracted by the sight of an immaculate red Ferrari driving into our station and to our pumps. This is Alice, a small town, it's not everyday that you get to see such luxury cars here. So when one appears it draws all the attention. -Kevin: "Nice wheels. Go attend to it. I'm sure the owner will give you a fat tip."

-Me: "I'll go. Not for the tip though, but because it's my job."

As I'm making my approach I see Bonolo getting out of the passenger side of this glittering Italian sports machine. Bonolo, one of Thuso's friends. She's probably with her blesser, I say to myself as she runs towards the shop, ignoring me.

I look through the rolled down window of the car to talk to the driver, and my heart almost jumps out of my chest due to shock when I see who the driver is - Thuso herself.

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-Me: "Thuso?"
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-Her: "Soso?

I can see that she's also shocked to see me working here. I've been working here for two months now but Thuso never knew that. It wasn't her business to know.

-Me: "Nice toy."

-Her: "Thanks. You're pumping fuel now?" Her "thanks" is as dry her brain.

-Me: "It's called honest living... I thought I'd see you in our classes today but you weren't there. Why?"

-Her: "I didn't know that I have a monitor to monitor my presence or absence. I only came back this afternoon, if you must know." What did I just say about her brain? Dry indeed. She can't even see that I'm asking questions tailored to a response that I've already anticipated.

-Me: "Your father got you these wheels?" -Her: "What does it matter who got me the car? Fact is; I'm driving it, you don't." -Me: "True. But I'm not jealous. I understand that as people we can't all be on the same level. We can't all have the same things." I state, boring my eyes into hers in a way that demands her attention.

-Me: "When you see the next person with something nice, something you don't have, the least you can do is be happy for them, not be bitchy about it. Thuso, I have December, you don't. Why can't you just accept that and back the hell off if you can't be happy for me? I know what you did the week before last. I know that you tracked Busisiwe down because you wanted her to break me and December up. But guess what, you failed. And whatever you try to do next, you're gonna fail again."

I say, unapologetically.

-Her: "Oh, so you're finally admitting to sleeping with a lecturer?"

-Me: "I am. Question is, what are you gonna do about it? Go report the affair, no one's gonna believe a loose bitch like you. You already killed your reputation, and you already made the allegations about Doc and I in front of the HOD. Nobody believed you then, and nobody will ever believe you. Whatever you decide to do next I say bring it on. I'm tired of your shit, Thuso. Keep this up and you're gonna see another side of me that you've never seen before. And I promise you,

you're not gonna like it."

I pause for a moment, allowing my message to be absorbed.

-Me: "Now...the petrol. How much?" My voice has been calm all this time but clearly my words have been so disconcerting that Thuso has to take a few moments to find her voice.

-Her: "Six...six hundred."

She's not saying anything about what I just said, but I know that it's not over. She hands me the R600 and I pump her petrol. As I close the petrol cap Bonolo gets to the car with two plastic bags full of whatever she's just bought from the shop. Again, she doesn't greet me, she just gives me a bitchy look then gets in the car. Does she honestly think I care? If anything, my thoughts about her good heart and her brains have just dissipated like the morning fog over the Tyhume River - our local river. Clearly she doesn't have any of those. I walk away to the cashier window and they also drive off.

As I'm still standing here, leaning on the wall by the cashier's window, thinking about the war that Thuso is about to declare against me, my phone rings. I take it out of my pocket and glance at the screen. It's Busisiwe, I saved her number. What does she want? I wonder. Taking a deep breath, I swipe through the screen to answer.

-Me: "Hello."

I answer, trying to sound more alive than I actually am.

-Her: "Someleze, hey. How are you?"

-Me: "I'm okay. Are you?"

I answer as I sit down on the outside bench. -Her: "I'm fine. Listen, the twins are coming down to visit their father this coming Friday and I'd really appreciate it if you could be nice to them as always."

Okay, what is this woman trying to say? -Me: "Oh?"

-Her: "Yeah. Can I just say something?" -Me: "Sure."

-Her: "What you said to me last week had me thinking, it pushed me to do some introspection. That's why I couldn't even say anything before you walked out of that restaurant. You left me open-mouthed. I was in awe by just how mature you are for your age. And I realised that I'd judged you harshly without knowing anything about you. You're not a typical 21 year old. Hell, I'm even ashamed to accept that I've been given a wise advice by a girl that's way younger than me. But you were right, the problem here was me, not you. And I've already started to pull my shit together, for my girls' sake. In a calm manner, you made me see that your intentions are pure. That your love for them and their father is genuine. And for that I respect you. Thando and I have been talking about this, he told me how serious you are about each other, and I'm glad he has someone like you in his corner. Even though I had some misgivings at first, if I'm being honest, I'm happy he's introduced the twins to someone like you. When they are over

there, I'm gonna rest assured that they are in good hands."

Okay, I didn't see this coming.

-Me: "Thanks for saying this, Busie. And yeah, you don't have to worry, I love the twins and they are gonna be taken care of when here." -Her: "I'm sorry for what I did, and I'm so ashamed, you know. I'm sure you saw me as a walking cliché. An ex-wife that's fighting the current girlfriend. So stupid." -Me: "Not really. And Busie... I'm glad you called. And don't worry about what happened, it's water under the bridge." -Her: "Thanks for listening. Bye for now." -Me: "Bye."

We both hang up. And I'm left looking at the screen of my phone. What was that? Was that real? Oh, wow.

"Baby."

I look up, to this familiar voice. A word doesn't exist for the feeling of unexpected delight I'm experiencing right now at the sight of Doc. He's now standing in front of me, smiling, and I quickly get up from the bench. But I thought he was home sulking. I'm happy to see him here though, but I immediately throttle back my emotions so my pleasure isn't completely obvious. But he has no such inhibition. He hugs me then kisses my cheek, lingering near my ear.

-Him: "I have a weakness for women in uniform. Especially if the name is Someleze Ndlovu." He says so seductively near my ear. My cheeks unconsciously lift with happiness. -Me: "But I thought you were mad at me.

What are you doing here?"

He pulls back, smiling wickedly as he takes my hand into his.

-Me: "I can never stay mad at you, babe. It's impossible. Working here is what you want and I'm willing to let you do it...for now." Yeesss!!! A slow smile of victory raises my lips.

-Me: "You mean that?"

-Him: "Of course...But you look tired even though it's still early. You could use some good coffee, and I've brought you some. Imported beans, not this dish water that's sold here."

I laugh happily as he walks me over to his car. When we reach it, he pauses. Then he turns me around and pins my back against its door. Stepping forward, to get very close to me, he moves his hand to touch my hip. With my short-sleeved shirt, I feel a fingertip from his

second hand touching the inside of my palm,

moving up my skin on the inside of my forearm, then crossing my elbow, to the back of my bicep. It causes shivers to run along my back. I unconsciously lean into him, humming against his cheek. The fact that I'm at work or that this is actually my lecturer and that some students or other staff members from his department could possibly see us isn't even hitting my mind, and evidently he's not thinking about it either.

-Him: "Damn, I love you."

He whispers close to my ear, his lips never touching the surface of my skin.

-Him: "I want to bottle you up and drink you down. I don't know if I'm gonna be able to sleep without you next to me tonight." Haha. What? I savour the image. Then I picture his arms wrapped around me in his bed as we drift off into a deep sleep. I want to feel that tonight, but it can't happen. I let out a subtle smile and brush his shoulder as he pulls his face away from my ear. -Me: "You'll be fine."

-Him: "I'll try."

His breath hits me before his lips do, because he's now close to my mouth. I suck in a breath, then he tilts his head and kisses me, right here in public. I don't ask, I kiss him back. A slow, passionate kiss. He finally pulls back and looks at me.

-Him: "I just had to come and see you before I climb on that empty bed. But you can go back to work now."

-Me: "Thanks for coming. Can I get my coffee now?"

I say, smiling. He opens the passenger door and comes out with a flask which he then hands to me. He knows that I have many new styrofoam cups in my locker, so I'm set. But he also takes out a lunch box.

-Him: "Food put together in an hour, but it's way better than that junk that's sold in that fast food shop."

He says handing me the lunch box. One of the things I love about Doc is that he's not only

good in the bedroom but also in the kitchen. He's a better cook than I am.

-Me: "Awww, baby, thanks. You're a darling, you know that? See you in the morning. I love you."

-Him: "Love you more."

We kiss one more time then he gets in his car. But before he drives off he has something else in his mind.

-Him: "What did your ex want earlier?" I knew he was going to ask.

-Me: "Love back. Don't mind. He's high on something."

-Him: "He better watch where he puts his foot. Bye, babe."

I don't know what he means by that and I don't even get a chance to ask because he rolls up his window and drives off. Okay, let me go back to work.

"You and the good doctor need to slow down, hey. What's with the PDA? Have you forgotten that you're at work? Did you even see the cars that needed to be attended to? I had to do it. And the other guys are complaining."

That's Kevin. He says as he comes to me. I just wave him off dismissively, like a designer to a tailor, even though I know that he's right. I make my way to the locker room and leave everything Doc gave me inside my locker, I'll eat later. Then I get my earphones out and plug them into my phone. I turn on the music then walk back outside to rock and roll. The guys that were complaining can sit their butts down and let me work alone if they wish. The pumping beats in my ears match the adrenaline running through my veins now that Doc has come around, energising me more than caffeine ever can. Nothing is as bad as I thought.

. 4 days later - Friday Alex

Over time, pain turns into grief, grief turns into silence, and silence turns into lonesomeness, as vast and bottomless as the dark oceans. When I lost my twin sister, with whom I was very very close, in a horrific car accident 3 years ago I retreated into a solitude that grew in weight day by day. I pushed everyone away but there's only one person who pushed back and hard, and that's Soso. She pushed her way in with no intention to walk out. I was going through a rough time and she was there for me. She helped me out of a broken place, she gave me comfort, she made sure that she held me close to her. She didn't even need to say much, her being there was enough. But I still remember what she said this one day when she found me home, sitting on the floor of my bathroom, about to

overdose on sleeping pills. She said something like, "Baby, things are going to be okay. I know that right now you feel like the light of your soul has been put out and that you will stay in the dark forever. But that's

not true. After grief comes another season,

another life, another you. I felt like this too when I lost my grandmother who was more like a mother to me. She is gone, she is no more, but then I started seeing her everywhere and in everything I do. Deep in the slow whirling of sorrow and longing, I am with my grandmother every day, every minute. She lives inside me. All this to say, you haven't lost your twin sister completely too, she continues to live inside you. You just need to be calm and listen to her voice that's within you. What would she say to you right now? Would she want you to take your own life?" After that she didn't wait for my answer, she just took the pills and walked out. What she'd just said didn't make much sense to me at the time but the last part really got me thinking. What would my twin sister say? She would definitely scream at me and tell me to stop being stupid, that much I knew. That's when I pulled myself together and got up from that floor determined to continue

living my life. Soso came back a moment later

and ran me a bath. After that long soothing bath, she tucked me into bed and held me all night without saying a single word. Having her next to me, knowing that I wasn't alone, made all the difference. In the morning I thought she would tell my parents about what I'd tried to do but she didn't. She knew how my parents would react and she didn't want that. Instead, she convinced me to go for counselling and I did. Counselling changed my life. Hell, SHE saved and changed my life. That's the kind of woman Soso was to me. Young but strong for me. She loved me and it showed. But I still dropped her anyway. For what? Just wild sex? How could I? Soso was my main chick but I just had to fuck up what we had. Thinking about it now, I see how stupid I was. I shouldn't have done what I did to her. She couldn't satisfy me in bed yes, but she loved me. She loved me past the fuck-boy stage and tried to make a better man out me. But I just had to disappoint her. After my wild

sexual encounters with Iviwe I could feel

myself drifting far from Soso. I blamed it on her whack sex game, but I couldn't even bring myself to tell her that. I just kept dodging her and ignoring her calls while I was busy acting wild, until she found out for herself. I hurt her. I hurt her so bad. I know that I don't have a right to but right now I'm missing her love, I'm missing what we had. Without her, I can feel myself fading. I don't know where or who I am. What was I thinking really? Was I even thinking though? I doubt it. Or at least not with the organ above my neck. I know that she's made it perfectly clear that she doesn't want me back and I'm trying to keep my head strong and accept that but my heart just won't let me give up on her. I want her back, I need her even though I can see that she's now drifted away from me. It took me being manhandled by another man to realise that Soso was a diamond. A diamond that I chose to discard and replace with an ordinary rock. I made a mistake, a colossal mistake. Iviwe was not for me, but I was too blinded by the good

sex to notice. When a man called her phone referring to her as his woman 2 weeks ago, she walked in through the door and her eyes went wild when she realised that I had answered her phone. I gave it to her so she could talk to the man but she just cut the call and looked at me nervously. Naturally, I asked what was going on and her answer was the same old answer: "That's my delusional ex who just doesn't want to take the message." Even though I had many questions, I chose to let it go. I was in no mood to fight that morning and I didn't even have time to, I just wanted to get to my department and work on my dissertation. But then the next day I went to her commune at the hospital and I got the answers to my questions in a not-so-pleasant way. I had just got there and I was still trying to talk to lviwe when this tough-looking guy walked in also wanting to see lviwe. I guessed he was in his mid to late thirties as I took in his face that looked like it was chieseled out

of a stone. As he spoke, I recognised his voice as that of the man who'd called Iviwe's phone the day before. I asked what was going on,

who he was to my girlfriend, and that got me more than I had bargained for. I found myself pinned against the wall with this guy's arms wedged under my throat. As it turns out he's also from Mthatha just like lviwe, and lviwe is his fiancée. You can imagine how I felt when that bomb got dropped on my lap. The first emotion I went through was anger. Angry at myself for being so stupid, then at lviwe for lying to me. She tried to explain but I wasn't interested, I had heard enough. I walked out of there with my blood feeling like liquid fire in my veins, I was boiling. How could she not tell me something like that? In fact, how could she lie to me like that? The first person I thought of when I got to my room was Soso. I felt so stupid for letting her go. I let her go for what? Another man's wife? It was clear to me that she's moved on but I just had to talk to her and find out if she's really closed our

chapter together. It took me a week to

muster the courage to go talk to her though. And even when I did, nothing came of it. She told me off. Now I'm sitting here, on my bed, drinking to escape my pain, my mistake. I messed up big time. But how could I have known that I was making a mistake? All I know right now is that I can't stop thinking about Soso, it's like she's running a marathon in my mind and I can't shut her out. I hear a knock at my door as I'm still drowning my sorrows. Who the hell is that? And what do they want?

"Come in."

I answer, already annoyed. My friends, Sive and Siya walk in.

-Sive: "Hey, man, why are you drinking in your room? It's Friday night and we're hitting the streets. Come on, get up from that bed and let's go."

-Me: "I'm not going anywhere with you guys. I just wanna drown my sorrows right here." -Siya: "See why I don't do monogamous relationships? They always end like this." -Sive: "No, this guy needs to get a grip. He's been like this for two weeks now and no woman is worth that...Alex, get the fuck up, clean your balls and let's go hunting. There are a lot of women out there."

-Siya: "You'd swear it's Soso who dumped him and not the other way round...Just get your ass up, bro, and let's go have some real fun." They keep going on and on, annoying the hell out of me. Dammit! I can't take it anymore. -Me: "I said I'm not going anywhere with you. Which part of that is unclear to you? Huh? Just get the fuck out of my room NOW. Both of you."

I'm screaming and they quickly walk out because they can tell that I'm really not in the mood, that I'm pissed. But soon after they have left I hear another knock at the door. These fools are back? Lord, kill me now. "I've told you two to go away." I say screaming, irritated. But the door opens and it's not the boys, it's TK.

-Me: "TK? What are you doing here?"

-Her: "Damn! You look like the sky is falling in."

-Me: "That's because it is."

-Her: "I heard. News travels fast around here. Listen, I may have a solution for you. You want Soso back and I want December, the man he's dating. So to get what we both want, let's work together."

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Let's please increase them likes, darlings. See you on Saturday.

#20

. "Been waiting for a lifetime for you. Been breaking for a lifetime for you. Wasn't looking for love 'til I found you." - Rita Ora [Liam Payne]

"You stood by my side. Night after night, night after night. You loved me back to life, from the coma. The wait is over." - Celine Dion

"Baby, I gotta go with Prof to Rhodes. Lincoln is apparently not feeling well, so Prof has asked me to fill in for him."

Doc says after waking me up with breakfast in bed. He's already bathed and got dressed. What's funny is that I didn't even hear his movements around the room, I must have been really out. But who can blame me after the wild night he and I had. It's no secret that nights with Doc are always wild but last night was the wildest of them all. He sent me high up to the dwarf planet Pluto but at the same time I felt like I was down to Mercury, the closest planet to the sun, because it was extremely hot. The best part was that I could scream as loudly as I wanted because we were alone, the twins didn't arrive yesterday, they are only coming today. Both Doc and I

were looking forward to spending a fun

Saturday indoors with them today, but now he has to leave for the whole day. Biochemistry honours students have an academic trip to Rhodes University in Grahamstown, and Prof - the HOD - and Lincoln, a postdoctoral fellow in the department, were the ones who were going to take them there, but now Prof wants Doc to go. Ugh! I don't like this but I don't have a say in it. And it's not like Doc has a choice either.

-Me: "When did Prof ask you?"

-Him: "He called around 6 this morning and I couldn't exactly say no. But there's this problem with the twins. Who's gonna go fetch them from the airport?"

-Me: "You don't have to worry about that. I'll do it."

-Him: "Really?"

-Me: "Of course, babe. You don't even need to ask. I'll take a taxi and go get them." He smiles then pecks my lips. -Him: "And you wonder why I love you this much. Thanks, babe. But I won't let you take 3 taxis to get there and 3 to come back. You can take my car. I'm not gonna use it today, we'll ride with the 5 students in our department's SUV."

-Me: "You want me to take your car? You trust me with it?"

-Him: "I trust you with everything that's mine, babe. Plus, you do have a driver's licence. So why not?"

-Me: "Baby, you don't trust even your own sister with your wheels. Why would you trust me? What if I wreck it? I haven't sat behind the wheel in 2 years, Thando."

-Him: "You're not my sister, you're my woman, Soso. What's mine is yours. And even though I don't know anything about your driving skills, I trust you. But if it happens that you hit a wall, a pole, a pavement or something, it's okay we'll have the car fixed. I just know that it won't roll onto its side. And I also know that I can't let you take a half dozen taxis, it's exhausting."

-Me: "Well, in that case, thanks. I'll take the car."

-Him: "Good. The keys are in their box in the kitchen. I'm sure you'll know what else to do." -Me: "Yeah, chill. The girls and I are gonna be just fine. It's gonna be a great bonding session without any high levels of testestorone around."

He laughs.

-Him: "Okay then, enjoy. I have to go wait for Prof down by the main road. That's where he's gonna pick me up. I didn't want him to know my address."

-Me: "I see. Have a great day, babe"

-Him: "Ditto. Love you."

He pecks my lips again then hurries to the door.

-Me: "Thanks for the breakfast."

-Him: "You're welcome."

He's already out the door when he replies.

And I'm left smiling to myself. Being in love is

the best feeling ever, I tell you. After my smile subsides, I climb down the bed to go brush my teeth and wash my hands before I dig into this appetising full English breakfast. After eating I move quickly around the house, cleaning it. Then I take a shower and get

ready to hit the road. Nervously, I get inside Doc's car and drive out. God, please don't let me hit anything, I say out loud as I drive down the street. And fortunately, I get to the airport without any hassles. As I'm standing there waiting for the twins, my phone rings and it's my mother. With a smile, I answer. -Me: "Mommy dearest."

My mom - Mandisa - and I have a very good relationship. But it wasn't always like this. When my grandmother was still alive my mom and I never had a mother-daughter kind of relationship. It was my grandmother who was more like a mother to me and my mother was like a distant sister. Things only changed after my grandmother passed away and my uncle tried to rape me. I think the whole thing forced my mom to learn to listen to me, to pay attention to me, to trust me and most importantly, to show me the love any child needs from their mother.

-Her: "Hey, baby. How are you?"

-Me: "All is well. Everything okay at your end?"

-Her: "Yeah. Listen, baby. I need you to come home next weekend. It's important."

-Me: "Important? What do you mean?" -Her: "Just make sure you get on that taxi and come home on Friday. You'll hear everything when you get here."

-Me: "Mom, please, don't do that. Just tell me what's going on now. Is everything alright? Are you alright?"

-Her: "I'm alright. Just do as I say, Someleze, and stop asking questions."

She says a little harshly now, sucking words out of me. Not knowing what to say, I just keep quiet. -Her: "I'm sorry for talking like that, baby. But please, just make sure you come home on Friday. Okay? I love you."

And with that she hangs up. I'm left staring at the screen of my phone. Perplexed. What could be going on? Is my mother okay? But if she wasn't or if it was an emergency she would have asked me to come home today, not on Friday. So what could be going on? Why does she want me home? What is so important that she couldn't tell me over the phone? My thoughts get interrupted by the voices of the twins as they scream my name. I raise my head to see them running towards me, pulling their small suitcases. Aww, the smiles on their faces just warm my heart. I quickly put my phone in my pocket and open my arms wide to hug them. They are so excited to see me. And guess what? I'm delighted to see them too and that manifests in the lingering hug I give them. Finally, we pull back then walk out of the airport to the car, with them talking non-stop. They get in

the back seat of the car, and I'm putting their luggage in the boot when I experience this uneasy feeling like someone is watching me. I turn around to see Buhle, one of my classmates, staring at me from behind. When she sees me looking at her she lifts her hand and waves at me. Despite the sinking feeling at the pit of my stomach, I manage to let out a smile and wave back. Then I turn and get in the car. Jeez, she's seen me driving Doc's car and I can't stop wondering what she's made of that.

Thando

After a very long day I finally get home. It's 18:10 when I walk through my front door and find my three favourite girls sitting on the mat in the lounge. They are busy, Soso is playing chess with Lily while Lathi watches. "Daddy's home. How are my favourite girls doing?"

I say, greeting as I come to stand by them.

-Soso: "Hey, honey. We're good."

-The twins: "Hey, dad."

Okay, this is not the welcome I expected. I thought they were going to be thrilled to see me, especially the twins. I thought they would jump on me but right now they are all too focused on the chessboard to pay me much attention. They don't even look up to acknowledge me, that's how much in the zone they are. I release a heavy sigh and let my eye assess the board. Soso moves her queen in order to force Lily's king to shift position. With a quick and brave decision, Lily moves her rook. Soso never just lets Lily win when they play. She always brings her A game as if playing with an adult, forcing Lily to think strategically and make the right moves or experience the bitter feeling of losing. In that way, when Lily wins, she always knows that she deserved the win and that she worked for

it. And right now I think she's going to win this game. I begin to suspect Soso's going to lose when she lifts her head and come eye to eye with me for the first time since I walked in. Leaving the board, she gets up and comes closer to me.

-Her: "Welcome home, hon."

She gives me a hug and a soft peck on the lips. But the hug is brief. She draws back in some alarm and gazes at me with questioning eyes, and I know why.

-Me: "I know, babe, I know. And we'll talk about it when we're alone. Okay?"

She nods. The twins also get up to come and hug me. Not even good sex beats the feeling of having their tiny arms wrapped around me, I tell you. That's how much I love my girls. And the fact that Soso also loves them earned her extra points from me.

-Lathi: "We missed you, daddy."

-Me: "I missed you too, babies. How was your flight?"

-Lily: "Short and uneventful. Could you please let sis' Soso and I finish the game now?" This one is 9 going on 19, I tell you.

-Me: "That's okay. Go ahead. I'll just sit here and watch."

I sit on the mat with them and let the two finish their game. Soso moves her king on the board and Lily's eyes fly open as she detects the fatal position. I want to say, "C'mon, babe, that was a fatal move." But instead I keep quiet and just watch. Taking her eyes off the chessboard, she looks at me.

-Soso: "How did it go at Rhodes? Meet any interesting people?"

I know exactly what she's asking. But I've already told her that we'll talk about it when we're alone.

-Me: "No one interesting at all. I just couldn't wait to come home to you and my girls."

She doesn't say anything, she just turns to Lily who is patiently waiting for her to return to the game. When she has her full attention, an impish smile creeps along Lily's mouth. -Lily: "Watch out, sisi. Checkmate!" She says, her voice triumphant. Soso just smiles.

-Lathi: "But sis' Soso, why did you make such a bad move? I'm no chess prodigy but I could see how bad that move was."

-Soso: "Baby, in chess, just as in life, there are moves that you make for the sake of winning and there are moves you make because they are the right thing to do."

-Lily: "Meaning you let me win?"

-Soso: "Meaning exactly what I just said: my move may have been a bad one but it was the right thing to do. Life is not all about winning, sometimes you just need to do what's right." -Lathi: "I think I get it. Just like I also stopped on stage in the middle of a competition when my dance partner strained his ankle. I could have continued alone and could have won but I just couldn't, not without him. Stopping was the right thing to do."

-Soso: "Exactly, baby. Doing what's right is a win on its own. Always remember that."

I let out a smile. She always does this, teaching them some valuable lessons in a simplest way.

-Her: "Now, girls, could you please go set the table for dinner. I will join you in a bit." The twins run out to the kitchen which shares an open floor with the dining area, leaving us alone in the lounge. Now I know why she threw the game, she just wanted it to end so she would turn her attention to me without leaving Lily hanging. Without waiting for her to say anything, I quickly explain the other woman's perfume that she smelled on me when she hugged me.

-Me: "About the feminine scent, babe. It's on my shirt because the woman who attended to us when we got to Rhodes is an avid hugger. She makes sure that she squeezes you in her embrace and let the hug linger. She did that when we got there then again two more times before we left. That's why I now smell of her." She looks at me with unreadable eyes. I honestly don't know if she believes me or not. -Me: "You better go freshen up. Dinner is already ready, I just need to warm up some of the dishes."

Then she passionately kisses me on the lips before heading off to the kitchen. That means she believes me, right? Anyway, I go take a shower then join them at the dining table. It doesn't take me much to notice that the girls have outdone themselves in the kitchen, it must have taken them hours to prepare all of this. I love the effort Soso puts in. And I also love this setting: us sitting at the table as a family, eating and laughing.

Someleze

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2 days later - Monday
Alice has never been this colorful and vibrant,
I say to myself as I walk out of the library.
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Have I been blind to this town's and campus' beauty all this time? Or is it just the happiness I'm feeling inside right now? I don't know and it doesn't really matter. All I know is that the day I let Doc into my life I plunged into a river of pure love. There I swam to my heart's content, finally sensing that this must be what people talk about when they talk about true love - a drop in infinity! This river is flowing waters that carried me from a heartbreak that felt like death to a life full of love and excitement.

I stopped taking naps on Doc's couch in his office in between my lectures ever since he and I started dating. Instead I go to the library's silent reading room, pick a cubicle in a corner, put my phone on flight mode, plug my earphones on and let the waves of music transport me to a quiet sleep until the vibrating alert of my alarm wakes me up. Then I'd go to the restroom to clean up my face before heading to my next class. It's not much ideal of a situation but it does the trick. I'm now smiling because as I stepped out of the library, I took my phone off flight mode then checked my emails because I've been waiting for an email for this next year's

internship program that I've applied for. They haven't replied yet but still, I've found a reason to smile. Doc has sent me a loving candle lit dinner invitation on my personal email address, for this evening. That means I won't be able to go to work, but so be it. I'll just have to call in sick because there's no way I'm going to turn my man down. A quiet romantic night with just the two of us is exactly what we need after the crazy, rowdy weekend we had with the twins. They left today, their father took them to the airport after dropping me off at the campus gate in the morning. It was really good spending time with them but now Doc and I need to spend some quality time together without any disturbances.

Even though I'm going to see Doc on our drive home after this practical session I'm going to reply to his email. It's romantic that way. Blushing, I type my response and tap send then hurry to the lab.

After the practical session I make my way to Doc's office and together we make our way to his car. As I open the passenger door to get in, I notice Buhle standing across the parking lot, staring at me. Ugh! Whatever. I don't even tell Doc about her, I just get in and we drive home in comfortable silence. As usual, he drops me off at my gate and drives off. Euphoria is what I feel inside as I make my way to my flat. Getting in, I put my bag on my study desk then go straight to the closet to look for a suitable outfit for this evening. I end up picking a red, above-the-knee, bodyhugging dress that I bought with Amanda's parents' card three years ago. I don't wear it much, in fact the last time I wore it was 2 years ago. But tonight I'm going to rock it, that's if it still fits me though. I fit it and I smile when I notice that it still fits like a glove. It hugs my amazing curves and tiny waist

perfectly, and shows off my gorgeous legs.

Beautiful. Now for the shoes, I pick a black pair of stiletto heels. I'm not a heels kind of girl, but I do wear them on special occasions like this one. Putting on the desk everything I'm going to need, I know that I'm now set. To settle the hole in my stomach I eat some cereal then rest a bit on the bed. I don't want to eat anything heavy because I want to have space for the food Doc is going to prepare.

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By 19:15, I'm standing in front of my mirror already dressed. I apply a layer of lipstick and for good measure, a small dab of my "special occassion" perfume on my wrist and neck. With subtle make-up and my weave tied into a messy bun, I know that I look effortlessly beautiful. I smile, looking at myself in the mirror. The anticipation of spending a blissful, romantic evening with my man in the quaint solitude of his house is a thrilling concept, it's way better than having a date night out. He said he would come pick me up at 19:20 for

19:30 but I've asked him not to come. I prefer walking to his house, it's only 5 minutes away and I also want to be pleasantly surprised when I walk through the door alone.

At precisely 19:30 I walk through his front door and I'm welcomed by a path of red rose petals bordered with two rows of lit tea light candles on each side. Mmh, this is nice, I say to myself beaming as I follow the path. Before I enter the dining area, where the path is leading me to, I notice a white note on the floor, amidst the red petals, and I pick it up. It reads, "Don't forget to smile". I can't help but laugh, this man is so corny. I enter the dining area and find a beautifully set table with a nice white tablecloth, candles and flowers. At the centre of the table there's a crystal bowl half-filled with water in which beautiful floating candles are lit. Doc has put in all the effort and it's much appreciated. The food is already on the table in attractive pots and

platters. And he's used his best dinner ware. How can I not appreciate that? The light is dimmed for a romantic feel and the soft romantic music playing in the background adds to the romantic ambiance. Everything is just perfect.

"Wow. You look absolutely beautiful." I hear Doc's voice behind me as I was about to ask myself where he is. I turn to see him standing by the door with his bright, sexy smile painted across his face. He looks so handsome in a navy suit, a white T-shirt and white low-top Salvatore Ferragamo sneakers. He comes to me and gives me a warm hug. Mmmh, he smells great. The same cologne he had put on the day we shared our first kiss, on his birthday. I can tell that he now wants to pull back from the hug but I just can't let go of him yet, I bury my face in his chest and let my nostrils take in his intoxicating scent. I want to savour this moment and smell him on me. I finally let go of him and raise my head to look at him. Our eyes meet and we hold the look,

not a single word escaping either of our

mouths. After a moment we draw closer to each other until our lips meet and we start kissing slowly and sensuously. Pulling back from the kiss, I look up at him and I open my mouth just as he opens his. "I love you." We say the three magic words in unison. Then we burst, laughing at what we've just done. Taking my hand, he leads me to the table and pulls the chair out for me before going to sit on the opposite chair. He pours some white wine in our glasses before we go for the starters. After that we go for the main course over a light conversation, just telling each other our personal stories. He's kept the menu simple but classy. I don't even know how he managed to put everything together in 2 and a half hours.

It's after the main course that he gives me this intense look of emotion. It lasts for a moment then he pulls something I think was attached under the table and hands it to me. It's a flat square gift, and I wonder what it is.

-Me: "What is it, babe?"

-Him: "Open it."

I do, only to find that it's the Søren Bebe CD that I saw in his car on the first day that I caught a ride with him. Okay, now I'm confused.

-Me: "This CD? I don't understand." He gives me that intense look of emotion once again and this time he holds it.

-Him: "I got that CD from Lathi. She got it from her dance teacher but she wasn't even using it. I took it, copied it to my laptop then transferred the music to my phone. You know why?"

-Me: "Why?"

-Him: "It was after my divorce, I was experiencing difficulty sleeping and hearing that guy's music in my ears would help me fall deep into a peaceful slumber. Six months down the line I was still going through the

same thing even though I had convinced

myself that I was moving on. I only stopped using that music to put myself to sleep when I met you. Every fear, every little bit of heartache vanished with the thought of being with you. I wasn't even looking for love when I met you. But you came into my life and changed everything I thought I knew. And you made me see that I've waisted so many years with someone who wasn't even meant for me. I don't know but I think you're the one I've waited a lifetime to be with. When I'm with you, Soso, I'm free, no inhibitions, nothing. In your eyes, I'm not only alive but I'm home. Sthandwa sam, I'm in this for the long haul. I love you. And I want you to keep that CD as a reminder of where you found me."

The words are said firmly, matching the determination on his face. A slow smile tugs at my lips as I gaze at my handsome boyfriend - a word I refused to say for some time after we started dating. -Me: "Wow. I uhh...I don't know what yo say, babe."

-Him: "You don't have to say anything. I'm just letting you know how much you mean to me."

-Me: "You know my story. You know that I was also broken when you found me. I was walking dead. Stuck in a world of pain that I couldn't get out of. I wished I could just disappear. But you came along and you stood by my side. You loved me back to life, Thando."

-Him: "You just took the words out of my mouth. I can safely say before I met you I was no longer living, just existing. I was a walking zombie among the living. Or you can say I was in a coma. But you woke me up. You loved me back to the land of the living, night after night."

-Me: "To think that I didn't like you the first time you came into our class."

-Him: "You didn't?"

-Me: "No. I didn't like you because you'd replaced a professor that I loved so much." -Him: "My first impression of you wasn't that great either. I thought you were one of those rebellious students and I just didn't like you. Little did I know that you are very obedient." -Me: "Obedient. Especially during sex." I say laughing. And he follows suit. -Him: "But I ain't gonna talk about sex

tonight. I just want to talk about us. And there's another important matter I want us to discuss."

He gets up and walks over to the sideboard. On its top he retrieves some papers which he comes back with and hands to me.

-Me: "What are these?"

-Him: "Your marks."

I notice that these are printed spreadsheets with my marks for each of my 3 courses. The marks for the other students are shaded out. -Him: "All your courses. From the first semester to this one. We both can see that your performance has dropped, and we know why. Baby, please reconsider. Keeping that job is affecting your academic performance. Yes, you still pass but not as good as you used to. I can see your potential, Someleze. If you quit that job that will guarantee you great distinctions in all your modules, I'm talking 90s. And that in turn will increase your chances of getting that scholarship to do your honours degree next year. Please, babe, do this for me. But most importantly, do it for

yourself, your future."

Awww, to know that he really cares this much about my future warms my heart. He's been trying to convince me to do my Honours next year even though I just want to take a break and start job-hunting. I take a few moments to absorb everything he's just said. "Okay."

I say eventually.

-Him: "Okay?"

-Me: "Okay, I'm going to quit my job and focus more on my studies. You don't know how much it means to me to know that you want this for me this badly. It means a lot, babe. And I'm not going to disappoint you or myself. I'm going to pull up my socks and get those distinctions."

He smiles. I can tell that he's happy to hear me talking like this.

-Him: "That's my girl. Thanks, babe, for doing this."

-Me: "No. Thank YOU."

He leans across the table and kisses me. Then we get up and clear the table. For dessert we are having strawberries and chocolate as we cuddle on the couch watching a romcom movie. And even though every ounce of my body is craving to have him inside me, he offers me something better - a more meaningful intimacy. Despite my initial remark to keep our conversation short after the movie has ended, we remain on the couch for 2 more hours. In a single, marathon conversation, I get to learn more intimate details of his life than he's shared in the previous months. Maybe it's the absence of sex, I don't know. All I know is that we're having a more deeper conversation right now and I like it. We only go to bed around 00:30 and we immediately fall asleep in each other's arms.

#21

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"Here I am, once again, I'm torn into pieces. Can't deny it, can't pretend. Just thought you were the one." - Kelly Clarkson

Someleze

The week seemed to be dragging, but thank God it's finally Friday and I'm going home. I can't wait to hear what my mother wants to tell me, I'm dying to know what's going on. If it wasn't for this afternoon practical session that I couldn't miss I'd already be home by now, but here I am, still walking out of this bad-smelling Chemistry lab around 16:30. But fortunately, I won't have to use public

transport at this hour, Doc has offered to drive me to P.E. He's such a godsend. A few minutes later I find him already waiting for me at the parking lot downstairs. He doesn't waste time, as soon as I get in the car he drives off. My weekend bag is in his boot, I put it there this morning because I didn't want to have to go to my flat when we drive out of campus.

On the way, it's obvious that he can tell that I'm nervous about finding out what's waiting for me at home and he tries to keep my mind occupied with his captivating conversations, and he succeeds. I didn't feel the 3 hour drive, I only realise that we've arrived when he pulls up in front of my mother's house. Checking the time, I realise that it's 19:45. It would already be pitch black if it was winter, but it's not because it's early in October. I turn to look at Doc with an appreciative smile. -Me: "Thanks for being my chauffeur, babe." -Him: "Hey, you don't have to thank me. Helping you out in any way possible is what I'm here for."

I let out a genuine smile then lean over, going for a kiss. He meets me halfway and our lips lock.

-Him: "I hope everything's okay with your mom. Please contact me before you go to sleep and tell me what's going on, okay?" He says with his deep yet hoarse voice after pulling back from the kiss.

-Me: "I will, babe. I will."

-Him: "I'm gonna miss you."

-Me: "Me too. But Monday is not too far." -Him: "Yeah."

I open my door and get out with my books bag just as he also hops out on his side. He goes to open the boot and retrieves my weekend bag. Taking it off his hand I sling it over my shoulder then take a step back, ready to walk away.

-Me: "Thanks once again, and drive safe. See you on Monday."

He doesn't say anything, he just looks at me

hard then he moves, closing the space between us. Slipping his arm around my waist he pulls me against him and before I know it, his mouth is on mine, hard and passionate. What is he doing? Not in front of my mother's house. For all I know my mom could be looking at us through the window right now. I want to push him off of me, but I can't, the truth is I don't really want him to stop. If there's one thing I can't fight off is Doc's kiss. Once his lips touch mine I just lose control of myself, I go weak and kiss him back. His tongue plunges between my teeth, exploring the moist cavity he finds within. His tongue caresses mine, mates with mine, causing me to lean against him. His hand cups my chin, angling my face to please him, lengthening and deepening his kiss. Finally, he pulls back, leaving me breathless.

-Him: "I love you. Don't do something I won't do, okay?"

He says huskily, his mouth still close to mine.

-Me: "I...won't. Love you...too."

My breathing is shallow and my words break. He smiles then pecks my lips before moving for the door of his car. He gets in and I wait for him to drive off before I walk into the yard. Once he motors down the street, I start moving. I get in the yard and make my way to the front door. I knock already pushing the door open. Jeez, my heart almost stops when I find my mom standing in the middle of the lounge, looking at me with her arms folded. "Hey, mom."

I say nervously.

-Her: "Was that Thando?"

I want to lie but there's no use, obviously she's seen us kissing. My mom and I have a close relationship but we never talk about boys. She even surprised me the day she talked about Doc with me on the phone after he had visited this house.

-Me: "Yes, that was Thando. I'm...I'm sorry I brought him here."

-Her: "Is he treating you well?"

Her voice is calm, and it makes me relax a little.

-Me: "Mama, he loves me in a way l've never been loved before."

-Her: "That's good. Now come help me dish up. Dinner's ready."

And with that she makes her way to the kitchen. Okay, I thought she would give me an earful. I'm glad she didn't, I really am, and now it's time to get to that serious talk. I'm not here for food, I need her to tell me why she summoned me here. I drop my bags on the floor and follow her to the kitchen. Finding her at the stove, I walk over to her

and hug her from behind.

-Me: "Mandisa Ndlovu, you know that I love you, right? So you can just tell me what's going on. No need to make me feel comfortable first, just tell me. Are you dying?" I say softly as I rest my head on her back. But as soft as my voice is, it still makes her jump and drop the spoon that was in her hand. It must be what I said. I jump back and look at her.

-Me: "Mama, is that it? Are you dying?"
-Her: "What? No. No, baby, I'm not dying."
-Me: "Then what is it? What is so important that you couldn't tell me over the phone?"
-Her: "Baby, just get the plates and help me dish up. We'll talk over dinner."
Defeated, I do as she says.

. Now we're sitting at the dining table, eating my mom's delicious dumplings and beef stew. Halfway through our meal she stops eating and looks at me.

-Her: "What do you think about marriage?" -Me: "If you're asking me if Thando and I are going to get married then the answer is: not anytime soon. Mama, he just divorced less than 10 months ago, he's not ready to dive into that hole again." I'm being too honest right now. Have I forgotten that this is my mother? -Her: "He's divorced? We'll talk about that a little later. For now I want us to talk about what's in my chest. I wasn't asking about Thando, at all. Early Saturday morning I received a call from the Mejes in Summerstrand, requesting a date to come here and start lobola negotiations.

Apparently, their son, Alex, wants to marry you."

-Me: "What?! The nerve! The nerve of that guy! I should have known that he would do something this stupid after he became so quiet. Who the hell does he think he is pulling a stunt like that?"

I'm shouting. I'm mad as hell. Alex is driving me insane right now. How dare he?

-Her: "I take it you and this Alex no longer see eye to eye. He's the boy you were dating since high school, right?"

She's the opposite of me right now, she's so calm and collected. I'm even surprised that

she knew about me and Alex right from when I was still in high school.

-Me: "You knew about me and Alex?" -Her: "Someleze, I had you when I was 17, I know these things. I, too, used to lie to my mother and go to my boyfriend. That gave me an advantage to see right through your lies. But what made me relax was knowing that I'd raised a responsible young woman in you. I'd find condoms in your bag and a clinic card, I knew that you were on injection. You didn't want to repeat your mother's mistake and that made me proud of you. That's why I kept quiet."

I look down, not knowing how to respond to that.

-Her: "So, what happened between you and this Alex?"

-Me: "He hurt me, mama. He hurt me so bad. He cheated on me and then he left me."

-Her: "And that's when you met Thando?"

-Me: "Yes. Alex is insane. Just because he's now realising that he made a mistake doesn't

give him the right to do what he did. It

doesn't give him the right to have his people call you for some stupid lobola negotiations. What is that? He and I are not together anymore. He thinks he's gonna reel me in with marriage and I'm gonna fall for that crap? I'm no longer the Someleze he knew. Getting married to him was my dream and he knew it. I wanted to marry him because he was my first love and at the time I was head over heels in love with him. But not anymore. I'm no longer that naive."

My mom doesn't say anything, just staring at me.

-Me: "So what did you say to them? What did you tell the Mejes? Did you agree to their stupid request? Please tell me you didn't. Tell me you didn't call me all the way here for those stupid negotiations because I'm telling you right now, I won't be a part of it." -Her: "Someleze, what do you take me for? You think I'd agree to something like that without talking to you first? Besides, I knew that you were no longer with Alex but with Thando. So why would I agree to something like that? I told them straight that we're not interested."

-Me: "Okay, you didn't agree. Okay, you know that I'm no longer with Alex and I'm never going to marry him. So why did you call me here?"

-Her: "The whole lobola thing got me thinking. You're a grown woman now,

Someleze. You can get married at any time. And when that happens I want you to go be a wife who knows her identity."

-Me: "My identity? What do you mean? I know who I am, mama. I'm Someleze Ndlovu and it ends there."

-Her: "No, you're not a Ndlovu. I'm the one who's Ndlovu, with a deadbeat Zulu father. When the time comes, I don't want you to walk down the aisle as a Ndlovu, Someleze. Your lobola can't be negotiated by the Ndlovus. It's not right. I want you to know your father, baby. That's why I called you here. It's time for you to meet him." I chuckle. What? She can't be serious. She's joking, right? Oh, but she's not. It's evident in her look.

-Me: "Mama, you can't be serious. My father? I don't have a father, mama. He wanted you to kill me before I was even born. And he was never there for me after I'd made my entrance into this world. You and grandma raised me. I am who I am today because of you and grandma. Because of your hardwork. Now you want me to meet a sperm donor? No. I ain't gonna do that, mama. I ain't gonna do it."

I'm now crying. I'm angry, AND disappointed at my mother. How could she? How could she want me to meet a man who dumped her while she was still pregnant with his baby? Why would she want him to be a part of my life when he didn't even assist her in raising me? Growing up I watched her break her back, doing hard labour and ridiculous jobs just so she could put food on my plate and clothes on my back. She put her dreams on hold just to give me life. And this man that she now calls my father wasn't there, he wasn't there to assist her. So why does she want me to meet him? Why does she want him to be a part of my life? I don't understand and I'm not going to do it.

-Her: "Baby, please. I know that he wasn't there for you for 21 years but he wants to be here for you now. In fact, he wanted to be a part of your life when you were 15 but I wouldn't let him. I was still mad and bitter, but I'm not anymore. I've forgiven him and all I ask is for you to do the same. Please, baby, do it for me. Do it for your mother. I'm the only family you have and if something happens to me I want you to have someone, a family. Please, baby, please. And it's important that you know who you are, to know your roots."

Tears are now trickling down her cheeks. I can see that she really wants me to do this. If I do

it it'd mean a lot to her, and if I don't that'd would kill her. I can see it. My mom is my queen, hurting her is the last thing I want to do. So I take a moment and let her words sink in my head. Then I get up and go to her side of the table to hug her. She gets up and we pull each other into an embrace, sobbing on each other's shoulders.

-Me: "Okay, mama, I'll do it. I'll meet him. But I'm only doing it for you."

I say, finally. After wiping my tears off. -Her: "Thank you, baby. That's all I ask. You don't know how much this means to me." She kisses my forehead.

-Her: "I love you."

-Me: "I love you too, mama."

-Her: "Your father is gonna be here tomorrow. Prepare yourself."

I nod. Then we clear the table and do the dishes together before we go to sit on the couch and catch up. We only head to bed around 00:00, that's what usually happens when I'm with my mother, we never run out of things to talk about, we only run out of time. Among the things we got to talk about, Doc also made the list. I came clean to her about him being my lecturer and him being 10 years older than me with 9 year old twins. Even though all that made her feel uneasy, she told me that she'd support me as long as I'm happy. And she encouraged me to open up to her about these things going forth. I smiled, my mom is truly my best friend. I get to my room and put on my PJs then get under the covers. But before drifting into slumberland I call Doc to hear if he got to Alice safely and to give him an update. He, too, encourages me to meet my father, telling me that half of my DNA belongs to the man and knowing him would be good not only for him but for myself too. Well, we'll see about that. We end up talking for hours until around 04:00 in the morning, none of us wanting to hang up, and Vodacom Night Shift also comes in handy. I really love this guy and I wouldn't mind talking with him 'til sunrise and he tells

me that he also feels the same way, but we're both exhausted and we need our beauty sleep. So finally, we hang up and I fall asleep immediately.

Alex

My plan to show Someleze that I still love and value her, that I really want her back in my life hasn't worked. I'm in bed thinking about her, the only thing I seem to think about these days, when I hear a knock at my door. I get my phone under my pillow to check the time, and it's 23:30. So who could be at my door at this hour? I swear if it's Sive and Siya I'm going to lose it. They wanted us to go clubbing since it's a Friday night but I turned them down. Clubbing doesn't interest me anymore, in fact nothing interests me these days, the world is just this one big sour place. I climb down the bed and go open the door, only to find lviwe standing there.

-Me: "Iviwe, what are you doing here?" -Her: "Alex, may I please come in?"

I don't know what she wants but I'm not in the mood to fight so I quietly let her walk inside.

-Her: "I've been calling and texting you but you're not picking up or responding to my texts."

-Me: "Then you should get the message. In fact, I thought you did. I'm surprised you're here."

-Her: "Alex, you never gave me a chance to explain. I'm here to do that."

-Me: "Explain what, Iviwe? How you lied about being committed to our relationship when you knew very well that you are another man's fiancée? A scary man at that." -Her: "I don't love him, baby, I love you. It's my brother who wants me to marry him. He's forcing me to."

-Me: "I don't care. Just get out of my room."

But she doesn't. She only comes closer until I can feel her warm breath fanning my face. Taking a step back, her eyes engage mine,

searching for a sign that I understand. She's wearing a coat dress and she pulls on its belt and it loosens. She peels the dress from her body and let it drop to the floor, revealing nothing but her sexy, naked body underneath. Without conscious volition I bite my bottom lip.

-Her: "You were saying?"

She says licking her lips. Damn, I can't fail to be aware of my arousal. I still want to kick her out of my room but my reserve breaks like a cracked dam when she reaches up to me, kissing and caressing me. It's like I'm under her spell, I can't stop her. Knowing how good she feels in bed doesn't help either. In one swift, powerful jolt I yank her to me, pinning her naked body to mine. I kiss her long and hard before lifting her off the ground and dump her unceremoniously on my bed, with our lips still joined. I quickly get rid of my PJ pants and deep my hard d*ck inside her wet,

hot vagina. I ram inside her and pound her in rhythmic succession. Her screams are growing louder and I can't have that at res, I close her mouth with mine in a kiss. Soon, I release inside her, for the first time since I started sleeping with her. Pulling out of her, I go get a towel to clean us both then I pull her to my chest and she falls into a deep sleep almost immediately. But this feels so wrong. Yes, I loved lviwe but that was before I got to know that she was lying to me. Things changed after that, I no longer feel the same way about her. And after learning the truth about her, I realised that I made a mistake by letting Soso go. Fuck! Why did I sleep with her again? I snap up, frustrated and angry. She's not Soso and she'll never be. I roll away from her, and she turns over, fully asleep. I get out of bed and go stand by the window. Retrieving my pack of cigarettes on the desk, I take out one, light it and smoke away my frustrations. I

seriously hope my plan with TK works. I really want my Soso back.

. . Someleze

"Someleze, come on, wake up."

I hear my mother's voice faintly as if at a distance. I groan and open my eyes to find her standing next to my bed.

-Me: "Mama, please go away and let me sleep."

-Her: "You know what time it is? It's 11:00, just an hour away from noon. Get up. Your father will be here in 2 hours."

-Me: "Fine. I'll be up. Just give me a few minutes."

-Her: "I expect to see you walk into that bathroom to take a bath in 5 minutes. Hear me?"

-Me: "Yes, mama, yoh."

She walks out, leaving me yawning. These are the results of sleeping at 4:00 in the morning. Knowing my mother, she'll come in here with a bucket of water if I don't get up so I drag myself out of bed and make it. Then I go to the only bathroom we have and take a bath. I'd take a shower if we had one but we don't. Less than an hour later I'm already dressed in

a floral, short maxi dress and matching sandals. I'm not going to dress up to meet a man I don't even give a fuck about. For emphasis, I'm only doing this for my mother. I'm in the kitchen drinking water with ice in this not air-conditioned house when my mother calls me out to the lounge. I put the glass in the sink and go to her.

"Your father is here. At the gate."

She says as I enter the lounge.

-Me: "Oh."

I say without even a drop of enthusiasm. -Her: "Please show a little enthusiasm. Do it for me." -Me: "Mama, are you seeing this guy again? Why are you being nice to him?" -Her: "I'm not seeing him. And just shut up." She says as she gets up from the couch to answer the knock at the door. She opens the door and this man in a wine red suit and a white shirt walks in. I don't know how much it costs but I can tell that it's a designer suit, it probably costs more than what my mother earns in 3 months. My mother hugs him then she turns to me.

-Her: "Baby, this is your father, Sandile Mali. Sandile, that's your daughter, Someleze." I absorb this man's face, frame and manner in one sweeping move. Before last night, my mother and I never really talked about him. Even when we finally did talk about him last night, I didn't ask how old he is but from the way he looks, I'm guessing he's around 40. And he's handsome, I can definitely see what my mother saw in him but that doesn't mean I like him. I stand exactly where I was, with my lips glued together. I have nothing to say to him. He walks over to me, opens his arms

and pulls me into an embrace without saying anything. I don't know but I quickly feel emotional as I feel his arms around me. I've never experienced this before, I don't know what a father's love feels like. And that's exactly what's making me emotional right now. I didn't want to feel like this but my heart is now betraying me. And I'm crying. -Him: "Don't cry, baby, I'm here now." I pull back and look at him, he has tears in his eyes too.

-Him: "I know that I'm not your favourite person and with good reason. But, baby, please forgive me. I was 19. I was young and stupid, I didn't know any better. And my parents didn't make things easier either. They told me to ask your mother to terminate the pregnancy. And then they got me out of town so I wouldn't be with your mother."

His eyes continue to water as he speaks. Last night I didn't ask my mother why he left me, I wanted him to explain with his own mouth. And the way I see it, he's not a man who likes beating around the bush, he goes straight to the point and make his case. I now hear his story but I'm not convinced yet.

-Me: "Then why didn't you look for me all these years? Why only when I was 15? You knew where my mother was but you never came for me. And now you expect me to just welcome you with open arms? No. No."

I speak wiping my tears frequently.

-Him: "I admit that I didn't do right by you and your mother, but I'm here now and I'm trying to correct those mistakes. Please let me. I want to be a good father to you. I want to make up for the past 21 years."

To think that my mother had it rough all these years trying to raise me when he was out there living a good life is making me sick. But at least he's here now and he's admitting that he was wrong. So maybe cutting him some slack won't hurt. I gesture for him to take a seat on the couch and I sit next to him as my mother sits opposite us. We end up talking calmly, getting to know a little bit more about

each other before going to eat the lunch my mother prepared earlier before I even woke up. I get to know that he's originally from Mthatha and that he was doing his first year at the then Vista University (now NMU) when he met my mother and made her pregnant. Upon hearing about that, his parents had him quit his studies, only for them to send him to UCT the following year. There was a lot of crap after that, but right now my heart is ready to forgive it all. He leaves our house around 17:00 and on a good note. After he left I grab my iPad and search for him online. Even though he didn't reveal much about what he does for a living, I can tell that he's up there, and that means I'll find something about him online. I find his profile from the page of the company he said he's working for. I read that he graduated first in his class from UCT, received his MBA from the University of Lincoln in the UK and worked for five years in London before coming back home. He got his

Ph.D. in finance, then worked for a large financial information systems group in the country. Five years ago, he became CEO at MRD and now leads triple-digit growth. He is lauded. He is respected. And he is also something else, I add. I don't know what it is but the intensity in his eyes told me that there's more to him than meets the eye. But I let it go. I'm just going to see how serious he is about being in my life. And I'm going to see what his story is.

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I spend the rest of the day with my mom, discussing my father and other things. I honestly don't know if my mother is seeing him again or what, but she says she's not. I hope that's true because I don't like him for her, there's just something about him, I can't really put my finger on it but it unsettles me. The next day, on Sunday, I bid farewell to my mother and go hitch-hike to Alice. I know that I said I was going back on Monday but I miss Doc so much. Being away from him is a torture. The way I'm so addicted to him it's like he put a spell on me.

I get to Alice around 14:30 and I make my way straight to Doc's house before going to my place. I didn't even tell him that I'm coming, I want him to be surprised when I call and say I'm at his gate and he should open up. But as it turns out I won't even have to make that call because when I get there I find the gate open and there's this car that I don't recognise in his driveway. He probably has a visitor, I say. I walk to the door and knock, only for it to be opened by this half-naked woman. She opens it then blocks the doorway with her half-naked body so I wouldn't come in.

-Her: "Hello. Can I help you?"

What? Who's she?

-Me: "I'm here to see Thando."

-Her: "Well, Thando is busy right now. We're busy as you can see."

Hearing her say that throws me off balance. I

think I'm going to get sick. My stomach turns. And what makes it worse is that I can smell her perfume, the same distinct scent that I smelled on Doc when he got back from Grahamstown the other day. What the hell? Doc is sleeping with this woman behind my back? I'm running out of breath and I can feel the energy being drained out of me. I lean on the wall next to the door for support, just as this woman bangs the door shut. With my hand on my stomach, I let my body slide down the wall until my butt reaches the ground. Oh my God, he lied to me, Thando lied to me.

I'm going to skip a day before posting, guys. My schedule is pretty tight. And let's please increase the number of them likes.

#22

"For tonight I'm gonna get my mind off it. Don't care that someone's got his hands all over my body. Stay out all night, go where the music's loud so I don't have to think about it. I'm beggin', please, don't play no more sad songs." - Little Mix

Beneath my white duvet, I swallow past a sore throat, feeling worn out. Staying up late last night, crying and drinking have taken their toll. Still, I get out of bed and drag my exhausted feet to the bathroom. It's 6:30 and my alarm has just woken me up, I need to get my shit together and get ready for my 8 o'clock class. If there's one thing I got from that psychotic bitch Thuso is that no man is worth missing classes for. I came to Alice to study and missing classes is just not me, I'm here to slay academically.

I turn on the shower and step into the inviting tiled enclosure. I immediately feel better as the water cascades down on me. The water feels wonderful on my skin, coursing over my arms, breasts and belly, taking sweat and exhaustion with it. I stand stretching luxuriously in the warm stream, needles of water massaging me. But that good feeling quickly dissipates like steam when the lies Doc told start circling in my head once again. Yesterday after catching my breath, I got up from his stoep and made my way to the gate without even knocking again on that door. I saw no reason to. Doc came home smelling of this woman the other day and lied to me about it, and now I find this same woman half-naked in his house. Well, that was pretty much self-explanatory to me, I needed no further explanations. But how could he do something like this to me? I trusted him. And it's so early in our relationship. Dammit, how could I have been so stupid? I was a fool to think someone like Doc would want to be in a monogamous relationship with someone like me. But why did he sell me lies? I can almost hear his voice in my head as I stand beneath

these jet needles of water, I can hear his lies: "Baby, I gotta go with Prof to Rhodes. Lincoln is apparently not feeling well, so Prof has asked me to fill in for him."..."He called around 6 this morning and I couldn't exactly say no."..."I have to go wait for Prof down by the main road. That's where he's gonna pick me up. I didn't want him to know my address."..."I didn't meet anyone interesting at all. I just couldn't wait to come home to you and my girls."..."About the feminine scent, babe. It's on my shirt because the woman who attended to us when we got to Rhodes is an avid hugger. She makes sure that she squeezes you in her embrace and let the hug linger. She did that when we got there then again two more times before we left. That's why I now smell of her."

All lies, all lies. He lied to me. He pretended as if he didn't even know the woman but she was now in his house, half-naked. How does he explain that? I don't even think he went to Rhodes. Fuck, his voice keeps echoing in my

head and in a fit of rage I find myself punching the shower wall repeatedly. Fuck, why did I subject myself to yet another heartache? I wanted to take a break after Alex, I was afraid to love again, but then he came along and made me fall so hard for him. If only I knew that he wouldn't catch me I would have protected my heart and stayed the hell away from him. Now I understand why Thuso shunned love, I understand why she avoided attachments. She's been avoiding this kind of pain. Love hurts, period. It hurts, it hurts like hell. Crying and weak, I let my body slide down the slippery, tiled shower wall until I sit on the floor. I sit there sobbing quietly, with my hand bleeding, until I realise that I'm going to be late for my first class. I step out of the shower and dry myself. Then I get a bandage out of the first aid kit in a cabinet above the sink and bandage my hand after sterilising the cuts. Damn, my hand hurts, I've really hurt myself, but I can't entertain that pain right now. I get dressed

then take some painkillers not only for the hand but also for the throbbing headache. Without a doubt this day is going to be long with this hangover, so I spare some minutes to make myself a hangover remedy I got from Thuso. This thing tastes awful but I bravely gulp it down in one go, then I grab my bag and leave my flat without even having breakfast. Hell, I'm too heartbroken and hungover to push any food down my esophagus.

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My first two classes seemed to be dragging but thank God they are now over, and I tried to stay focused and absorb as much as I could from the lecturers. Now it's 12:35, time for my third and last class for the day - Doc's class. Hell, I ain't attending that class, not when I'm still this hurt and mad at him. I don't think I'll be able to stand the sight of him. And I doubt I'll even hear anything he teaches. It'll just be a waste of time. Best thing to do is to not go at all. I just sit at the library, continuing with the book I've been reading. I have a Chemistry assignment to submit on Wednesday and I'm trying to gather some more information. With my heart this broken, concentrating is hard but I try, I have to. At 13:55 I leave the library going to my practical session - Doc's. I can't miss it, I can't miss something that has marks that would count towards my DP for this course. Even though there are lab assistants to help us conduct our experiments, Doc likes popping by in his course's practical sessions to check if everything is in order. I hope today he doesn't do that. I really don't have the energy to look at him. He doesn't even know that I'm back, he thinks I'm only coming back this afternoon. He called me three times last night but I didn't answer, I was in no mood to hear his lies. Sandile, the man who calls himself my father, also called but I didn't take his calls either. He needs to stop coming too strong,

I'm still ambivalent about letting him into my life.

I get to the lab and find some of the students still walking in and I join them. As I pass by Thuso, who's already seated on her chair, she grabs my arm, stopping me on my tracks. -Her: "This looks like one nasty injury you got on this hand. What happened?" I yank my arm off of her hand. What makes her think I'd tell her anything? She's been quiet all this time, since the day I saw her at the filling station, we've just been ignoring each other. So what makes her think I'd want to talk to her now? After yanking my arm

back I don't say anything, I just walk away from her.

-Her: "You better bundle up, it's cold out there. Dangerous things happen in this world."

What? I turn to look at her, wanting to ask what she meant by that, but just then Doc walks through the door. Shit! I hoped he wouldn't come. I put my labcoat on and go sit at my designated work station. When I lift my

head I find him looking at me. Quickly, I look back down, sickened. He starts talking, giving us pointers on how to carry out today's experiments. Out of the corner of my eye, I watch as he speaks slowly. My gaze drops to his thin, pink lips and bright white teeth - the mouth I know so well and have kissed so many times. But now I visualise him kissing that other woman. That big-bosomed, athletic and confident white woman who showed off her breasts in a tight and sexy undergarment when she answered his door yesterday. I imagine him kissing her with haste and hunger, not at all the way he's slowly speaking now. I feel myself getting sick at the thought of it all and something inside me snaps. I make a decision, with chilling clarity, that him and I are done, that I'm not going to cry for him again and that tonight I'm going to walk out into the world where dangerous things happen all the time - as Thuso put it and enjoy myself, just let loose.

•

After those pointers, Doc walks out of the lab and we start working. With so much determination I work on my experiments and by 17:00 I walk out of the lab feeling exhausted. All I want is to get home, eat, rest a little, then hit the streets later. I walk down the corridor to the elevator. I hit the button and wait for the damn elevator to come and transport me down to the ground floor, I'm too tired to take the stairs. But this frustrating machine that breaks more often doesn't come up until this man that I stupidly called mine shows up. He's carrying his laptop bag, also leaving, done for the day.

-Him: "Someleze."

He says as he comes to stand next to me. -Me "Sir."

I feel like dying right now but I still keep my cool. There's no one around but I still keep it professional. -Him: "I saw you passing by my office, leaving. Why didn't you come to me so we'd drive home together as usual?"

-Me: "I'm not catching a ride with you." My voice is calm but evidently I still can't mask my anger. He sees it and he looks at me alarmed.

-Him: "Is everything okay, Soso? And why didn't you tell me that you're back? I called you last night. Why didn't you pick up?" I notice other students coming.

-Me: "Not here. Not now."

I turn around and take the stairs. I rush down and he follows behind. When we get to the ground floor, I quickly grab the door to walk out of the building's exit but he grabs my hand and pulls me to him. It's like he doesn't care who sees us anymore.

-Him: "Someleze, wait."

-Me: "Don't you dare draw eyes to me." -Him: "Then come with me to my car." Not wanting drama, I walk with him to the damn car. Immediately after we've settled on our seats he asks me what's going on, as if he doesn't know.

-Him: "Baby, talk to me."

-Me: "I came back yesterday, Thando. I didn't tell you because I wanted to surprise you. But guess what? I ended up surprising myself." -Him: "What are you talking about?" -Me: "I went to your house around 14:30 yesterday, Thando. And you let the woman

you're fucking open the door for me half naked."

The word "shit" escapes his mouth almost inaudible. And he blanches before dropping his gaze, down away from my piercing eyes. That to me is total admission of guilt and I can feel my heart break once again inside my chest.

-Me: "Thando, how could you? I trusted you. I told you that if I give you my heart I don't wanna hold back and that I would be vulnerable. I told you that I was scared to get hurt again. But you said you loved me and you'd never hurt me. Why did you do this to me, Thando? Why?"

Tears are streaming down my cheeks and I can't hold them back. I'm dying yet another death before the actual one.

-Him: "Baby, I can explain."

He says taking my hand. I yank it off of his grip, angry.

-Me: "Don't you dare touch me."

I open the door and get out. I keep wiping my tears as I walk away from his car. When I look up I see Buhle, once again, looking at me from across the parking lot. I'm starting to feel like this girl is stalking me and she's making me feel uncomfortable but I don't have the energy to go ask her what the fuck she wants from me. I just walk away, going home.

. On my walk home I call Kevin and he answers on the third ring. -Him: "Hey, buddy." -Me: "Kev, are you working tonight?" -Him: "No, I'm at work as we speak. Day shift."

-Me: "That means you'll be out by 18:00. And tomorrow? You have a day shift again?" -Him: "No. Night. Why are you asking me all this? Soso, you just quit and left me here." -Me: "Yah, well, I wish I didn't quit. I need my job back but I know that I won't get it, so it's okay. Anyway, I'm asking because I want us to go out boozing tonight. Get your girl and let's hit the streets."

-Him: "On a Monday, Soso? Are you okay?" -Me: "No, I'm not okay but I don't wanna talk about it. I don't even wanna think about it, I just wanna forget. I wanna go where the music's loud and dance the night away, man. Just as long as they don't play sad songs." -Him: "Think that's a good idea? What, you and Thando had a fight?"

-Me: "The bastard is cheating on me, Kev. But like I said, I don't wanna talk about it. What I wanna know is: are you up for getting wasted tonight?"

He takes a moment then answer.

-Him: "I'll see if Asanda's up for it then will call you back."

-Me: "Sure."

I hang up and continue the walk home. I get there and throw myself on the bed. I said I was done crying for Doc but I can't help it, I find myself crying all over again. This shit hurts. I really need a temporary relief. I don't want to be alone crying myself to sleep tonight. I did enough of that last night. I just want to get drunk and dance with strangers, I don't even care if some guy I don't even know puts his hands all over my body. I just want to numb the pain. If I'll be able to wake up for my classes tomorrow, well, I'll worry about that tomorrow. Right now I just want to deal with this pain. Doc has really broken me. Kevin calls me back and his girl, Asanda, is up for going out tonight. I knew that she'd be up for it, the girl's a lost soul, she doesn't know if

she's moving forward or backwards. She can't

differentiate between Monday and Friday. She's 20 and not doing anything. She passed grade 12 two years ago then she just lazed around spending Kevin's money and her parents'. But I mostly blame her parents for her behaviour though. They don't show her the right way, they don't set rules for her, they just spoil her instead. Last year they bought her a car, a Polo Vivo. Why the hell would you buy a child who's not doing anything with her life a car? Some parents though.

Anyway, by 20:00 I'm ready and Kevin calls saying they are outside. I walk out and find Asanda's Vivo parked in front of my gate. I hop in and we drive to Fort Beaufort [eBhofolo], to this pub called Pandarosa. We are about to turn this night into one big party, I'm going to spend some of the money Doc gave me. My rent is sorted and so are my other essentials, so having fun with the rest won't hurt. We get to Pandarosa 30 minutes later and even though it's a Monday we find the place packed. Clearly people don't care what day of the week it is, if they want to get drunk, they do.

We start with tequila shots. And we down them like it's lemonade. Then we order two bottles of Johnnie Walker, 2I Coke and ciders. Soon, I can tell that the booze is going down between the legs in these two lovebirds that I came with because they can't keep their hands off each other on the dance floor, with their tongues down each other's throats. At the rate they are going, I swear they'll end up having a quicky in the bathroom. And me? Well, I'm left dancing alone. I know that I said I don't mind if some stranger's got his hands all over my body but fuck, I do mind. These perverts keep hitting on me and they are only making me angry. Ugh! I need some air. Plus, the toilets here are not inviting so I just walk out to use the bathroom at the adjacent Total filling station. I don't need anyone to tell me

that I'm tipsy right now, I can tell by the way I walk. My phone keeps vibrating in my pocket and it's Doc calling. Ey makame kancinci. It's now around 23:00, so when is he going to sleep anyway? Even though I don't want to talk to him, I'm still curious to know what he's saying in the messages he's been sending me all evening. As I'm looking down, opening my WhatsApp to read the messages I bump into this person.

"Hey, watch it."

He says. Fuck, I know that voice. I look up and it's Alex carrying two bottles of still water having just walked out of the Bonjour shop which has an entrance that's only separated by an ATM from the one I was going to use to the restrooms. Our eyes meet, and I can tell that he's shocked to see me here at this hour, not to mention that I'm drunk on a Monday night.

-Him: "Soso? Baby, are you okay?" #24 "I've been looking for a saviour. I've been looking for a real one to hold on to. I've been looking for a saviour, saviour, yeah, to save me." - Quavo [Iggy Azalea]

My eyes snap open when I hear my morning alarm ringing. It takes a moment for me to realise I haven't died and gone to heaven. I have Doc's arm around me as we are curling into a classic spoon position beneath my pillowy down comforter. He's indeed back in my life and he's spent the night in my bed. I move away from him to reach for my phone on the bedside pedestal and turn the alarm off. Then I turn to look at him. I smile to myself as I study his face. He looks so handsome even in his sleep. I am so happy I haven't lost him, I'm ecstatic. Without him I was slowly but surely going down a slippery slope.

It's now 6:30 but he's still deep asleep even though he's usually up by 5:00 to take an hour maintaining his sexy abs 4 days in a week or

to use that hour attending to my needs on the other days. I don't blame him for still being out though, it's exhaustion. Just like me, my poor baby hadn't had a goodnight sleep in two days. We didn't even get to go deeper into our conversation about Natalie last night. I had to focus on finishing my assignment first, so he pulled a chair, sat next to me at the desk and helped me out. When that was done there was no time to talk. Slowly, oh so slowly, we took off each other's clothes, we were both naked as our lips locked and hands caressed each other's bodies. Our moist lips would meet and part, creating a bridge of our juices. They would hover, then sensuously kiss flesh. Then he was inside me, making slow and passionate love to me. With almost each movement inside me he told me he loved me, showing me time and again as his body shuddered. We've made love with so much passion before but last night was different, the passion was there in spades.

The session was so slow, sensual and he was in no hurry to reach the end, he was more about reconnecting our souls. It was as if he was making love to me with the intent of driving away any fear I have felt about the end of our relationship. Finally, our fingers entwined and tightened; my moans grew louder; he tensed and the moment arrived at the same time for the both of us. The climax became as intense as the entire session was. It was as if I'd been climbing a tall mountain and now I'd reached its highest pinnacle. With my arms spread, I floated out over the precipice, my cry of fulfillment both mindless and sapped with pleasure. After that he looked deep into my eyes and spoke with unmistakable passion. "I love you, Someleze. You're my everything. You mean the world to me." He didn't wait for me to respond, he kissed me then pulled me into his arms and I lay with my head on his chest. We were both spent and we fell asleep almost immediately. I had to make sure that we used protection

though, I can never know what infections Natalie has transmitted to him. Though not a rubber of choice, one condom from a box of government condoms that I've been keeping in my bathroom came in handy. It's a box that I got from my social worker landlord back in May. She likes acting like she's my mother, although that gets a little annoying at times, I appreciate the fact that she's concerned about my well-being. At the time, I was sure that I would never use those condoms but I accepted them anyway because I didn't want to disappoint her. It turns out I did myself a huge favour by accepting and keeping them because one of them came in handy last night. What I also like is that I'm not the only cautious one in this relationship, Doc is too. He told me that after learning that he'd slept with Natalie he visited his GP and the GP wrote him a prescription for the PEP

treatment. He didn't mind having to pay the GP for consultation and then pay for the 28

day course of anti-HIV drugs. A healthy life is priceless.

As I'm still staring at him, he opens his eyes and when they meet mine he gives out a loving smile.

-Him: "Good morning, beautiful."

-Me: "Morning, thando Iwam. Sleep well?" -Him: "Like a vampire in a blood bank." I can't help but laugh at that. Then I peck his lips.

-Him: "Thank you for not walking away from me."

-Me: "Walk away from a guy who loves me so much that at his age he didn't even think twice about jumping over our fence that's made of a high brick wall just to get to me. Risking being caught by my landlord in the process. I'm telling you, babe, you had me with that."

I say laughing.

-Him: "And given a chance I'd do it all over again."

-Me: "You didn't need to do it though, all you had to do was to not break your phone then call me to come to you. You don't know how worried I was when you didn't answer my calls. I thought maybe you had given up on me, on us, not knowing that your phone's broken."

-Him: "I would never give up on us, babe. Not this soon. Listen, I promise to be more open with you going forth. Okay? And I won't break that promise again. I swear."

-Me: "You know how you make me feel, Thando? You make me feel like there's absolutely nothing I can ever say or tell you that would offend you, hurt you, or make me any less than what you already think of me. You make me feel like I can tell you anything. I'm also trying to make you feel that way with me too. Baby, you don't need to feel embarrassed about anything around me. You can always tell me anything no matter how bad or embarrassing you think it is. I need you to tell me, especially if it it's gonna affect our relationship. I need to hear these things from you, babe, before things spiral out of control. Please."

-Him: "You got it."

He says, gently brushing my cheek with his hand.

-Him: "I've been around, I've been with a lot of different women in the course of my life. I've dated a few and just had sex with the rest. My 11 years with Busi doesn't mean we were together for 11 years, it means I started dating her 11 years ago. There were a lot of breaks between us in that 11 years, as you know I only got to marry her 3 years ago. We'd take breaks and be with other people, but most people I've been with never heard the L-word come out of my mouth, I don't just use that word lightly and that's because I value and respect the meaning it carries... Because Busi and I had a strong bond, which was not only our kids, we'd always find a way back to each other's arms. And when we got married we took a vow to never leave each

other again, which is why the divorce we had in January broke me. It made me realise that we were really over, for good this time. To numb the pain I'd have a different woman in my bed almost every night. I didn't even need to be drunk to do it, half of the times I'd be sober. I was using sex to sedate myself. But that wasn't working, it'd manage to numb the pain for an hour or two at most and then the pain would catch up with me again. I wouldn't

pain would catch up with me again. I wouldn't even have half the interest to spend the night next to the woman I've picked up, I would leave them in my bed and go to the couch downstairs, put my earphones on and let the music put me to sleep. I lived like that for months, up until the next woman I picked up was a psycho that would make me regret it -Natalie. So I left Jo'burg and came to EL to clean up my act, and that was a month before I met you. I told myself that I was taking a break from women, but then you came along and turned my life around. I was definitely not looking for love but without doing

anything you made me fall for you so hard

that I, myself, didn't even know what had hit me. What we have means a lot to me, Someleze. YOU mean a lot to me. So, going forward, if my not-so-good past threatens to destroy what we have I promise to communicate with you, to let you know about it. I promise to learn to be more open. And I'm never gonna break that promise again." This is a start.

-Me: "Thanks. That's all I ask, sthandwa sam. And like I once said to you, I would never judge you by the things you did in the past. I love you, Thando, and that won't change any time soon. I also promise to be calm and give you a chance to explain when something happens next time."

He smiles. And we seal the promises with a kiss. But that kiss is cut short when I hear a knock at the door. Jeez! That must be my landlord.

. Anxious, I get out of bed and go put on my

robe that's hanging on the back of the door. Then I open the door. And it's indeed my landlord, on her way to work. She works in Adelaide, an hour away from Alice, so she leaves early.

-Me: "Morning, Ma."

-Her: "Morning. Listen, I need to talk to you when I come back from work, okay? Be here." -Me: "Okay, Ma. I'll be here."

With that she walks away. I just know right there and then that I'm in trouble. She probably heard noises coming out of my flat last night and knew that I was with a man. And if that's the case then I'm really screwed.

Grrr! I wonder what she's going to say.

I close the door and go sit on the bed. I don't communicate my fears with Doc though, I just keep quiet.

-Him: "Everything okay?"

-Me: "I don't know, hey. Guess I'll know when she comes back from work. Right now we need to get up and get ready to go to campus."

-Him: "Not yet. I can be late and I know that your first class is only at 9:50, third slot. So come sit next to me and let's talk about this Nat thing."

He says as he sits up straight on the bed, leaning on my cheap headboard.

-Me: "You have my timetable in your head?" -Him: "I keep everything about the people I deeply care about. Now come."

I climb back into my bed. I sit next to him and lean on the headboard too.

-Me: "After Zizo told me that Natalie had been emailing you almost frequently and then she just showed up where you were at Rhodes and at your house, proving that she knew exactly where you were, that got me thinking. It got me thinking about what Alex once did in front of me. Zizo thought Natalie hired someone to follow you but I didn't think so. My theory was: it's Alex and Thuso who fed her that information." -Him: "Alex and Thuso? Why?"

-Me: "Ain't it obvious? Thuso wants you and Alex also wants me back. So they used Natalie to break us up. I think the plan was for Natalie to come to your house, do what she did, sleep with you and take those pictures, pictures that would end up on my lap and make me not think twice about leaving you. And Natalie was more than willing to do it, for her own obvious reasons."

-Him: "Then why did the pictures not end up on your lap?"

-Me: "Because there was no longer a need for that. I had already seen Natalie half naked in your house and made my own conclusions. Both Thuso and Alex know me very well. They know how I react. And they also know that when I'm extremely angry I punch and break things. Thuso saw my injured hand in class on Monday and made a comment that I figured a meaning to only yesterday when I was talking to Zizo. My injured hand and knowing that I found Natalie in your house the day before meant one thing, that they had succeeded in their scheme."

-Him: "But how did they find out about Natalie to begin with?"

-Me: "From your emails. Alex is doing his Masters degree in Computer Science. Even though I won't say he's a hacker, he knows a lot about hacking, programming and coding. He was my boyfriend for years which means I absorbed enough from him just like I also absorb a lot from you now. You know me, I like listening more than talking and if something fascinates me I ask about it. He showed me how to access someone's computer remotely as long as the computer in question is connected to the internet. He did it in front of me once, he hacked into Lexi's boyfriend's computer. And Lexi was his twin sister. Now deceased."

-Him: "So you're telling me that that boy hacked my emails?"

-Me: "I believe he hacked your laptop first, then your emails. I believe he first looked through the documents stored on your laptop for something, anything he could use to get me to leave you. And when he didn't find anything he moved to your emails." -Him: "And how did he do that? How did he invade my privacy?"

-Me: "By creating an email bug that he then sent to you so he could get your IP address. The bug is a piece of code he imbedded in the email he sent to you. An email that caught your attention. Once you opened the email, the bug simply told him that you've read the email, and it also provided your dynamic IP address. Then from there he used your IP address to access your laptop. Dynamic IP is the IP address ordinary people like you and me get, it means every time you disconnect and reconnect to the internet your system is assigned a completely new IP address, contrary to static IP. When you're home your laptop is always connected to your home WiFi, but when you disconnect it to take it with you to campus and reconnect it later

that means you get a different IP address.

That means anyone who wants to hack you using your IP address will have to obtain it every time they want to access your system. But that wasn't a train smash for Alex because he wanted to access your computer only once. Remember the email you got from someone you didn't know on Friday night, the night before you were asked to go to Grahamstown? The email with Biochem third year students as a subject and a MPEG attachment that made no sense?" -Him: "Yeah, I remember it."

-Me: "Well, I think it was from Alex, an email account he created. Once you clicked it, that's how you gave him access to your laptop. But having just your IP address wasn't going to help him. He also needed a backdoor in your system, an open port that could listen to and reply back to his data packets. The bug he sent you also helped him with that. And the fact that you have no firewall made things easier for him." -Him: "But how did Alex even know my personal email address?"

-Me: "I thought about it. I doubt he even knew your last name. What I'm sure of is that he knew your first name from your birthday party. Remember, he attended the party not because he knew Bhongo but because Bhongo knows his two friends who are East Londoners, Siya and Sive, and he'd asked them to bring someone when he was inviting them. So he couldn't have asked Bhongo about you. Yes, he could have asked Siya and Sive, but they don't have that information either. So instead of a long chain from him to Sive and Siya then to Bhongo to get to you he worked with Thuso, a person with the same goal as him, a person who knows a whole lot about you. Busi told me that Thuso tracked her through social media and I think that's where they also got your email address. Knowing your name they looked you up on social media and they found your Gmail account username under your contact info on Facebook because you have it displayed there. Then they sent you the email and got

access to your computer. But when they couldn't find anything they could use on the documents stored on your laptop, they moved to your emails. And guessing your password was now easy because Alex already had access to every folder stored on your computer. Just like he did in Lexi's boyfriend's computer. Narrowing it down, he targeted folders that contained more personal documents, especially those that contained memories from the past. I guess he did the same with you too. You know yourself, babe, you're very sentimental, you keep everything. Like the photos of your first girlfriend, Liesl, who died in a car accident when you were both 16. Photos of Rocky, the chocolate Labrador that you shared with Busi. Photos of Lesedi, your first car that your father bought you when you turned 21. Photos of your daughters on the day they were born. All that stuff that's important to you, photos with

captions, they are all stored on your laptop. And I'm guessing Alex used them to guess

your Gmail password, I also did. I thought it would be your daughters' names or their birth dates but it was "Lesedi", your first car. I guess they figured it out too."

-Him: "I feel naked, you know. Yes, I know that I'm literally naked right but you know what I mean. My privacy has been invaded by people I don't even have dealings with. I don't have a problem with you seeing my stuff, but them...."

-Me: "I know and I'm sorry... Google sends you a security alert when your account has been accessed on a new device, they notify you so you could change your password and protect your account just in case you've been hacked. Did you receive their email and did you even pay attention to it?" -Him: "This makes sense now, I got the email but I only read it on Saturday. And I changed the password. At first it was my daughters' names combined, then I changed it to "Lesedi". And yesterday I got another telling me about the possible hack, I guess it was you. But I haven't changed the password yet." -Me: "You better make it stronger this time around, include numbers and capital letters. And also use the two-factor authentication which means the hacker will also need your mobile device as well before accessing your emails. And there is no other way around that...Anyway, from your emails that's where they found out about Natalie and decided to use her as their lil pawn. They could tell how obsessed she is with you and all they needed to do was to put you two together at the same place and at the same time, away from me. Yesterday I read the emails she's been sending you, they have a signature block, her contact details at the bottom, her work address, work phone number and her

cellphone number. Work address in

Grahamstown. That's close enough and it worked in their advantage. Everybody in the Biochem department, including Thuso, knew that the Honours students had an academic trip to Rhodes that Saturday but not everyone had a reason to want to see you in Grahamstown, only Thuso and Alex had one." -Him: "And Lincoln not feeling well at the last minute was no coincidence, was it? With him out I was the next option."

-Me: "Exactly. The guy was not even sick. My psychotic ex-friend just gave him some green to say he was. I talked to him yesterday, I gave him no choice and he admitted to it. They had you sent to Grahamstown that day and told Nat about it. And they are also the ones behind Nat showing up at your house last Sunday."

-Him: "These kids are crazy, seriously. What is it with them? To go to such great lengths just to break us up? What is that, seriously? Are they that desperate? How did they even know my address? I don't have anything that's got my address on my laptop or on my emails."

-Me: "I believe they got the address through me. I've dated Alex for 3 years, and in that 3 years our lives were connected. The iPhone I'm using was a gift from him and he's the one who set up my Apple ID and my iCloud account. I never changed the passwords after we broke up. So I'm sure he's been using "Find my iPhone", logging in using my details and tracking my phone more closely. And guess where my phone's GPS has been putting me at night lately?"

-Him: "My house."

-Her: "Exactly. So they figured it out. Maybe they even drove by one day just to make sure. And your car, that Thuso knows very well, is mostly parked in the driveway than in the garage."

-Him: "And this past weekend they knew that you weren't around, your phone told them that you were home in P.E, that's why they sent Natalie to my house to do what she did." -Me: "You're seeing it. Monday night I went out drinking because I was stressed, and guess what? Alex just conveniently showed up and acted as if he was surprised to see me at Fort Beaufort drunk at that hour. With my phone on and data on, he knew exactly where I was, that I was in Pandarosa obviously drowning my sorrows because of what they did. And he went there to take advantage of the situation. But unfortunately for him that didn't work. We sure do know how to attract crazies, don't we?"

-Him: "No kidding. At least Natalie and Alex are our exes, who I don't get is that girl Thuso. Even if their plan had worked, how did she think she'd benefit in all of this? How did she think she'd make me feel something for her? I mean, I don't want her and she knows it. And how was she even planning to get rid of a psycho like Natalie once she got in the picture?"

-Me: "I really underestimated just how sick Thuso is, I didn't know she'd go this far, especially for a man that doesn't even want

her. I guess her craziness even rubbed off on Alex. They used Nat as their pawn, forgetting that in a game of chess a pawn can turn into a queen if it travelled all across the board to the other side. Natalie is the one holding the cards now, because she did this for her own reasons, not theirs. But apparently Thuso had or still has a plan for her. At least that's what Buhle told me after she confirmed my theory. But she doesn't know the details of the plan." -Him: "Buhle?"

-Me: "Buhle Vilakazi in our class."

-Him: "Where does Vilakazi fit in all of this craziness?"

-Me: "The girl's been using her eyes on me and you a lot lately. So yesterday after I went to see Lincoln I looked for her on campus, wanting to know if she was also involved in Thuso's plot. And if yes, why. She told me everything she knows. Apparently, before Thuso approached Alex for this sick alliance she asked for Buhle's help. Apparently, Buhle has the same skillset as Alex when it comes to

computers, only difference is that she's street-taught. She says when Thuso told her about my relationship with you she didn't believe it and she didn't want to help her, she even denied being that computer savvy. But she started thinking it was true when she coincidentally saw me at the airport driving your car. And to be sure she started using her eye on us, just out of curiosity. But even though she turned Thuso down, apparently Thuso still shares her plans with her but she doesn't give her all the details. Before I left her room yesterday, she promised to get me everything Thuso is planning next. She told that she's against what Thuso's doing and she has her own reasons for feeling that way and they are pure. Knowing that Thuso might not give up after seeing that her plan hasn't worked, I think we could use any intel I get from Buhle to be one step ahead of Thuso in their next plan with Alex."

Doc just gets out of bed and grabs his clothes on the chair. Then he starts getting dressed. -Him: "You know what, babe? Dealing with one crazy Natalie is enough. I'm too old and busy to be dealing with two bored crazy kids such as Thuso and Alex. I'm just gonna deal with Natalie, get her to surrender the sex tapes she has in her possession. Because the last thing I want is to be an internet porn star. I'll even pay her if I have to. Money is the only thing I can offer her, nothing more. As for Thuso and Alex, I really don't have time for them and I suggest that you ignore them too. They have failed in their sick game, and they're gonna fail in whatever they try next. Let's just promise each other that. That we're not gonna let their stupid schemes separate us. That whatever happens next we'll know that it's them and deal with it with the highest level of maturity." I'm not sure about this but I nod.

-Me: "Okay."

He's now done getting dressed. And he comes to me, leans over and peck my lips.

-Him: "Please come open the gate for me, I need to go get ready for work...I'll just strengthen all my passwords and make sure that I don't get hacked again. Other than that I don't want any dealings with those kids. I'm letting this go."

I sigh then climb down the bed. I put on my morning shoes and go open the gate for him. He tells me that he's going to come get me after an hour so we could go to campus, then he leaves.

Indeed, after an hour he comes to get me and we drive to campus. I don't see Thuso in all of our classes, I don't know where she is and I'm not sure I care. As we leave in the afternoon, walking to Doc's car, I see Alex looking at us, leaning on his own car in the parking lot. Our eyes lock and I don't miss noticing the anger

in his eyes. Clearly, realising that their plan

didn't work is driving him nuts. Well, he should have known that evil doesn't win. It doesn't matter what he and Thuso decide to do next, they are going to fail again. As I'm looking at him, the distinction between him and the man walking beside me is stark. Alex's passion and looks are sexy to be sure. But Doc is more sexier, and his mature and sophisticated demeanor gives him an urbane flair I find compelling in a way I've never encountered. Alex must be insane if he thinks I'd leave Doc and go back to his boyish ass. With no drama, Doc and I get in the car and he drives away, leaving Alex still standing where he was. Ten minutes later, Doc drops me off at my gate and I walk to my flat to anxiously wait for my landlord to come home. Wondering what she wants us to talk about, I find myself sweating, anxiety getting the better of me.

Around 18:30 she knocks at my door and asks me to follow her to the main house. I do with my heart banging against my chest,

trepidation killing me. We enter her lounge and she asks me to take s seat on the couch next to her.

-Her: "Someleze, Monday night you came home really late, drunk and rowdy. Then last night you brought a man into your flat. I heard you having sex in my yard. Is that respect? What did I say to you about rules in this yard? Would you have sex in your mother's yard?"

Oh my God, I'm screwed. I look down, fucked and paralysed by shame.

-Me: "No, I wouldn't."

My voice comes out as a whisper.

-Her: "Then why did you do it in my yard? It's me you don't respect, is that it?"

I lift my head and look at her with the respect I've always been showing her all these years.

-Me: "No, Ma. I respect you. A lot. And I'm sorry I did what I did. It won't happen again. Ever. I swear. Please forgive me." -Her: "I'm sure it won't happen again.

Someleze, you broke the only two rules I gave you when you first got here. I can't stay with a rebellious child like you in my house. That's why I'm letting you go."

-Me: "Letting me go? You mean you're kicking me out?"

-Her: "Make sure you clear all your stuff by tomorrow. I'll refund you half of your rent money for this month."

As painful as what she's saying is, not a trace of feeling grazes her face. Clearly her mind is made up, there's no changing her decision. She's really kicking me out of her house, just like that. Where am I going to go now? I'll

have to figure it out, she doesn't care. I rise from the couch rather slowly.

-Me: "Thanks for keeping me in your house all these years, Ma. And I'm sorry for disrespecting you. I'll be out by tomorrow." Without even waiting for her to answer, I

make for the door and walk out.

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I don't go back to my flat, I just go straight to the gate and walk out to Doc's house. On the way I feel like crying but I manage to hold it together. In no time I get to Doc's gate and I call him to open up. He does and I walk into the yard and make my way to his front door. I walk in obviously looking flushed because he immediately asks if everything is okay as he leads me to the couch.

-Me: "No, everything is not okay, Thando." My voice cracks and my tears betray me, they just fall even though I don't want them to. Doc, who's sitting next to me on the couch, pulls me to him.

-Him: "Baby, talk to me. What's going on?" -Me: "I don't have a place to stay, Thando. My landlord has just kicked me out because Monday night I came home very late and drunk, and because you spent the night in my bed last night."

He pulls back and looks at me.

-Him: "Is that it? Well, don't worry, babe. Just come stay with me. Let me take care of you, with the accommodation and everything else."

-Me: "But that's not right, babe. Cohabiting is just not me. What would my mother say if she were to find out? I can't do it."

-Him: "Of course you can, babe. You don't have much choice. And your mother won't find out."

He says, wiping my tears.

-Him: "This is Alice, accommodation is scarce. Besides, I'd love having you here all the time. We've been practically living together anyway."

-Me: "No, Thando, we have been spending nights and weekends together while we lived separately. That's very different from living a life together."

-Him: "And that was going to be my point. With you living here we can be ourselves, all the time. We'll be much closer, our bond will be strengthened. And anything that's plotted against us won't easily shake us."

-Me: "Ey...I don't know, babe. It's still early for such a big step."

-Him: "I know, but I believe we're ready to take that step. It's gonna be good, babe, you'll see. Just say you'll do it."

No, this is too much and too sudden. I'm not sure I'm ready for that. It's still too early and I love having my own space. But do I have a choice? I glance around me, at Doc's beautiful house, his beautiful self, and I struggle with the opposing emotions I feel in my head and heart. I'm now going to be completely and utterly dependent on this man.

-Him: "Someleze, I love you. And I want you close to me, I need you here. When I asked you to quit your job, yes I wanted you to have enough time to focus on your studies. But, like I also told you, I also wanted us to have enough time to spend together. My marriage ended because my ex-wife and I couldn't spend much time together. And even though I never said it out loud, I didn't want something

like that to happen to us too. And now we have a chance to not only avoid that but to grow closer too, to strengthen our love, our relationship...Like I told you this morning and even before, I was lost after my divorce. I didn't even know it, but I needed a saviour to save me. I was feeling the weight of the world like I had bricks on my shoulders. I walked down a dark, muddy path; I had a dance with the devil and he got a grip on me. But I managed to escape. You became my saviour. You gave me strength to beat that darkness. And now I want you close to me always. You're not a rebound, you're the real one for me and I want to hold on to you. Please, just say yes you'll move in with me."

Ncooh thanks for all your encouragement guys. I got to read all your comments today because I had a hectic weekend, and a hectic Monday. I apologise. I really appreciate everything y'all said. And for those who asked: I'm a Xhosa first time writer from P.E, a University of Fort Hare alumnus, but I'm now based in Jo'burg. I understand most of our languages so you can comment using any language. Thanks guys. Love y'all <3

#25 [+18S, extreme adult-content]

"Put you up against the wall. And I'ma go to work 'til you get off. Baby, soon as you're done we'll go some more. Girl, just imagine us." - Chris Brown [Rita Ora]

3 days later - Saturday Thando

Running and sweating early in the morning, I finally get to slow down and completely stop when I reach my gate. I turn to look at Soso who's coming at a distance, also running. From where I am standing she looks alright, she's doing pretty good, but as she gets closer I can see that it's not that good. Her body is tense, her breathing ragged. She slows down and comes to a stop in front of me, clutching a stitch in her side.

-Me: "Aw, no, you're kidding. Really?"

I say, with symphathy.

She can't even speak, she looks away and dryheaves once. Then she takes a deep breath as she can muster and let it out, panting.

-Me: "That banana I tried to make you eat seeming like a pretty good idea right about now, huh."

-Her: "First 2 kilometres were all right, then the wheels came off."

-Me: "That's because you've never made more than 2 kilometres before, but you'll get used to it. Just stick with me."

-Her: "A couple that exercises together stays together, right?"

-Me: "That's just about right."

-Her: "Crap. Whoever said that was probably high."

I laugh and pull her fully into my arms.

-Me: "I'm glad you moved in."

I say looking into her eyes.

-Her: "Yeah, me too."

I'm not sure if she means that though. I helped her move in yesterday, but I could see that she was reluctant. She only moved in because she had no other choice. I, too, didn't want to force her into doing something she wasn't comfortable with, that's why I've been trying to help her find another place to rent since Thursday. But like I said, this is Alice, a small town, accommodation is pretty scarce here. But hopefully we'll find something soon, in the meantime she can stay with me. -Her: "Thanks for being here for me." -Me: "Hey, that's what I'm here for. Besides, your unreasonable landlord kicked you out because of me."

-Her: "Unreasonable indeed. I really didn't think she'd kick me out, I thought she'd only give me a lecture and a warning. But hey, I did sign the rules when I took the flat. I guess rules are rules. And it's her yard, her rules. Anyway, it doesn't really matter. I'm just glad I'm not out in the street."

She kisses me, we kiss, and my hands move down from her waist to grab her firm ass. She lets out a soft moan in my mouth. And I can feel my cock stirring into life. She feels it too and she pulls back.

-Her: "Let's go inside."

-Me: "You sure you don't want to go to East London with me today?"

-Her: "No, babe, you know what my first priority is. I'm sorry."

Just then her phone rings. It's strapped to her upper arm and I can see the caller ID: Sandile. -Me: "Who's Sandile, babe? My competition?"

I ask jokingly. I know very well who Sandile is. -Her: "Baby, you're too young and handsome to be this senile. I told you that Sandile's my father. You'll never have a competition." Her face adorned with a smile, she pecks my lips, then she puts her AirPods back on and double taps the outside to answer the call as she walks into the yard. I'm left standing there, watching her as she walks away towards the house. Damn, God really took His time sculpting her, then another creating her inner being. How can I not be this smitten? Just then, my own phone rings. It's Zizo and I answer as I lean on the half-open gate. -Me: "Hey, Zee."

-Her: "T-Love. How's it going?"

-Me: "Good. Great actually. How are you?" -Her: "I'll be okay if you bring Soso around today. I don't feel like hanging out with just you boys."

Today I'm going to East London to meet up with Bhongo and the other guys I made friends with at my birthday party. Zizo will also be there, she doesn't let Bhongo go anywhere without her. That's nice and all but I think it's too much, I'd suffocate if it were me. -Me: "Yah well, looks like you're gonna be stuck with just us. Soso's not coming, she can't."

-Her: "She can't?"

-Me: "Yeah, she's writing a test on Monday so she's got to study."

-Her: "Ah damn. But I understand...See this thing of yours of dating a student though,..." I cut her off.

-Me: "Hey, let's not go there, okay? It doesn't matter what Soso does, I love her. Besides, even if she was working, she wouldn't always be available."

-Her: "C'mon, Thando, you know that I was just joking, don't be catching emotions now. I like Soso, you know that."

-Me: "Listen, Zee, I gotta go. See you later." -Her: "Later."

I hang up and walk into my yard, closing the gate behind. Seriously, I don't like it when my friends make reference to what Soso does. I don't even understand why it matters to them what she does with her life. I walk into the house and find Soso in the bathroom stripping off her jogging clothes, about to get in the shower.

-Her: "Sandile says he's coming to Alice today. He wants to see me."

-Me: "Do you want to see him?"

-Her: "Guess it won't hurt. The man's been wanting to see me for days now, I can't keep brushing him off."

-Me: "Yeah, just see him. That's a step towards building a relationship between you two."

-Her: "You won't mind if I bring him here, in your house? I can't sit with him in the car as if he's my blesser."

-Me: "POC, it's not my house, it's our house now. And of course, I won't mind. I won't even be here by then."

-Her: "Please just don't come home drunk, okay?"

I chuckle.

-Me: "Have you ever seen me drunk, babe? The answer is no. And that's because I no longer drink to get drunk."

-Her: "That's good."

She drops her panties. Now completely naked, she steps inside the shower enclosure and turns on the water.

Someleze

I'm really not sure about this cohabiting thing but I only had two choices; to do it or sleep in the streets. So I did it. But I hope I get another place soon. I must say though, knowing that I now live in this house with the man I love feels good. The only thing I think is going to be a problem so far is that I know myself, I'm not the cleanest glass on the rack. I'm nothing like Doc. Doc is a neat freak, and his house is always immaculate. So now I have to keep up or we will clash. Facing the wall, with my back to the shower door, I enjoy the feeling of warm water and the creamy lather of the soap on my skin. Then the shower door clicks open and Doc steps inside to join me. With my back to him he hugs me from behind, wrapping his arms around me and interlocking his fingers on my stomach. Mmh, I love the feeling of his naked body against mine.

"Are you okay with me joining you though?" He whispers close to my ear.

-Me: "Of course, babe."

As if I'd say no. Is he kidding me? He starts washing my back. I can tell that he enjoys it - but that's nothing new. I'm sure my skin feels soft and silky in his hands with the soap making it wet and slippery. He goes down to wash my bum, working his soapy fingers down on each of my butt-cheeks, the soap making everything slippery. With an effort, he works his way down to my feet before standing up and starting on the front while still standing behind me. Getting

everything nice and soapy again, he starts

washing my breasts spending a little more time than necessary working around my hard nipples. Finally, he works his way down my stomach to my private part and starts rubbing it gently with his fingers pulling me close to him as he does. And I can feel his erection pressing against my butt as he's standing behind me. The moans I let out when he washing my back end are nothing to the ones I'm letting out now, they are loud and more frequent. He gently works his fingers up and down over my vagina and then slips one of them up to rub my clit. Working his fingers deeper into me and massaging my clit, it is not long before I climax.

Then he stops and asks me to wash him too. Without hesitating, I start working him the same way he did with me. When I get to the front, I wash his chest and stomach then I excitedly move on to his erect cock. Getting my hands extra soapy, I kneel before him and begin sliding my hand up and down his shaft and over his knob, while I use the other hand to massage his balls. I can see that this excites him but he has nothing to give yet so he just stands there and let me work my recently obtained magic on him. I continue to gently stroke his shaft, until I can tell that he's about to come. That's when he gently removes my hands off him then pulls me up.

-Him: "Let's get rinsed."

Clearly he doesn't want to get there yet...or he doesn't want to get there at all, I don't know and I don't ask. We just rinse each other off then step out of the shower and dry ourselves. With a towel wrapped around my naked torso, I look at myself in the bathroom mirror as if I would see my disappointment written all over my face. I thought Doc would go get a condom and deep himself inside me right there in the shower, I wanted him to, but clearly he isn't interested. With a towel wrapped around his waist, he comes to stand behind me then turns me around to face him. He pulls me to him and kisses me. Pulling back, he looks into my eyes.

-Him: "Do you trust me?"

What is he asking?

-Me: "Of course I trust you."

-Him: "Then I'd like us to try something a little different today."

Something different? Different how? I don't know but I just nod.

-Me: "Okay."

His finger tugs, ever so gently at my towel. The towel parts, then slides down to the floor. His eyes, meeting mine, smile as they follow the downwards path of the towel.

"I love you."

He says as the finger he used to get rid of the towel wanders downwards between my breasts. Then he steps away from me and leaves the bathroom.

He comes back with one of his ties. Quickly he binds my wrists together, glancing briefly up into my eyes as he does so, for a sort of permission. And then pulling up my arms over my head, he attaches my bound wrists to a towel ring fitted high up on the bathroom wall. Then he stands back and let out a sly smile, admiring his handiwork. I stand there, naked as the day I was born, stretched up and tied for his perusal. Okay, this is new to me, but I think I like it. I trust him and I know that he won't do anything that would physically hurt me. Down there, I am already growing warm and wet. His eyes lock to mine. Then he moves closer and whispers close to my ear. -Him: "Are you sure you're up for this?" Am I? Oh hell yeah.

-Me: "Yes, baby. I'm keeping an open mind." He smiles. Placing one hand on one of my breasts, he starts kneading as his mouth lowers to the other, first to suckle, then nibble the nipple. His tongue circles, flicking the nipple to hardness. When he seems to feel he has a satisfactory result, his mouth and that tantalising tongue move to the other nipple, while a hand slides over my stomach, descending. I feel him outlining the curve of my waist, over my hip and belly. His fingers brush over my vagina before slipping in between my thighs.

I can hardly contain myself at this point, I moan loudly. Then I hear his chuckle of approval as he feels how wet I am. His tongue circles the nipple, one finger mirroring the movement over my clit. Torn between the desire to stay still and just let it happen, or to grind my hips around his hand, I find myself simply trembling helplessly and my thighs growing wetter and wetter, and warmer and warmer, my juices beginning to flow. He pauses and looks into my face, running his hands up and over and down my trembling torso, breasts and shoulders, gauging my reactions. Very slowly and gently he runs his hands back around my shoulders and behind my head, pulling my face to his. He kisses me,

very softly on the lips then starts nibbling at my ear.

"Are we enjoying this?"

He whispers and I just nod, panting. -Him: "Want to take things further?" I nod. Of course. This whole thing is driving me wild. His slow careful caressing and touching is arousing me far more than any "straight shag" could have. I am quivering with arousal.

His head nestling into the curve of my neck and shoulder, he reaches behind me with one hand, firmly pulling my buttocks to him. His towel still around his waist, his feet slide between mine, easing my legs apart. I stagger slightly, but his other arm takes my weight as I regain my balance.

-Him: "We don't need to tie those ankles apart, do we?"

-Me: "No."

That comes out as a whisper. My trembling continues and I'm panting, my breath coming

in short bursts and my colour rising. He knows exactly what he is doing to me.

With his lean muscled, bare torso and just the towel around his waist which is now bulging at the front, lambent eyed and clearly with a purpose in mind, he is utterly, astonishingly suggestive and inviting. Delicately, slowly, with only the tips of his fingers, he caresses my face. Then he moves down my neck, over my breasts and stomach, his fingers titillating me. Soft moans keep escaping my mouth and I feel my juices running below. He grins wickedly as I am panting uncontrollably. He kneels down and push my ankles further apart. My legs are now spread wide, my feet further apart and my hands are tied securely above me. He stands up and stands back, looking me up and down, just standing there, arms folded. Just looking.

"You are really beautiful you know." He says before coming close to me, almost, but not quite touching. I can feel his breath on my skin and I am longing for him to be

inside me, but he's taking his time. Carefully,

and touching no other part of me, he reaches for and rubs my left nipple. Under the influence of arousal, my nipples are hard, crinkling with stimulation. He tweaks the nipple, smiles and nods, 'Hmmming' to himself. He releases the nipple. Still touching no other part of me, his hand reaches down between my spread and dripping thighs. "You do like this don't you."

Does he really want me to answer that? Carefully - oh so carefully - he touches my clit and delicately rubs. I moan loudly and uncontrollably, and I gush down there. He continues at it, rubbing my clit a little harder now. I gasp and cry out as my knees buckle. But I manage pull myself upright. He pulls quickly at my clit and massages it for a moment longer. This time he holds me by the waist as my legs give way.

"Don't want you hurting yourself in your enthusiasm."

He whispers into my ear.

-Him: "Tell me. What would you like to happen next?"

I am almost beyond reason.

-Me: "I want.... I want...."

I can't get the words out in my state. His fingers make lazy circles around my clit and I gush again. I am frantic for something inside my hole, but nothing is forthcoming.

-Him: "What do you want? You have to tell me."

His fingers continue flicking and kneading my clit. I am about to come and I feel myself reaching the plateau. And he stops. His hand still holding my waist, he removes the other from my private.

-Him: "You have to tell me what you want, before it goes any further. I won't let you cum until you tell me what you want me to do." His hand slips between my thighs again and quickly, ever so briefly, his fingers stroke across my vagina. The lips, swollen, engorged and sodden, pulse as one finger strokes between them and then withdraws. I am almost frantic with lust.

-Me: "Let me cum, baby. Let me cum." -Him: "What do you want me to do?" His breath by my face is like a promise. He kneads my clit quickly between two fingers, sending electric desire pulsing up through me. -Me: "I want you inside me."

If I weren't tied and supported I would collapse entirely right now.

-Me: "I want you inside me."

He slides a finger inside me, his thumb over my clit and begins to work me. My climax, which had subsided a little, begins to build again immediately and he feels it.

-Him: "No, no, not yet."

His fingers withdraw. Fuck! My tormented clit and my aching vagina want more.

-Me: "Baby, please."

I mumble. He grins and his finger brush over my p**sy lips. I gasp and moan, writhing in my restraint and his grasp. -Me: "Please make me cum. Please. Just fuck me."

He kisses me full on the mouth, then pushes two fingers up inside me hard. I feel them almost scrape against me inside, against my G-spot. I cry out but he has already withdrawn and is down on his knees, his face to my thighs. He pushes my ankles, that were already closing, apart again. I look down to see him looking back up at me, at my face. As he looks, his hands are working the lips of my private. He leans forward, and for one delicious moment, I feel his tongue curl around my clit. I scream, just in time to feel him pull my thighs fully apart and his tongue lick up from the back of my vagina through and over the lips. And he stops. I hang, my weight on my wrists, making incoherent gasps and wishing he could continue. He pulls away and stands smiling at me. I stand there with my wrists restrained and my body sticky with my own sweat and juices.

-Him: "I don't like the taste of soap. You didn't get rinsed thoroughly down there."

He unties me then takes my hand and walks me back inside the shower. He binds my wrists together again and pulling up my arms over my head, he attaches my bound wrists to the shower fitting on the wall and presses me against the wall. Then he reaches for the hand held shower head, turning it on full but cool. He aims the fine needles of water over my breasts, concentrating on the nipples. I squirm and squeal. The water is just cool enough to make me react without chilling me. He pushes my legs apart and turning the shower head upside down, he sprays squarely up into me, over my vagina and my clit with the water. Water and my juices run down my legs as I struggle and squeal against the intensity of it all. The sheer scale of the stimulation is beyond bearing. I scream, trying to escape the intense pleasure/pain/overstimulation of the needle jets of water. I am about to cum uncontrollably. And he stops again. By now I am almost delirious with the desire to cum and I sag in my bonds, head bowed.

He kneels and go in between my legs with his face. He laps slowly at my private, tongue exploring.

-Him: "Part your legs further. Spread your thighs for me."

I obey. He slides two fingers between my thighs, over my bud and towards my vagina, stroking gently, fondling my clit, massaging the lips. I begin to gasp, and I stagger slightly as my body reacts to the oh-so-gentle stimulation he is giving me, waves of arousal fanning over me.

-Him: "Don't move."

Jeez! It's not easy to stand still when he's doing this, but I try.

"Spread your legs some more. I want you open."

His voice is harsh, intense. It is difficult to move them further apart now and as I try to obey, I totter, all my weight on my wrists for a moment. From his kneeling position, he forces my ankles further apart, and further, until I can barely stand at all, my wrists taking the strain.

-Him: "That's better. Now we have you properly presented."

Standing back, he takes off the towel around his waist, his eyes never leaving mine. As the towel drops to the floor, his manhood stands upright against him. I watch, hypnotised as I'm staring at his erection. He follows my stare and grins. Damn, I want nothing more than for him to fuck me stupid right now. Coming close, he tweaks at my nipples, raising them to hard brown buds, then bends to suckle one, whilst pinching and squeezing the other, sending electric waves of arousal through my core to my vagina. My breathing is so heavy now, so fast, and moisture is running down my skin, from the sweat of my rising heat, and from my vagina, now flowing freely down my legs. He looks at me, eyes lingering on my breasts, my flat belly, the parting of my legs. Then he kisses me fiercely. There is nothing tender or gentle here. His mouth is hard on my lips, forcing my mouth open. He drops to his knees, face up close, pulls the lips of my vagina apart and wraps his tongue around my clit, working it mercilessly.

I moan and try to struggle, but I have nowhere to go. Hands tied, spread-legged and weight on my wrists, I cannot move, but only writhe helplessly against the cascade of sensation. His tongue working my clit, he slips fingers inside me and rubs, hard, against my inner walls. I can hear nothing, feel nothing except the pain of my wrists and the inescapable pleasure/pain/delight/torment of his tongue and fingers. My moaning increases, turning to squeals, fighting against the breathlessness of my rapid breathing. My heart pounding, climax wells up inside and my squeals turn into a triumphant scream as

orgasm pulses through me, pounding through

my vagina, belly and thighs. My legs give under me and I hang by my wrists, writhing and shaking, helpless in the grip of my crashing climax. I do not hang for long. Before the spasm passes, Doc rises, unties me from the wall and carries me out of the shower and into the bedroom. He puts me on the bed in a kneeling position, face down over the bed. My legs splayed, my private is open and displayed to him, as he stands behind me. He gets a condom out of the drawer and puts it on. He comes to kneel behind me, then with one hand on my back, pinning me down, he slowly pushes himself inside me. He is huge, and at almost any other time, I would struggle to accommodate him, but in my state of screaming arousal, he sheaths himself, full length, straight into my dripping passage, and starts pounding into me. I scream again, and orgasm wells up once more, my walls grasping and gripping as they throb around him. His hand leaves my back and I feel him

grasping me by the waist, forcing me back

and forth against his rhythm, deepening the drive of his shaft, intensifying his already deep thrusting as he rams into me, plunging into my depths. Through my own cries, I hear him moan and gasp and feel the pulsing of his cock as he cums. For a few moments, he holds, shuddering against me, then relaxes down onto me with a gasp.

For a few seconds, he simply lies on top of me, spent, then he takes a couple of deep breaths and pulls out of me. I feel him kiss the back of my neck, then he turns me around to face him. He passionately kisses my lips.

-Him: "That was great...I love you."

It was really great.

-Me: "I really enjoyed it."

-Him: "But with you I would never take it any further that this."

Whatever that means. We just lie on the bed, spent. We only get up after an hour and go take a shower again, then we go to the kitchen to make something to eat. We're both famished.

. After eating, Doc goes back to the bedroom to get dressed for going out. He comes back to the kitchen wearing black jeans cut to flatter his noticeably male physique, white low-cut D&G sneakers and a white D&G Tshirt. He grabs his car keys and comes to me for a kiss.

-Him: "Let me get going, babe. Good luck with your father."

-Me: "I'm probably gonna need it. Enjoy in E.L. Don't do something I wouldn't do."

-Him: "You know I won't...See you later. I love you."

-Me: "Love you too."

He kisses me again then leaves.

I'm left dialling Thuso's number. I really need to talk to this girl, maybe she'll stop her stupid schemes. This nonsense has gone too far. As for Natalie, Doc called her yesterday and asked her to come meet him here in the house tomorrow. I'm not sure what his plan is, he just said I should wait and see.

. I want to open a group for episodes like this one. What do y'all think? Another thing I need to address: This is "Diary ka Soso" and that, by definition, means the story revolves around Soso. That said, you'll get her POV more than of any other characters in the story.

#26

"I've been drinking, I've been drinking. I get filthy when that liquor get into me. I've been thinking, I've been thinking. Why can't I keep my fingers off it, baby? I want you, na na." -Beyoncé

Someleze

"Someleze, what do you want?"

Thuso says after answering the phone on the sixth ring.

-Me: "I want us to talk. About Doc, about you pulling all the stops to try and break us up." -Her: "What's there to talk about, Someleze? You didn't ask to talk before you went after him, did you? You just went after him even though you knew very well that I liked him." -Me: "Thuso, first of all, I didn't go after Doc, it didn't happen like that. Second, we didn't even start seeing each other until 6 weeks after you had accused me of sleeping with him, after you went and had sex with my ex. If anything, you're the one who betrayed me here. Tell me, Thuso...do you even love Doc or you're just doing this to prove a point? I'm asking because I know you, you're incapable of loving a man. You don't do love, Thuso, we both know it."

-Her: "What I'm capable or not capable of is not your business now, is it?"

-Me: "Thuso, we were best friends once. We loved each other, we had each other's backs. Or at least I thought we did. Now why are you letting a man turn us into enemies? Is it even worth it? If you continue doing what you're doing I might just decide to retaliate and the results won't be good. I don't want things to get to that point, Thuso. A cycle of mutual destruction won't get us anywhere. Is that what you want?"

-Her: "The only thing I can tell you is that you wasted your time calling me, girly. Your words are ineffectual."

-Me: "Thuso, just admit it. You don't like Doc. You're only obsessed with getting him because you want to prove that you can get any man you want. You hate the fact that he rejected you. And you also hate that I got him and you didn't. You were enjoying the fact that I was living under your shadow, that you always seemed better than me. Now that I have what you couldn't have that is driving you nuts, literally. Can't you just take a chill pill and a step back? What you're doing is so fucking unnecessary."

-Her: "Like I said, this call is a waste of time. I've got nothing more to say to you, Someleze."

And with that she hangs up. I'm left looking at the screen of my phone. Did she just hang up on me? Oh yes, she did. I let out a sigh then put the phone on the kitchen counter before making my way to the bedroom. Yah well, I've tried, really tried. And I won't be held responsible for whatever I do next. Getting my iPad from the bedroom, I go sit outside in the back veranda, I need some fresh air. It's now 10:30, and I connect the iPad to Doc's home WiFi to save my data, I need to read more on Sandile before he gets here. I never really had time or interest to look him up again since the day I first met him. Now is the time to do just that. But instead of getting on with the web search I

find myself caught up in a trance, images of what Doc did to me before he left circling in my head like a movie - an adult rated movie. I can't believe how hot that was and how much I enjoyed it. I feel myself becoming wet just from the thought of it. And almost of its own volition, my hand ends up between my legs, rubbing my sex over my bum shorts. Damn, the things that man does to me. Any man can insert himself in between my legs and fuck me, but I don't think there's a man that can do me like Doc. I like the fact that he's the backbone of our sexual pleasure, the fact that he calls all the shots, and whatever we do is so good that I can't help but give all of me to him. He's always in charge of my experience physically, mentally, and emotionally. I like how he takes his time with my body, gently dominating me, killing me with pleasure.

Alex

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No one likes defeat, no one enjoys failing, and I'm no exception. Knowing that I've failed to get Soso back has knocked my confidence down. But hey, if I'm being honest I don't deserve to get her back. She's probably better off with the guy she's with now. That, of course, doesn't sit well with me but I have to accept it and move on, it is what it is. There's nothing I can do to get her back, I've tried, even went so low that I felt my head touching the ground but still, I failed. She's happy where she is and she doesn't need me to complicate her life. So I'm taking a step back. There's nothing wrong with accepting defeat. My phone next to me on the desk rings. It's Iviwe. This woman is really annoying me. What language does she want me to use in order for her to get the message? I ignore her call and continue typing on my laptop. I need to submit the final draft of my dissertation on Monday and just get this whole thing over and done with. I can't wait

to be done with Fort Hare and Alice

altogether. Nothing excites me here anymore. My breakup with Soso, which was entirely my fault, has made everything sour and unbearable for me in this small town. I can't stand having to see her around campus every now and then, I just can't. I need to go start afresh somewhere else. There's nothing I need more than a clean slate right now. Iviwe keeps calling, and I finally decide to answer.

-Me: "Iviwe, what do you want?"

I ask annoyed as fuck.

-Her: "Alex, don't do this. You know that I love you."

-Me: "What I know, Iviwe, is that you're someone else's fiancée and I'm done with you. How many times must I say that? When are you ever gonna get it? The fact that we slept together a week ago doesn't mean anything, Iviwe, I told you this. Just...just leave me alone tu." -Her: "I'm never gonna leave you alone, Alex. Not when I'm still in love you. You know that I don't love that guy, I love YOU."

This girl is crazy and I don't have time for her bullshit, I don't have time for her stories that don't even make sense. I mean who forces anyone into an arranged marriage these days? She must think I'm stupid, hey. I just hang up and do what I've been avoiding to do all this time - blocking her number. Then I continue polishing up my dissertation. But it's not long before I get distracted again. This time by a knock at the door. Who the fuck could it be? I seriously hope it's not lviwe because I swear I'm going to lose it. I get up and go get the door, already pissed. But instead of Iviwe I find TK standing there. -Me: "TK, what are you doing here?" She just pushes past me and gets inside. -Her: "Don't ask me that, Alex. You know what brings me here. You know what brings us together."

-Me: "You mean apart from the fact that we once fucked?"

-Her: "ONCE" being the operative word. That's all it was, Alex - a once-off fucking session. It would never happen again." She says standing in the middle of my room, her arms akimbo, looking so sure of herself. -Me: "Oh please, don't flatter yourself by thinking I'd ever want to go there again. Even when I did we both know that I was drunk. I would never in my sober mind do that with a bitch like you."

-Her: "Well, this bitch is gonna help you get your girl back, so you better be nice." She says without even the slightest anger or irritation in her voice, clearly she's taken no offense.

-Me: "Help me get my girl back how? TK, we've lost. It's time to accept that and move on. I didn't even want to take part in your sick plan right from the beginning but I went along with it because I was insanely desperate. I went so low but still nothing came of it. Those people are still together. So what makes you think you'll be able to help me get Soso back this time around?"

-Her: "You seriously need to chill. Your plan to get her kicked out of her flat has worked, she moved in with Thando yesterday. And that means we can now build a strong case." -Me: "And what good is that gonna accomplish? TK, if we go down that route we'll only manage to ruin Thando's life and possibly Soso's. That's all we're gonna accomplish. We won't get what we want." -Her: "Jeez! Just have a little faith, will you?"

Someleze

It's now around 13:30 and I'm still sitting outside in the veranda studying when Sandile calls asking for directions to my place. I give them to him then continue with what I was doing. Earlier I spent only about 30 minutes reading about this guy online. What

discouraged me is that I couldn't find much personal stuff about him, it was mostly business reports. And I couldn't get anything off his social media. I guess whatever I need to know I'm going to have to ask him. About 15 minutes later he calls saying he's in front of my gate. I flip my books and laptop closed then walk to the front of the house to open the gate. He drives through in his....wait a minute. I know this car. I fucking know this car. What the hell is going on here? As he parks in the driveway I take strides down the three front steps and towards this car, feeling a rise of an emotion close to anger within. I can't believe what I'm seeing, I can't. Sandile gets out of the car looking all kinds of handsome. Even at his age my father is an eyecandy, I have to admit, but he sure knows how to piss me off.

-Him: "There she is. My beautiful daughter." He says with a smile as he comes to me for a hug. Oh hell no, not now. I take a step back, avoiding any contact with his body. He looks at me a little alarmed... and disappointed. -Him: "I'm sorry did I do something wrong?" -Me: "Sandile, are you sleeping with Thuso?" -Him: "What?"

-Me: "Thuso Kwena, the Fort Hare student that's the same age as your daughter. My ex best friend. Are you sleeping with her?" -Him: "Why are you asking me that? Who told you that?"

He's prevaricating, and he's making me angry. -Me: "Please don't do that. Don't delay giving me an answer. I know what I'm asking, I know what I saw. I saw Thuso driving this very same car a few weeks back. This red Ferrari with the same registration number. I still remember it, I pumped petrol into it, and I don't forget anything I see with these eyes of mine. Now tell me, why would she drive your car?"

For a moment he looks down, leaning on the car, then he looks back up at me.

-Him: "These things happen, Soso. I didn't even know that she was your friend." What? What the hell? So he's really doing it. He's sleeping with her. My newly-found father is sleeping with my ex best friend. What the hell is that? I'm beyond myself right now.

-Me: "So it's true, huh. You really are sleeping with her. A girl that's young enough to be your daughter, Sandile, a young girl. Ah come on, what is that? You're 40, she's only 21. What is that really? Where did you two even meet?"

I'm so disgusted right now. I knew that there was just something not right about this man, and this is probably just the tip of the iceberg. From what he told me when we were in PE, I know that even though he lives in Jo'burg, working there, his family home is in Mthatha and he also has a house in East London. So where did he and Thuso meet? Here or in Jo'burg? -Him: "What does it matter where we met? I'm not here to discuss that, Someleze. I'm not here to discuss my sex life, I'm here to see you - my daughter."

But I'm not ready to let this go yet. -Me: "You gave her your car. So what does that mean? Are you serious about her or you're just her blesser?"

He doesn't answer. He just tucks his hands in the pockets of his pants and lifts one of his feet to rest it against the car. He looks really good in this smart casual outfit of his; navy chinos, white sneakers and a white loose shirt that's clearly custom made. The shirt is unbuttoned from the neck down to the end of his sternum. He has a lean muscular structure. His torso beneath that shirt bespeaks the kind of man who works out, knowing that women don't go looking for over-muscled morons. Ugh! Why am I even analysing him with my eyes? He's making me sick.

-Me: "Please answer me."

-Him: "Are you sure you want to talk about this stuff with your father, baby?"
-Me: "Please don't 'baby' me? You're not my dad. You're just a man who happened to fertilise my mother's egg."

He looks away and exhales, obviously hurt. Then he looks at me.

-Him: "But I want to be your dad, Someleze. That's why I'm here. I want to be in your life?" -Me: "Then start by being honest with me. Just please answer my questions about Thuso."

He takes a deep breath before answering. -Him: "Fine... Thuso and I are just having fun. Nothing more."

-Me: "Oh, so you're that kind of man, huh. A man who goes around having fun with young girls...What about my mother? Are you having fun with her too? Are you sleeping with her again?"

-Him: "Someleze, I love you, you're my daughter but I don't appreciate the tone of your voice with me right now. I'm still your elder. Don't talk to me like that. Okay?" I look down, realising just how I've let my anger push me to the zone of disrepect.

-Me: "I'm sorry. It's just that I wasn't expecting any of this."

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-Him: "This is not how I imagined this meeting either. I was hoping for a nice chat with you, not an interrogation about what I do in my bedroom or even who I do it with. But I'll answer your question anyway... Your mother and I are not together. We're just two parents trying to put everything behind and be civil towards each other for our daughter's sake...And please don't judge me based on what you've just discovered about me. You don't know how it's like to be a man in my current situation."

-Me: "Current situation? You mean the divorce?"

-Him: "What, your mother told you about it?" -Me: "No. My mother and I don't talk much about you. I've read about it online."

According to the media reports I read, he's single, and he shelled out a confidential but likely considerable amount of money to an exwife last year.

-Him: "Life after divorce is not easy, baby. But I don't want to get into it."

I'm surely surrounded by recently divorced men, huh. And from everything Doc told me, I understand how hard it is to deal with divorce. And I understand why he doesn't want to talk about it. So, I decide to cut him some slack. Still though, knowing that he's sleeping with my ex best friend is making me sick. But I'm going to let it go...for now. -Me: "Let's go inside."

We've been standing here for longer than necessary, it's time to go inside.

We walk into the lounge and I offer him a seat on the couch. He sits down then let his eye scan the room. -Him: "Nice place. Who are you staying with here?"

-Me: "A boyfriend. But you won't tell my mother about it."

-Him: "If that's what you want, I won't. Is the guy good to you though?"

Isn't it too late to act as a concerned father now? I want to ask but I decide better of it.

-Me: "Yes. He's good to me. Now what would you like to drink?"

-Him: "Just water will be fine. Bottled water, please, I don't drink tap water."

Amen. This man is so full of himself, huh. This is not his house, he should just take whatever I offer him. Now I understand why he didn't drink water in my mother's house. Does he even know the negatives of bottled water though? I don't ask, I just nod then go to the kitchen to get the damn water. Fortunately for him, there's always bottled water in Doc's fridge because just like my father, he also avoids drinking tap water. I rinse a glass then grab the bottled water out of the fridge and go back to him. I let him finish drinking then I sit down next to him.

-Me: "So, do you have any other children?" -Him: "No. My ex wife and I couldn't have kids."

-Me: "Oh, I'm sorry to hear that. What was the problem?"

I ask carefully.

-Him: "The problem was me, it is me. I can't have any more children."

That's hectic. I look away from him, not wanting to pity him. Then I suck in a breath. -Him: "You're my only child. It's just you now and it will always be just you. But that's not the reason why I looked for you. Even if I had other children I would still want you in my life. You are my blood."

-Me: "So I will never ever have siblings from both sides. That's not very nice to know but it is what it is, I guess. What about you? Do you have any siblings?"

-Him: "Yes, only one. A younger sister. She's way younger than me though. There's a 16

year age gap between us. I'm the first born, she's the last and all 4 children that our parents had after me and before her never lived past their first birthdays."

Feeling the need to look at him now, I turn my head bravely and look into his intense eyes. His handsome face is completely impassive, no sadness at all. I guess none of this bothers him anymore.

-Him: "My younger sister is a doctor. And she actually lives here in Alice. She's doing her community service at Victoria hospital."

-Me: "Mmh auntie's got brains, huh. Maybe I should meet her some day soon."

-Him: "Auntie, huh? That's interesting considering the fact that you don't even call me 'father'?"

-Me: "We'll get there some day. Don't worry." -Him: "I'm a very patient man...Let me show you your aunt."

He takes out his phone from his pocket and thumbs it before handing it to me. My eyes land on its screen to see this young aunt of mine who's got brains. Oh my God, what? No friggin' way. No man, what is going on here? What is wrong with this day? Am I being tested or what? I know this woman in this picture. This is Iviwe. Alex's Iviwe is my....aunt? Just the thought of that is enough to make me dry-heave once. The world is not just small, it is a very strange dot. We're all connected in some way or the other.

. This has been one strange day. The discoveries I've made are shocking to say the least. If I had the luxury of time I would still be digesting it all but I can't afford to do that, I have to study. Chemistry has me by the throat and I'm suffocating.

It's now 18:30 and Sandile left around 15:00, but we'll see each other again soon, he promised. I didn't tell him that I already know his sister though, I decided to keep that piece of information to myself...for now. I stretch my arms yawning, I've been in this study, sitting in this same position for hours and my body is now tense.

Just then I hear the sound of the gate, then a car driving down the driveway. That must be Doc. He's come back early hey, I wasn't expecting him 'til after 21:00. I get up from the chair and go open the front door for him. A few moments later he comes up and walks in. I can tell that he's a little drunk, even though he clearly didn't go overboard. -Him: "Hey, baby."

He says as he closes the door behind him. -Me: "Welcome home, thando lwam." He comes to me for a hug, and I return it. -Me: "You're drunk."

-Him: "In love maybe."

In one single motion of power he pushes me against the wall and smashes his mouth on to mine, almost bruising my lips in his fervour. He takes possession of my lips with heated urgency that betrays his hungry need. His mouth smells and tastes of alcohol, but for some reason that's turning me on. I wind my arms around his neck and let him deepen the kiss.

-Him: "I want you."

He whispers against my lips. I want to say "Daddy, I want you too", but I can't. I have to go back to my books, he's just distracting me. -Me: "Baby, I can't. We can't. Not now. I'm still studying in the study."

He presses his body against mine, pressing me harder against the wall, and I can feel his erection pressing against me, making me wet down there.

-Him: "Baby, come on, I've been missing you all day. I was in the company of my friends and all the women that were there but all I could think about was you. I just couldn't wait to come home to you, that's why I came back early. This liquor in my body is not making things easier either, I know how I get when my blood is mixed with alcohol... I want you, baby, I want you." He kisses me hard, constantly murmuring the "I want yous" in between the kisses. But I just can't do it. I push him off of me.

-Me: "Baby, just go freshen up and come to the kitchen to eat. I didn't cook but there's pizza, I'll warm it up for you."

-Him: "I don't want food, baby, I'm hungry for you."

-Me: "But you still need to eat so you could take the PEP pills in your pocket before 7." -Him: "You don't want to give it to me, fine.

-Him: You don't want to give it to me, in

I'll go take the shower, a cold one."

He turns to walk away but not before he spanks my ass.

-Him: "I still love you though."

He says as he walks away to the bedroom. I laugh.

-Me: "I love your drunk ass too."

I go to the kitchen to put the pizza in the microwave. About 20 minutes later he comes to joins me in the kitchen, smelling fresh. I sit with him as he eats and I tell him about Sandile's visit and the fact that he's one of Thuso's fuck buddies.

-Him: "Did you tell him that Thuso is now your enemy, that she's coming after you."

-Me: "No, I didn't."

-Him: "Well, maybe you should. Maybe he can help get her off our backs."

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-Me: "You think?"
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-Him: "I think it's worth a try."

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-Me: "Maybe."
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He gets up to get the water to drink his pills. And I leave him and go back to the study.

I'm sitting at the desk in the study, my head focused on applied Chemistry when suddenly Doc is behind me, running his fingers through my relaxed hair. Another hand land on my shoulder and his face presses against my ear. -Him: "I'll help you study all night if you have to. Just please come to the bedroom with me, we'll be quick." He whispers so close to my ear. His warm breath feels so good on my skin. But I slowly turn my head away from him so as not to appear eager.

-Me: "Baby, you're a distraction, you know." -Him: "Did you hear what I just said? I'll help you study soon enough. It's just Chemistry, babe, and I'm good at it...I just can't keep my hands off you, I can't get enough of you." He kisses my neck. His mesmersing scent lodges in my nostrils completing the arousing sensation. I am all present; everything else falls away. He scoops me up in his arms and begins to kiss my lips slowly. My body is pressed against his. And he looks into my eyes and kisses my forehead gently. I don't want this distraction but at the same time I want him, so I let him take me. He carries me carefully to our bed and lays me out on the covers. He lies down next to me and touches my cheek softly.

"I love you."

He says, then leans over to kiss me again. He

begins slowly unbuttoning my blouse and kisses the skin exposed above my bra. He buries his face into my neck and breathes in, causing me to shiver happily. I smile at him as he sits up and take off his vest, revealing his smooth skin. He straddles himself over top of me to kiss me more passionately. When he draws back up, I run my hands across his abs and over his strong chest to wrap my arms around his neck, pulling him down to me again. He leans down and kisses my neck, and I feel his fingers close around my wrists. He begins to move my arms up above my head and drags his lips down across one of my arms. We are both smiling excitedly and he comes to my mouth and kisses me again, faster this time around. I leave my arms above my head as he moves his lips down my neck and over my bra. He continues to move lower, down my chest, and over my stomach. When he reaches the top of my shorts, he sits up and begins unbuttoning them with a

wicked grin on his face. He pulls them and my panties down and off my ankles. He presses his fingertips into my hips as he leans down to kiss my lips passionately. I get up and sit up on my knees and he leans back and let me unzip his own shorts and tugs them down. He pushes me backwards once he is down to his boxers, which he quickly tugs off and tosses to the side. My heart rate skyrockets and my eves light up as they take in his hard cock. We

eyes light up as they take in his hard cock. We sure are both excited for what we are about to engage in. He leans down again to press his lips into my neck. I breathe raggedly and he grins. I arch my back as he presses his body down onto mine, ever desperate to get even closer. I moan, but still he refuses to slip into me and give me the inexpressible joy that I can feel building. He presses his warm hands onto my hips and rolls over so I can be on top of him. Trying to take this opportunity, I press my hips onto his, trying to get him inside me, but he grins wickedly and pulls away, evading me. He rolls us over again, so I could be under him once again. He goes down to kiss the top

of my breasts, dragging his teeth over them. I moan and arch my body, exposing my skin for him to kiss and tease with his lips and teeth. As I'm still enjoying that he comes up and cups my face before lowering his down for his lips to meet mine in a fast, passionate kiss, slipping his tongue into my mouth and making it last for much longer than I thought I could go without breathing. When he finally pulls back I gasp and moan, feeling his hands across my back, unfastening my bra. I kiss his cheek and move over to tug on his ear lobe with my teeth while he takes off the last article of clothing between us. I am so ready to feel him inside me right now, I'm even starting to shake. He said we'll be quick, didn't he? Then again I know him, even the up all night studying thing I don't buy it, we'll probably be up all night making love instead. He runs his hands slowly over my now fully exposed breasts, and up to my neck as he comes down to my lips with his mouth for

another feverish kiss. Pulling back, he gets a condom out of the drawer and puts it on.

Then looking deeply into my eyes, he gets between my legs and pushes himself slowly inside me. I moan in ecstasy and close my eyes, arching my back, trying to get him to push in deeper. But he pulls out slower than he went in, then pushes back in, making my body shake with pleasure. I moan and my breath gets suspended as he pushes in ever so slowly and pulls back out again. I am wracked with a feverish eagerness and I try to tilt my hips and get him inside deeper and faster. But he holds them down and kisses my lips just as slow as he was moving inside of me. He runs his tongue over my lips and they tingle. Burying his face in between my breasts, he pushes in farther. He looks back into my eyes and I whimper softly, powerless. Fuck, I want him to go faster. -Me: "F-faster, baby. Please." I beg, breathily.

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He grins and tilts his head back, then he pushes in harder and I find myself screaming his name. I can tell that he's enjoying seeing me losing my mind like this because that grin doesn't seem to leave his face.

-Me: "Fff—ahh—faster! Please."

He suddenly thrusts himself faster into me and the force wracks my body with an instant orgasm. I scream his name again and start yelling as he continues to thrust and thrust, faster, and faster. I am breathing fast and raggedly, the pleasure screaming through my body. I can't even speak properly.

-Me: "F-f...Fuck me!! F-fuck me! Harder!" He obliges and rams himself inside me harder and faster. I orgasm all over again, moaning and screaming in my ecstasy. I don't want this to end. I keep yelling faster! Harder! And he keeps going, faster, and harder. Thrusting deeper and deeper. I orgasm for the third time but he's still not there yet. He continues to push, deeper and deeper inside me. He's not pulling out, just pushing himself into me harder, until it feels so blissfully euphoric it hurts. I push him backwards and I feel instantly powerful as I roll us over to be on top of him. His eyes light up as I take control, straddling myself over him. Without wasting much time, I direct his hard cock straight into my wet love hole. I am sopping wet and his cock slips easily inside me. He grips my hips and pushes me down on to him hard. I start moving back and forth, his cock sliding in and out of my wet pussy. Gosh, this feels so fuckin' good. I've never been on top before but now I'm realising what I have been missing out on all this time. My hips keep moving in sync with his feverish breaths, pushing and thrusting. Reaching up, his hands play with my breasts, intensifying the pleasure. I am bouncing down on him, making his cock hit every spot inside me. His rather

loud moans are an encouragement to me, I can tell that he likes me totally in charge. I

continue riding him like a pony until I feel my

orgasm building up once again. His hands clutch my waist as he pulls me down hard against him. He's so deep inside me and my stomach muscles become tense, I quiver. His sliding cock creating an amazing rhythmic throbbing inside my pussy. The pleasure keeps getting stronger and stronger with each pounding. My brain keeps sending out a "DON'T STOP!" command, and my body obeys by going faster and faster. We move with the same rhythm, going faster and harder until I explode. And he follows suit almost immediately. Catching my breath, I get off of him and lie next to him. We both lie there panting.

"Wow. That was good, babe. You've got some moves."

He says as he kisses my lips. Then he goes to get a towel from the bathroom to get us cleaned up. After that he pulls me to him and we fall asleep almost immediately.

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I wake up some time later. Getting his phone from the nightstand, I realise that we've been out for about an hour because it's now 20:45. I look at Doc and he's still asleep. Hell no, he needs to wake up, he promised to help me study. I wake him up and he tries to protest but I keep pushing. He finally wakes up and climbs down the bed. We both get dressed and move to the study. Not long after we've entered, my phone on the desk rings. I glance at the screen to see that it's Buhle calling. -Me: "Buhle, hi."

l answer.

-Her: "Soso, I know what Thuso's next move is."

#27

"The storm is over. The storm is over now. And I can see the sunshine somewhere beyond the clouds." - R. Kelly

Sunday - 10:00

"Baby, we are out of cheese and a few other things in the house."

I say to Doc as he enters the kitchen busy thumbing his phone. I'm busy too, making myself some sandwiches, putting them in a lunchbox.

-Him: "Then we're gonna have to go grocery shopping this afternoon."

He says without even looking up, still busy on his phone.

-Me: "That means I'm gonna have to come back early."

He puts the phone on the counter and comes to stand next to me.

-Him: "You do know that you don't have to leave, right? You can sit in in my meeting with Natalie, in fact I'd prefer if you did."

It's Sunday and Natalie is coming to the house for that meeting Doc requested. I still don't know what his plan is and I won't even be here to find out, I'm going to campus. -Me: "No, babe, I'd rather sit this one out. I believe Natalie is likely to cooperate if it's just the two of you. Besides, I need a quiet environmment to study. And the campus library is the best place."

-Him: "You have a point. Okay, forget the meeting but still, you can study here, you don't have to go all the way to campus. You can have the study room, and I promise I won't disturb you. Besides, I thought we covered everything last night. Jeez, we only went to bed at 03:30 this morning." -Me: "I know, babe, and I'm grateful you helped me out, but there's a couple of sections I still need to go through once again before I write tomorrow. And I prefer going to the library. However, I'm not going there for Chemistry, I'm going for the module I'm writing on Wednesday. It's your course, remember? And we agreed that you won't

help me with anything that's got to do with it. That would be cheating in a way."

-Him: "I see. I guess I'll see you later then. Anyway, what did your father say? Did he agree to come and meet you?"

-Me: "Yah, he just replied to my text. Says he'll be here around 13:00 or 14:00, he's not sure because he's a bit busy today. And another thing, he's leaving for Jo'burg in the evening. So I don't know. I really hope he'll come through though."

He chuckles and leans on the counter with his elbows.

-Him: "You know what's funny? You weren't so thrilled about involving your father in this Thuso crap when I suggested it yesterday, but now you're the one who's so eager to involve him."

-Me: "That was before I knew what Thuso was planning, Thando. But now that Buhle has given us the heads up I see the need to act and fast. We can't let Thuso ruin everything." -Him: "You're so worked up about this whole thing. I, on ther hand, I'm chilled. I really don't care what that bored girl does."

-Me: "I wish I was as chilled as you, you know."

I put my lunchbox in my bag together with a bottle of juice and some snacks, just like a school kid. I'm going to need these, burying my head in books for hours makes me hungry. Doc lifts his arms from the counter and pulls me to him.

-Him: "I don't want you to worry about this thing, sthandwa sam. Everything is gonna be okay. Trust me."

-Me: "I trust you. But just let me handle this myself, okay? You handle Nat."

-Him: "I love it when you're in control, you know. It's so sexy."

He bites his bottom lip, then kisses me briefly. -Him: "Have a great day. See you later. And I'm sorry I can't drive you to campus."

-Me: "Don't worry about it, I need the walk anyway. See you later. I love you." -Him: "Love you more." I grab my bag then leave.

. I pass by the Saverite supermarket just around the corner from the Engen filling station I used to work at. I don't miss my days working there, I just miss spending time with Kevin. If he was around today and on duty I would have stopped by just to see his face but he's out of town, he left on Friday to visit the friends he used to visit in my hood in PE. I go inside the supermarket and just buy two packs of Orbit spearmint flavoured chewing gums. I'm out of these and they always come in handy when I can't brush my teeth after eating.

As I walk out, I bump into... Kevin?

-Me: "Kev? You're back? But I thought you were in P.E for the weekend."

-Him: "Oh, hello to you too, S?"

He says with this naughty smile on his face.

-Me: "Sorry, buddy. It's just that I wasn't expecting to see you here. How are you?" -Him: "Over the moon. You?"

-Me: "I'm good. And what are you all happy about? When did you even come back?" -Him: "I came back last night. Asanda wanted me home because she had some news to share. She's pregnant."

His eyes light up as those words leave his mouth. I can tell that he's really excited. -Me: "Really? You're gonna be a father? Wow! Congratulations, buddy."

I'm screaming as I open my arms to hug him. I'm really excited for him. Children are always a blessing.

-Him: "Thanks, buddy. I know that having a kid is no walk in the park but we'll make it work."

-Me: "I wish my dad was as excited as you are when my mother told him that she was pregnant." Kevin knows the story about my father, I told him. What he doesn't know is what I've just discovered yesterday.

-Him: "Don't curse, the man wants to be in your life now. He wants to love you. That's all that matters."

-Me: "I guess. Anyway, what are you here to buy?"

-Him: "Only mints. I was just next door, at Eskom."

-Me: "I have some mints. They are chewing gums though."

I say giving him another pack of chewing gums.

-Him: "Thanks. These will do."

-Me: "Good. Now please accompany me to campus. You don't mind, do you? I missed you."

-Him: "Of course I don't mind. I missed you too. Now come, let's go."

He says wrapping his arm around my neck. And we walk and talk. I tell him about my father and Thuso, and the fact that Iviwe is actually my aunt.

-Him: "You're kidding. Are you for real?"
-Me: "I wish I was kidding but I'm not."
-Him: "This is one small world, huh."
-Me: "Tell me about it."

-Him: "And you're saying that Italian beast this Thuso was bragging about actually belongs to your father? Wow, I'd like to see her face when she finds out."

-Me: "I really don't care about that, you know. I just want to get something out of this web of madness. My father is gonna have to help me get his plaything off my back. The girl's out to ruin my life and Thando's, Kev. Can you believe that she wants to report us to the department's head and the faculty Dean? She's collected all the evidence to prove my relationship with Thando. She once made claims to the HOD that Thando and I are sleeping together, but because of her rotten reputation no one believed her. And now...she's got proof. Emails exchanged

between Thando and I. Just four emails though. In one of them Thando was inviting me over to his house for a romantic candle lit dinner. In another he was telling me just how much he loves me and how much I mean to him. Then my two replies. And apparently the bitch also has photos of me and Thando kissing in front of Thando's gate. Photos taken yesterday when Thando and I were coming from a morning jog. Clearly she's been following me. Plus, she's gonna use the fact Thando and I are now living together. You know what all of this is gonna do, Kevin? Thando could lose his job, and I could also be in trouble too. It's gonna look like Thando's been doing me favours when it comes to his course, giving me marks that I don't even deserve, just like Thuso once claimed. I can't let that happen, Kev, I can't."

-Him: "Yoh, this girl's one crazy bitch, hey. To go this far just out of bitterness? Now that's another level of crazy. What is Thando saying about all of this?" -Me: "Thando's not shaken, Kev. And that's frustrating the hell out of me. He's so chilled. He's not even planning to take action to prevent this disaster. That's why I need to do something. I already had a plan in my head, I knew exactly what I was gonna do to deal with that crazy bitch. But apart from the fact that it's extremely harsh even for a psycho like her, it's also gonna take time, and time is a luxury I can't afford right now. That bitch is gonna report us tomorrow."

Kevin suddenly stops and pulls my arm forcing me to stop too. Then he looks at me.

-Him: "Listen, Soso. I know you. You're a very nice person. It shows just how well you were raised. So please don't do something that's gonna land you into more trouble. Don't let this psycho change who you are. Don't lose yourself because of her. Okay? Don't do anything drastic."

I nod.

-Me: "You're right. Which is why I've scrapped my plan. Now I want my father to take care of it. It's time for him to play the father role in my life. Besides, Thuso's his plaything so it

would be easy for him to deal with her." -Him: "That's better. But do you think he's gonna help you though? I mean considering the fact that he's sleeping with her."

-Me: "What's that they say about blood, again? I think they say it's thicker than water. So as my father I expect him to side with me and not with his blessee."

-Him: "I really hope he'll come through for you, hey."

-Me: "Yeah, me too."

We continue our walk to campus, catching up on other things, until we reach the campus small gate, then Kevin leaves me and walk back to town. I really enjoyed catching up with him. He's the only friend I have in this crazy small town. It's only around 16:00 that Sandile calls saying he's now in Alice. I had already given up, I thought he was no longer coming, but now that he's here I couldn't be happier. I ask him to wait for me by the campus gate, then I quickly pack up my stuff and leave the library. I'm almost running as I make my way down to the gate, I really need him to help me stop Thuso.

When I walk out the gate, I immediately spot his car and I take long strides towards it. Seeing me coming, he opens the door for me from the inside and I hop in. Without wasting any time he immediately gets to the point. -Him: "Hey, baby. Are you okay? You said it was important. What's going on?"

I tell him everything.

-Him: "Your lecturer that is 10 years your senior, baby? Are you kidding me?"
Seriously? Out of everything I just told him all he cares about is me dating my lecturer?
-Me: "Come on, now is not the time for that.
Did you hear what I just said?"

-Him: "It's just that I wasn't expecting this from the young lady who stood before me yesterday and threw judgements around." -Me: "Dad, are you gonna help me or what? Because I'm telling you now, I'm only 5 seconds away from opening this door and not only get out of this car but out of your life as well."

He turns his head and looks at me without saying anything.

-Me: "What? Why are you looking at me like that?"

-Him: "You just called me dad."

-Me: "And I'll continue calling you that if you help me with this. Use this opportunity to redeem yourself to me. So what's it gonna be? Me or your plaything? Tell me, does she even know that I'm your daughter?" He pulls his eyes away from me and look forward, out the windscreen.

-Him: "No, she doesn't know. She and I don't have that kind of relationship, Someleze. I told you this. We don't talk about such stuff. I don't know much about her and she doesn't know much about me either. There's only one thing connecting us, and that's the obvious." -Me: "I wonder what she'll say when she finds out that you're my father."

-Him: "She doesn't have to find out. Don't tell her. My plan to help you will only work if she doesn't know."

-Me: "So you're gonna help me? You really mean that? Because, Sandile, I don't want you to say it unless you mean it, okay? If your heart is not into it all you have to do is tell me and I'll do it myself. But just don't blame me when I hurt your girl pretty badly, okay? See, there are only two things that are very, very important to me. And that's my education and the people I care about. And right now Thuso is threatening them both. I don't take kindly to that, if you must know. And even though I've never done anything drastic in my life, right now I'm prepared to. It's the only choice I have." -Him: "But that's just the thing about choices, baby. You can make a thousand right ones but it only takes one wrong one and you're done, your life is over."

-Me: "So what are you trying to say? That I should just let Thuso ruin my future? Is that what you're trying to tell me? I tried to do things the right way, Sandile. I tried to talk to Thuso but she just wouldn't listen. She's so determined to ruin things for me. And I'm not gonna let her."

He looks at me again, and I don't fail to notice the affection in his eyes.

-Him: "What I'm saying is: the gateway to understanding is through pain. And I'm that gateway. She couldn't understand when you talked to her, right? So now it's time for me to make her understand that no one threatens my family. I may be sleeping with her but that's just all there is to it. And you, you are my blood. And no one, I mean no one, threatens or hurts my blood and gets away with it. You're not gonna do anything that will get you into trouble, alright? I'll handle Thuso myself and I mean that. Don't worry, she won't report you tomorrow, okay?" -Me: "Thank you."

-Him: "No need to thank me. I'm your father, you've hollered help and I've come to set you free. You've been dealing with Thuso's shit for some time but, baby, the storm is over now. You're not alone, your father is here. Okay?" He leans over to hug me and I don't only let him but I also return the hug.

-Him: "I love you."

I close my eyes, trying to stop my tears from falling. It's not only what he's just said that's making me emotional but it's also how he's said it, with so much intensity and affection. -Me: "I love you too...DAD."

I say finally.

He pulls back and looks at me with a smile.

-Him: "I'm sorry but I now have to run. Let me drive you home."

He says after taking a moment just looking and smiling at me.

-Me: "You're still flying back to Jo'burg this evening?"

-Him: "No. Not when my daughter needs me here."

He starts the car and drives me home.

. He drops me off the gate and drives off, after promising to call me tomorrow. I use my own remote to open the gate then get inside. I notice Bhongo's car in the driveway. Oh, he's here? I didn't even know that he was coming. When I'm about to climb up the three steps to the front door, Doc walks out of the house with Bhongo and one other guy that was also at his birthday party in August. I still remember his name, it's Sibusiso but they all call him Sbu.

-Me: "Hey, guys."

I greet first as I stop and wait for them to get to where I'm standing.

-Bhongo: "Hey, Soso."

Sbu also replies. And Bhongo comes to me for a hug.

-Him: "How are you? You look good as I still remember you. And I must say, I was hoping to see you in EL yesterday."

-Me: "I'm good, I'm good. You look good too, but that's nothing new. As for yesterday, well I was swamped, I couldn't come with Thando."

-Him: "He did tell us. Zizo was still disappointed though."

-Me: "Uzoqina. [She'll be strong]"

I say laughing then I turn to Sbu.

-Me: "Sbu, are you good?"

-Him: "Yah, I'm alright. It's good to see you again, hey."

-Me: "It's good to see you too, guys. I didn't even know that you were coming though. If I did I wouldn't have left the house."

Bhongo looks at me then at Doc, clearly surprised that Doc didn't tell me that I was coming. Doc doesn't say anything, and the moment quickly feels awkward. -Me: "Oh, yah, I remember now. Yesterday Thando did mention that you were coming today but it must have slipped my mind. A lot of school work would do that to you."

I say lying, trying to make the moment feel less awkward.

-Bhongo: "Yah, I understand. Anyway, we were already on our way. We'll see you again soon, I hope."

-Me: "Sure thing. Drive safe."

I hug them both then Doc walks them over to their car while I wait for him by the front door. He waits for them to drive out then he closes the gate and comes back to me.

-Him: "Sorry I didn't tell you that they were coming. I wanted you here so you could see everything for yourself."

He says as he wraps his arm around my waist and walks me inside the house.

-Me: "And what is 'everything' exactly?"

I ask closing the door behind us.

-Him: "That."

He says pointing at a laptop I don't recognise and several storage devices on the coffee table. 2 hard drives and about 4 USB flash drives.

-Me: "What are those?"

I ask walking over to take a closer look. -Him: "They all belong to Natalie. This was my plan B just in case she refuses to give me the sex tapes."

-Me: "How did you get them?"

-Him: "The day I asked to meet up with her I first asked to meet at her place in

Grahanstown. She agreed and texted me the address, but I wasn't planning to go there so after that I asked her to come here instead. And she stupidly agreed. Yesterday, Bhongo, Sbu and I talked about my plan of action. So when she was here earlier, Bhongo and Sbu were in her apartment collecting every storage device she could have stored the tapes in. And Sbu being the IT specialist that he is he managed to get into her emails and delete the copy of the tape she sent to me. So now I believe we have all the copies she had." -Me: "But, baby, I'm sure she knows by now that you're the one behind the break in into her apartment. And she's gonna retaliate. The woman is crazy, you know her better than I do."

-Him: "Of couse she knows. She called. But she won't retaliate because Sbu got us into her computer and we found a lot of goodies in there. Stuff she doesn't want to get out. So as long as I have those, I control her. And she would never ever come anywhere near us again."

-Me: "Yoh. But this was a gamble, hey. What if you didn't find anything to blackmail her with in her computer? And what if she had other copies of the sex tapes stored somewhere else?"

-Him: "Well, none of that matters now. What matters is that she will stay away from us and she won't release those tapes even if she has other copies." -Me: "I guess that's a win then. I hope you also asked Sbu to to put up a strong security system to protect your devices from being hacked again. That should supplement your change of passwords."

-Him: "Of course I did. You should see his own computer in his place. I don't know much about this stuff but I could tell that the guy's got the absolute, most sophisticated state of the art security system. I could tell when he showed it to me."

Well, I guess Bhongo did great by hosting Doc's birthday party and introducing him to Sbu and the others.

New posting days: Monday, Wednesday and Friday. No episodes on weekends. I know it's NOT enough but I get busy, hey. Still love y'all.

#28

"Ngiyakudinga lovey wami. Nguwe wedw' empilweni yami. Ngeke ng'suke duze kwakho. Inhliziyo igcwel' uthando. Ngalama gama ngithi I love you." - Thami

Thuso

Monday - 06:00 Just having had a shower, I step out of the shower enclosure into the expansive immaculate bathroom that is smelling pleasantly of the owner, a mixture of expensive after shave and musky male scent. The bathroom is as classy and chic as the rest of the house, betraying the owner's financial status. This is Sandile's house in East London. Sandile is a man who always wears his hefty bank account in his body and that's probably the first thing most people notice when they lay their eyes on him, that he's loaded. But no, not me. I saw something different in him. I met this man back in July, right here in East London. It was just a week after the

accountant from King William's Town had ended our no-strings-attached affair following the incident that happened at the Pulse Nite Club in Arcadia, right here in East London. I had went to the club with him but I ended up ditching his ass and leaving with Alex around midnight. Getting back at Soso by sleeping with Alex was my plan but I hadn't planned to do it that night. I didn't even know that Alex would be at the club but when I saw him there and in an impaired state, I ceased the opportunity. To say Mr Accountant was pissed when he found out what had happened would be an understatement, he was livid, and he ended things between us. To be quite frank, though, I didn't care, I never involve feelings in these things. And if he thought I was going to beg then he got disappointed. I wasn't going to do that, not when there are a lot of men out there.

A week later, I found a replacement for him in the most weirdest of ways, like those incidents you see in romance movies, except I wasn't up for love. I was here in EL, in Vincent, getting out of a taxi when it happened. I was feeling light-headed, apparently I was hungrier than I'd thought. I attempted to gracefully hop out of the taxi and by gracefully hop, I mean fall in the most unladylike way I could have possibly imagined. Except I didn't hit the ground. Instead of hitting the warm concrete like I thought was going to happen, I hit a wall of warm strong chest. Two arms corded in muscle wrapped around me to keep my face from hitting the ground. Realising that I'd been caught mid fall I pulled back and stared at said chest covered by a dark grey designer t-shirt. Up even further, I caught a dark stubble across a strong jaw, full lips with quite possibly the whitest teeth I've ever seen in my life, a straight nose and dark eyes shaded by a dark blue baseball cap. Stunning. It's the only

word I could think of at that moment. But thank god I didn't mutter it out loud to make the embarrassing moment much worse. "Hi."

The deep soothing voice came out of those full lips I'd been staring at and I finally realised that the gorgeous face was talking to me and that I should probably switch where the blood supply was flowing and turn my brain back on to say something intelligent. "Hi."

That's the only word that managed to escape my mouth. Noticing he was still holding me, I began to peel myself away and I instantly noticed the lack of warmth and comfort. I regretted my decision immediately.

"Thank you, for catching me. I didn't mean to be such a spaz and fall on you."

I said with a nervous smile.

"No problem, it happens. Not that I have beautiful girls fall on me everyday. Not that you're beautiful, I mean you're beautiful but...ugh, you know what I mean."

Oh my god, he was so yummy. And him saying I was beautiful was it for me, he had me with that. That's how it all began, that's how I met Sandile, and as they say, the rest is history. He made me feel all nervous with this warm fluttering feeling in my tummy, but it wasn't love. Of course I like him, I do. He's based in Jo'burg but when he's around he knows how to make me feel good and I enjoy spending time with him, especially between the sheets. Oh don't get me started with that, the guy really knows his stuff, he sure knows how to hit it. Sometimes I would even miss my classes and just spend a day with him in his bedroom. I don't mind the perks of using his expensive toys either, especially that Ferarri. But that's just about it, we are only having fun. The man I have my eyes on is Doc December. That's one man I happen to really really like, even love, and I'm not going to stop until I get him. But if I can't get him I'll make sure that Soso doesn't keep him either. In fact, I'll ruin both their lives.

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I walk out of the bathroom wet and naked as the day I was born. I step into the stunning, bright bedroom to find Sandile tossing a leather suitcase onto the bed. Bare-chested, I can see that he intends to pack and dress at the same time. He pulls on a beige business shirt and I watch as he buttons the front. Hell, I can't let him get dressed, not when I still have this craving that yearns to be fulfilled by him. He's moving to the cuffs when I step behind him. I cup his eyes and laugh, my naked, wet body staining his clothes. He twists around and I fall into his arms. For a long moment he holds me, our eyes locked, and I can tell that he knows what I want. -Him: "Sweetheart, no, you're gonna be late for your first class. You're still going to Alice, remember?"

-Me: "I know that. But you promised to give me your car when I asked. So relax I'll make it in time, that machine flies."

-Him: "Well, you're gonna make ME late. You know that I have a business meeting at 7:30 and after it I have a flight to catch which is why I'm packing now."

-Me: "But, daddy, you can't leave me like this. You know that I won't see you again for a month, so please let's just forget about everything and enjoy this moment." He peels away from me and take a step back before his eyes take in my wet, exquisite body. I step closer and begin to unbutton his shirt, then rip it open in frustration, kissing his chest and nipples.

-Me: "I'm sorry... so sorry, I... can't... help... it... I... want... you..."

I say in between the kisses. His reserve breaks like a cracked dam. He yanks me up into his arms and carries me to his king sized bed. I crash onto it but I'm up in an instant to undo his pants. Soon he's inside me and our naked bodies writhe in unleashed lust. I cry in pleasure and sweet pain as he grabs my great mane of relaxed hair, riding forward like a charging warrior. We come almost at the same time and we catch our breaths just for a moment before he gets up and asks me to come take a shower with him.

-Him: "Come. We need to get going." I get up and follow him. Soon we are done with the shower and we get dressed. I grab my stuff and he walks me to the front door. Grabbing the Ferarri keys in their box by the front door, I wrap my arms around him in a hug and bury my face in his chest.

-Me: "Call me immediately when you're around again, okay? And don't worry, your wheels will be safe with me."

-Him: "I don't doubt that for a sec."

He lifts my head and gives me a peck on the lips then releases me.

-Him: "Goodbye, Thuso."

-Me: "Come on, don't say goodbye. You're talking as if we won't see each again and that's not the case."

He just smiles and pulls the door open for me. I'm running late, so I walk out of the house and pace towards the two cars parked in the driveway, the Ferarri and a stupid Toyota Corolla.

The moment I slide behind the wheel and turn the key in the ignition, Sandile strolls from the walkway to watch me go. The Ferarri's starting motor drones, the cold engine almost catches, then dies. I try it again but again, it dies.

"What the fuck?"

I say frustrated. I really need to get out of here, I'm running late. What is this car doing to me now?

-Sandile: "What's wrong with it?"

-Me: "I don't know, hey."

I say out the window.

-Me: "Maybe you should come check it out."

-Him: "There's no time for that, sweetheart. Just take the Corolla."

Without even waiting for me to respond, he turns and goes back inside the house. In a moment he comes back with the Corolla keys and take the Ferarri's. Frustrated, I crawl out of the Ferarri and slip behind the wheel of the Corolla. The Corolla's engine catches immediately. I throw it in reverse and it screeches out of the driveway.

Down the road I guide the humble Japanese car. Running late and also wanting to see what it can do, I check the rear-view mirror, seeing no cars behind me I floor the Corolla. It bolts forward. I settle in behind its wheel, enjoying the speed, testing it against one of the less busy roads of East London. Up ahead, in a busy intersection, I see a street light turn red, I apply the brakes. Nothing. Worse, the Corolla hasn't slowed its acceleration. It jets forward, increasing speed. I pull the emergency brake. Useless. The Corolla dashes for the stop light. Cars cross the intersection at intervals. The light remains red. Desperate, I slam a palm down on the horn. It blares a warning. The Corolla shoots through the intersection, barely missing two crossing cars, and continues on, with me twisting its wheel to avoid hitting anyone and slamming my foot on the brake repeatedly. I pass cars on the

right, then left, and knowing I can hold off destruction no longer, I open the driver's door and try to leap free but the stupid seatbelt holds me onto my seat. Focusing on trying to unbuckle the stuck seatbelt, I can't control the car anymore and it impacts against a stone wall and it's lights out to me.

. . Someleze

It's now 13:20 and it's the end of my last class for the day - Doc's class. I didn't see Thuso in any of our classes today but that's nothing new. I just wonder if Sandile managed to get her to back down from what she wanted to do. The university can't find out about my relationship with Doc, no they can't. I get up from my seat and walk to the exit with the other students, but I immediately stop by the exit when Doc calls my name. -Him: "Ndlovu, please remain behind." I wonder why he wants me to do that but I just do as he says without causing any drama. Grabbing his things quickly, he doesn't wait for me to walk over to him, he comes to me and we both walk out of the lecture room to his office. Without saying anything, he opens his office and gestures for me to walk in first.

He walks in after me and closes the door then locks it.

He stares at me, his eyes dark and his look intent and dangerous, but despite everything I just can't look away.

-Him: "I want to make love to you. Right here, right now."

He says, and now he moves, closing the space between us. His warm breath fans my cheek and his quickening breathing matches my own. I would back away, though, but his hand at my nape prevents me from moving at all. "Please let me."

He adds, bending to brush the corner of my mouth with his lips. My breath catches in the back of my throat. This isn't what I expected when he called me here. He's so close I can feel the heat of his body enveloping me, so close I am suddenly aware of the pulse beating at the centre of my core. Warm fluid drenches my panties and my limbs go totally weak, that's the effect this man has on me. -Me: "Thando, no."

I try to make a protest, but the truth is my body also wants this. He moves even closer, taking my bag that I'm holding like a barrier in front of me and tossing it on his desk. Then he slips an arm around my waist and pulls me against him, my breasts crush against his chest, my hips against the hard muscles of his thighs. Then his mouth is on mine, hard and passionate. He deepens the kiss and I lose my

mind. A hot wave of desire surges over me, making my body tremble, but not enough to

sweep all my inhibitions away. Somehow I manage to push him off of me.

-Me: "Thando, what's going on? We agreed that we wouldn't do any of this here."

-Him: "Well, there's no point anymore. The HOD and the entire faculty knows about our relationship and they've called me to a hearing tomorrow. I'm sure they've also sent you an email in your university email account. They are gonna fire me, so I might as well give them a very good reason to."

-Me: "What? What are you talking about? They know? But I thought my father said he would handle this."

-Him: "Well, clearly whatever he tried didn't work."

-Me: "That's if he even tried at all. Mnxm I shouldn't have believed him."

Just then my phone vibrates in my pocket. I take it out and glance at the screen to see that it's Yonela, one of Thuso's friends. What does she want from me? I hesitate but end up answering.

-Me: "Yonela."

-Her: "Soso, I'm sorry to call you but things are bad."

She tells me what happened.

-Me: "What? When did this happen and where?"

She tells me, crying.

-Me: "Oh my God. Listen, I'm gonna have to call you back."

I hang up, as a rainbow of emotions washes over me. Shock, surprise, confusion, hurt.

Doc looks at me, also confused.

-Him: "What's going on, babe?"

-Me: "It's Thuso."

-Him: "What has she done this time around?" -Me: "It's not what she's done. She's gone, Thando. Thuso's dead. Yonela says she got involved in an accident while driving alone from East London early this morning. And she passed away in hospital." -Him: "East London? Where your father is? Coincidence?"

-Me: "I don't think it's a coincidence...at all. Thuso doesn't have a car, Thando. I bet my life the car she was driving belongs to Sandile. Dammit! What has he done? Yesterday I didn't ask what he was going to do to get Thuso to back off, he just said it would involve pain. But I didn't think he would go this far. I didn't want it to be like this, Thando, I didn't." Doc just folds his arms against his chest, showing not even the slightest emotion on his face.

-Me: "Why are you so calm? A person is dead, Thando."

-Him: "What do you want me to do or say, Someleze? You want me to lie and say I feel sorry for that psycho? Hell no, she got what she deserved. If it's your father who's behind the 'accident' then he did great if you ask me."

-Me: "You're heartless, you know that...Let me call Sandile and ask." I dial Sandile's number but I only hear: "Hi, you've reached Sandile Mali. Please try me again later because here's the truth, I don't check voice messages and I don't leave them either. If you still leave me a message after hearing this then you need to have your head examined."

That's his voicemail. Seriously, what kind of voicemail greeting is that?

-Me: "His phone's off."

I tell Doc as I'm already starting to pace around the office. I don't believe this. I can't believe Sandile chose this route.

-Him: "But if Thuso didn't make it to campus today then who reported us? Vilakazi...Buhle said Thuso wanted to do it in person today. So if she wasn't here, then who did it?"

I stop pacing.

-Me: "Alex. Her partner in this crazy crusade. I really didn't think he would be involved in something this extremely low, you know. What is he gonna get from it? Clearly Thuso's

craziness has rubbed off on him, no kidding. I

swear if he's involved I'm so gonna hate his ass."

-Him: "You mean you weren't hating him before this?"

-Me: "I hated him at first but over time I stopped feeling anything about him. He's just a part of my past that I chose to lock away in the back compartment of my brain. Which is why the fact that my blood aunt and I were both sleeping with him doesn't bother me." My phone rings again, only this time it's Buhle.

-Doc: "You're popular today, huh."

-Me: "Please just seal your mouth."

I answer the call.

-Me: "Buhle, are you gonna tell me about Thuso? I just heard the news."

-Her: "Thuso? No, I want us to meet and talk about yours and Doc December's hearing. I just heard about it."

-Me: "Oh, that. Okay. Where are you? I'll come to you."

-Her: "Freedom Square."

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-Me: "Okay, I'll be there in 5."
I hang up and tell Doc that I'm leaving. Then I
grab my bag and walk out.
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. I find Buhle sitting under one of the cosy thatched shelters by the staff centre and I join her. But before we get into our business of the day I inform her about Thuso's passing. And just like me when I heard the news, her face tells me that she's experiencing a number of emotions at once.

-Her: "It's sad that she's gone and I don't want to speak ill of the dead but the girl was a crazy bitch."

She says eventually.

-Her: "Now about the hearing. Girlfriend, I'm sorry that it has come to this. Believe it or not I was once in your position too, I know how it feels."

-Me: "What do you mean?"

-Her: "Not so long ago, just last semester. Remember that our two modules in

December's course were taught by two professors last semester?"

-Me: "Yeah. The retired professor and Prof Elliott."

-Her: "And that's when Prof Elliott and I started seeing each other."

-Me: "What? You're kidding, right?"

-Her: "I kid you not. And Mjekula in our class found out about the affair and threatened to expose it. Scared to be in trouble, Elliott ended things before Mjekula could blow the horn."

-Me: "No friggin' way."

-Her: "Trust me you'd want to save your no friggin' way for the next part. I was pregnant when Elliott dropped me and when I told him about it, he forced me to have an abortion. That's what someone like Thuso did to me. And that's why I'm on your side."

Tuesday

I enter the library in the morning on an empty stomach. I couldn't eat anything for breakfast, all I could think about was the hearing. Yesterday after I met up with Buhle I read my emails and the first email I read was the hearing invitation from the HOD, more like a subpoena. A hearing that would be today at 13:30. Ugh. So Thuso has lost her life for nothing because Doc and I are still in trouble anyway. I still haven't talked to Sandile to get all the details about the "accident" but I'm pretty sure that he was behind it. His phone has been off since yesterday, I don't know what's going on but I'm pretty sure he's okay wherever he is.

Clearly it's Alex who reported us. And I swear on my grandmother's grave, if Doc loses his job because of him, he's going to feel my wrath. I'm angry, I'm boiling, but Doc on the other hand is still not phased by all of this, he's the picture of calm and I don't even know why. When I needed to know the reason yesterday he just said he would like to get this hearing thing over and done with as soon as possible then see what's next. When I asked what that meant, he didn't answer me. Now at the library, I'm keeping my head down, not looking up for anything, studying

for the test I'm writing tomorrow. I don't want to be anywhere near Doc today until the hearing begins.

Some hours later, at 13:00, my phone on the desk reminds me that it's time to drop everything and go to the hearing. I collect my stuff and make my way to the restroom downstairs. Standing in front of the mirror, I make sure that my face is clean then I apply lip gloss and tie my hair anew. Then I leave the library going to the boardroom in the Science block where the hearing is going to be held. I get there and I feel my stomach clenching as I wait at the closed door after knocking, waiting to be let in. When the door opens, a young professional lady I don't

recognise motions me to the table where the

head of Doc's department, the head of the School of Biological Sciences, the Dean of the Faculty of Science and Agriculture, and Doc himself, are seated. Everyone is quiet and tense as their eyes bore into me. Seeing how serious they make this to be, I'm surprised they didn't also invite the Dean of Students and the VC himself. I look at Doc. His face is stern, but his manner is relaxed. I glance away, feeling a heat that has nothing to do with nerves. He got dressed in front of me this morning but as it seems, I still can't get over how good he looks. He is so unbelievably striking today, in a dark suit set off by a blue tie, a deep, electronic hue with a shimmer. I feel my blood pressure drop at both his looks and from my fear at what is about to happen in this room. I've only heard of hearings or disciplinary discussions in school and here in varsity but I have never experienced one myself. I have always been a disciplined pupil,

learner and a student. This is my first time "screwing up".

"Please have a seat."

The HOD says flatly, now not looking at me. I approach the table, the set-up unfamiliar to me. I sit on the available chair, legs crossed, hands folded on my lap and wait.

-HOD: "Okay, let's begin. This is the first day of the hearing investigating the violation of the university rules by the newest staff member of the School of Science. Fraternising with a student to be specific. Please state your name for the record, Doc."

-Doc: "Thando December."

His voice is calm and chilled as he was this morning.

-Faculty Dean: "Doctor December, we have evidence indicating that you have a personal relationship outside the lecture room with one of your students. Do you have any witnesses that would help you dispute these accusations?"

-Doc: "No, ma'am."

-Her: "I have to advise you that this is a serious matter and it might destroy your career."

-Doc: "I understand that, ma'am." -Her: "We can postpone the hearing until tomorrow if you like to bring in some witnesses or representation, something I would strongly advise."

-Doc: "What is the first question, ma'am?" Looking at him, he's still the picture of calm. -Faculty Dean: "Alright then, let's begin. Doctor December, do you know Miss Ndlovu?"

Doc stares at me with his penetrating, dark eyes before answering.

-Doc: "Yes, I do."

-Faculty Dean: "Is it true that you have a sexual relationship with her?"

-Doc: "Yes, ma'am."

-Her: "Would you say you broke some rules by engaging in this kind of relationship with her?"

-Doc: "Probably."

-Faculty Dean: "Probably? Well, that's a very care-free answer. You don't seem to care about the implications here." Doc doesn't say anything.

-Faculty Dean: "Well, Doctor December?" -Doc: I'm sorry, ma'am, I didn't hear a question."

-Her: "Did you break the rules by sleeping with a student?"

Before answering, Doc looks at all of them like a pitpull looking at Chihuahuas. He's nowhere near being nervous, he's cool and collected. I swear if he was any cooler than this he'd have frostbite.

-Doc: "According to the rules set forth by the university, yes I did. Ma'am, why don't I save y'all some time? Because clearly the institution is going to fire me anyway. I..." The Faculty Dean cuts him off. -Her: "That is not the objective of this hearing, Doctor December. Here we only want to establish the circumstances surrounding the rule violation, then we will deliberate later."

-Doc: "Ma'am, I met a young woman and I fell in love with her. I loved her and I couldn't act as if I didn't. The truth is, I simply followed my heart."

The HOD can't keep quiet anymore, he voices his thoughts.

-HOD: "You call sleeping with a student following your heart, Doctor December?" -Doc: "I call it what's necessary to make myself and the said student happy. Considering the fact that we're both consenting adults."

-HOD: "Doctor December, I don't need to explain that you committed the one act I told you was unacceptable when you first came aboard, do I? Was I in any way unclear?" Doc's handsome face has grown only more so with the contained fury that I now see moving beneath the surface. The muscles under his jawline are fixed, his eyes burning with controlled anger. Clearly the HOD is brushing him the wrong way and I understand why. -Doc: "Not at all."

-Faculty Dean: "So basically, what you're saying, Doctor December, is that your happiness comes first and that love trumps rules."

-Doc: "When cupid strikes, when my path crosses that of a woman I love, I believe there is a reason. And that I need to follow my heart to complete one of my missions on this earth, which is finding my soulmate." -HOD: "Even if it means breaking the rules and falling for a woman you're not supposed to fall for?"

-Doc: "Well, my HOD, Prof ELLIOTT, the difference between me - a real man, and a sorry excuse of a man is that I can stand for what I believe in. Love doesn't care about the rules. It is what it is, pure and simple. It strikes anyone at any given time, and it doesn't ask

questions. And, sir, I'm the kind of man who'd

never be scared or ashamed of loving." The HOD, Prof Elliott, the same man who was sleeping with Buhle, looks down. I bet he can tell that Doc knows about his sexual endeavours too and his hypocritical ways. -Doc: "To answer your question, Faculty Dean. Is my happiness above everything? No, ma'am. And since falling in love between a lecturer and a student is against the rules and policies, I am more than willing to step down as a lecturer in this university. This is the last week of the fourth teaching block anyway and then the final exams will begin. I'll still make sure that my students write my test tomorrow and I'll mark their scripts, I'll also calculate and submit their DPs. Then I'll also mark their exam papers, and calculate and submit their final marks, then I'll be done. The university can advertise the post now. But do not sit there with that smug look on your face and expect me to regret the decision I have

made because the truth, ma'am, is that I don't. I'd never regret falling in love." He stops talking and looks at me briefly before he continues.

-Doc: "All I ask is that y'all don't punish Miss Ndlovu in any way. The only crime that we both committed is falling in love with each other. And that's got nothing to do with this university or the course I'm teaching. I haven't been doing her any academic favours. Here, you can see for yourselves. Numbers don't lie."

He says pushing the papers that have been sitting in front of him all this time to the Faculty Dean, and she accepts them. -Doc: "Those are Miss Ndlovu's marks. From her first year until now. I know that you could access them on your own but I already took the liberty. You can see for yourself that her performance has been stellar all this time. She's always been an A student in all her courses before I even got here. Her marks in my course or any other course haven't skyrocketed just because she's now with me, if anything they have dropped this semester. I'm sure you can see that I haven't been doing her any favours. So please, just let her write her final exam. But if y'all think I'll give her the paper before the exam, the HOD, Prof Elliott,

over here, can make sure that I don't see the paper at all. And he can mark her exam paper himself. That's all I have to say."

-Faculty Dean: "We'll check all this out then deliberate."

-Doc: "Fair enough. I'd like to be excused now if there's nothing else."

-Faculty Dean: "You can go. You'll hear from us."

Doc gets up, ready to leave.

-HOD: "You're willing to lose your job over this, Thando? Couldn't you just end the affair and keep your job?"

-Doc: "It's not an affair, it's a relationship. And I'm cool, y'all can keep the job."

-HOD: "You do realise that if you leave you'll leave with a tarnished reputation? Finding another lecturing job will be close to impossible."

-Doc: "I'm aware of that, but I don't care." And with that, he walks out. What did this man just do? This is not what we agreed on last night. And to say I'm pleased would be the same as saying the deceased have come back to life. I want to go talk to him and ask what happened to what we agreed on. Seeing that there's nothing left to be said here, I also ask to be excused and they let me go. I walk out and pace down the stairs hoping to catch up with Doc but I don't see him anywhere. I rush to his office but I don't find him there either. Where could he be? I call him but his phone goes straight to voicemail. Ugh! I'm pissed but I still need to return to the library to continue preparing for tomorrow's test.

Thando

When I drive up to my gate around 17:00, I find Soso already there, pacing by the gate. I remember that she left her gate remote behind this morning, and I wonder how long she's been standing here. But why did she

walk home alone? Why didn't she come to me so we could drive home together as we normally do? I tried calling her before I drove out of campus but her phone was off.

I open the gate and through the rolled down window I gesture for her to hop in the car so we can drive in together, but she just shakes her head and walk into the yard. I let her be and go park the car in front of the garage. But I quickly hop out and hurry after her to the front door. We get to the stairs to the front door at the same time and she looks at me, not saying anything. I don't say anything either, I just search her face, focusing on her eyes. I notice that they are red, she's definitely been crying and that breaks my heart. Then without a word, I follow her up the stairs to the door and we stand apart, silent, the energy between us growing. She

takes her keys off around her neck and I wait behind her as she unlocks the door, her hand shaking as she twists the key in the lock. The door opens and she let's me walk in first. She's barely closed the door when I draw her against me. I feel her exhaling as my arms tighten around her, leaving only her toes resting on the floor. I smother her face, cheekbones and eyes with kisses, my mouth moving down her neckline, my warm breath coating her skin.

-Me: "Someleze...I love you. And everything is gonna be okay? Trust me."

I say looking into her red, puffy eyes. Fresh tears escape them and she pushes me off of her, crying.

-Her: "No, everything is not gonna be okay, Thando. It's not gonna be okay. Why did you do that? I tried talking to you about this last night, we agreed on what you should say when we get to that hearing but you didn't say any of it. Why? Now you'll be out of a job, Thando. What are we gonna do? What are you gonna do?"

She's now sobbing loudly, hitting my chest with her tiny fists. I gently grab them and pull her to me, rubbing her back without saying anything. Finally, I pull back and look into her eyes.

-Me: "Baby, there was no way I was gonna say any of what we agreed on. And there was no way I was gonna do or say any of what Prof Elliott advised me. He wanted me to throw you under the bus and make it look like you're the one who initiated everything, and then not just promise everyone in that hearing that I would leave you but also do it. Just like you told me he did to Buhle. Hell, there was no way I was gonna do that. What I learned from my marriage, Soso, is that it's love before job. I can always have another job, but not always have a love, I can't have another you if I let you go now. I need you in my life, sthandwa sam, I do. You're the only thing that makes sense in my life right now,

and I'd rather have you and nothing else. I'll never leave your side, for the job or any other thing. My heart would be incomplete without you and I don't want that. I love you, Someleze, I love you too much and nothing is ever going to change that. And you don't have to worry about your final exam, they will let you write. But if they are already considering otherwise, which I doubt, Prof Elliott will sure change their minds. I gave him a little encouragement by letting him know that if he doesn't persuade them to change their minds then the university will know about his own affair with a student. I reminded him that my case is way better than his, that I didn't impregnate a student then force her to have

an abortion."

Still, what I'm saying doesn't make her feel any better, I can see it in her face as I wipe away her tears.

-Her: "What are you gonna do with your life now? You haven't given me an answer to that." -Me: "Baby, don't feel bad about me leaving that job because I don't. You mean more to me than it. It was a rebound job anyway, a job I didn't even deserve. We both know that I only got it because Bhongo used his connections and bribed a few people...Listen, when you were busy worrying about the crazies that were fighting us, I was busy

planning ahead because I knew that this would happen. I could see that it was imminent so I took some steps to secure my future, OUR future. I'm going back to being a surgeon."

Her face lights up when she hears the last part. And a tiny smile finds a way to her beautiful face. She doesn't say anything, she just pushes me and we both fall against the wall. Her mouth finds mine, hard and passionate.

-Me: "I can't be without you, Someleze. I can't."

I say against her lips.

"There's not a thing I won't do. I'd give my life up for you 'cause you are my dream. Girl, 'cause you are the only thing that I got right now." - Justin Bieber [Chris Brown]

Someleze

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Wednesday - 06:00
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"In the past few days I couldn't help but notice that you don't have the textbook Doctor O recommended last week. And trust me, it is very good. Just like Doctor O said, without it you'll experience some difficulties in this course. But don't worry, I have another copy and I can give it to you, free of charge." I looked at this girl talking to me as we walked out of the Maths class at Black auditorium. I didn't know her, so I wondered why she was talking to me as if we were friends. Clearly, she also noticed that I was confused and wondering because she then saw the need to introduce herself.

-Her: "Oh, sorry. My name's Thuso. Thuso Kwena from Mpumalanga."

She said offering me her hand.

-Me: "Someleze Ndlovu. PE."

I said accepting her hand.

-Her: "Oh, Soso. Do you mind if I call you Soso?"

-Me: "No. That's actually what my friends and most people I know call me."

-Her: "Well, from now on I also consider myself your friend. I've been eyeing you in this class as well as in the Chem, Physics and Zoology classes. And by 'eyeing' I don't mean it in a weird way."

-Me: "Oh, that's good...I guess. But I'd be lying if I said I too have noticed you before now. These first year classes are packed, it's hard to

notice everyone."

-Her: "I know, right. But I hear the student numbers decrease as the academic levels increase. With that height of yours though, you stick out like a sore thumb, you're not hard to notice."

I chuckled.

-Me: "Oh, gee, thanks for telling me that I'm the tallest lady in class."

She laughed.

-Her: "But I didn't mean it like that, hey. Anyway, come, walk with me to my room to collect the textbook and we can also get to know each other better."

She seemed nice, with a smile that didn't seem to leave her face. I walked with her to her res, eThembeni, and along the way we talked as if we'd known each for years. She was loud and out there, a breath of fresh air, and I liked her.

That's how Thuso and I met, just 2 weeks after we started our first year at Fort Hare. And since that day we only grew much closer. We became the best of friends, more like sisters. She always had my back, I always had hers, we simply loved each other. In spite of, and mostly because of, the fact that she was different from me, we had a strong bond and I learned a lot from her. Which is why I didn't, and probably would never ever, understand why she just turned on me, especially because of a man that wasn't even hers. But even though she became a thorn in my side I didn't want her dead, I didn't want things to go this way. I didn't want her to lose her life because of me.

I just got off the phone with Sandile and in not so many words he's confirmed that he caused the accident. He didn't say much though, he just said we'll talk when he's here on Saturday then he hung up on me. I still can't believe he went this far, you know. What kind of an animal is he? How could he just take a life of a young woman like that? Thuso was still young, with so much ahead of her. Yes, she was crazy and she made my life difficult but she didn't deserve to go like this. No, she didn't.

Burdened with emptiness and guilt, I let my body slide down the wall in the kitchen until my butt lands on the cold, tiled floor. Thuso's passing has only managed to sink deeper in my head last night, and it hit me pretty hard. Before last night it did disturb me yes, but I also had this whole hearing thing to worry about so I couldn't afford to give anything else much thought.

Thinking about her parents, the fact that she was their only child, their pride and joy, I find tears flooding out of my eyes as I draw my knees to my chest. Knowing how much they loved her, I wonder how they must be feeling right now. Oh God, they must be so devastated. She was the apple of their eye and now because of me they have lost her. To think that they were nice to me when I visited their home twice before makes me feel even more guilty. The last time I was there was for Thuso's birthday party in May, the party that initially had an all-white theme but changed at the last minute. I met her parents for the second time and they were so nice to me just like they were when I was there during the

Good Friday long weekend last year. They are very nice people and they didn't deserve this kind of pain, especially because of me. Oh God, what have I done? Why did I involve Sandile? Why? I bury my face in my knees and sob loudly.

Thando

From my morning jog that Soso didn't feel like partaking in today, I walk into my house and make my way straight to the kitchen, wanting to rehydrate. But upon walking into the kitchen, my eyes land on Soso sitting in a fetal position on the floor, crying. I hurry to her and kneel by her side.

-Me: "Baby, what's going on? Did something happen while I was out?"

She lifts her head and looks at me. With all these tears I'm sure her image of me is blurry.

-Her: "It's indeed Sandile who did it, Thando. The woman who's been my friend for almost three years is now gone because of me. She's gone because of me. It's all my fault. I shouldn't have involved Sandile in this, I shouldn't have done it."

She cries some more. I abandon the kneeling position and sit on my behind next to her before pulling her to me. With her head on my chest, she continues to sob.

-Me: "Baby, what happened is not your fault. At all. Stop saying it is. Sthandwa sam, there's no way you could have known that your father would do this. You ain't no psychic, so please stop beating yourself up about something you didn't do."

-Her: "But still, I feel so guilty. And it hurts that Thuso's gone. Yes, we were no longer friends but deep down I still cared about her. I didn't want her to go like this, Thando. No. It was too soon for her, baby, too soon. Her life got cut short by my own father, because of me." Eish, I don't know what to say to her to make her feel better. I'm really out of words. -Me: "She's gone but it's not your fault, babe. Cut yourself some slack, will you? Yes, I'm sure losing her hurts. And I won't sit here and act as if I know what it's like to lose a friend to death. But as someone who's lost a number of patients in the past I know how it feels like to lose someone to death. And I also know that it gets better with time. You'll be okay, sthandwa sam, everything's gonna be okay. Just please don't feel guilty about this. You

didn't do it and you didn't know that it was going to happen."

She lifts her head and looks at me. I help wipe away her tears.

-Her: "Considering that Thuso and I were best friends since she got here, I'm sure her parents will expect me to attend the funeral. I have no idea how I'm gonna look them in the eye and offer my condolences knowing very well that I had something to do with their daughter's death but still, I'm gonna go." -Me: "Are you sure you wanna do that, babe? You don't have to attend the funeral. You don't have to do it."

-Her: "I don't have to but I want to. Thando, it's the least I can do. I'm gonna call her father today to pass my condolences and also ask about the funeral arrangements."

I know how stubborn she is. When her mind is made up it's hard to convince her otherwise, so I just let her be.

-Me: "As long as you're sure, babe, it's okay you can go."

-Her: "I'm also gonna meet up with Yonela and try to find out how much they know about the circumstances surrounding that accident. I want to know how much they know about the man Thuso was seeing, how much they know about Sandile and if he's going to be in trouble."

I can see that her protective instinct has kicked in now. I think as much as she's angry at her father for what he did, she still doesn't want him to go down for this. -Me: "You can do that. But please watch what you say or how you fish. You don't want to give yourself away."

-Her: "I know."

-Me: "This happened Monday but you are only reacting to it now. Why? If I may ask." -Her: "Because I had other things to worry about, the hearing to be specific."

She completely pulls away from me and leans on the wall.

-Her: "I still can't believe you gave up your job for me, you know. That's cute, but still crazy." -Me: "There's nothing I wouldn't do for our relationship to survive, babe. And there's not a thing I wouldn't do for you. I'd even give my life up for you if I have to. That's how much I love you, sthandwa sam. You are all I have right now." A lazy smile slowly creeps to her face. When I see her smile like this my world feels alright, and I can't help but smile too.

-Her: "You're so corny, you know that?"

-Me: "And I know you like it."

She lets out a soft giggle.

-Her: "Whatever."

-Me: "But if I'm being honest, I submitted my resignation yesterday yes, but I didn't do it for you. I did it for my own selfish reasons. I did it because I didn't want to lose you. I knew that my heart would be incomplete without you and I didn't want to subject myself through that pain...besides, I was already tired of that job anyway. It's not exciting or fulfilling enough for me, not to mention the pathetic salary. I want more, babe. I miss that adrenaline rush I used to feel working as a surgeon. I miss saving lives. Being a medical doctor is what I was born to do, babe. I wasn't born to talk, I was born to do. And with you by my side I think I'm ready to go back."

Still smiling, she leans over and kisses my lips briefly then pulls back.

-Her: "I don't care why you did it, silly. I still love you. And the fact that you put us, our relationship, first makes me love you even more...Now remind me, which interview are you having tomorrow? The one at Vic?" -Me: "No, silly. The one at Vic is on Friday. Tomorrow I'm going to Frere Hospital." -Her: "Oh, yah, I remember now."

-Me: "With the foundation laid, chances are I'm going to be taken by Frere though. I really want Frere. Victoria hospital is small, I need more."

-Her: "Then I'll be praying and crossing fingers for everything to go according to plan. I want you to get the job you want."

-Me: "But you know what that would mean, right? That I would have to move to East London and leave you here."

-Her: "That's no train smash, babe. I've always known that we won't remain in the same town forever. If...I mean WHEN you have to move to EL I'll be fine with it because I understand that you have to live your own life. We'll still get to see each other when we're both free, we'll be fine, we'll make it work, EL is not that far. But that's if I'll still be in Alice by then, if Fort Hare accepts me for Honours next year."

-Me: "Of course they'll take you, babe. They have no reason to reject your application." -Her: "Hopefully."

-Me: "Relax, they'll take you...Another thing, babe. When I go back to the medical field, a lot is going to change and I'm gonna need you to bear with me. The 8:00 to 16:30 thing is going to end. I'm now going to work long, irregular hours. And our leisure plans will be upset by emergencies quite often. I'm going to work under stressful conditions and I'll sometimes take the stress home with me. I need you to understand this."

-Her: "Of course, babe, I understand all of that, it comes with the territory. I know what

to expect and I promise not to give you a hard time."

-Me: "That's good to hear. However, and please don't take this the wrong way, what you just said is exactly what Busi also said. But down the line all I could hear from her were complaints, one after the other. Listen, I know that you're not her but I'm just saying." -Her: "You're right, I'm not her. And you need to relax and stay positive, we'll be fine...Now, would you like me to help you prepare for tomorrow's interview this afternoon?" I laugh.

-Me: "You? Help me prepare for the interview? Please remind me, how many formal job interviews have you ever been to in your life? If I remember correctly, the answer is zero, none, zilch. So tell me, how can you possibly help me?"

-Her: "Oh, kulungile delela. [Oh, it's okay, look down on me.]"

She says with this cute side smile.

-Me: "Sorry, my love. But don't worry, I got this. Now come let's go take a shower and get ready to go to campus. I'm still a UFH employee until the exams are done, and you still have a test to write today. So let's get a move on."

I help her up and we make our way to the bedroom.

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Someleze
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It's now the afternoon, around 15:00, and I'm walking out of Yonela's room at eLitheni residence. After writing the test I called her and asked to meet, and she said I should come to her room. I was cool with that. But before going to her, I decided to call Thuso's father to extend my condolences and also ask about the date of the funeral. He took my call and even though I could tell from his voice that he was hurt, he tried to act strong. He really appreciated my call, something that made me die a little inside as guilt started eating away at me once again. And from the way he spoke, I could tell that he didn't know anything about the falling out I had with his daughter. Maybe that's a good thing, right? Anyway, he told me that he was now in EL to get his daughter's body transported to Mpumalanga, and that the funeral would be on Saturday next week. That to me became a confirmation that the girl who's been my friend for years is now really gone. Words got stuck in my throat and I felt like all the energy was being sucked out of my body. I staggered but quickly reached for the nearest wall to steady myself. After hanging up I just sat there, on the stairs of my department's building, for about 10 minutes trying to regain my strength. Then I got up and made my way to Yonela's res.

All she could tell me is that Thuso left Sunday evening saying she was going with this older guy from EL, one of the guys she was sleeping with. And that all she knows about this guy is his name - Sandile. She doesn't know his last name or his face because apparently she never got to meet him, not even once. Now I realise why Sandile didn't want me to tell Thuso that he's my father, and I can also see that he was telling the truth when he said Thuso didn't know much about him. Without a doubt, if she did her friends would too. This works for me because I don't want him to be linked to me, I don't want him to drag me down with him as an accessory to this murder should he go down for it.

Leaving Yonela's res, I make my way to Alex's. I seriously need to give him a piece of my mind for what he did to Doc and I, for reporting us.

Taking long strides, I quickly get to his res on the other side of campus. After knocking on his door, he tells me to come in and I walk in only to find him packing his belongings in boxes. -Him: "Hey, Soso. I wasn't expecting to see you here."

He says stopping what he's been doing.

-Me: "You're packing. Why?"

-Him: "My time here is over. I submitted the final draft of my dissertation on Monday, so there's nothing left for me here. I'm leaving tomorrow, and if there's anything else I need to do pertaining my dissertation I'll communicate with my supervisor via email."

-Me: "Oh, so this was your plan, huh?"

-Him: "What do you mean?"

-Me: "Your plan was to ruin mine and Thando's life then disappear, huh? Why, Alex? What did I ever do to you? Are you that bitter? Alex, you're the one who left me, you're the one who hurt me and not the other way round. So why are you doing this?" -Him: "You're talking about the emails and me bringing that crazy Natalie into your lives? About that, I'm sorry, Someleze. I truly am. But I'm glad that it didn't shake your relationship." -Me: "You're glad? You're glad? Fuck you, Alex. Fuck you! And I'm not talking about Natalie here, I'm talking about you reporting my relationship with Thando."

I take in his face. He looks surprised and kind of confused.

-Him: "What? You got reported?" He sits on the bed rather abruptly, still keeping his eyes on me.

-Him: "Soso, bona, Thuso came to me with that plan on Saturday but I asked her not to go ahead with it. I had already decided to take a step back in this whole madness and just focus on myself. I asked Thuso to also do the same and just drop the whole thing. I saw no upside in reporting you, I saw no upside in fucking up your lives. I didn't want to hurt you and I really tried to convince Thuso to also draw back, and for some reason I thought I got through to her. Now I'm surprised to know that she still went through with reporting you." -Me: "She didn't go through with it, Alex, because she didn't make it to campus on Monday. Don't tell me you don't know." -Him: "Know what?"

-Me: "That your one-night stand is no more."
-Him: "No more? What do you mean?"
He really doesn't know, I can see it in his eyes.
-Me: "Thuso got involved in an automobile accident when she was driving from East
London early Monday morning. She passed away in hospital."

He springs up from the bed like a madman, really shocked.

-Him: "Say what now? Whoa, what? TK is gone? I didn't know any of this. I didn't." He says, frantically scratching his head. -Me: "It is true and it is very sad. It really

hurts. But I'm not here to talk about it, I'm here to talk about what you did."

He comes closer to me. My first instinct is to take a step back but then for a reason I don't know, I find myself not moving. He stands so close to me and looks into my eyes.

llim, "Complete Llips, that I lips to you a

-Him: "Someleze, I know that I lied to you a number of times before but I need you to believe me now. I didn't report your relationship, I didn't do it. I couldn't go that far, no. That is extremely low, even for a scumbag like me. I couldn't have done it. I don't need anything else from you, I just need you to please believe me. I didn't do it." I look at him, deadpan, searching his face, his eyes specifically.

-Him: "Please tell me you believe me." I do, but I just can't say it out loud. I only turn and make for the door.

-Him: "Someleze, I'm sorry...for everything." Still, I don't say anything. Leaving him standing there, I walk out and take the stairs down, wondering who could have reported us if it wasn't him.

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Out of the res, I make my way to Doc's office. I know that it's not the time to go home yet but I just want to see him and talk to him about this.

I find him sitting behind his desk already marking the scripts of the test we wrote today. As soon as he sees me, he stops and covers the papers. That doesn't surprise me though, it's what he always does: he never lets me see the other students papers or their marks.

-Him: "Hey, how did it go with...what's her name again?"

-Me: "Yonela."

I tell him everything.

-Him: "That works for you...I guess. But why does it look like there's something else on your mind?"

-Me: "Alex didn't do it, Thando. He didn't report us. So if he didn't do it, who did?" -Him: "Oh, that. Don't crack your skull trying to figure it out, it was Thuso. I was talking with Prof Elliot earlier, asking him the same question and he didn't only tell me who did it but he also showed me. Using her university email account, Thuso emailed everything to Prof and the management on Sunday, in the afternoon. So Monday morning everybody got the email and yah, shit happened."

-Me: "Are you serious?"

-Him: "I am. I saw it with my own eyes."

-Me: "So it was all her. Oh God."

-Him: "Still feel guilty about what happened to her?"

-Me: "Honestly? Yah. This doesn't change how I feel about the matter. But at least now I know how much she hated me, how much she was determined to ruin my life."

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Saturday - 14:00
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"Baby, Sandile just texted me. He says he's in town and I should meet him at Engen now." I inform Doc as I enter his study room. He's sitting behind his desk, working on his laptop. Lately, he spends most of his time in this room and behind that laptop. I'm not sure

what he does exactly and I never ask, I just give him his space because a nuisance is the last thing I want to be. He went to both his interviews yesterday and on Thursday, and we're both optimistic. If he gets the job in EL then that would mean I no longer need to get a place of my own anymore. He's going to move out of this house and leave me here. This house already feels like home, so much that I no longer want to move out, I think I'll just get housemates to help me with the rent. -Him: "So you're on your way to him now?" He asks without even looking up.

-Me: "Yeah. You don't need anything from me, do you?"

He lifts his head and looks at me.

-Him: "Just one thing actually. Please don't give your father a hard time when you meet him. Understand that he did what he did because he was trying to protect you." Seriously, I've made this clear to this man in the past few days. I told him that if he wants us to get along he should just keep his mouth shut as far as this matter is concerned. He shouldn't tell me what to do, what to feel or even how to feel it.

Irked, I choose not to respond to what he just said.

-Me: "Is there anything you need me to get you from the shops?"

-Him: "Oh, so that's you ignoring me, huh. Fine, go. And no, I don't need anything from the shops."

With that, he pulls his eyes away from me to focus on the screen of his laptop again. I can tell that he's irritated and quite frankly, so am I. Without saying anything more, I leave his study and make my way to the front door. Fifteen minutes later I get to Sandile's car parked at the Engen filling station I used to work at. Ready to get inside and give him a piece of my mind, I reach for the passenger side door. But before I can open it, he opens it from inside and I simply hop in. -Him: "Hey. Are we okay?" He asks looking at me square in the face as soon as I settle in my seat.

-Me: "Okay? What do you think, Sandile? Do you honestly think we'd be okay after what you did? Sandile, I came to you for help but I didn't ask you to murder anyone. So why did you do it? Why?"

The way I'm angry at him I'm not even talking, I'm shouting.

-Him: "Why? Someleze, I'm your father, I did what I did to protect you. That's what fathers do, isn't it?"

Unlike mine, his voice is calm and collected. -Me: "Couldn't you have used other methods to do that? There were so many methods you could have used to deal with the situation. Why did it have to murder? Or is that the kind of person you are? The kind that has no respect whatsoever for human life? Do you enjoy killing?"

He looks away from me and exhales loud enough for me to hear. -Me: "I hate you for what you did, Sandile. I hate you. I thought we could build a good relationship, you know. But after this, I'm no longer interested. I don't know you, and I don't even want to know you. You give me the creeps."

He looks at me.

-Him: "Someleze, here's what you need to know. There's not a thing I won't do to protect you. I'd break the law or take a bullet for you without even thinking twice. That's because you're my blood and I love you. You are the only child I got, and making sure you're safe is my job now. And another thing you need to know is that I'm a proactive person. I don't wait for things to get out hand before I deal with them."

-Me: "And by dealing with things you mean killing, isn't it?"

-Him: "I mean dealing with them as meticulously as possible. For example, the car Thuso died in has no ties to me, whatsover. But I'm not here to talk about that. Just take the iPad at the back, it belonged to Thuso. The password is 'crocodile', her last name in English, her family totem. Check the iMessages exchanged between her and a person named Slice, then tell me she didn't deserve to go."

Then he looks out the window once again. Clearly looking at me right now disgusts him as much as looking at him disgusts me.

Confused by what he just said, I reach for the iPad. And he's right, this iPad belonged to Thuso, I know it.

-Him: "Don't read the messages here. Just take the iPad with you on your way out." -Me: "Is that you telling me to get out of your car?"

-Him: "Yes, before I say something I'll regret. I don't respond well when the word 'hate' is directed to me. So just go. Besides, I need to go see my sister, I don't have time for your tantrums." His sister. He's making me so angry right now but I still think I should tell him that I actually know his sister and how I know her.

-Me: "About that, I..."

But he cuts me off.

-Him: "Don't bang the door on your way out." Yoh! Seriously? He really meant it, he wants me to go. With the iPad in my hand, I open the door and get out.

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Sandile

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Do I enjoy killing? My own daughter has just
asked me that. Well, unless there's a major
short circuit upstairs, I don't think there's
anyone out there who enjoys taking another
person's life. The fact though is, everyone has
it in them to kill someday. People don't seem
to get that until it happens to them. They
think of themselves as incapable of murder.
But it is just a matter of coincidence or
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circumstance. A misunderstanding, a squabble over something, a reaction to

provocation, self defence or simply being at the wrong place at the wrong time can bring out a destructive streak in people who are otherwise good and decent. Anyone can kill. It's just a matter of why or how you do it. I was also one of the decent fellows, and I still consider myself one, when circumstances pushed me to murder 6 years ago. For me the push factor was revenge, I was avenging my parents' deaths. If I'm being honest, I no longer have faith in our justice system. Perpetrators walk free everyday and that's exactly what happened with my parents' killers too. Something inside me snapped when they walked free and I decided to take matters into my own hands. And once I crossed that line there was no going back. Now, killing is my default setting. You come after me or my loved ones, you simply incur my wrath in the worst possible way. Do I

enjoy doing that though? The answer is no, but I see it as a necessary evil.

When you kill someone with your hands, something from that person passes to you - a sigh, a smell or a gesture. It clings to your body and seeps into your skin, going all the way into your heart, and thus continues to live within you. Which is why I no longer literally stain my hands with blood, I use other methods to permanently remove obstacles out of my way. Already I am carrying with me traces of the two people I killed with my bare hands. I wear them around my neck like invisible necklaces, feeling their presence against my flesh, tight and heavy. It is a very uncomfortable feeling. So, do I enjoy killing? Once again, the answer is no. But make no mistake, if you touch my loved ones, you'll take the elevator all the way 6 feet under and never come back up again.

I get to the staff quarters in Victoria hospital to see my sister. She called me earlier asking to see me. She sounded sad and when I asked what was going on, she didn't want to tell me anything over the phone, she just wanted me to come see her. So yeah, here I am.

I knock at the door of their commune and she immediately comes to open.

-Me: "Mntana ka Ma. [My sister]"

I say hugging her. I really love my little sister. Since we no longer have parents, she's the only family I have, putting Soso aside.

-Her: "Bhut' wam. [My brother]"

She sounds so down, and that tells me that something is definitely wrong. As a man who hates beating around the bush, I go straight to the point, I ask her what's going on. She answers by taking my hand and walks me over to the couches.

-Her: "Please let's sit down for this. I'm alone, everyone's out. But, bhut' wam, that doesn't mean you're free to shout at me when you hear what I have to say."

She says as we both sit down on the couch. -Me: "What's going on, sis? Talk to me." -Her: "I'm pregnant." #30 Finale Part 1

"If there's a question of my heart, you've got it.

It don't belong to anyone but you. If there's a question of my love, you've got it. Baby, don't worry, I've got plans for you." - Usher [Wale]

Sandile

"You're pregnant? Then that's good news, sis. So, why ain't you happy?"

I ask, confused. I don't understand why lviwe would be this down when she's pregnant for the man she's engaged to.

-Her: "The baby is not Nathi's, bhuti."

-Me: "What do you mean it's not Nathi's? What are you talking about, Iviwe?"

-Her: "I mean the father is Alex. A guy I met right here in Alice. A guy my age, not a man that's 11 years my senior. I'm pregnant for the man I love, bhuti, not a man you're forcing me to marry."

I don't know how or when I got off the couch but I find myself on my feet. I'm angry and disappointed at Iviwe. How could she? How could she go and get pregnant for another man when she's engaged to be married to another? The wedding is less than 2 months away for goodness sake.

-Me: "Forcing you? Me? A man I'M forcing you to marry? Why do we have to keep going over this, lviwe? Why? I'm not the bad guy here, lviwe, and you know it. I'm only making sure that our family keeps its end of the bargain. That's all."

-Her: "At my expense."

We always called Iviwe the miracle child of our family. And that's because every child that our parents had after me and before her never lived past their first birthdays, all 4 of them. But she survived and grew up to be this fine young woman that she is today.

According to what our parents told us, we

owe that to Nathi's parents. Nathi Tose is

Iviwe's 35 year old fiancé. And his parents are a prophet and a prophetess back in Mthatha. Apparently, they are the ones who protected Iviwe, whatever that means. I'm not religious nor traditional, but I never questioned any of what our parents told us. All I know is that they had an agreement with Nathi's parents that if Iviwe lived past the age of 15 then they would have to marry her off to Nathi. My parents signed the agreement because they believed that they owed the Toses for saving Iviwe's life from whatever "curse" that was bestowed upon them. Now, with my parents gone I'm the one who has to make sure that we honour that agreement. Nathi paid lobola last December and the wedding is supposed to be this coming December. Do I believe in arranged marriages though? Oh, hell no. But because I'm avoiding conflict with the Toses, because I want peace, I'm going along with this.

-lviwe: "If you're not the bad guy then stand by my side, bhuti. Support me in this pregnancy and go tell Nathi and his parents to go to hell. I don't love Nathi. I don't love him, bhuti, and you know this."

Trying to calm myself down, I sit back down. -Me: "And you love this...Alex?"

-Her: "Yes. But I'm not sure if he loves me." She says looking down.

-Me: "Meaning?"

-Her: "After he found out about my engagement to Nathi, he dumped me. And now he's not talking to me."

-Me: "Does he know about the pregnancy?" -Her: "No. He's even blocked my number, I can't talk to him."

-Me: "Then this boy needs to deal with me. Give me his number and I'll call him myself. I need to see him today. Now."

-Her: "Does that mean you're gonna tell Nathi to go jump?"

-Me: "That baby you're carrying changes everything."

Someleze

Disbelief and anger rise inside me as words from the screen of Thuso's iPad make themselves clear before my eyes. Realising just how Thuso was determined to not only ruin my life but to also have it taken is unsettling to say the least. I can't believe I was feeling guilty about her death. I wasted my emotions for someone who didn't deserve any of it, and knowing it makes me angry. I'm livid. And now I can safely say I understand why Sandile got rid of her. I can't believe I judged and blamed him for nothing. Thuso asked for what happened to her. It was either me or her, and my father chose me. For that he deserves a medal not insults from me. With that in mind, I reach for my phone on the coffee table and call him. I want to

apologise for all the things I said to him, he didn't deserve any of it.

I dial his number but he doesn't pick up. I try again and still, he doesn't answer. Is he still mad at me? I honestly wouldn't blame him if he still is though, I deserve it.

Getting up from the couch in the lounge, I make my way to the study, to talk to Doc. When I got back from Sandile I just sat in the lounge alone and immediately opened the messages to see what Thuso was up to. And now it's time to share my findings with Doc. I walk into the study to find him sitting barefoot on the floor, on the thick soft mat, with his back against the corner couch. Immediately when he sees me he stops thumbing his phone, he locks its screen then puts it aside. I can't help but feel like he's hiding something from me but I don't want to ask, not now anyway.

-Me: "Hey, babe. Am I disturbing you?" -Him: "No, no. Come on in. I'm surprised you're only coming in now though, considering the fact that you came back 10 minutes ago."

-Me: "You've been counting? Then why didn't you come to me in the lounge?"

-Him: "I wanted to give you your space."

-Me: "Thando, are we okay?"

-Him: "What are you talking about? Of course, we're okay. Why wouldn't we be?"

I don't answer, I just walk over to sit next to him on the mat.

-Me: "You were right when you advised me to not give my father a hard time about this Thuso thing. You were right, he did it to protect me. I didn't listen to you, I waved you off as if you were talking nonsense and for that I owe you an apology. I'm sorry, baby." -Him: "Don't worry about it, babe. So tell me, what happened? Your father explained to you why he did what he did?"

-Me: "Not really. He just gave me this iPad so I could see for myself."

-Him: "And? What's in the iPad?"

-Me: "The iPad belonged to Thuso. And my father asked me to read the messages exchanged between her and a person named Slice. Here, read for yourself."

I give him the iPad and he reads.

-Him: "What the fuck? Murder?! So Slice is a gun for hire and Thuso hired him to take care of you should her plan to break us up not work?"

-Me: "That's what the messages say." -Him: "See what I was telling you? Thuso deserved what happened to her. She deserves no compassion from you, her dead self ain't worth it. She wanted you gone permanently, babe. And if it wasn't for your father, she was gonna go ahead and do it. Still think she deserves your tears?" -Me: "I no longer give a fuck about anything

that's got to do with her, Thando. I really underestimated how sick and obsessed she was. She reported our relationship and she also wanted me dead. For what exactly? A man that wasn't even hers. Honestly? I no longer feel sorry or guilty that she got killed. She simply got what was coming to her. If there's anybody who deserves anything from me it's my father, he deserves my apology. I judged him without getting all the facts first." -Doc: "So call him and apologise."

-Me: "I've already tried but he's not picking up. I'll try again later."

-Him: "This should teach you to wait for an explanation first before you react next time." -Me: "Yeah, I know...Now I need to get rid of this iPad."

-Him: "It doesn't have internet connection, does it?"

-Me: "No. So it can't be tracked. But I still need to get rid of it."

I say putting it aside.

-Me: "But first things first. Let's talk about us."

-Him: "Us?"

-Me: "I don't know, babe, but in the past couple of days I've been feeling like you're drifting away from me. I feel like you're hiding something from me. You spend your time in this room, behind your laptop screen, working on something only you knows about. Even when I walked in here just now, you quickly hid the screen of your phone. You ain't telling me anything, Thando. What's going on? Why are you being so secretive? Do I need to be worried?"

He looks down for a moment then looks at me.

-Him: "You don't think I'm cheating, do you?" -Me: "I don't know. Are you?"

He lets out a chuckle.

-Him: "Of course not. Come on, babe, you know that I'd never do that to you." -Me: "Do I?"

-Him: "Baby, you've got my heart. It doesn't belong to anyone but you. You've got my love. You know this."

-Me: "Honestly, I haven't been feeling that a lot lately. What are you hiding from me?" He covers his face with his hands. -Him: "God, I didn't want things to go this way."

-Me: "What way?"

He removes the hands and looks at me. -Him: "I wanted this to be a surprise, baby, and now you've ruined it. I've been making plans for us, plans of love. Since I'm going back to medicine soon and knowing how busy my life is going to get, I wanted us to go away on a vacation as soon as you're done with your exams, to spend some quality time together, away from everything and everyone. I've been planning a trip to the Bahamas and my generous father is bankrolling it."

-Me: "Are you for real?"

He doesn't answer me, he just gets up from the mat to retrieve his laptop from the desk. Then he comes back to sit next to me. He shows me everything and I'm honestly taken aback. Aww, ain't he just sweet? I really wasn't expecting this...at all. A romantic getaway? I've never experienced any of this

before, and that's me being honest. UDoc undifaka ezintweni ndiyakuxelela. Without saying anything, I quickly put the laptop aside and attack him with a hug. -Me: "I'm sorry for ruining the surprise, thando lwam. I'm really sorry, I didn't know." -Him: "It's okay. Now you know. As for the phone....here, see what I was doing." He unlocks the screen and hands the phone to me. I can see that he was typing an email, a reply to a travel agent. I find myself smiling, both at my imagination running wild and at Doc's sweet gesture. My poor man hasn't been doing anything wrong, he was only planning something nice for me, for us. -Me: "Thank you for this, sthandwa sam. Really. No one has ever done something this nice for me, not that I've been with a lot of people though, but hey...you know what I mean. I'm really sorry it's now no longer a surprise. And I'm sorry for letting my

imagination run wild."

-Him: "Don't sweat it. And you deserve this, babe. We deserve it."

He leans in and kisses me softly on the lips, and then puts his finger on my chin, lifting my eyes to meet his.

-Him: "I love you."

-Me: "I love you more."

Just then my phone rings and it's my mother. Not wanting Doc to disturb me, I go answer the call outside, in the passage. Doc also walks out of the study and past me to the bedroom.

. My mom wants me to go home next weekend...with Thando. She says she wants to officially meet him as my boyfriend. I think she's being a little forward now but I promise to get back to her after I've talked to Doc. Then we talk about other stuff. When I finally hang up, Doc is already back in the study. I find him sitting on the couch busy fiddling with his phone again.

-Me: "Baby, my mother..."

But he doesn't let me finish. With this naughty smile on his face he puts his hand up, shushing me. Then he puts the phone aside. -Him: "Come here."

From his voice and body language, I already know what he has in mind. I walk over and stand somewhat obediently before him. He rises from the couch to kiss me on the mouth with so much passion, then he pulls back and gradually sits down again.

"Take a step back and take your skirt off." I don't know what this man does to me but simply hearing him say those words excites me and I feel that inner warmth rising. I unbutton and unzip my skirt then kick it off of me.

"Now unbutton your blouse. Slowly."

I happily obey. I slip the buttons free, until the silky garment hangs loose from my shoulders, my full breasts protruding beyond the folds. -Him: "Take it off."

He's enjoying the show, I can tell. Obediently, I let the blouse slide to the ground where it ripples onto the thick soft mat. My push up bra sure has enhanced my cleavage. It is black satin, matching the panties I'm wearing. I start to take off the bra, but he stops me. "No. Come here. I'll do it myself."

And compliantly I step closer. I feel incredibly erotic right now. My total surrender of will to my man's wishes is so arousing. I warm from within, embers of arousal beginning to fan into flame.

Only in bra and panties, I hover over him. His hands journey to my back and he slowly unclasps my bra. Tossing it aside, his hands run up my thighs, all the way behind, gathering me in and pulling me close, his face against my stomach as he kisses and nibbles my skin. Then, one hand still clasping me from behind, the other moves to my private. With a single finger he slides inside the front of my panties, pulling them slightly to one side and, lowering his head, nuzzling his face against me. I can feel his hot breath against me as he softly bites at the skin of my sex. My breathing quickens and he chuckles as he hears it. Then he leans back onto the couch. -Him: "Now, play with yourself."

I hesitate, a little unsure of what he is asking. "Go ahead, babe. Give me a show. Play with yourself. I want to watch you arouse yourself, then when you're good and wet I'll take over."

Sliding my fingers down the front of my sex, I start to rub myself over the panties. His head tilts and his eyes are dark, pupils wide as he watches. He's not exactly smiling, but his teeth show a little, as I see his breathing deepen.

"I don't think we need those, do we?" He says, referring to my panties. And I quickly discard them.

"Now start fucking yourself."

I stand close to him as he leans further back into the couch.

-Him: "Closer. I want to see everything."

I try to move closer, but cannot as my knees chafe against the couch.

"Kneel up. Straddle me."

Kneeling up, my legs parted astride my man, he supports me with his hands on my hips, steadying me.

"Now. Play with yourself. I want to see you dripping."

This will not be difficult. The act of opening myself, so close to his face that I can feel the heat of his breath on my loins, is already arousing me and my pussy is moistly warm. Slipping fingers between my legs I start to play with my clit, pulling the hood back with one hand and rubbing it with the other. Working at my nub, it grows hard under my fingers. A couple of fingers in my pussy for a moment gives me a little juice to lubricate myself, making my clit more slippery and easier to work. He watches as I work myself. -Him: "Put both your hands on my shoulders. Support yourself." I do as he says, stopping playing with myself.

Taking one hand from my hips, he parts the lips of my vagina, leaning in close to suckle at me. His tongue, lapping at my bud is electric and I moan, struggling to remain still in my awkward position balanced over him.

"Don't move."

He says, withdrawing from me for a moment, then he returns to his work, nibbling at me, chewing lightly at my labia, working my clit with his tongue.

My breath is shuddering now, and my balance is precarious.

"Take your hands from my shoulders. Support yourself against the couch back."

When I remove the hands, he slides down, now directly under me, my pussy open for his inspection. Looking down, he peruses my folds, tasting and licking, flicking at my clit with his tongue, working circles around it, nibbling with his teeth. I am very liquid now,

my breath ragged and broken. P**sy juices trickle and he licks them away. He tongues my entrance, probing first lightly and then more deeply. His face presses close to me, sucking me as I judder and squirm, fighting the impulse to buck my hips. Through my growing euphoria I feel two of his fingers going inside my vagina. He finger fucks me for a moment then he pulls out and plays with my clit sending waves of electric stimulation shooting through me. I squeal, convulsing reflexively as he circles my clit with his fingers, first probing into the root, then skimming the tip, now sensitised and swollen. Juices gush from my throbbing p**sy and an unbearable euphoria builds in waves as he works mercilessly at my tender button. Orgasm rises quickly, engulfing me in spasm after spasm of pleasure. At some level I am aware that he is no longer working my clit, but has buried himself in my pussy, drinking from me as I cum, his mouth locked

over me, his tongue penetrating prolonging my climax as I shudder and scream. Barely does my orgasm subside than he pushes me away and down to the floor, on the mat. Standing, he towers over me, stripping off his t-shirt and pants. As they drop in a heap beside me he has one more thing to say.

"On your hands and knees, baby. Ass up. I want to see you."

I obey, dropping down to rest on my elbows, head well down so that my naked ass is presented for him to see.

With him now kneeling behind me, I feel a slight spank on one of my butt cheeks and I quiver in anticipation of what's about to come next.

-Him: "You like that, huh?"

-Me: "Yes. Yes."

He spanks me again, harder this time, making me yelp. A tingle runs down my spine. I have barely come down from the waves of one orgasm but already I feel my body's response to what he's doing to me. Biting my lip, my ass smarting, I can feel my pussy juices flowing once again. Then his fingers ram inside me, pumping in and out. I moan loudly. And I want nothing but his cock inside me right now.

-Me: "Please, fuck me, baby. I want to feel you inside me. Please."

He gets up from the kneeling position and reaches for his pants and takes out a condom out of the pocket, I'm sure that's what he went to get from the bedroom when he walked out of here. He puts it on then with a hand pressing my head to the mat, he kneels between my splayed legs, forcing my knees a little further apart with his, then opening my pussy wider with his fingers. His erection presses again my smarting lips then thrusts inwards.

I am slick and slippery. There is no resistance as he pumps into me, hard, meeting my inner walls. My elbows are still on the ground, my back is arched to present my open p**sy.

Pumping me, he spanks my butt cheeks in time with his rhythm, first one side, then the other. I am so close to another orgasm right now. But he pulls out and turns me around so I could lie on my back on the mat. He enters me again. In he slides and out, in and out. Not hard, nor gentle, but regular and even and smooth as silk, with a rhythm like a heartbeat. My eyes close, my own heartbeat is wild, my pulse banging wildly at my temples, the gliding thrust of him filling my p**sy making me moan and pant. Opening my eyes, I find him gazing down, watching my face as he works me. His eyes are deep, intense. I could drown in them. His teeth lightly gritted, I see a sheen of perspiration as he draws me to my climax. It begins, rising from my core, rippling out through the muscles of my belly and thighs. As I convulse inside, he responds by now thrusting hard in his heartbeat rhythm, my cunt squeezes his cock as I erupt into orgasm. Through my physical rapture I am

conscious of arms encircling me as I cum,

kisses on my neck and breasts. Gliding down

once more from the heights, I feel warm breath by my face and fingers running through my hair. He does not cease his thrusting. Kissing me briefly on the lips, he raises himself over me as he thrusts, looking down on me as he builds to his own climax. And now, I stroke his face, reaching up to caress his beautiful features as I move with his rhythm, trying to gift him what he just gifted me. With my pussy I relax as he glides in, squeeze as he pulls out, trying to make it good for him. His sweat drips onto my breasts, trickling over my hot damp skin, annointing me with his cologne. With a gasp, his eyes shut tight and he shudders into orgasm, groaning as his hips buck, his cock pressing deep inside me. His chest heaving, he collapses onto me and simply lies there as I brush his damp hair with my fingers, kissing the side of his face.

Alex

I walk into KFC to meet up with this guy that I don't even know. He called me and asked me to meet him here in an hour, saying he was Iviwe's big brother and that it was important. My first instinct was to tell him to go to hell because I'm no longer with his sister but I ended up agreeing to the meet. So here I am now.

Without even looking around I immediately spot lviwe sitting with this guy that I assume is the brother and I walk over to them.

-Me: "Molweni. [Greetings]"

-Iviwe: "Alex. I didn't think you'd come."

-Me: "Yah, well, I'm here now."

-Her brother: "Sit down, Alex. And start telling me what you're planning to do now that you've impregnated my sister."

-Me: "What?"

That comes out of my mouth as a shout. Noticing that people are now staring at me I slowly sit down, a little embarrassed. Iviwe is pregnant? I don't believe this.

-Me: "What do you mean lviwe is pregnant?" -Her brother: "I'm not here to explain Biology to you, Meje. You know what you did with my sister. And you impregnated her, that's a fact. Another fact is, I hate wasting time. What I wanna know is what are you gonna do now that you're aware of the damage you've caused."

This whole thing is a shock to me. I wasn't expecting to be ambushed like this. How does one respond to something like this? How? Dammit! Why did I become so careless with Iviwe? I'm not ready for this, I'm not ready to be a parent and definitely not with this woman.

I hesitate, not knowing what to say.

-Her brother: "Let me make things easier for you, Meje. You're gonna have to step up as a man and do the right thing. You're gonna have to marry lviwe."

Marry? What?

Someleze

Getting up from the floor, Doc and I are both famished. I suggest that we go take a shower together then go grab a bite at KFC, I'm seriously craving their fried chicken.

As we walk into KFC I immediately spot my father with Iviwe and Alex. What the hell? Oh God, the thought of my father finding out like this that I actually know his sister literally stops me in my tracks.

-Doc: "What's going on, babe?"

-Me: "Over there, that's my father with my aunt and..."

He finishes the sentence for me.

-Him: "And your ex boyfriend that's now your aunt's boyfriend. Talk about awkward."

My instincts are telling me to walk back up out, now, before my father looks up and sees me. I'm just not ready for this situation right now. But before I can make that lame move, my father looks up and gestures for me to walk over to them when he sees me.

Not in the mood, I slowly walk over to them and Doc walks over to the counter. -Me: "Dad."

I say, as I stand by their table. As soon as that single word leaves my mouth both lviwe and Alex look at me as if they've just seen a ghost, their eyes wide. Confused, shocked.

-Them: "What?"

They say in unison.

-Sandile: "Y'all know each other? You know my sister, Soso?"

-Me: "Unfortunately, yes. I know Iviwe. And I also know Alex. Alex was my boyfriend and your sister over here, took him away from me. You, Alex and Iviwe, as you've heard: Sandile over here is my father. How's this for a family get-together, a get-to-know-eachother moment?"

All three of them look at each other. Their facial expressions priceless.

-Me: "Now that the introductions are out of the way I think I should leave you 3 to whatever you were talking about."

I turn to walk away but Alex gets to his feet rather abruptly and grabs my hand.

-Him: "Please don't walk away like this, Soso. I didn't know. I didn't know that Iviwe's your aunt."

-Me: "I'm sure you didn't. Now let go of my arm."

He releases my arm and I turn to walk away again. But he tries to follow me.

-Sandile: "Hey, Alex, come back here. Leave my daughter alone, you're marrying my sister."

Marriage? That stops me in my tracks. I'm never ever going to be rid of Alex, am I?

#31 Season Finale

"Inkomo zikababa zilungile, nenhliziyo yami iduduzelekile. Awu vuma sthandwa, vuma vuma sibemunye. Ng'zokunik' uthando olungapheliyo." - Thami

"This whole thing is one colossal mess, Dad." I voice out to Sandile as I'm sitting with him in his car. After I walked away from their table at KFC I went to ask for the car keys from Doc who was standing at the counter. I just couldn't wait inside, I wanted to go wait in the car, away from that drama. Doc gave me the keys and I walked out, leaving all of them in there. Some moments later Doc came out and we drove home. But not long after we got there Sandile called asking to see me, hence I'm now in his car.

He looks at me and his lips stretch to form a smile.

-Me: "At least one of us is finding this amusing."

-Him: "No, forget this drama. I'm smiling because I love it when you call me dad." Hearing him say that makes me smile too. -Me: "After what you did for me you deserve it, Dad. I feel like thanking you non-stop." -Him: "No, like I said, there's no need for that. I'm your father, protecting you is my job. Whenever you find yourself in a tight corner just know that I'm only a phone call away and I'll be there to save the day."

-Me: "Superman's got nothing on you, right?" We both laugh.

-Him: "I don't know about that, hey." -Me: "Superman is only a fictional superhero but you're something more, you're my real

life hero, Dad."

-Him: "I don't know about that either."

I laugh.

-Me: "Fine, be modest. I'm just happy you've forgiven me for judging and disrespecting you."

Yeah, the first thing I did when I got into his car was to apologise to him for the way I reacted about this whole Thuso thing. -Him: "Don't worry about it, just don't repeat it, okay? Respect me as your father, baby, and we'll be good."

-Me: "You got it, pops."

He lets out that beautiful smile again.

-Him: "I love you, baby. Which is why I feel bad about this Iviwe and Alex thing. If I knew the kind of recent history y'all have I wouldn't have suggested that they get married. I only wanted Alex to do the right thing now that Iviwe is pregnant. Soso, I fucked up with you and your mother, and I hate seeing another man doing the same thing."

-Me: "I sure understand where you're coming from but, Dad, don't you think forcing Alex to marry her is too much? You just told me that Iviwe was about to enter into an arranged marriage with this Nathi guy, and now you want to arrange another marriage for her? Think that's a good idea?"

-Him: "It was going to be different with Alex. Those two are expecting a baby because they were in a relationship at some point, they loved each other and from what I hear they only broke up because of Nathi."

-Me: "WAS gonna be different? Past tense?" -Him: "Me and too much drama don't mix, baby. After the bomb you dropped on my lap at KFC I decided to take a step back and drop this marriage thing. It's like you've just said, this whole thing is a mess. And I got to find out the wrong way. I felt so stupid, you know."

-Me: "I'm sorry you had to find out that way. I'm sorry for just dropping a bomb on you like that."

-Him: "Yah well, what's done is done. And I didn't miss the opportunity to give Alex an earful for what he did to you and to my sister. The boy needs to grow up."

-Me: "What did he say when you told him that you're dropping the marriage thing?" -Him: "Said he's still gonna sit down and think about the whole thing. But if he goes ahead and marry lviwe then it would be because he wants to and not because I'm forcing him to." -Me: "God, I wish he doesn't go ahead and do it. That would be a torture to me. Dad, Alex was my first love, my first love, and lviwe took him away from me. Both those people hurt me, they hurt me so bad, Dad. It is difficult enough that I now have to look at the woman who snatched my first love and treat her as an aunt, but to have to accept the ex that hurt me as an uncle by marriage would be too much. No, that's too much. I honestly don't care who Alex marries, he can even follow in our former President's footsteps and have multiple wives for all I care, I'm so over him, but him marrying my aunt, him being my family would be too much for me seriously. You know, papa, after everything that guy did to me all I wanted was to keep my distance from him, to completely cut ties with him. But if he marries lyiwe then that won't happen. He's gonna be a part of my life forever. And honestly, just the thought of that is enough to make me wanna puke."

-Him: "I understand, I do. And that's exactly why I no longer want this guy to marry my sister. But if he CHOOSES to go ahead and do it then we can't stand in their way, we're just gonna have to find a way to deal with it. Besides, even if they don't get married Alex will always be a part of Iviwe's life and yours

because of the baby they are expecting." -Me: "A baby that's gonna be my cousin. This is really messed up, yoh. Anyway, what is Nathi and his family going to say about all of this? The pregnancy, and the marriage if it happens."

. -Him: "I'm not worried about that, I can handle them. I'm gonna get them to back off whether Iviwe marries Alex or not." -Me: "Handle them? Do I even want to know?"

-Him: "Actually, I'm just gonna talk to them, reason with them." -Me: "And if they don't want to listen?" -Him: "Then I'll make them listen." -Me: "Do I want to know?"

He chuckles and shakes his head.

-Him: "With this one, no. Just like you don't need to know what happened to that guy Slice."

-Me: "What, you tracked him down?" -Him: "I did what had to be done. And, baby, please never ever question my methods." My father sure has a dark side, it is what I was seeing the very first day I met him, but I'm done judging him.

-Him: "Now let's change the subject and talk about you."

-Me: "About me?"

-Him: "Yeah. The fact that you're living with a man doesn't sit well with me. I know that I don't exactly have much say in how you live your life considering the fact that I wasn't in it for years, but I'm still your father. And as your father I need to tell you when you are doing something I don't like, something that's ...inappropriate."

-Me: "I know. And I don't like cohabiting either, it's just that I was out of options when Alex had me kicked out of my flat. But it is a temporary arrangement, when I come back here in January I won't be living with Thando."

-Him: "That's better. Speaking of Thando, it's him that you were with at KFC, right?" -Me: "Yes, that was him."

-Him: "I saw him but I didn't want to say anything to him until I get to officially meet him as the man in your life. I want to meet him and assess if he's good enough for my daughter."

-Me: "What? Come on, dad, you don't have to do that. I know that Thando is good for me. That should be enough."

-Him: "Actually, it's not enough for me. I still need to meet him and talk to him, baby."

-Me: "Fine then. I'm taking him to meet my mother in PE next weekend, so why don't you come too? I know that you're going back to Jo'burg in the morning and that you get busy that side but it'd really be good if you could come next Saturday. I'm gonna have to ask my mom if she's gonna be okay with that though."

-Him: "I'll sure make time and come. And trust me, Mandisa won't mind."

He says the last sentence with a smile that I interpret as that of someone in love.

-Me: "Dad, are you and mom together again?"

He chuckles.

-Him: "Baby, the answer to that question is still the same as the one you got the last time you asked. Your mother and I are NOT together. We're just two parents trying to be civil towards each other for our daughter's sake."

Honestly, I don't believe him. But I don't say that out loud.

-Me: "Oh, okay. Guess I'll see you in PE then."

-Him: "Yah. Lemme get going now. 'Til next weekend, baby. I love you."

-Me: "I love you too, Dad."

We hug. Then before getting out of the car, I give him Thuso's iPad so he could get rid of it.

A week later

It's now around 12:00 on Saturday, the day of Thuso's funeral. But instead of going to Mpumalanga to bury the bitch who wanted me dead I've chosen to do something better with my time. I'm now in PE, it's a meet-theparents day for Doc. We pull up in front of my mother's house after driving for 3 hours from Alice, and I can't help but notice how nice the house now looks. The renovations are done and the once gateless yard now has gates. Aww, my mom did great.

Doc, who's the picture of calm beside me, kills the engine then looks at me. I really expected him to be nervous but no, he's far from that. -Me: "Are you ready, Thando Iwam?"

-Him: "I am. Let's do this, babe."

-Me: "Why ain't you nervous though?"

-Him: "If I didn't know what I want and what to expect from your parents then I'd be nervous."

I don't know what he means by that but I think I like his confidence.

-Me: "Okay then, let's do this."

He gently brushes my cheek with the back of his hand and smiles.

-Him: "You needn't worry, babe. I have a feeling everything's gonna go just fine."

I really hope so. The last thing I want is for my father to grill and embarrass him. But despite the apprehension, I manage a smile.

However, it's brief because before I know it Doc has pressed a hard kiss to my mouth. He takes possession of my lips and I don't only let him but I also respond to the kiss. Pulling back, he doesn't say anything more, he opens the door and leaps out of the car then walks round to come get my door. He helps me out then we make our way to the small gate with his hand possessing my arm with undisguised ownership, and I let him. We walk into the yard and to the front door. I knock and wait for my mother to come get the door, something I don't normally do.

She opens the door already smiling, her face and eyes beaming.

-Her: "Hey, you two. Come on in."

She immediately steps to one side to allow us through the doorway.

-Me: "Hey, mom."

I say, going for a hug. But the hug is brief, she quickly pulls back and turns to Doc.

-Her: "Thando, it's good to see you again." -Him: "Same here, Ma."

He stretches out a hand for a shake but my mom doesn't accept it, she goes for a hug instead.

-Her: "Welcome to our home, Thando. Now come take a seat."

She leads us to the couches then brings us something to drink. The atmosphere remains

relaxed as we engage in nothing deep but just light conversation. My father is not here yet and we need to wait for him before we have lunch.

-Me: "When did he say he'll be here, Mom?" I ask because we've been waiting for him for nearly an hour now.

-Mom: "He said by 12:30 he'd already be here but I'm sure that time has already passed...Please go get my phone in my bedroom, baby. I want to call him and ask if he's still coming."

I get up from the couch and make my way to her bedroom. Knowing exactly where she puts her phone in the bedroom, I go straight to the bedside table. But I don't just find the phone there, I also find my dad's wristwatch. I know very well that this expensive, distinct watch belongs to Sandile, he was wearing it the last time he was with me in Alice and it has his initials engraved on the back. Now the first question that comes to my mind is: why would my father's wristwatch be in my mom's bedroom? To me this only means one thing, they are seeing each other again. I just don't understand why they keep lying to me. Initially, I know that I didn't like Sandile for my mom, but now that I got to know him I think he's okay. Yes, he was sleeping with my ex friend and he takes lives, but I get his reasons for doing all that. The man is not all bad as I thought he was.

I take the phone and walk back to the lounge. But before my mom can make the call we hear the car gate outside opening. I noticed that that gate is motorised, so now that it's opening that means my father has its remote. Now why would he have a gate remote to my mom's house? This is clear as day to me, these two are together. Period.

A few moments later, Sandile walks through the door. He looks every bit as handsome as he was the last time I saw him, moving with a lithe, cat-like grace to meet us in the couches. He's very casual today, in a black T-shirt, black jeans and white sneakers to add a splash of colour in his otherwise dark outfit. I don't know, but his casual outfit gives me hope. If he's this casual then that means the lunch is casual too and he won't give Doc a hard time, I say to myself.

-Him: "Greetings, family."

He says with a smile as he puts his keys on the coffee table. We greet back then he comes to me and I get up to give him a hug. Doc also gets to his feet and they share a rather strong handshake that lasts longer than necessary. -Him: "That's quite a strong grip you got there, Nozulu."

He's using Doc's clan name. I'm even surprised that he still remembers it, he asked it the first day he went to see me in Alice.

-Doc: "It's good to meet you, sir."

-Dad: "Well, it's too early for me to say the same about you. Don't be impressed. Just keep your head down and answer all my questions. Kindness is not your friend until you prove to me that you're worthy of my daughter." There's not even a hint of humour in his voice. Oh no, he's already starting. I find myself swallowing non-stop as the moment quickly starts to feel awkward. But my mom intervenes.

-Her: "Remember what we talked about, Sandile, please."

The words leave her mouth as softly as her manner. My mom really likes Doc and she wants him to feel at home, I can tell.

My father looks at her and lets out that same smile I noticed on his face when we were talking about my mother in Alice, a smile that comes from a place of undeniable love. -Him: "Okay, you got it."

My mouth compresses in an effort to control my mirth, these two really think I'm stupid, they think I can't see what's going on between them.

-Me: "Mom, let's get moving and serve the lunch, I'm starving."

I say with my eyes on my father, they are mocking him and he knows why, I can tell by his lazily amused expression.

My mom and I go to the kitchen, leaving the men alone to talk. I just hope they will get along.

Some moments later we get to sit at the perfectly set dining table. My dad sits at the head of the table where the head of the family is supposed to sit, I just wonder who said he was the head of this family, or maybe he got that from my mother. Doc and I sit on one side of the table and my mother sits on the other. Throughout the lunch, I efface myself and let both my parents speak mainly to Doc. They are asking him a lot of questions, wanting to know more about him, and what I like is that even my dad is asking the questions in a very diplomatic manner. After the delectable, passion fruit mousse dessert, they ask me to make myself scarce and go to the bedroom because they want to talk to Doc alone. What? What for? I want to put up some kind of protest when Doc gives me the "it's okay" kind of look.

-Me: "Okay, I'll go. But I won't be in my bedroom, I'll go meet up with Amanda. When I was in the kitchen she sent me a text saying she's around and asking to meet. When y'all need me just call."

I don't know what they want to talk about but I get up and walk out with just my phone. I'm meeting Amanda, the friend who now studies in Jo'burg, at a shisanyama not very far from my home. Just like me, Amanda's only back home for the weekend.

I get to the shisanyama and find her sitting with Jackie, a friend of hers from the suburbs. When she sees me, she excitedly gets up from her seat to squeeze me in a tight hug.

-Her: "Wow, babe, you're glowing. Thando is treating you well I see."

-Me: "That is very much true, babe. I'm in a very good place in my life right now, I'm happy."

-Jackie: "Then sit down, girlfriend, and tell us everything about this wonderful man of yours."

I know Jackie very well, she's too forward and she loves hearing about other people's relationships but she would never share much about hers. Well, if she thinks she's gonna get anything out of me right now, she couldn't be any more wrong.

I just laugh then sit down at the table and start feasting on their braai'd meat. We all start catching up on other aspects of each other's lives. But as we're still enjoying, a nuisance comes to our table to spoil all the fun.

-Him: "Hey, Soso. I didn't know you'd be here, I thought you were in Alice."

I raise my head to see him standing by our table, flashing the smile that I found so attractive the very first time I laid my eyes on him. Ugh! But now I no longer find it compelling, it just makes me sick.

-Me: "This is my hood, Alex. It can't be a surprise that I'm here."

With a calm voice, I tell him what he already knows.

-Him: "I hope you don't mind me being here too."

-Me: "This place is open to everyone, you too have a right to be here."

I recite the first diplomatic line that I can think of.

-Him: "Can I talk to you in private?"

Then he quickly turns to Amanda before I can even answer.

-Him: "You ladies won't mind, right?"

Irked, Amanda doesn't give him an answer, she only gives him a dirty stare. She never liked him from day one.

-Me: "Fine, we can go talk in private."

I rise from my chair and we go talk by his car that's parked on the side of the street. Me: "Now please get to the point, Alex. What do you want to talk about?"

He lets a moment pass then exhales before speaking.

-Him: "I don't know how this is gonna sit with you, but I'm going to marry Iviwe."

Oh God, my worst fear is now confirmed. This guy is going to remain a thorn in my side. I'm never ever going to be rid of him.

-Me: "Oh. Well, if that's what you want then go ahead and do it. You didn't even need to tell me about it."

Deep down I know though that what I'm saying with my mouth is not what I'm feeling inside.

-Him: "I'm telling you because I know that the whole thing is going to be awkward

considering the fact that lviwe is your aunt." Ugh, this guy. If he knows that it's going to be awkward then why is he doing it?

I don't respond to that, not even with a simple "oh".

-Him: "If I'm being honest though, I still love you, Soso. I do. But I know that we can never be together again, and on the other hand I know how difficult it is to not grow up with both parents under one roof. It happened to me and my sister, as I told you my parents only got married when my sister and I were 10. Now I don't want my kid to go through the same thing I did. That's why I'm choosing to do this. It's the right thing to do." -Me: "You don't owe me any explanation, Alex. Like I said, do whatever you want. It doesn't concern me really. Can I go now?" I don't wait for his answer, I leave him standing there and walk back inside to my girls. No longer wanting to be here, I tell Amanda that I'm leaving, that I'll see her again tomorrow before we both leave PE. Despite her disappointment, she understands

why I have to leave and she let's me go. I get home only to find my dad sitting with Doc outside on the boot of his car. I'm surprised by how well they seem to be getting

along. They are even laughing. Okay, I expected the worst so what I'm seeing with my eyes right now is surprisingly good. I don't say anything to them, I just walk inside to my mother. I ask her what they wanted to talk to Doc about but she simply lies to me,

telling me that they just wanted to let him know of the consequences should he mistreat me. I know that's a lie but I accept it. I later accept it from Doc too. Before he leaves me and drives back to Alice around 18:00, he repeats the same line my mother gave me as if that's what they all agreed on telling me. I hate being kept in the dark, I really do, but I just let this go.

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Two weeks later

It's a Saturday once again but the only difference is that Doc and I are now in East London. We're back in Beacon Bay, at Bhongo's home, for yet another party. But this time we're celebrating Doc's return to medicine, he got the job at Frere, the same hospital Zizo works at, and he's starting in 9 days. He's really excited and he's not the only one, I'm excited for him too. The guy needs his life back, he needs to go back to what he loves.

"You do know that you look hypnotised, right?"

Zizo's voice breaks my reverie. I realise that I've been standing alone like a statue under the back patio staring at Doc who's chatting with the guys by the swimming pool.

Daydreaming about a long-term life with this fine guy is no sin, is it?

-Me: "Really?"

For some reason I'm now a little shy.

-Her: "You really are in love with him, hey."

-Me: "Is it that obvious?"

I ask, blushing.

-Her: "Is my name Zizo?"

We both laugh.

-Me: "Okay, point made...I really love him, Zizo. In a way I've never loved any other man."

-Her: "And I'd like to think he feels the same way about you too...You know back when we were still in med school, the guy would walk into a room and not only charm the panties off all of women in there but also make some guys think twice about their nonexistent gym memberships. He's grown now but he's still handsome and charming as fuck. So I understand why you're head over heels in love with him."

-Me: "I still can't believe he's mine, you know. Is that weird?"

She laughs.

-Her: "Maybe a little. Tell me, would you say yes if he were to ask you to marry him?" I chuckle.

-Me: "Marriage, Zizo? No, I don't think Thando is ready to go there again."

-Her: "You haven't answered my question."

-Me: "I know and I won't answer it."

-Her: "Okay then, I'll let it go. But tell me, are you ready for your trip tomorrow?"
-Me: "Oh hell yeah. It's my first trip out of Africa, so I can't wait."

I'm really excited. I'm done with my exams and Doc and I are leaving for the Bahamas tomorrow. We'll be there for 4 days then come back just in time for him to move into his new rental townhouse here in EL, in Amalinda. He wanted an apartment but we couldn't find a clean, nice apartment so he ended up taking the townhouse.

I'm so excited about this getaway, my passport will get stamped only for the second time since I had it. The first time I used it was when I'd just had it, during my matric year when we had a school trip to Kenya. It's no secret that people like me can't afford to travel, we only get to travel when the expenses are covered by other people. -Zizo: "I envy you, babe. Seriously. Make sure you enjoy every minute of it, hey." -Me: "I plan to. But right now let's join the party. Let's join the other girls."

We land at Nassau International Airport in the Bahamas on Tuesday around 15:00. It has been a very long flight, with two boring layovers, but it was worth it because now we've finally arrived in paradise. The New Providence Island is out of this world, I say to myself as I let my eye take in everything out of the window of the metered taxi from the airport to the hotel we'll be staying in. My stomach does a flip and my breathing gets suspended as we reach our destination - a resort called the Meliá Nassau Beach All Inclusive. Doc didn't tell me that we'd be staying in a beautiful place like this. I'm literally out of breath as we step into the magnificent, extremely spacious lobby of this upscale, beachfront resort. Jesus, this is heaven. Now I realise that Doc's father has

spent some serious money on this vacation,

he didn't hold back. And I now feel extremely special, more than I felt when Doc took me to meet his family before we took our flight out of OR Tambo Airport on Sunday. His family is very nice, I got to meet his little sister and both his parents. But honestly, the nicest one has got to be his father. Before we left, he held out his arms and gave me a full bear hug. I felt his admiration, also his warmth and caring.

We check in then take the elevator to our suite, and the porter follows with our luggage. Oh my, the suite is so beautiful, it's island-inspired and it has a spectacular view of the beautiful turquoise blue ocean water. Because we are exhausted, we immediately shed our clothes and go take a long cool shower together. Then we order room service. Green salad and ice-cream seems innocuous enough to me. And we dig in as soon as our food gets delivered. After the meal I go out onto the balcony. The suite is overlooking the resort's grounds, 3 inviting

freshwater swimming pools and the ocean. I rest my elbows on the rail and breathe deeply, trying to inhale the memory into my lungs. The air is exotic, velvety-soft and scented with a dozen unfamiliar fragrances. As someone who's never been to any holiday before, this is more than a dreamy escape to me. I really can't believe I'm here.

As I'm still enjoying the view, I feel Doc's arms snake around my waist as he hugs me from behind.

-Me: "Baby, this is more that just beautiful. Thank you for bringing me here. Look at this view, it's amazing."

-Him: "No. You're amazing."

He turns me around and kisses me on the lips with so much passion. Damn, he's pouring his entire soul into this kiss and I can feel it. He scoops me up and walks back inside with me in his strong arms. He gently puts me on the bed and continues to kiss me. Soon we are both naked, and we embrace, arms searching each other's naked bodies. There's a knock at the door but we both ignore it, focusing instead on each other's naked bodies and the intense love between us. We make slow, passionate love and we finally reach the finish line at the same time. Then we lie entwined, lovers whose last drop of passion has been spent on another.

I must have been really exhausted, jetlagged, because I passed out almost immediately and I only wake up the next day when the morning sun is streaming in through the balcony doors, with the drapes open. I also notice that I'm in an empty bed. Doc is not next to me, but he's left a note: "Couldn't wake you. Out. Be back around 12:00. Order yourself room service. Love you. Tee." If this was a romantic movie, the note would probably be left with a single red rose but now it is just pinned to the orchid we found on the bedside table. But at least he left it. I don't even bother myself by wondering where he went, he knows this island, he's been here before. Checking the time, I realise that it is just after 08:00 and I make my way to the bathroom to take a shower. After I'm done with my morning routine I put on white, cotton skimpy shorts, a matching white loose top and white flip flops.

As I'm still waiting for room service, I go out to the balcony again. Mmh the pools look very inviting from up here and watching holiday-makers splashing around in them I just can't hold myself, I leave the suite and make my way down there before I could even eat the breakfast. I'm not particularly hungry anyway. I don't even put on a swim suit because I know I am not going to have a dip in the water yet, I just want to feel the vibe sitting on the lounge chair.

As he promised, Doc gets back just after 12:00 and finds me by the pool. Taking my hand, he

asks me to come have lunch with him at one

of this resort's fancy restaurants, a restaurant called O'Grille. Do I like it? No, that would be an understatement, I love it. It features a casual ambiance seamlessly mingling the ocean and beach with dining and entertainment. It's got a breathtaking beachfront location, open air with fabulous views of the sea and the pool.

After our lunch we enjoy a lazy walk along the beach. Then he tells me we are now going to Paradise Island, an island which he explains as located directly off of the New Providence Island that we are now on. When I ask what we'll be doing there, he just tells me that he has a surprise for me.

-Me: "What kind of surprise, babe? Please tell me. I know it won't be a surprise anymore but please tell me."

He tells me he bought me a swimming with the dolphins excursion in Atlantis at Dolphin Cay. What? I begin to tear up. I'm tearing up because I told him when we'd just met that I would love to swim with the dolphins some day, and now it means so much to me for him to have remembered that and surprise me with it.

We get to Atlantis - a lush, dynamic oceanside resort on Paradise Island. It is a beautiful and unique resort featuring the largest open-air marine habitat I've ever seen. But all we're here for is to interact with the dolphins at Dolphin Cay.

As I'm still playing with one of the dolphins, focusing on nothing else, our trainer has me throw the dolphin a tube to fetch. When it brings me the tube back, our trainer has me open it. Inside the tube I find a banner that says, "Atlantis Dolphin Cay". Okay, what's so special about this? I mean, I know exactly where I am. I look at the trainer confused and that's when she tells me to turn the banner over. On the other side I find the words, "Will You Marry Me?" What? I'm now shocked and emotional. So this was the ultimate surprise, not the trip itself. Doc has been planning and

concocting the most romantic proposal ever.

The plans of love he was talking about was this, an engagement. I instantly become an emotional mess as the song "Marry Me" starts playing over the speaker and the hundreds of people surrounding us immediately begin cheering and clapping. When I turn around, Doc is back on the beach behind us kneeling on one knee with an arrangement around him. I feel like I'm in a dream. I don't know what to say. I make my way to the beach, to him, with both shock and happiness written all over my face. I really didn't expect this, I'm in complete shock. But I'm now realising why Zizo was asking me that question on Saturday. I come to stand before Doc as he's smiling

I come to stand before Doc as he's smiling nervously.

-Him: "Someleze, I know that I can't really match your direct style, but I want you. All the time. Everyday. I want you in my life forever. That for a man like me is like saying you came into my life and you rotated my world a few degrees. The gravitational forces are askew and the axis is unbalanced with people falling off. I feel like we are Siamese twins separated at birth."

He stops and chuckles nervously before continuing again.

-Him: "In all seriousness, Someleze. It's like you were made for me. In fact, my heart is telling me that you were made for me. I love you, Someleze, with all of my heart and I want to continue to love you as my wife. Will you give me the honour and the joy of being your husband?"

I still don't know how to respond, I'm emotional.

-Me: "Thando."

His name comes out of my mouth more like a purr.

-Him: "The lobola back home is ready, baby. Both our parents know about my intentions to marry you. I stole your mother's phone number from your phone and I called her and told her about my intentions, that's why she asked to see me two weeks ago. That's what she and your father wanted to talk to me about when they asked you to excuse yourself that day. Please say yes, sthandwa sam. Just say yes and I promise to give you eternal love."

This is really sweet, overwhelming, exciting, and shocking but it is also... so sudden. We haven't even hit the 3 month mark as a couple, but he's already proposing? I really don't know how I feel about this. Yes, I know that our relationship has survived several challenges in just a short space of time, but are we ready to take this big step?

Season 2 will begin on the 8th of next month, I'll be away for some time. Still love y'all. Season 2 #1

"Don't make me wait until the morning. Got a bed, wit' your name on it. Got a kiss, wit' your

name on it. Love me good, love me down. Don't turn me down." - Ariana Grande [Nicki Minaj]

Someleze

7 months later - June

I love that point in a relationship when you're close and comfortable with each other so much that you do almost everything together. Doc and I were also there at some point but not anymore - well, because of circumstances.

From my solo morning jog, I walk into my kitchen to find Kevin and Asanda, his pregnant girlfriend, sitting at the counter, having some breakfast. At first these jogs weren't so fun without Doc but I eventually got used to it. I just let the music waves from the iPod Touch I got as a little gift from Anathi, Doc's sister, help pump adrenaline through my veins as I push my body forward. I no longer take my phone with me because I'm avoiding draining its battery by playing music on it.

-Asanda: "Hey, Iviwe just called your phone. She wanted to know if you got to fit the dress she sent yesterday."

She informs me as I walk past them, making my way to the fridge.

-Me: "No. I'll fit it when I have time. I thought I told her this."

-Asanda: "But isn't the wedding next
Saturday? What if the dress doesn't fit?"
-Me: "I'm sure it'll fit. But if it doesn't, I'll
simply have my mom alter it. She's good and
quick. Ivi needs to chill."

-Kevin: "You're serious about attending this stupid wedding, Soso, aren't you?" He asks half-humorously as he jabs his fork into a piece of sausage and chews slowly. Since January these two have been living with me in the house I once shared with Doc. I know I said I'd look for housemates to help me with the rent but that didn't quite happen. These two are living here for free. I

took them in when Asanda's parents kicked her out of their house as her pregnant belly started to show. Kevin is still working at the filling station and I know for a fact that he can't afford to pay this rent and also save enough money for the coming baby, so I asked them not to bother with the rent and just save for their baby. My background helps me understand other people's hardships and show some compassion. The fact that I have a rich father, who also happens to be my mother's boyfriend, hasn't changed who I am, I'm still the same old Someleze and I'm still living the simplest life. I only let my dad cover our rent and I only use the credit card he gave me to buy myself a few clothing items every month, nothing more. Anything else, I cover with my own money. Despite the slight drop in my marks during my last ever semester, I managed to earn my B.Sc. degree cum laude, I got that scholarship, Fort Hare admitted me into the Honours programme in Biochemistry

and I'm also working for them as a lab assistant, so I'm earning my own cents to cover my other expenses.

-Me: "Of course, I'm serious, Kev. I've been telling you that I'm cool with the wedding. It stopped bothering me a long time ago." I reiterate, taking bottled water out of the

fridge to hydrate my body.

-Him: "I thought you were just pretending, you know."

-Me: "Nope, no pretending, buddy. I meant it."

Iviwe and Alex are getting married next weekend and I'm seriously cool with it. I'm not only attending their wedding but I'm also one of my aunt's bridesmaids. I accepted the fact that the both of them are now my family a while back. There was nothing I could do about it anyway, so accepting it was the only way. If there's anyone who still gets uncomfortable when we are all together it's Alex. The guy seriously needs to deal with the feelings he still has for me or his marriage won't last.

-Kevin: "You're a better person than I am, S. I swear, I wouldn't be civil towards those people if I were in your shoes."

-Asanda: "Baby, come on, don't put ideas in Soso's head."

-Me: "Nah, don't worry about it, Asa, it won't happen. Kev, I'm in a very good space in my life. I don't have time to worry about those two, I don't even have to waste my emotions on them. I have my own loving fiancé, I don't have time to entertain or create drama with them."

When Doc asked me to marry him last year I was in complete shock and some doubts started circling my mind, but the excitement of continuing my life with the most romantic and loving man I've ever known, the man that I love with every fiber of my being, trumped all of that. I took his hand and helped him up from that kneeling position on the beach sand, then I pulled him fully into my arms and kissed his lips. I was so excited that I almost forgot to answer the most important question that I would ever be asked. After I let go of him, he asked, "So is that a yes?" Of course, I said YES!! He did such an amazing job planning out that sweet proposal. It was definitely the best day of my life and one I will never forget.

When we got back to our suite at the resort he made love to me in a way he'd never done before. I thought I knew all he could do, but it turned out I was wrong. He was all there, so gentle and passionate. I swear, I could not only feel the love but I could also touch it - to me, HE was love at that moment.

And that's exactly how I also want him to feel tonight. Tonight is just another special night for us and I want to make it extra special for him before I make love to him like I never did before.

-Asanda: "I'm sure you can't wait for your own wedding, hey."

-Me: "You have no idea, babe. The 28th of December seems so far. I really can't wait to be Mrs Thando December."

-Her: "You are one lucky girl, babe. And I'm happy for you. I just wonder when I'll get my own engagement ring."

She says, her eyes boring into Kevin.

-Him: "Baby, no, don't do that. We talked about this. We can't..."

I quickly cut him off.

-Me: "Okay guys, that's my cue to leave. I think this conversation needs to be just between the two of you."

I leave them there and go to my bedroom, then to the en-suite bathroom to take a shower.

After getting dressed and eating breakfast, I pack my bag then go put it in the boot of my car - well, the car that I'm using. In January Doc gave me his second car to use, the car that was gathering dust in his parents' garage in Jo'burg, the very same car he once refused to give to his little sister just for a short period of time until her insurance claim could be approved and her own car fixed. He was like, "no woman of mine will take 2 taxis every time she needs to come to EL to see me." So he went to get the car from Jo'burg and gave it to me. It's a five-year old Audi A4, the first and only car he's ever bought with his own money - the spoils of having a rich father. It has always been his baby but he didn't have a problem giving it to me, and it works well for me.

After closing the boot, I go get my handbag from the house then say my goodbyes to my housemates.

-Me: "Y'all enjoy some time alone, hey. But don't do anything I wouldn't do, okay? See you in 3 weeks."

As the tight family that we are, we share a group hug then I walk out. I'm going to spend the winter research break with my fiancé in

East London. I know that it's only going to be 3 weeks but I'm just glad that the long wait is now over, my excitement levels are running high, they are off the charts. And who can blame me? Doc and I no longer get to spend much time together since he went back to medicine, and the fact that my research project is also keeping me busy is not making things easier either, hence I want to make the most of this time together.

I get in the car and pace the German machine down the R63 route. My body is here but both my heart and mind are already in East London. I just can't wait to see my man again, God knows it's been two extremely long weeks. Excited, I keep tapping my fingers against the steering wheel as I sing along my favourite artist - The Weeknd. Waiting until I could get to see Doc to share the exciting news that I have has been difficult for me, but I find this too important to share over the phone, so no matter how difficult it was I just had to wait. And I couldn't miss the opportunity to see his face when he hears the news, I'm sure he'll be as excited as I am, if not more.

I get to Frere Hospital around 11:00 and I dial his number as soon as I park in the parking lot. From his voice I can tell that he's pleasantly surprised to hear that I'm around to collect the keys to his townhouse. He's surprised because he didn't know that I was coming today, he thought I was only coming tomorrow. Hell, I couldn't wait until tomorrow, not when I miss him this much. God, I'm aching to feel his warm embrace, to sink into his dark spices and let him take me where he would.

Twenty minutes later I see him approaching my car in his scrubs. I blush as I realise just how much I still find him irresistibly sexy in this gear. This is no ordinary uniform, in this clothing he makes the difference between life and death almost daily, and he wears it with pride and honour. I know that he's only been on duty since 07:00 this morning and that he's going to be on call after his normal working hours but I'm still hoping to see him home for dinner this evening - the special romantic dinner that I'm planning. And I'm also hoping to spend some quality time with him for the next 4 days since he's going to be off work, but deep down I know that it won't happen, not when the twins are coming.

I get out of the car as he gets closer. A broad, bright smile finds a way to his face as soon as his eyes land on me, causing my heart rate to skyrocket and my temperature to rise as if I'm seeing him for the very first time. I honestly find it quite amazing that he still makes me feel this way.

-Him: "Hey, Mrs Me."

He says as he comes to stand before me.

-Me: "Not yet, baby. We still have 6 more months to go."

I correct him, laughing.

-Him: "That makes no difference to me. Just come here."

He opens his strong arms and in a non-verbal response I eagerly slide into them. They surround me in a warm, passionate embrace that has no urgency. I melt in them, consumed by the raging fire of emotion his embrace never fails to ignite. With my face buried in his neck and the scent of his cologne penetrating my bewildered senses, we stand like that for a long moment with neither of us speaking, just holding onto each other and letting our bodies communicate our innermost feelings.

Eventually, he releases me only to push me against the car as his lips seek mine. Concerned about the fact that we are in public, I hesitate for a moment, but unable to resist I surrender to his warm lips and secure embrace, clinging to him as my heart steps up pace. He takes possession of my lips hungrily and with a heated urgency. Our tongues dance in each other's mouths, with us completely forgotten about where we are and that we are actually visible to anyone passing by. We only stop when his beeper goes off. I withdraw from his embrace, withdrawing from the warmth and comfort of his body. -Him: "I'm sorry, babe, but I gotta go."

-Me: "It's okay, I understand. But please be home for dinner at 7."

-Him: "7? Okay. But, sthandwa sam, if I can't?"

-Me: "Please, thando lwam, try. This is a special dinner, we'll be celebrating something."

-Him: "Celebrating something?"

-Me: "I can't tell you now, I'll tell you over dinner. Just make sure you get there, okay? If we don't do this dinner for two tonight we won't get another chance, babe. The kids are coming tomorrow, remember?"

-Him: "Okay, I'll be there. I promise. But for now let me get back in there."

He pulls me into an embrace once again and his lips seek mine briefly. Then he gently breaks the embrace and steps away, smiling at me in an inviting way.

-Him: "We'll finish this tonight."

-Me: "Tonight."

He hands me the keys then turns and walks away. Smiling from ear to ear, I watch him from behind until he disappears. God, I love this man.

Some minutes later I walk into the always immaculate house that belongs to my man. Gracefully, I sit on the couch in the lounge and let my eyes wander around the room. When they land on the three framed photos on the modern fireplace mantel, photos of me and this man of mine on the day of our engagement, I let out a smile. That was truly the best day of my life, and it's a good thing that Doc hired professionals to capture every moment of it. Okay, enough reminiscing. I need to go get fresh ingredients for the dinner I'm planning to cook. After considering several options I've chosen a fairly demanding menu that would keep me busy all afternoon: Clam Chowder with Saffron, Coconut, and Orange Pasta Baked with Mushrooms, Fresh Herbs, and Five Cheeses. Rosemary-Infused Veal Spareribs with Vinegar and Roasted Garlic. And Lime-Bathed Green Bean and Cauliflower

Salad. Then for dessert I've decided to make Warm Chocolate Soufflé.

I was never that big in the kitchen but since I met Doc I fell in love with cooking. The guy is very good with pots and he made me fall in love with them too. Now I find creating a delicious meals out of ordinary ingredients not only gratifying and fulfilling but also strangely sensual. Besides, it quiets my mind. The kitchen is the one place in my life where I can avoid the outside world altogether and stop the flow of time within myself. For some people sex might have the same effect, I imagine, but that always requires two people, whereas to cook all one needs is time, care and a bag of groceries. Since Doc moved to East London I no longer get to have much sex, and the fact that I'm living with a couple that's always at it like rabbits isn't making things easier either, so I always find comfort in the kitchen.

For hours after coming back from grocery shopping, my mind is filled with thoughts and excitement while my hands are restless, doing all the work. I chop tomatoes, mince garlic, sautée onions, simmer sauce, grate orange peels, and knead dough for a loaf of homemade whole-wheat bread. Having worked the entire afternoon, just before 18:00 I set an exquisite table with matching napkins, white unscented candles, and a small bouquet of red roses mixed with a single white orchid, my favourite flower. For the final touch, I add sparkly napkin rings that I just bought today. When I'm done, the dining table resembles those found in stylish

home magazines and I'm satisfied. I set the oven timer for forty minutes, so that the food could still be warm by seven o'clock. It occurs to me to light the candles, but I change my mind upon second thought. I think it's better to leave the table like this, like an immaculate picture. Untouched, unmoving, until that moment when Doc drives through the complex.

Tired but satisfied, I leave the table and go take a quick shower. After the shower, I quickly put on my new sexy lingerie and a sexy black satin bare back floor-length gown with a long left slit that goes all the way up to my thigh. As a final touch, I put on my sexy and seductive perfume. Then I go wait for Doc in the lounge, with my eye not leaving the clock fitted on the wall. The hands of time move past 7 o'clock but there's still no sign of Doc. By 19:30 I move back to the pictureperfect table and light the candles. They burn, giving the dining room a sacred air, a romantic ambiance. Then I sit down on the chair, my feet tapping the tiled floor incessantly. I'm really running out of patience right now, so I decide to call this man and he answers on the third ring.

-Him: "Sthandwa sam."

-Me: "Baby, are you still coming?"

-Him: "Yes, baby. Just give me thirty and I'll be there. I promise."

-Me: "I really hope you mean that. Please don't make me wait until the morning, baby, okay? I can't have dinner alone and I also don't want to go to bed alone. I seriously need you here. Apart from what we'll be celebrating, I also miss your body on mine. Don't turn me down, please."

-Him: "I won't. I'll be there now, now. I promise."

-Me: "Okay then. See you soon."

Thando

After hanging up, I shed off my scrubs and put on my ordinary clothes, ready to leave the hospital and go home to my woman. Excited, I grab my bag and rush to the door. But as I walk out of the office I bump into Emily, one of the trainee surgeons in my unit.

-Her: "Going home?"

-Me: "Yep. I'm done here. I have a hot date with my fiancée."

-Her: "Well, I'm afraid that's gonna have to wait. Doctor Summers has sent me to ask you to scrub up because we have incoming patients from a yacht that blew up in our ocean waters. 7 incoming but only three are critical."

Oh, damn. This is the kind of life we live, our leisure plans often get interrupted by emergencies. We come to work not knowing what to expect. Every single day is different, there is no fixed routine for how our work schedule would be in this trauma unit that is practically run by us - a team of general surgeons, with no specialist trauma surgeons on site.

My first posting as a registrar at The Charlotte Maxeke Johannesburg Academic Hospital was in the trauma unit. For a newbie, I was initially quite intimidated by the myriad of patients that come through the door. You have no idea what to expect when you come in to work every day, but I grew to like it. When I got moved on to postings in other departments I realised that I missed the hustle and the bustle of that unit. I really like working in the trauma unit but it does get too much, just like now. The percentage of trauma patients that come through our doors and those of the two other tertiary-level public health facilities in this province is worryingly higher than the national average, and most of them require surgical attention. The reality is that we are always short-staffed, we work long hours but there's still huge backlogs and waiting times.

-Emily: "I'm sorry but as you know, we're short-staffed. We really need you here."

-Me: "Fuck...What do we have?"

I ask as I open my office again to leave my bag then rock and roll.

-Her: "Burn victim. Male, 26, 3rd degree over 70%. Then a pregnant female, mid-30s, multiple lacerations. The third one is open fracture or dislocation right leg and near amputation of right hand...They'll be here in a moment."

-Me: "I'm on."

I hurry down the hallway to the scrub room. I put my scrubs back on and begin scrubbing up. This is going to be a long night, I'm sorry but Soso is going to have to wait.

I only get to go home just after midnight. Braced for a quarrel, I walk through the door only to find Soso passed out on the couch with her phone on her lap and an empty glass of wine by her side. The dining table is still set and the pillar candles are still burning. Now I feel really bad seeing her like this. What's worse is that I didn't even get to call her and cancel. I'm sure she passed out really mad at me, and I honestly don't blame her. With a heavy breath, I blow out the candles then go pick her up from the couch and carry her to the bedroom. Not wanting to wake her, I gently put her on the bed then go take the much needed shower, I can't go to bed like this.

. . . Somoloz

Someleze

After calling Doc's phone several times when he didn't show up at 20:00, I drank a glass of wine and laid back on the couch, waiting for him to come home or at least call. I must have passed out in that wait because

I'm only waking up now as I hear Doc in the bathroom taking a shower. My man would work for hours at the hospital, but he would rather not take his shower anywhere other than his own bathroom.

I'm on our bed, a bed that I made anew with fresh special sheets in the afternoon, hoping to later get between them and make love to my man until the morning. But instead, this is what I got. No call, no text, nothing. I reach for my phone that he's put on the nightstand and check the time only to find that it's 00:40 in the morning. My first instinct tells me to pretend to be asleep when Doc finishes taking the shower and comes back to the bedroom, thus saving him from having to explain himself to me at this hour. But hell, I can't do that. I need to know what happened. I get off the bed and take off the stupid dress and flat sandals then get under the covers. When he walks back through the room, he finds me sitting up on the bed, waiting for an explanation.

-Him: "Baby, I'm sorry."

I just stare at him without saying a word. He comes to sit next to me on the bed and holds my hand.

-Him: "There was an emergency at work and I couldn't even get a chance to call you and inform you about it. You know how it gets, but I'm sorry. I'm really sorry, sthandwa sam, and I'll make it up to you. That's a promise." I get it, I understand, but that doesn't make me any less horny.

-Me: "How about you make it up to me right now?"

Without wasting any time, I lean in for a kiss while my other hand unwraps the towel around his waist. For a brief moment he responds but then he pulls back.

-Him: "Baby, I'm sorry, I've been on my feet for hours, I'm extremely tired. I really can't do this right now."

With that he gets into bed next to me, ready to be transported into slumberland. Fuck, I can't fall asleep, not when I'm this horny. -Me: "You don't have to do anything, babe. Just let me do all the work."

He doesn't respond. But that doesn't bother me. I get on top of him and lean down to kiss his lips, but he still doesn't respond. The next thing I hear is him snoring. What? You have got to be kidding me. This man has just passed out on me. What the hell? Frustrated, I get off of him and lie on my side of the bed. I've been waiting for this night for two long weeks, I'm hot, I'm frustrated and my hormones are all over the place. How am I going to fall asleep? This sure is going to be a very long night.

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"Baby, wake up. Breakfast is ready." My eyes snap open to find Doc hovering over me, already showered and dressed to go out. It's the morning, I don't even know how I managed to fall asleep last night, or this morning rather. I stare at him confused. Why is he dressed like this? Where is he going this early?

-Him: "Good morning. I've made you breakfast."

I'm not interested in breakfast. What I want to know is where he's going.

-Me: "Where are you off to?"

-Him: "Work, babe."

-Me: "But I thought this was your day off. You got called in?"

-Him: "No. I'm standing in for Zizo. She's got a family crisis and I'm taking her shift."

-Me: "And you didn't care to tell me this last night, why? What about your own family, babe? The kids are expecting to be welcomed by us both when they get here, sthandwa sam. They haven't seen their father in months, they sure want you here. Hell, I want you here."

-Him: "I'll make a plan, baby, I promise. I'm sorry I didn't tell you about this last night but I was really tired and out of it. I also know that I let you down by missing dinner, but like I promised, I'll make it up to you. But for now I have to get going."

-Me: "You remember that I said we would celebrate something last night, right? Well, I still need to talk to you about that."

-Him: "I know. But I'm afraid it's gonna have to wait until I get back, baby. I really have to go now, I'm already running late."

With that he gives me a peck on the lips and hurries out of the bedroom.

-Me: "Thando, I'm pregnant. We're pregnant."

That's supposed to be directed to him but I'm now saying it to myself because Doc is no longer here.

I sigh then take my phone and play the video that was taken at the Bahamas when this man put the engament ring on my finger. I need to remind myself that this is what I signed up for the moment I said yes to him.

Let's please keep those likes coming.

Season 2 #2

"Like the tree out in the back yard that never has been broken by the wind. Our love will last forever, if we're strong enough to bend." - Tanya Tucker

Still sitting on the bed, my tired eyes move to the tray on the nightstand, taking in the breakfast Doc has prepared for me. It's a full English breakfast, except there are no eggs included, and a glass of orange juice. I wonder when did he get the time to prepare it. He didn't get much sleep, did he? This guy only slept just before 01:00 this morning and I'm sure he was up before 05:00 because now as I glance at the brass clock on the wall the hands of time tell me that it's 06:50 and he's already left for work - just a few minutes ago. He works really hard and I understand how

demanding his job is. Things can get very

hectic in the trauma unit. They treat the most high-risk of injuries, life-threatening injuries. And they don't need to just stay focused all the time but they also need to move fast. So I understand why he couldn't get the chance to inform me about the emergency last night but still, that doesn't make me feel any better about the fact that he missed dinner. I really hate that I stood in the kitchen for hours, slaving away for nothing. And him taking Zizo's shift is making me more mad even though I know and understand their arrangement. When Doc can't make it to work, when he wants to make time for me, Zizo often puts her own affairs aside and take his shifts, take care of his patients, just like she did two weeks ago when I was here. Doc also does the same for her, it's an arrangement they have, it's not the hospital that calls a stand-in. But still, I'm not happy about this. I really needed Doc here. And I wanted the moment I tell him about this

pregnancy to be special, but that's all spoiled

now. Ugh! I'm even starting to think I'm going to be alone through most of this pregnancy. Or am I thinking the worst of him? I mean, he's been trying to make time for me in the past months even though it wouldn't be as much as I would like, reason being whenever he has time off he often has to catch up on research because surgery is evolving. But to be fair, he did tell me that things would be like this before he went back to this profession and he asked me nicely to please bear with him, and I promised that I would. To be honest, understanding hasn't been that hard, especially considering the fact that I'm not always available when he needs me either. My research project takes most of my time and I take my studies very seriously. Sometimes he would want to see me and I would be busy, exactly what was happening last year when I was still working at the filling station. Our leisure times often clash. And he always understands when I can't come

through, so I also have to understand when

he's busy too. Doing that hasn't been that difficult all this time but right now it is, and that's me being honest. Maybe it's because I wanted to share the most important news with him or it's because my hormones are getting the better of me. I don't know, all I know is that I'm pissed right now.

Once again I look at the breakfast he's prepared. He's really trying, and I probably should appreciate these little sweet gestures but right now, I just can't. In a different day I would find this breakfast appetising but right now I can't stomach it.

I look at the beautiful engagement ring on my finger and it sparkles as it catches my teardrop. It is a thin sterling silver band with a big baguette diamond. It's perfect. But right now I can't help but feel like it's a piece of chain that's tying me down to a man who's never going to have enough time for me. It's probably wrong of me but I'm also starting to feel that way about this baby too. Maybe I shouldn't have relied on the pill, maybe I should have had a new implanon implant inserted when the one I had expired. If I did, I wouldn't be pregnant and feeling alone right now. I don't want to lie, I wasn't ready for a baby but when I found out that I'm pregnant and knowing that I'm pregnant for the man I love, my fiancé, I got excited. I believe that babies are precious gifts from God no matter how they come about. I just hope that Doc shares my sentiments, but from the way things are right now, I can't help but have

some doubts.

Feeling like a bag of mush with a truckload of hormones dumped on top of it, I plop down on the bed and curl up, sobbing lightly, hurt. But soon I can feel myself drifting off to slumberland. That doesn't come as a surprise to me though because I know that I didn't sleep well last night. I had to force my eyes shut and try to fall asleep, but it was hard to ignore that the man who always gives me so much sexual pleasure was lying right next to me, and that if he was awake he would ravish my body over and over. I so wanted him inside me but he was deep in his sleep. Frustrated, I kept letting out deep sighs, and finally after what seemed like forever, I fell asleep. So it's no wonder I'm still feeling this sleepy, or why I didn't even hear Doc's movements around the house when he woke up.

. In the back of my blissful dream with Doc deep inside me, I hear my cellphone ringing. I don't want to wake up, I want this dream to last forever. But this phone doesn't stop ringing and I'm thrust into wakefulness. Dammit! Who the hell is bothering me in the middle of a sweet dream like this? Whoever it is, I'm already upset at them. I frown as I reach for the incessantly ringing phone but I soften up when I see that it's my buddy who's come to be more like a brother to me - Kevin. "Hey, Kev."

I answer, groggily.

-Him: "Are you still asleep at this hour? You do know that it's after 11, right?"

-Me: "After 11 on a Sunday, Kevin." -Him: "So? Who said that means you should still be in bed? But I can't say I blame you. I can only imagine what you and the good doctor were up to last night."

Yoh, if only he knew.

-Me: "Hey, you know that I don't talk about my bedroom life. Anyway, what's up? Everything okay over there? You aren't calling to tell me that Asa went into early labour, are you?"

-Him: "What? No. Asa is fine. We still have 4 more weeks to go before we meet our bundle of joy. I'm calling just to check up on you. And to know how Thando reacted when you told him about your own pregnancy." My own pregnancy? How does he know

about that? I haven't told anyone yet, I wanted Doc to be the first one to know.

-Me: "How do you know about my pregnancy, Kev?"

-Him: "You seem to have forgotten that I'm a very observant creature, S. You probably don't even realise it, I'm sure it comes instinctively, but you've been so protective of your belly lately. And that's how I concluded that you're pregnant before I even found the three positive home pregnancy test strips in the trash can last week, but I didn't want to say anything. Knowing you, I figured you'd want to tell Thando first, face to face...So how did he react?"

-Me: "You sure are observant, it's not even funny. As for Thando, I haven't gotten the chance to tell him yet so I don't know how he's going to react."

I can hear him chocking on the other end. -Me: "Kev? Are you okay?"

He coughs.

-Him: "Yeah, yeah, I'm fine. It's just that I...I gotta go. Talk later." With that he hangs up. And I'm left looking at the screen of my phone, puzzled. Ugh, whatever.

I need to talk to my mother and tell her that I'm coming home tomorrow. The way Doc is annoying me I'd leave today but because I want to see the twins and also go pick them up from the airport, I'll stick around for today. But tomorrow I'm leaving, and I'll probably come back in two days. I just need my mother's embrace and advice right now. Before dialling my mother's number, I text Doc, asking the time the twins will be here. Surprisingly, he texts me back almost immediately, telling me that they are no longer coming today, that they are coming next week. Okay, that means I'm leaving today, but I don't tell him that. I close my WhatsApp then dial my mom's number. "Hey, princess."

That's not my mom's voice answering but my father's. Eshe, I didn't even know that he was in PE. My parents are sneaky, huh.

-Me: "Hey, Dad."

-Him: "How are you, MaMashiya? Still okay?" He's calling me with his own clan name.

-Me: "It's MaNdlovu, Dad. uMaGatsheni."

I correct him, giving him the clan name I grew up using.

-Him: "Hey, I don't have a Ndlovu child. Someleze Minenhle Ndlovu. Just listen to that. One would swear you are Zulu."

-Me: "Yah well, blame it on my mom's Zulu father."

He wanted me to change my last name to Mali in December last year after he introduced me as his child to his ancestors in Mthatha but that didn't make sense to me, not when I'm going to change it again to December this coming December.

-Him: "You're bearing the name of a man who left your grandmother to raise your mother and your uncle alone."

-Me: "But you didn't need to mention that now."

I want to remind him that that's exactly what he also did to me and my mother, but I don't like going back to something that already got resolved.

-Me: "And, Dad? I love you, I really do, but when I want to talk to you I'll call your phone, not my mom's. I called because I want to talk to mom. Where's she?"

-Him: "She's still busy right now, baby, but I'll ask her to call you back when she's done." -Me: "Okay, just tell her that I'm coming home today. And since you're already there, I'm hoping to see you too when I arrive. When are you going back to Jo'burg?" -Him: "I'm flying back tomorrow morning, so you'll definitely find me here. I can't wait to see you, baby."

-Me: "Me too, papa. See you later then." That's the truth. I'm looking forward to seeing both my parents. Even though I talk with them over the phone often, the last time I saw them was in April, so I really miss them. -Him: "Later. I love you." -Me: "Love you too, Dad."

I hang up then climb down the bed. Today my parents are going to find out that they are soon going to be grandparents. I'm sure they'll be happy because I'm pregnant for a man that has already paid lobola for me, so traditionally Doc and I are already married.

An hour later, I'm standing in front of the mirror in the bedroom wearing simple blue jeans, a black sweater and sneakers, ready to go. I seriously didn't feel like dressing up in this cold weather and definitely not when I'm feeling this down.

As I'm applying Vaseline jelly on my lips, my phone rings. It's on the bed and I reach for it to find that it's Bhongo calling. Bhongo, Zizo's husband. When I first met them last year they were still engaged but they tied the knot last December in an intimate ceremony that I was also a part of in Durban. "Hey, Bhongo."

I answer, wondering why he's calling me.

Bhongo doesn't just call me unless there's a very good reason to.

-Him: "Hey, I'm here to see you. Please let me in."

He's here? To see me? Why though? I wonder, but I don't ask. I just hang up and quickly go let him in.

He pulls me in a warm hug once he steps inside the house.

-Me: "Is everything alright, Bhongo? I mean, I heard your wife had a family crisis. Is that why you're here?"

I ask, genuinely concerned as we sit down on the couch.

-Him: "Everything's fine. Relax."

So if everything is fine why is he here? -Him: "It's just that I heard that you're around so I thought I should pop by and see you." Okay, I don't buy that. Bhongo and I are cool but we don't have that kind of relationship. We don't meet up unless Doc is also around. -Me: "Oh."

That comes out flatly that I would have liked. And it's then that I get up from the couch to go get him something to drink from the kitchen. Coming back, I hand him the soda then sit down next to him once again, still confused as fuck.

-Him: "So, how's it like being a partner of a general surgeon working in a trauma department of a busy public facility?"
-Me: "Honestly? It's difficult, Bhongo. Tell me, how do you do it? This is new to me, whereas you on the other hand has been in it for years."

-Him: "I know it's not easy. The unpredictable hours. The demands of being on call even at night. But they need our understanding and support. They're already working under a lot of pressure, so they don't need pressure from us too. They perform a number of emergency surgeries almost daily. They often have a person laying on their operating table and they have to do what's right for that person and take care of them, and it doesn't matter what time it is, it doesn't matter if it's 3:00 in the morning, but they have to finish that surgery and take care of the patient. Not to mention the sense of urgency that is often accompanying what they're doing. They need to stay focused, they don't have the luxury of time to think about us when they are busy behind those hospital walls. Behind those walls they are decision makers, they make life

and death decisions. They have to make really hard choices, you know. Do I operate or not operate? What are the consequences if I do, what are the consequences if I don't? What if the patient dies if I choose to go home now instead of putting them under the knife? They have to make good, hard, fast decisions often and I think that's got to be tough enough without us adding more to their stress levels. All we need to do is to be more understanding and patient with them. We need to stress them less. And we need to support them. We chose them, we love them, and that should include everything they come with. It's the life we signed up for."

Of course, he's right. However, I can't help but wonder if Doc has asked him to come talk to me about this after his wife disrupted our plans by asking my man to stand in for her. But Doc also disrupts their plans every time he asks Zizo to take his shift, so I needn't be harsh.

-Me: "Did Thando ask you to come here and talk to me about this?"

I ask, with a calm voice.

-Him: "Not really. He only mentioned that he feels bad about missing dinner last night. And that he could see that you were pretty mad when he left early this morning."

-Me: "I see."

-Him: "Please cut him some slack. And remember that he didn't know that you were coming yesterday so he couldn't make any arrangements or disrupt the ones he had already made."

-Me: "I guess."

We end up talking some more and as we go a little deeper into this topic I feel myself getting calmer and seeing no reason to go home anymore.

-Him: "Anyway, what are you up to now? Would you mind taking a drive with me to the airport? I'm going to pick up someone and I think you could use some fresh air and just get out of this house."

He says after reading a text message on his phone.

-Me: "Ummh...that won't hurt, I guess. And I'm bored here anyway. So let's go."

But before we walk out, I text my mother and tell her that I'm no longer coming and that I'll call later. Then Bhongo and I leave the house and walk over to his car. Along the way we don't run out of things to talk about, this guy is very talkative I tell you. And because of his flexible mouth the drive seems too short than it actually is, we get to the airport before I even expected. He pulls up then looks at me with a smile, but I soon realise that his eyes are not actually on me but behind me. He's looking at something or someone through the window of my door. As I'm about to turn to also look at what he's looking at, I hear my door open. I'm surprised when I see who's opening it. Doc. Wait, isn't he supposed to be at work? I turn to look at Bhongo who just shrugs and smiles before telling me to: -Him: "Just go enjoy some time alone with this man."

I'm confused. But Doc doesn't give me time to process it all. He offers me his hand and helps me out of the car. Then he thanks Bhongo before Bhongo drives off.

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I look at Doc as he stands before me, looking somewhat nervous, but of course sexier than a GQ South Africa model. I'm still a little mad at him for what he did last night and this morning. And I hate that my breath catches when I see him. "What's going on, Thando? Why am I here? And aren't you supposed to be at work?" I ask, really confused.

-Him: "I was never at work today, baby. Zizo didn't ask me to take her shift. She wouldn't have done that knowing that you're coming. I just told that little lie because I wanted to surprise you with a little something." Eshe, this man. He sure loves surprises. I wonder what's the surprise this time around. He places his hand on my chin and lifts my face so I have to look into his dreamy dark eyes.

-Him: "I'm sorry I let you down last night. And I promised to make it up to you, so I hope what I've planned will be enough even though I started planning it a month ago...Please tell me you forgive me."

He does look genuinely sorry, but I don't say anything, just staring at him.

-Him: "Oh come on, baby. Just say you do, I know you want to." He grabs my arms, shakes me gently then smiles. Oh my, that beautiful smile softens me up. I can't help but crack a smile too. He picks me up and twirls me around. But no! What I want is to remain mad at him, even just a little, but it's very hard to when he's being so sweet...not to mention hot.

-Me: "Of course, I forgive you, silly."

I say, with a broad smile on my face as my feet land on the ground again.

-Me: "Now what's the surprise?"

I ask with undisguised excitement.

-Him: "Like I said, I started planning this a month ago. We are going away, but not too far. I just want us to be alone and spend some quality time together for the next few days. We'll come back on Thursday. That's why I asked the twins not to come this week but I couldn't tell you that because I wanted everything to be a surprise."

-Me: "You sneaky man."

I playfully punch him on the shoulder.

-Me: "So where are we going?"

-Him: "You'll see. And you don't even have to worry about your clothes and stuff."

Okay, this sounds interesting and super exciting.

But not as exciting as it gets when he tells me that we'll be flying private.

"A private jet?"

I ask in disbelief. But he just lets out a silly smile, not repeating what he just told me.

I get open mouthed when we get to the jet. So this is really happening, I say to myself as I'm staring at the white and red private jet in front me.

-Him: "This is it. But don't give me any points, I didn't spend a cent on it. I didn't hire it, it belongs to my father's company. And luckily for me, our schedule corresponded with the jet's 'empty leg' so I ceased the opportunity. It landed here this morning, bringing in the company's executives from Cape Town for a week-long conference that will be starting tomorrow right here in EL. It was gonna return to Cape Town empty and that's when I jumped in and asked for a favour from my father."

Okay, I already got a clue - we are going to Cape Town.

Doc's father is a chairman of a big construction company. He founded it in Jo'burg with Bhongo's father almost two decades ago. But now it has grown, it has other offices in Cape Town and several shareholders. The duo now has a board to consult before making any decisions regarding the company or the use of its resources, but I guess none of them minded us taking the 'empty leg' flight for free. We board the jet. And oh my goodness, I literally stop when I see its luxurious interior. But Doc gently pulls my hand and leads me to one of the two long cream-coloured leather couches that are facing each other, instead of the four single seats situated at the front of the jet. Clearly none of this is new to him. He sits me down and takes his jacket off. Then he goes to talk to the two pilots. A few moments

later, he closes the door to the cockpit then

comes to sit next to me and help me buckle up. I don't want to lie, not even in my wildest dreams had it ever crossed my mind that I'd ever be flying by a private jet. I have to pinch myself to believe that it's really happening. Once the aircraft has lifted off and reached cruising altitude, I stretch in my seat, watching Doc sitting smugly back next to me, his eyes closed. As if he feels my stare, he opens his eyes and smiles at me before sitting up straight.

-Him: "I have something for you."

His hand reaches for a flat, white box that's been sitting on the table that's by our seat. With a lazy smile, he hands the box to me. -Me: "What is it, babe?"

-Him: "Just a little something to say thank you."

Something to say thank you? Thank you for what? I wonder, but I don't ask. I'm just interested in finding out what he could have gotten me.

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-Me: "Can I open it?
-Him: "Impatient, are we?"
-Me: "You have no idea."
-Him: "Then go ahead and open it."
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I lift the lid off the box, and inside I find a card
saying "My love, as of today I have another
reason to try and be a better man. I will do
everything I can to make you and our baby
proud of me". What? I quickly lift the card
and under it my eyes land on a white...
-Him: "Triple sonogram pregnancy keepsake
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frame to watch our baby grow through all three trimesters."

I glance up at him, giving him a confused look. How did he know?

-Me: "But how...how did you know?" He smiles.

-Him: "I'd like to say I felt it as other men would say but no, I didn't. When you told me that we have something to celebrate yesterday, your hand instinctively moved to your tummy. So I kinda guessed that we're pregnant."

Oh, so it's not just Kevin who's observant, huh. I wasn't even aware that I touched my tummy.

-Him: "Then this morning Kevin confirmed it when he sent me a text congratulating me." Now this makes sense. It explains why Kevin suddenly chocked and coughed when I told him that I hadn't told Doc about the pregnancy yet. He was realising that he's let the cat out of the bag without my permission. -Me: "Oh, wow. This is not how I imagined this moment. I imagined me telling you about the pregnancy, not the other way round." -Him: "I know. But it doesn't really matter now. What matters is the life we created together. So how far along are we?" -Me: "5 weeks. But, baby, are you happy? About this pregnancy that is."

His face gets a little serious when I pose the question. He turns fully to look deep into my eyes.

-Him: "To be honest, I wasn't ready for a baby just yet. But now that we've already created one, I couldn't be happier. Hell, I couldn't stop smiling since Kevin sent me that text."

His hand moves to touch my tummy.

-Him: "This life that's growing inside of you is a product of our love, baby. How could I not fall in love with it? How could I not be happy? This is the best gift you could have ever given me. Now, I know that I won't always be there when you need me throughout this pregnancy, and I won't even lie and promise that I will be, but what I can promise you is that I'll try. I'll make you and our baby proud of me, sthandwa sam, I will. All I need from you is a little understanding when I can't be there for you two. I have a duty to save people's lives but I'll also try not to neglect my duties as a father and a husband. That's my sincere promise to you."

Without a word, I lean in and wrap my arms

around him, feeling like the weight of the world has just dropped off my shoulders. After what happened last night and this morning, I was really starting to think he won't be happy about this baby and that I'll be alone in this pregnancy. But as it turns out, I was wrong. I find tears escaping my eyes as I cling onto him. Tears of joy. I think he can feel that I'm crying because he strokes my back gently before pulling us up to our feet and wraps his arms around me in a tight embrace. As calmness encompasses me, I feel the beat of his steady heart against my breasts. And ever so slowly, my worries melt away. After a moment, he pulls back and wipe away my tears before pulling me down to sit on the couch again. He sits down too then looks at me.

-He: "I know that I'm not a perfect partner, but I promise to try harder. Okay? Let's try harder, sthandwa sam...Our relationship has never been perfect right from the beginning

but we managed to overcome several

challenges. We were strong enough not to break then and I believe that even with the challenges that we now face and are still going to face because of my job our love and union will remain strong, we need to be strong, strong enough to just bend and not break. Now, that requires some understanding and communication. And no matter how busy we are we should try and make more time for each other. I promise to try harder, but you also need to do the same." He's right, it's not just him who needs to make more time for us, I should too. -Me: "I promise, baby. I'll try harder too." He smiles then pecks my lips. -Him: "I have another gift for you." He pulls the drawer of the table, comes out with another gift box and hands it to me. -Him: "This is what I went to get when I left the house early this morning. I had it custommade for you from a very good jewellery store in PE. I wanted to give it to you today,

they were going to courier it to my house yesterday and I was gonna go sign for it but when you came yesterday instead of today I had to change plans. I could no longer have them deliver it to the house, I simply didn't want you to see it before I could personally give it to you. So I called them and asked them to deliver it to me at the hospital but they didn't do that. So this morning I drove to PE to go fetch it myself. Then I also had to make sure that we get the jet."

Aww but my man is really sweet. I just melt before I can even see what the jewellery piece is. But my inner guilt-o-meter has gone up for misreading the situation and thinking the worst of this thoughtful man. I thought he doesn't put me up as a priority in his life and that he won't support me in this pregnancy, but I was wrong. Now, do I share with him the thoughts I had? Oh hell no, let me just let everything go. I open the box and inside I find a necklace with a diamond queen chess piece pendant. -Him: "14K white solid gold queen chess piece pendant. The crown is pave set with brilliant small round cut diamonds and the rest of the body is pave set with numerous small white round cut diamonds, as you can see. It's custom-made just for you and it has your initials engraved on the back. I hope you like it."

Wow. I'm speechless right now, I seriously don't know what to say. This sure must have cost him a small fortune. And if I could say I like it that would be an understatement, I love it.

-Me: "Oh my God, baby, I love it. It's so amazingly beautiful. Thank you."

I manage to push out the words a few moments later.

-Him: "I'm glad you love it."

-Me: "Why did you choose the queen chess piece though?"

-Him: "Apart from the fact that you're the queen of my heart, as someone who's big on chess you know that the queen is the most powerful piece in the game of chess. Just like you. You're more powerful than you think, babe. And just like the queen piece you have the ability to make any move, move any number of squares in any direction. You just need to believe more in yourself and make things happen for yourself. You can do anything you put your mind to, baby. And if you do, you'd never ever have to rely on me or any other man. And with this, I want to show you that I believe in you and your

capabilities."

-Me: "Aww, this is so thoughtful, baby. Now I love it more. Hell, I love you more." He's right, I have the tendency to doubt my capabilities lately, and he's been pushing me to be the better version of myself. Just like he pushed me to continue with my studies when all I wanted and thought I was capable of was just a junior degree. I just wanted to graduate and start looking for a job, a job I wasn't even going to get easily. If he didn't push me to do Honours it's high likely that I'd be sitting at home now as just another statistic, a graduate with no job. But at least now I'm doing something with my life, equipping myself with more skills.

I guess it's now time for this key locket pendant that I've been wearing around my neck since I was 7 to go and replace it with this classy one. I take it off and Doc helps me put the new necklace on. My God, I really love it.

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I lean in and kiss his lips briefly then pull back. -Me: "I love you."

-Him: "I love YOU."

He reaches behind my neck and presses my mouth harder to his. His lips are warm and wet, and they taste so good. His kiss grows more demanding, and as I open my mouth his tongue slips in and out with each erotic kiss. It moves to meet mine and joins in a slow, sensual dance. Oh, shit. At this pace we're going to have sex right here. But do I want

that knowing that there are two pilots on the other side of that door? I want to stop him and pull back but I am completely incapable of resisting this man. All reason vanquished by his touch. I can't manage to pull away from his intoxicating kisses. And I can tell that he wants me too, I can feel it in his hungry kiss, in the way he gropes my body, and in the way he's breathing so erratically.

"Do you want to do this right here?" He asks, pulling away, his arms still around me. I nod, still high from his fervent kiss. "Are you sure?"

He asks as his eyes darken with a lustful look that I know very well. I nod again, no longer thinking about the company we have - only the immediate gratification. Hell, I've been wanting him inside me since forever and I can't wait to feel all the sensual pleasures he usually gives me. Damn, the thought of that alone ignites my blood, and has me squeezing my thighs together in sweet agony. My inner muscles clench in anticipation. And when he gives me a wicked grin, and places his hand on my waist, I give him a subtle nod as my breathing turns dangerously shallow.

"Close your eyes and keep them shut. Don't open them for anything."

He tells me and I slowly shut them, feeling my heart beating like a drum in my chest. What is he going to do?

Proceeding to take my hands, he pulls me up from the couch and before I know it, he's pulled my sweater off and is down untying the laces of my sneakers. Unable to see him, but just feeling what he's doing to me is driving me crazy. My senses seem to come so much more alive.

Soon my sneakers are off and he peels me out of my jeans and T-shirt. I'm now standing in nothing but my bra, and G-string panties. Goosebumps speckle my skin as I feel his fingertips ever so lightly touching my arm and glide down it. Then they glide all the way up my arm and to my shoulder, continuing on to my chest. I shiver. He reaches behind my back and unclasps my bra. With the bra gone, my breasts meet the cool air in the cabin and I gasp. Tracing his fingers around one of my nipples, he encircles it around the most tender part. With my eyes shut, I feel every sensation triple-fold.

He blows on me gently, the silken air causing me to tremor and breathe heavily. He takes one of my breasts into his mouth and sucks on it. Hard. Oh, my! I squeeze my inner thighs together, feeling the heat building there. He glides his fingers up my chest, to my chin, and to my mouth, letting one of them brush me gentle across my top, and then bottom lip. Suddenly, the finger is gone, and instead his lips press against mine, softly. His tongue delves into my mouth and I meet him in a greedy kiss, my body trembling with each labored breath. But he pulls away all too soon and turns me around, taking my hands and guiding them to the top of couch so I'm bending slightly forward.

"Spread your legs"

He says. And I do as I'm told. My eyes are still closed and the inability to see him is making me even more aware of his deep, raspy voice that seems to make me lose all control of reason. I feel his fingertips on the back of my right thigh, just above my knee. He traces them upward, tantalizing me with them, swirling them toward my ass. Before I met this man, I never knew that simple fingertips could bring me to such an aroused state. His fingertips reach my ass, and he moves my panties to the side then moves down to stroke my clit gently. I wince. He keeps brushing my sensitive part, the gentleness of his fingers an agonizing delight. Now he pulls my panties down and discards them. Then he slides his fingers deep into me. I gasp at the sensation, the angle of his touch just right. He pulls my head slightly back until I moan loudly as he continues to finger fuck me. I'm glad the hum of the engine is loud, drowning out any noise the pilots might hear.

As I'm still enjoying that, he spins me around so my butt is on the seat and I'm facing him. When he asks me to open my eyes I hurriedly undo his pants, and once I have access, I reach inside and grope around his erection. He lets out a low rumble.

-Me: "Please can I have you inside me now?" I ask looking into his eyes. Damn, they're ablaze with desire.

-Him: "Yes, Mrs Me. Right. Away."

He doesn't undress, he just pulls his pants and boxers down to his knees then guides himself into me slowly. He pulls back ever so slowly, tantalizing me with the leisurely rhythm. "Oh...oh...please, baby, faster, harder." I beg, feeling his girth all around my insides. He grabs my waist and pulls me toward him so he plunges deeper into me. With the other hand on the nape of my neck, he crashes his lips to mine, claiming me with his tongue. He speeds up, a hard, relentless, and punishing tempo, and I feel myself climb higher and higher, his passion so severe I think I will soon explode. I brace myself on the back of the couch, my legs burning with fire as he thrusts into me deeper and deeper.

-Him: "Fuck...I missed your tight pussy." His words take me over the top, and I detonate into a thousand delicious pieces around him. He yells my name, and with the last shove, we both let out unconstrained moans, as we melt into each other's arms. -Him: "I could have lasted longer but I missed you, I couldn't hold myself."

I smile at him, and kiss him gently on the lips. -Me: "You have no idea how much I missed you too."

He kisses me then pulls out of me. After pulling his pants up, he helps me up and we make our way to the bathroom to clean up. My hair is a mess, it takes me a few minutes to tame it, and Doc leaves me to it. When I'm done I look into the mirror and take a few deep breaths. I finally got to have him inside me. Mmmh. I can't stop myself from smiling that goofy grin, completely dazed by the amazing sex we've just had.

Pulling my eyes away from the mirror, I leave the bathroom and make my way back into the cabin to sit down next to my man.

Soon we land in Cape Town and there's already a car waiting for us right off the runway. Doc puts his suitcase, which he just retrieved from the jet, in the boot of the car then we climb in and the driver drives off. He must have packed the suitcase this morning when I was still asleep. And I must say, if there's one more thing I like about flying private is the fact that you don't have to go wait to get your luggage from the carousel. As the car moves forward, I can't help but wonder where we will be staying.

Season 2 #3 "Mntan'omuntu ngiyaz'fela ngawe. Wena wedwa, wangenz' umuntu ebantwini. Amehlo am' ohlala njalo ejonge wena, wena wedwa. Ngakho namhlanje ngifis' ukukubonga ngayo yonke inhliziyo yam'. Turn off the lights. Baby come duze. Let me make you feel alright." -Siphelele Fuze

I can't say I know Cape Town too well but my mom and I used to come here during some summer holidays to visit her cousin who was living in Sea Point. The cousin was the only person she was close to from her father's side of the family, and since he passed away 5 years ago we've never been to this city again. However, that doesn't mean I can't see that we're now leaving Cape Town behind, driving up on the N1 in the direction of Paarl. All the while, Doc is holding my hand and he kisses me passionately every now and then in this back seat, causing my insides to churn with delicious desire. Our sex up in the air, in the

jet, was so amazing, and I can't wait to experience all the sensual pleasures again. My body buzzes with the anticipation, thinking about what we'll do once we reach our destination. Gosh, it feels like an eternity. Despite the intoxicating kisses that distract me, I notice the car taking the Paarl/Franschhoek exit no. 55. But still, I'm not sure of our destination until later in the drive when I see Grande Roche Hotel signs on the left of a street called Plantasie in Paarl, a hotel I get to see directly in front of us at the top of the street.

"This is our destination, babe."

Doc only informs me when the car turns right into the hotel's driveway.

-Me: "Woow! This place is charmingly beautiful, baby."

I say as I take in the perfectly manicured front fields.

"So scenic."

I add as I admire the views through the window of the car.

It is now 16:30. And as soon as we get out of the car we get personally greeted by a very nice lady, a member of the hotel's Guest Services team. She walks us inside and we are offered welcome drinks of our choice after checking in. But before being escorted to our room we get a short tour around the estate. This luxury hotel is actually situated on an old but working wine farm, something I find really amazing. The suites that we are going to be occupying one of, are overlooking the vineyards of the farm. Isn't that amazing? Here, history intersects with a funky modernity, and I think I'm in love with how the hotel embraces the old and new with equal vitality. We just got here but the way I love this place, it feels like home already. I'm even starting to think it'd be hard for me to leave on Thursday. Here, we sure are going to experience the privacy and tranquillity Doc and I really need. With these stunning views, I

feel like we have escaped to our own personal country estate. This is, without a doubt, a perfect getaway, one I want to last forever.

After the brief tour, we get escorted to our suite. The garden suite which we're told was once the original farm stable is a totally private suite, something my man and I really need - total privacy. Doc definitely made a right choice by booking this particular suite. We walk into its lounge with the lady that welcomed us. Looking around, I can already see a combination of luxury, romance and rustic charm. It sure doesn't get better than this.

"Wow! Baby, this is so beautiful."

I say, impressed.

-Him: "Not as beautiful as you, baby." He says, his arm tightening around my tiny waist. He's been holding me like this, so possessively throughout the short tour, and not only did I not mind but I also liked it. My heart nearly misses a beat at the sound of his sexy voice. No matter what this man says, he has a way of making it sound so erotic. I glance at him, then quickly avert my eyes. Shit, I just can't stop thinking about him in that way. What is this lady still doing here? I mean, our luggage, which is the single suitcase, is already inside. And she's already shown us the complimentary flowers, wine and mineral water. Now can't she see that we need our privacy?

Doc glances at me and smiles before pulling me fully into his arms and caressing my ear with his lips. The oxygen in the room suddenly becomes sparse, and the energy that seems to always be pulling us together, that delicious magnet of fire, rises to hazardously high levels. My knees go weak, and my heart rate shoots through the roof. I feel my desire growing stronger, until it floods my senses, and I can't even hold myself steady anymore. I hear the door slamming shut, the lady leaving. Shuuu! That was long overdue. Doc's warm hands cup my face and gently brush my

cheeks and I can't help but remember that just a few hours ago his fingers were on my naked body, inside of me, bringing me to a state of complete frenzy. I feel his warm breath fanning my face then suddenly, he crashes his lips to mine. His hands hungrily grope my body as he guides me across the lounge, walking me into an unfamiliar room, I'm thinking the bedroom but I don't have time to take it in. I just keep my eyes closed as I lose myself to him, returning his demanding kisses.

"Fuck, baby, I can't keep my hands off of you."

He says in a slurred voice. Well, I like that he can't.

. He lifts me up and throws me onto the plush king-sized bed. I get a chance to quickly scan the bedroom. It is really nice and bright, and so is the bed with its white covers and burgundy pillows.

Immediately, Doc starts tearing off his jacket and shirt.

"Do you have any idea how badly I want you right now?"

He growls, kneeling on the bed in front of me, his eyes ablaze as he pulls both my sweater and T-shirt off in one go.

"Throughout the drive I've been dying to finally be alone with you. To feel your naked body, and make you come."

Fuck, just hearing him say that is enough to make me slippery wet down there. He commands me to take my bra off, and I follow his orders - no questions asked. He pushes me down on the bed so I'd lie on my back then he lowers himself to tug on my lower lip with his teeth, sending all kinds of emotions raging through me. He seems much wilder than he was on the aircraft, more driven by sheer lust. He cradles my face in his hands as he ravages my lips. His kisses are demanding and wild, like a man who has waited for years before finally succumbing to his addiction. But it's not just the kisses that are so tantalizing, it's that I can feel he really wants me. That's such a fucking turn on, and I want him just as much.

After opening the covers to reveal the soft, silky sheets, we frantically pull each other's bottom clothes off. Impatient and wanting, our bodies yearning to become one. Soon we're both completely naked, and I take in every inch of his perfect physique. Damn! I don't know if it's because I'm highly aroused but his body seems even firmer, more muscular than I remember it.

He, too, is drinking my own naked body with his eyes.

-Him: "The way you're so sexy, you're driving me crazy."

I only reply with an alluring smile. Pushing me back down on the bed, he rolls one of my breasts between his fingers, then sucks on it, biting it gently. His tongue encircles my nipple, shooting a trail of sensation all the way down between my legs. I think my senses are still heightened from the session we had earlier, and I find I want him now with so much desperation.

He kisses a trail down my chest to my abdomen, leaving tingles where his wet lips touch. I'm so heavy and wanting, and I arch my back in anticipation. But I feel him stopping, I open my eyes to see him looking at my flat tummy with a smile. I guess he's happy because he knows that there's a little him growing in there. He brushes it gently then starts planting a thousand kisses before moving down south.

He reaches my sex then spreads my legs apart. I close my eyes in anticipation. The way we're both yearning for each other, I'm expecting to feel his dick entering me but instead I feel his fingers slipping inside my wet love hole.

"Fuck, baby, you're so wet."

His voice is raspy, and I can feel his

satisfaction in it. He begins finger-fucking me and I moan at the pleasure as I arch my back, allowing his two fingers to go deeper. This is not the real deal yet but this surgeon sure knows how to use his fingers. The intensity increases, making me wince. He moves his fingers, faster and faster inside me as his thumb rubs my clit until I feel myself building. "Come for me, baby. Come for me."

Shit, his words drive me over the edge and I explode all over his fingers.

Barely do I recover from that orgasm, with my eyes still shut, I feel him kissing a trail up my inner thigh, and I judder with each cold, wet kiss. I instinctively open my legs wider to allow him more access. His cold lips land on my clean shaven mound, kissing it softly. I bite my lip and let out an instant moan as his warm tongue licks my throbbing inner pussy lips and reaches my sensitive spot. He continues to suck my clit gently before his glorious tongue glides inside my pussy and fucks me senseless, with him drinking my love juices. I arch my back as each dip pushes me closer to the edge all over again. Oh shit! A girly cry mixed with a moan escapes my mouth as I approach the peak of passion and pleasure once again.

"You taste so good."

He says, inhaling me deeply as he sucks and tugs on my most intimate area. He keeps sucking until I feel myself shudder, until I cry out in ecstasy. He takes my cry as an invitation to open my legs even further. As I'm sure I'm about to come, he stops and comes up to kiss me on the mouth, making me taste myself on him.

He lays beside me, then he licks his fingers and slides them inside me once again. He starts moving them against my inner walls. Damn, I think I'm going to come. My body quivers as he continues to fondle me, bringing me to that sweet high place yet again. I moan louder, almost grunting. He moves his fingers faster and faster until I feel myself rising higher and higher, until I reach that wickedly wonderful peak. I scream as I spasm in yet another orgasm.

"Now I'm ready to take you. And I'm going to make you come so fast and so hard that you can't even remember your name."

He says so close to my lips, sending shivers down my spine. Shit, what is this man doing to me? I haven't even recovered from that last orgasm but I can't wait to have him inside me.

He kneels between my spread legs, grabs his rock hard cock and rubs its tip up against my wet pussy entrance, exciting me even more. "Please, enter me already. I want you so bad." I beg, already losing my mind. The throb is so intense it's almost painful. He stares at me, eyes smoldering, his mouth slightly open. He braces himself over me. Then with one merciless shove, he's buried deep inside of me. I gasp at the sudden move, feeling his massive erection so hard and so full that it's almost painful even though I'm dripping wet. But a second later, pleasure washes over me,

taking me to a whole other level. Desperate for more, I clutch his ass and try to make him do it again. A greedy laugh escapes his lips, and he slams into me again and again. Deeper. Harder. Oh. My. God. This feels so good and that manifests in my loud moans. -Him: "Fuck, babe, you're so warm." His voice is ragged. I gasp in delight as he continues to move inside me. He lowers himself down on top of me, his elbows on either side of my head, holding himself up. I wrap my legs around his waist, tilting my pelvis up just right, meeting him with each thrust.

He starts to move faster, stroking me on the inside, deep, the intense friction slowly pushing me forward onto yet another amazing release. My breath finds a steady rhythm, and each time he drives into me, a small cry escapes my mouth.

-Him: "Keep making noises like that and I won't last long." -Me: "Don't stop."

I say, the peak emerging like a burst of fire. He's moving so fast now, slamming into me at a merciless speed, the sweat of our bodies mingling. Fuck, he feels so good inside of me. The build-up inside me explodes, and my body turns into a storm of tingles. I feel myself climaxing, and he yells my name, slamming into me two more times - so deep, so gratifying and so forceful. After the final thrust, he exhales, his head dropping down, filling me with his release.

After a moment he lifts his head and his eyes connect with mine.

"Damn, baby, I can't get over how good you feel."

I just smile, feeling my cheeks flush. He smiles too then kisses me slowly before pulling out of me.

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He continues to kiss me as he's still laying on top of me. And his kisses grow more urgent. Soon, I feel him getting hard again.

"Damn, Soso, I can't get enough of you." He says, as he lifts himself off of me, but still hovering above me, balancing himself with his hands on either side of my head.

Fuck, I can't get enough of him too.

-Me: "The feeling is mutual, baby."

-Him: "Are you ready to go again? Because if you aren't, it's okay, I'll stop."

Is he kidding me? I respond with a nod and by placing my hand on his hard erection,

massaging it. He moans then his lips glide into a smile. He lowers himself on top of me then his lips meet mine and he continues to kiss me as his hands fondle my breasts then move to fondle my ass.

I'm dripping wet all over again, wanting him inside me.

-Me: "Give it to me, baby. Please."

My wish is his command. He braces himself over me again and enters me, ever so slowly.

My wet pussy welcomes him. I open my legs wider for him and he starts moving slowly inside me. But fuck, I want it hard.

-Me: "Harder, baby."

He pulls back then bangs into me, so hard that a loud, uncensored cry leaps out of my mouth before I can silence it.

-Him: "You want hard, I'll give you hard." His movements become a little aggressive, and I find that extremely hot. As much as I love it and it melts my heart when we make slow, sensuous love, I love it more when it's rough and unrestrained.

Holy hell. I want more.

"Harder. Harder, baby."

I say, my voice more of a breath than a sound. He pulls back and slams into me even harder. He continues to thrust into me harder and harder, a slow, and unbelievably forceful rhythm. God, this man knows how to fuck. I grip his arms to steady myself, feeling them hard, and strong. He moves faster and deeper into me, twisting his hips in a way that drives me to the brink of insanity. The sounds coming from his mouth are wild growls, unrestricted, carnal grunts. Just those noises alone would be enough to make me come. But then he stops and pulls out of me. What the hell? Why is he stopping? I almost feel let down.

He lowers himself down onto his elbows and his lips grind unyieldingly against mine as his tongue explores my mouth.

After a moment of kissing, he directs his still hard shaft inside me again and he starts to move. I moan, because I need to let the pleasure come out somehow, somewhere. Suddenly, he flips me over so I sit on top, straddling him. I press my hands to his firm chest to steady myself, and he gropes my breasts, squeezing them. I smile. He wants me to fuck him.

Slowly, I rise up and sink myself down, my inner walls clamping around his brute erection, grinding my clit against him each time I lower myself, a sense of urgency snapping me into a frenzy. The pressure becomes unbearable, the arousal too painful as I yearn for my release. But I can't get myself to move fast enough.

Then, I see a hungry gleam in his eyes, and he starts to thrust upward, hard, unrestrained movements as his features turn strained. He grabs onto my shoulders to keep me there, but I'm still moving up and down on top of him.

Quickly, he flips me onto my back again, pinning my arms to the mattress. He sucks on my lower lip and his thrusts become so hard that with each jolt, my cunt spasms tighter and tighter until it's so wound up, I don't know if it will ever find relief.

When he lets go of my wrists, I grip the smooth sheets, trying to hold onto something as he rams into me hard, again and again. Oh, fuck. Oh, shit. I can't take it, but no amount of force could be too hard. He grunts louder, his carnal sounds thundering through me as a reminder that he has taken full possession of me. Finally, I feel myself come as he drives me, shoves me, flings me over the edge into a wicked orgasm.

As he finds his release, he lets out a loud moan and thrusts into me one more time. I'm still clinging to the sheets when his head sinks to my forehead. We're both sweating and panting, coming down from our exultant high. A high so intense that the room is a blur, my body numb with tingles.

He laughs as he rolls off me and falls into the mattress.

-Him: "Damn! That was hot."

I smirk.

-Me: "That was..."

I bring my hand to my forehead and laugh.

-Me: "I have no words to describe how amazing that was."

I say, still feeling myself coming down from the earth-shattering orgasm. Damn, this man knows how to do me. Our intimate time together is always explosive, like nothing nothing - I've ever experienced with anyone before. And that 'anyone' would be that dooch, Alex.

His hand gently lands on my cheek and he twists my face so I can face him.

-Him: "I have no doubt in my mind that you were made for me, Someleze. I really can't wait to give you my name."

He's looking deep into my eyes. And I can see the sincerity in his. My heart melts completely at this point.

-Me: "And I can't wait to give you another little you."

His lips form a beautiful smile then he kisses me on the lips, ever so gentle. He pulls back then rests his head on the pillow. We lie like that for a few moments, catching our breaths. Then he tells me that we need to go freshen up quickly because we have dinner reservations at 19:30 and now it's just after 18:30. That sounds good to me, I'm really hungry. Apart from the snacks on the airplane, I haven't eaten anything today. He picks me up from the bed and carries me to the bathroom, and we take a quick shower together.

In less than an hour we are both dressed in smart, formal outfits. In that suitcase he brought, there were also clothes for me and other essentials like toiletries. Well, new clothes that he bought for me. He bought me everything I'll be needing in this trip, including underwears. No man has has ever bought me underwears before but I LOVE that he did, and he sure knows my sizes.

The dress I'm wearing is a ruby red floorlength lace peplum dress. It has a slit in the back and capped sleeves. It's sexy enough to keep him wanting throughout dinner, but also conservative enough to be worn in a formal dinner setup.

When I looked at its price tag, which was still attached, I gasped as I realised that it was

only one rand short of 4 thousand. Four thousand rands on a dress? Honestly, I've never in my life owned a clothing item this expensive, this is my first. But I've always known that Doc has expensive taste. Both of us looking super duper hot, we leave our suite and go to what he tells me is a private dining room in the property. When we get there, I'm surprised to find the place empty. In my mind I expected to see other

diners.

-Me: "Why is this place quiet, babe? Where are other people?"

He looks at me and grins.

-Him: "I actually booked the entire place for us. We'll be dining alone tonight."

Oh wow. I'm impressed and quite taken aback, to be honest. Even though he said it is a private dining room I didn't expect us to have the entire place to ourselves.

Speechless, I take in the place and it's only now that I realise that it is indeed set up for a private romantic dinner. It is without a doubt a nice and ideal space for sophisticated intimacy. The lights are dimmed, giving the room that nice, romantic ambiance. An ambiance that is enhanced by a lit fireplace. Wow, this is great.

A waitress comes up and leads us to our perfectly set table. A table with rose petals and lit candles. This is just beautiful. Doc pulls out a chair for me then goes to sit on his once I'm settled.

As I'm still amazed and struggling to push words out of my mouth, a live pianist takes the stage and starts playing something romantically soft, setting the tone. Oh wow, this is really amazing. It's a scene straight out of a romance movie, I tell you.

-Me: "Wow. Baby, this is amazing. You did all of this for me?"

-Him: "You deserve it and more."

I smile then lean across the table to kiss him. -Me: "Thank you, thando lwam. You don't know how much this means to me."

I say, smiling from ear to ear.

-Him: "You know when I started planning to bring you here I didn't know that we'd also be celebrating our pregnancy."

He holds both my hands on the table and looks deep into my eyes.

-Him: "Thank you, sthandwa sam. Thank you for making me a man again. And I promise to make you and that baby happy, always."

I smile. The sincerity in his eyes making my heart beat faster.

-Me: "Have I told you lately how much I love you?"

-Him: "I don't mind hearing it over and over." -Me: "Well, I can't tell you using words. I'll just show you by sticking with you through everything. I love you, thando Iwam. And there's nothing I want more than to spend the rest of my life with you."

His appetising lips instantly form a smile. Then he takes my hand to them and kisses it. -Him: "We'd celebrate with champagne but I'd prefer it if you didn't touch any alcoholic drinks in the next 8 months. I'll let the glass of wine you had yesterday slide, but please, baby, you shouldn't do it again. I know that one glass of wine once in a while doesn't hurt, but still, I'd prefer if you didn't touch alcohol at all."

-Me: "That's okay, baby. I promise, I won't." -Him: "Thank you. Now we're just gonna use grape juice instead."

I nod. Then the sweet waitress comes with its chilled bottle and fills our glasses.

-Doc "So? What are we toasting to?"

-Me: "To me and you... Meant to be. It hasn't been a long road, it's been 9 months to be exact, but 9 months of pure happiness. Yes, I know that at first we experienced some drama but look at us now, we are about to start a life together as a married couple, and there's a baby on the way. What more could a girl possibly ask for?"

-Him: "I think I'll drink to that."

We clink our glasses then take our sips.

-Him: "It hasn't been exactly a smooth ride but I'd like to think it's gonna get better from now on."

-Me: "I'd like that."

The waitress comes with our starters. We dig in then soon comes our main course. The music from the pianist a delightful accompaniment to the exquisite fine dining experience.

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-Doc: "You know, like I said back in the plane, I know that I haven't been the perfect partner to you, especially since I went back to medicine. I'm always busy and I don't give you much time. Yes, I know that you get busy too but not as much as I do. You'd want to be with me and I'd be busy. But in all of that you've never exactly complained. You've been supportive of me, my dreams, my career, even though I know that it's not easy for you. And that's why today I want to thank you for your patience. Thank you, baby, from the bottom of my heart."

He stops then looks away for a moment before looking back at me.

-Him: "I know I said this before, but I'll say it again. Without you, sthandwa sam, I wouldn't have had the courage to go back to medicine. You're the one who got me in the right state of mind to go back. You breathed life back into me and I became alive again. And yes, I'm aware that it gets too much for you sometimes, but I'm working this hard to make sure that you and our children get to have a home, a home that y'all deserve. And the fact that you don't complain makes me love you even more. My eyes will never look at any other woman the way I look at you. You have my heart, baby, and no one else will ever have it but you...With that same heart, I want to plead with you tonight to please remain patient with me, just a little longer. I know that at some point you'll find yourself running on empty, especially now that you're

pregnant. But please don't give up on me, sthandwa sam. I've just gained my momentum as a surgical consultant, and once I reach full speed, I promise to slow down and turn to another chapter in this profession. A

chapter that won't demand much of my time.

I'll do it for you, for us. I promise."

-Me: "What do you mean by another chapter?"

-Him: "I can't say much right now, but it's gonna be good for us - for our relationship, our marriage. You know, my worst fear, sthandwa sam, is losing you. I don't wanna see the day where you pack your bags and walk out of my life to be with another man because I don't give you as much time as you would like. That would kill me."

I can now see tears welling up in his eyes. And that breaks my heart. I get up from my chair and walk over to his side of the table. I take his hand, help him up from his chair and pull him into a warm embrace. I can feel him frantically wiping his tears away and I hold him close to me tight. Honestly, I now feel bad for thinking of leaving his house without even telling him earlier. It's not like this guy's been neglecting me...well, not on purpose.

-Me: "I would never leave you, baby. Ever. I promise. I promise."

I say, brushing his back. We stand like that for a long moment, clinging onto each other. Then finally, we pull back and kiss before sitting down again.

-Me: "I love you. And I mean it when I say I'm gonna stick with you through everything." I say, kissing his hand.

He smiles a little. And decides to change gears.

-Him: "You know the real reason I brought you here?"

I shake my head no.

-Him: "You remember saying getting married in the Cape was your dream?"

-Me: "Yes."

-Him: "But then your mother wanted you to get married in PE, and you just had to go along with her suggestion. But, baby, that's not how it's supposed to be. This is your wedding, your special day, so you should do what makes you happy, get married where you want to. And it is because of that reason that I got us this venue in April and I've

brought you here so you could see it for yourself. But if you don't like it that's still okay, we'll get married in PE."

-Me: "They also do weddings here?" -Him: "Yeah. They'll take us through everything tomorrow. And we can pick a choice of venue for the reception. I personally like this place but if you don't, don't feel bad we'll cancel it."

-Me: "Wow, baby, you're one amazing man. You're so thoughtful, and you know exactly what I like. I like this place, babe. No, I love it. I don't know what they're going to show me tomorrow but I'm sure I'm gonna like it. Thank you, baby. I can't wait for tomorrow."

I'm super excited right now because I know that I've already fallen in love with this place. And saying "I do" on one of these manicured lawns while enjoying spectacular views of the Paarl Valley and Drakenstein Mountains sounds very appealing to me. I know that my mom is going to freak and my dad is probably going to get upset because he's going to lose the deposit on the venue we already booked in PE, but it's like Doc just said - this is my big day and I should do what makes me happy. I lean across the table to kiss my man on the lips. And from the way he prolongs the kiss I doubt we'll wait for that dessert. Being back in our suite, in that soft bed, to make each other feel good once again is what both our bodies need.

Season 2 #4

"Once upon a long ago someone touched my heart and soul, my life. You and I were meant

to be. Was I just too blind to see the light in your eyes?" - Restless Heart

Thursday

Last night, which was our very last night in this hotel, I slept like a baby in Doc's arms after our amazing love-making session. When I wake up, I don't find him next to me but I can hear the shower running, so I know that he's already in there. I sit up on the bed and stretch my arms. Damn, I feel sore everywhere, especially in my most intimate places. Deliciously sore. I squeeze my thighs together when I think of Doc being inside me, feeling a burning sensation down there. I like being reminded of last night and the three other nights before that, nights of pure romance and incredible sex. Doc may not always have time for me but when he does, he makes sure to satisfy me in every way possible. Now tell me, how can I not fall in love with him everyday?

He exits the bathroom with nothing but a towel around his waist, baring his sculpted shoulders, and tight abs. I let my eyes scan every corner, every inch of his fabulous upper body. With it glistening like that, all I want is jump out of this bed, walk over to him and touch that firm, hairless chest.

I shift uncomfortably in my position. His wet skin. The bulge underneath that towel. Damn! My eyes flick to his and I see that he's staring at me. Suddenly, I need him...again.

-Him: "Good morning, baby."

He sits down on the bed next to me and kisses me lightly on the mouth.

-Me: "Morning, thando lwam."

-Him: "Sleep well?"

A smile plays at his lips as he asks.

-Me: "As always when you're next to me. Did you...enjoy your shower?"

-Him: "I would have enjoyed it more if you would have been in there with me." He leans over and kisses me again. Slowly. His tongue tracing my lips. I feel the blood pool in my lower abdomen.

-Me: "Want to join ME in the shower?"

I ask, already panting.

His eyes smolder, and he scoops me into his arms. With me holding onto him tight, my naked body pressed against his, he carries me into the bathroom.

-Him: "Tub or shower?"

-Me: "Now that I have a choice, tub." This spa bath looks very inviting. He sets me down onto its edge then turns the water on. When he swivels back around, I see a huge bulge beneath his towel. Oh... The low burning sensation I was feeling before immediately doubles in intensity. Throbbing. I go to him and feel his hard erection through the towel, every part of me hyper alert with anticipation.

He doesn't waste any time, he turns the water off and lifts me up onto the sink counter. He spreads my legs with his hands, his smooth skin sending tingles through me. He hasn't even touched me anywhere erotic, but I already feel the agonizing pleasure between my legs. With my legs spread and no panties on, his two fingers glide inside of my already wet cookie, and he stares me in the eyes.

-Him: "Is this what you had in mind when you asked me to join you?"

Oh, damn! I moan, and let my head fall back. -Me: "Yes. Yes."

He bends his fingers up and down, pressing them upward against the inside of me,

massaging me. He moves them faster and faster forcing me over top in a matter of seconds. Damn!

Impatiently, I tear his towel off and throw it to the floor. My eyes open wide at the sight of his erection. Fuck, I want him inside me. Now.

He kisses me the pulls back enough to ask: -Him: "How do you want it?" I don't know what to say, because I only want it now. Hard. Fast. Deep.

He presses the tip of his erection against my sex, and massages me up and down, driving me crazy. I loop my legs around him, trying to force him inside. Nothing else will do. But he takes my hand and guides it to his erection. -Him: "Not yet."

A low guttural laugh comes out of his mouth. -Me: "Please."

-Him: "Touch me, baby. I want to feel your soft hands on me."

I'm game. I let my fingers wrap around his hard cock, and I begin to stroke him up and down, his skin silky smooth beneath my fingertips. His eyes roll back and he lets out a soft moan. That to me is an invitation to do more. I quickly get down from the counter and kneel before him. I grab his rock hard cock and put it in my mouth.

He continues to groan as I sheath him with my mouth. Deeper and deeper I go as I suck on him hard, cupping my teeth with my lips. Suddenly, I feel his fingers fist in my hair. -Him: "Careful, baby. I don't want to come like this."

I suck harder and he groans loudly.

-Him: "No, baby, you're gonna make me come."

He pushes me back then lifts me back up on the counter.

I lick my lips slowly, and his lips open in response.

-Him: "What do you want, baby? Tell me." -Me: "I need you inside me. Hard. Please, I...I

can't wait."

I say, the words increasing the longing for him even more.

He smiles and spreads my legs wider. He enters me, slowly. He lets me adjust then grabs my shoulder and hip and keeps thrusting again and again, deep, and hard

inside me. Loud moans keep escaping my

mouth as he continues to work me. -Him: "Say you are mine, Soso. Say it." -Me: "I'm yours, Thando. I'm yours." The way he's doing me it's like he wants me to always remember how much pleasure he gives me even when I'm alone in Alice. He's moving faster now, stroking the entire length of him in and out of me, filling me with heavenly ecstasy, and driving me to higher gratification with each blessed, aching thrust. -Him: "Say it again."

-Me: "I'm yours, Thando. All yours."

-Him: "Do you want more?"

He asks, thrusting into me with all his might. Shit, oh, oh, shit!

-Me: "Oh, yes."

He pulls out of me, guides me off the counter and turns me around. He bends me over, spreads my legs, grabs onto my hips, and directs himself back inside me.

I'm holding onto the counter for dear life as he begins to move, and high-pitched moans escape my lips each time he delves deeper and deeper inside me. The sensation is even more intense this way, his erection rubbing against that sweet, sweet spot.

His hands grope my hips and he slams into me, pulling my hips backward and forward so we crash into each other again and again. He's moving faster now, and I feel myself build, coming up to the peak.

-Him: "Yes, come for me, baby. Come for me." I keep shouting his name as he throws me over the top.

Our eyes connect in the mirror and I see the pleasure on his face, an agonizing expression filled with passion and lust. He yells my name as he comes. He moans at the very last thrust as the climax rips through him. Then his head sinks onto my back and we are still panting, but motionless, like the calm after the perfect storm.

I'm still clinging onto the counter, and my arms are trembling from the pleasure. Once he has slowed his breath, he pulls out of me, stands me up and we look at each other in the mirror. Still standing behind me, he grabs my breasts and squeezes them.

-Him: "I love you."

I turn to look at him and smile.

-Me: "I love you more."

He pulls me closer then kisses my lips.

-Him: "Now let's go take that bath."

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Three hours later we are on a commercial flight out of Cape Town to East London. It's good to be going home but it has to be said, I really had a great time in Paarl. And it's been settled, that's where my man and I are going to exchange our vows 6 months from now. My parents will just have to understand. When we land in East London around 12:30, we find Bhongo already there to pick us up in Doc's car. The car has been with him all these days. He went to pick it up from the airport later on Sunday after we had flown to the Western Cape.

He drops us off at home then takes a taxi to his place. Doc immediately changes into his PJs and hits the pillow because he has a shift at the hospital tonight. I, on the other hand, starts cleaning around the house. I get the now spoiled food I cooked on Saturday out of the fridge and throw it out, then I clean everything before preparing to cook another food. I'm going home later this afternoon and I want to leave my man with some home cooked food because I know that he won't have time to cook.

I make him his favourites then plate up for him and put the plate in the microwave. The remaining, I put in containers and then into the fridge.

Now there's one more thing left to do ironing the clothes my man is going to wear to work when he wakes up. When that's done, I'm reminded that I have another thing hanging over my head, and that's to fit that bridesmaid dress from Iviwe. If it doesn't fit that would be bad because the wedding is on Saturday, the day after tomorrow, and I don't think my mom or any other tailor can do major alterations to it tomorrow - it would be too short notice. And Iviwe will freak because she's been calling me since Saturday last

week wanting to know if the dress fits. But I was too busy with my own stuff to care about her wedding.

I get the dress out of the closet and try it on. Fortunately, for Iviwe, it fits me perfectly. The dressmaker got my measurements right, and I haven't gained any extra kilo yet.

It is an elegant, sleeveless floor-length dress with lace appliques and a sweep train. It's made of silk-like satin and it's lilac in colour lilac, the wedding's theme colour. It really looks good on me. But is "good" the same word I'd use to describe my feelings about attending this wedding? Well, probably not. Don't get me wrong, I don't have a problem with this wedding but I can't say I'm looking forward to being a part of it. I'm just going because I feel like I have to.

Now, with everything in place, I'm ready to leave. I pack my bag and go put it in my car. Then I come back to wake Doc up and tell him that I'm leaving.

"Thando. Baby, wake up, I'm leaving."

He opens his eyes and looks at me.

-Him: "What time is it?"

-Me: "It's 17:30. I'm leaving and you need to wake up and get ready for work."

-Him: "I miss you already, you know."

-Me: "But we'll see each other in PE on Saturday. Right?"

-Him: "At the wedding?"

-Me: "No, at the funeral. Of course, at the wedding, silly. You're still coming, right?" -Him: "I'll see if Zizo is still up for taking my shift. If she is, then yeah, I'll go attend the wedding of my fiancée's ex. How nice." -Me: "I know that this is complicated, baby. It is weird for me too that I'll be attending my ex's wedding, but I'm doing it for family. A family that's now yours too. My dad would be very happy if you could go occupy your reserved seat."

-Him: "I know. You don't need to give me this speech again, babe. I'll be there."

-Me: "Thanks, babe. Now let me get

going...There's food in the fridge and in the warmer. I've also ironed your clothes. Don't be late for work."

A lazy smile forms on his face.

-Him: "Thank you, sthandwa sam. You're amazing, you know that?"

He pulls me to him and kisses me passionately on the lips.

-Me: "See you on Saturday."

I say, after pulling back from the kiss.

-Him: "Saturday."

I peck his lips one more time then walk out with my handbag.

Three hours later I'm driving into my mom's driveway after she's let me in. I park in front of our single car garage then get out of the car with my bags and make my way to the front door.

I knock already pushing the door. Upon entering, I find my mother watching TV in the lounge. She smiles when she sees me and immediately gets up to come and hug me. I drop my bag and handbag on the floor and return the hug.

-Her: "Now, tell me. How are my baby and grandbaby doing?"

She asks touching my belly. Yeah, I told her about the pregnancy over the phone on Monday since I couldn't come tell her face to face last Sunday. Just like I'd thought, she got so excited, as excited as she still is right now. -Me: "Mama, it's not a baby yet. It's still just a tiny embryo."

I say, laughing.

-Her: "Hey, don't be smart with me, I know all about pregnancy. I did carry you, didn't I?" -Me: "Yes, you did, Ndlovukazi. And you did a very good job not just with that but with raising me too. I can only wish to be just like you and be the best mother to this baby." She takes my hand and sit me down on the couch.

-Her: "Baby, you have a level head above your shoulders and you're loving and responsible so I know that you'll make a very good mother to that baby."

-Me: "I really hope so, hey. I don't want to flop."

-Her: "Don't worry yourself, everything will come naturally. And I'll also be here to show you the ropes and help you take care of my first grandchild. Lonto you're turning me into an old woman, Someleze. Now I'm gonna be a granny."

I laugh.

-Me: "A very hot granny at that. But you do know that this baby is a December, right? And because of that he or she will spend more time with the Decembers, than he or she will with you. I'm sure my mother-in-law will want to be the one to show me the ropes to motherhood. I'm saying this because I heard how enthusiastic she was over the phone on Monday, you'd swear the baby was coming the very next day."

-Her: "Yah well, I don't mind who takes what role as long as you give birth to a healthy baby I'll be alright. I have to understand that unlike me, you'll be a married woman when you give birth. That makes me so proud though. You waited until we could get that lobola before you got knocked up - knocked up by a very responsible man. I'm so proud of you, baby. And that's why I'm this happy and excited about this pregnancy."

She pulls me in a warm hug once again. -Her: "I'm really proud of you, baby." -Me: "Thank you, Mama. And I promise to continue making you proud by continuing with my studies."

I say after pulling back from the hug.

-Me: "I just hate that I will walk down the aisle with a big belly, you know. I'm gonna be an elephant bride, just like Iviwe. If I could, I would have changed the date of the wedding to November, at least. But we couldn't get a November date at that venue in Paarl."

-Her: "A venue in Paarl? What are you talking about?"

I tell her, and why I no longer want to have my wedding here. Her face drops. I can see that she's disappointed.

-Me: "I'm sorry, Mama."

She lets out a weak smile.

-Her: "It's okay, baby. It's your wedding after all, not mine, so we'll go with whatever makes you happy. And don't worry about your father. I'll talk to him when he gets here tomorrow for Iviwe's wedding." Okay, this has just gone better than I'd

anticipated. I thought my mother was going to give me a hard time.

-Me: "Thank you, mom."

-Her: "No problem. Now let's go dish up. I haven't eaten yet, I was waiting for you."

Saturday

The big day for my aunt and my ex has arrived, and everything is in place. Yesterday we had a successful rehearsal dinner, even though I noticed that Alex seemed a little uncomfortable in my presence. The guy seriously needs to get a grip and keep his head straight.

But apart from his little discomfort, I think everything went well and we are all hoping that Nathi - Iviwe's ex-fiancé - won't come and gatecrash the wedding. My father had a hard time getting him and his family to back off last year but they finally agreed to step back even though I still don't know how he did it. I just hope they won't come and cause drama today, for both Alex and Iviwe's sake. And probably theirs too, because I know my father doesn't respond well when people fuck with his family.

Already dolled up as one of the three bridesmaids, excluding the maid of honour, I leave the bridal room in this country style venue in Theescombe, here in Port Elizabeth. The couple chose to get married here, close to the groom's family, even though they are now both based in Durban. Iviwe got a position at King Edward VIII Hospital in Durban after she finished her community service in Alice in January. Alex followed her, but he still hasn't found a job yet. He's now a registered PhD student at the Westville campus of UKZN.

I walk out to my car and get the little something I have for the bride then go back to the bridal room. When I get there, I find the other bridesmaids no longer in the room, only the bride and the hairdresser who is still busy styling her hair. I ask for a minute of privacy and with no hesitation, the hairdresser walks out, leaving me and my aunt alone.

-Me: "You are one beautiful bride, auntie. And this is gonna be a beautiful day. The weather is fine outside."

I say as I come to stand by her in front of the mirror.

-Her: "I hope nothing bad happens, hey. But I'm not sure about me being a beautiful bride though. Do you see how big I am, how big my belly is?"

She is big alright, but not big enough for an 8 months pregnant woman. She looks like she's still in her 6th month.

-Me: "Don't worry about that belly, it takes nothing away from you. Anyway, I have something for you."

I give her the little box in my hands. She opens it to find my beautiful diamond earrings that my father gave to me for my 22nd birthday earlier this year - January 26th. -Her: "But these are yours, Soso. My brother...well, your father, got them for you." -Me: "I know that but I figured you'd look more beautiful in them than the ones you are wearing right now."

-Her: "Really?"

-Me: "Yeah. They are something borrowed, auntie. And they are also just a little something to say thanks to you."

-Her: "Thanks for what?"

-Me: "For taking Alex away from me. If you didn't I wouldn't have found the best love I'm now getting from my fiancé. So yes, thank you."

She looks down, guilt written all over her face. And trust me, this is not me being bitchy, this is me being truly thankful. I no longer have a problem with Iviwe, or Alex for that matter. We talked and made peace a long time ago.

-Me: "You don't need to feel guilty about anything, auntiza. Just finish getting ready and go out there to marry the man you love, the father of your baby."

-Her: "I uhhh...thanks, I guess."

I smile at her in the mirror then walk out.

The ceremony goes well without any drama, even though Alex's eyes landed on me for a brief moment before saying "I do". Only he knows what his problem is and I'm not entertaining it.

Doc also came through as he promised. And during the reception I go sit next to him at their table. I had my seat allocated at that table rather than at the bridal party table, I just wanted to sit next to my man.

As we're just sitting there, talking with each other, not paying attention to the rest of the proceedings, I hear his cellphone buzzing in his pocket. He takes it out then looks at me with a hint of concern after reading the text. -Me: "What's going on?"

-Him: "It's Zizo. Says she can't take my shift tonight. Something's come up, apparently." He shows me the message. -Me: "So you have to go?"

-Him: "I'm afraid yes. If I leave now I'll get to EL two hours before my shift starts, and I'll get to have a little rest. I'm sorry, babe. I know I promised to be with you tonight but I..."

I cut him off.

-Me: "It's okay, sthandwa sam. You didn't know that this would happen. Don't worry about me, I'll be fine with mama tonight and I'll join you home tomorrow."

-Him: "Home?"

-Me: "Yes. In EL. Baby, wherever you are that's where my home is."

He smiles.

-Him: "I love you."

-Me: "I love you too. Now come, let me walk you to your car. And don't worry about my parents, I'll tell them that you had to go." We get up and leave the hall. I walk him to his car and we kiss before he hops inside. -Him: "Tomorrow?"

-Me: "Tomorrow."

He gets in and I walk away, back to the hall, as soon as he starts the engine.

"Somi?"

I hear a voice behind me before I could even leave the parking. What? That voice is not just familiar, I know it. It's been a while since I heard it but I still remember it very well. Besides, there's only one person who's ever called me "Somi".

I stop then slowly turn around to see him moving away from his own car, walking over to me. Oh my God, I never thought I'd see this face again.

-Him: "Someleze Ndlovu. It is really you." -Me: "Oh my God, it is you. My Romeo." -Him: "If it isn't my Juliet."

He says smiling. Excited, I meet him halfway and we pull each other into an embrace.

Still in that position, my eyes move over to where Doc's car was. I find that it's still there, it hasn't moved, he hasn't left yet. He's just looking at me through the rolled down window, watching me in another man's arms. I'll post again once this post and the previous one reach a minimum of 2K likes and 300 comments. I certainly don't mind waiting or quitting. Happy reading <3

Season 2 #5

"Now when I add the sum of you and me I get confused and I keep coming up with 3. You're too much for one man. But not enough for two. Dadgummit! Who is he and what is he to you?" - Bill Withers

. Someleze

Seeing that Doc is still here, I pull back from the hug with the intentions of going over to him and introduce Ryan. But he just throws the car in reverse and screeches out of the parking lot. Shit! I hope he didn't get the wrong idea about me and Ryan. I really haven't done anything wrong here, I just hugged an old friend. And I didn't even know that he was still here when I approached Ryan.

Trying not to let the way he just drove out get to me, or even embarrass me, I look back at Ryan and offer him a smile.

-Me: "Wow! I didn't expect to see you here, buddy. When did you come back?" I ask with excitement.

-Ryan: "Three months ago... I spotted you right from the beginning of the ceremony but when you didn't pay me any attention, I kinda doubted that it was you. And the fact that this is Alex's wedding and you weren't the bride but a bridesmaid didn't help either."

-Me: "I know it's weird. And the story is long and complicated, buddy. A lot happened since you left."

-Him: "Yeah, no kidding. How long has it been, again?"

He asks giving me a mischievous smile, the expression he always wore, I swear, like 99% of the time back then. I guess some things never change.

-Me: "It hasn't been that long, this is the 4th year...I swear though, I didn't see you earlier. Trust me, I wasn't trying to ignore you. If I'd noticed you I would have tried to find you and come talk to you during the reception. Anyway, you look good. I can see that America's been treating you well." Ryan's a dancer who was my Romeo during my days of telling the story of Romeo and Juliet on stage - a story which has become one of the most celebrated, performed and reimagined ballets of this and the previous century. That was when I was still doing professional ballet at that upscale ballet school Amanda's parents enrolled me into after years and years of self-taught ballet. In December of my matric year my ensemble was to tour a revival of a 1977 Romeo and Juliet production in the US but I couldn't go

because I was to register for my first year at the University of Fort Hare in January of the

following year. Ryan tried to convince me to abandon that and go with our ensemble, saying it was an opportunity of a lifetime, but my mother wouldn't let me do something so reckless, neither would Alex, nor myself. Yes, there was a promise of dance scholarships for the leads to major in dance at the University of South Florida School of Theatre and Dance in the US if our tour became a success, but I just couldn't take the risk. Besides, I never wanted to make a career out of dance. Ryan on the other hand was excited to go because he had no other commitments, he was 23 at the time and had practically built his entire life around his dance career. With my situation different from his, I pulled out of my contract with the ensemble and lost the role of Juliet to my understudy. The three-month tour became a success and when it concluded, Ryan landed that 3-year scholarship and got to move to the States.

This man was my Romeo for two years after a year of me working hard trying to get the principal role of Juliet. In that two years we became more than just dance partners, we became very good friends. He came along and touched my heart and soul, my entire life in a very positive way. As my friend he saw me through my fair share of highs and lows, and he was always there for me. He cared a great deal about me but not even once did he hit on me. He was a sincere friend, a friend who tried to remain loyal and in touch even when he was in the States. But I didn't offer him the same courtesy - I just drifted away from him. Maybe I was subconsciously jealous of what he had accomplished, I don't know. But now that we are meeting again we haven't talked

in years.

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-Him: "Life was really great over there, but you know what they say: there's no place like home."

He says, his blue eyes staring straight into my own eyes as he runs his fingers through his blonde hair.

-Me: "I'm sorry I never kept in touch. I'm sorry I drifted away from you. You and I were meant to be friends forever, or at least that's what we promised each other before you left. But I didn't keep my promise, I don't even know why. I uhh...I don't know know whether I was too blind to see how much you cared." -Him: "Hey, don't worry about it. These things happen. Out of sight, out of mind, right? Seasons change and so do people. I guess we, too, changed and we lost that connection." -Me: "Ah come on, Ryan. Don't put it like that. But, anyway, it's so good finding you again. My long lost friend."

-Him: "Ewe kuhle ukukubona kwakhona, Somi. [Yes, it's good seeing you again, Somi.]" His weird white accent makes me laugh. -Him: "Anyway, was that your husband that just sped out of the parking lot? I'm seeing a ring on your finger and I saw you two by his car."

-Me: "No, he's still my fiancé actually. This is an engagement ring. But I'm sure that's a wedding ring on YOUR finger."

-Him: "Yeah, it is. Got married last winter, December 10th."

I chuckle.

-Me: "Hey, don't be coming with American tendencies here. December is summer to us, not winter...So, you married an American?" -Him: "Yeah, she's American. A very lovely woman."

-Me: "I'm sure she's beautiful. I know you've always had a great taste when it comes to women... Anyway, are you're still around here? In Theescombe?"

He was living here, in this very area that we are in right now, with his family before he left.

-Him: "No. I'm now based in East London. My wife and I have opened a dance studio there.

I'm only here to assist a friend of mine, the videographer. He asked me for that favour when his assistant couldn't make it."

-Me: "Oh, I see. Maybe I should pop by your studio sometime and just see it, you know.

I'm still in Alice but my fiancé lives in East London and I'll be with him for the next

couple of weeks, so I'll have time to come by and see what you guys are up to. But that's if you don't mind, of course."

-Him: "Of course, I don't mind. You'll also get to meet my wife."

-Me: "And you'll get to meet my fiancé." -Him: "Fantastic. Tell me, do you still dance?" -Me: "No, no, I don't. I stopped the day I left my Juliet role. I just had to focus on my studies."

-Him: "Well, maybe once you see our studio you'll be inspired to dance again."

Well, I doubt it. I think I outgrew that. But I don't say that to him.

-Me: "Maybe. Who knows."

-Him: "Let me give you my card. Call me, okay? We still need to catch up."

He takes it out of his pocket and hands it to me. I accept it with the promise to call soon. Then we share another hug and part ways. But before I walk back inside the hall I decide to call Doc and offer him an explanation about Ryan. The way he drove away makes me think he's mad. I don't even know why he is though because I haven't done anything wrong. Aren't I allowed to have male friends now? When did we get there? I don't remember having a problem with his female friends or colleagues. So why is he tripping? I don't get it. But I still need to give him an explation, now rather than later. I dial his number but his phone just rings unanswered. I try again, and again. But still, he doesn't pick up. Eshe, I wonder what's going on in that head of his. I guess I'll have to try him again later. For now, let me get back to the festivity inside the hall.

Thando

I've never been the overly jealous type and I never thought I'd ever be one, I just don't think it's healthy. But when I saw that guy, whoever the hell he is, wrapping his arms around my woman like that, I felt my anger levels going up. I was far to hear anything escaping their lips but close enough to see everything about their actions. The way they hugged suggests that they are very comfortable with each other, they sure know each other very well. But I don't think something has ever happened between them because I know for a fact that Soso has only one ex, and that's Alex. I don't think something's currently happening either because I trust my woman, in my heart I know that she would never cheat on me. It's the guy I don't trust. I'm a guy too, and I know

how we operate. The way he held her, the

positioning of his hands on her body, the length of the hug, I just didn't like it. I know that Soso is a woman, a beautiful one at that, and I know that guys probably hit on her on a daily. But knowing that something like that probably happens and seeing it happening are two different things. And the latter just doesn't sit well with me. Someleze is my wife, mine alone, I don't want no guys putting their filthy hands on her body. There's no longer space for a new variable in this equation. Fuck, I want to know who that guy is and what the hell he is to her. But when she called earlier I just couldn't talk to her. I was still annoyed, not by her of course, but by that guy's actions, and I didn't want to talk to her at that state, I just didn't want to end up saying something I shouldn't, something I'd later regret. I'll call her back later, for now I have work to do.

Feeling right at home in my white coat over my day-to-day clothes, but feeling down in my heart, I walk into the meeting room at the hospital to find team trauma - our team of nurses, surgeons and other doctors working together to provide effective care in the emergency department, in the middle of a handover. I'm a few minutes late.

"Oh, look Calvary is now here. You kids won't spend the evening and the night alone." That's Doctor Summers, one of the senior general surgeons who've been around these corridors for years. The "kids" he's referring to are the surgical registrars, and "Calvary" is me. No matter how much I've tried to have him stop calling me that, he just won't, and I'm now past the point of giving up. He makes it sound like I'm causing these "kids" extreme suffering, especially mental suffering, in their training. And that's not even true.

-Him: "Thank you for finally gracing us with your presence, Doctor December."

He says, with a smirk. If I were him I'd refrain from fucking with me right now, I'm really not in the mood for his bullshit today. But I don't say anything, I just lean on the wall at the back, with my hands tucked in the pockets of my coat.

-Him: "Calvary's gonna babysit you tonight, he'll oversee any surgery-related matters unless there's something major he can't handle with just you aboard the ship, in that case the other surgeons on call will be contacted. I know that I'm one of those surgeons but that's just on paper. I don't care if the sky is falling but if none of my patients requires EMERGENCY attention by yours truly, don't bother me at home. Everybody got that, right? Tonight, my kids, you only have yourselves, but Calvary is also gonna be here, and there are also other surgeons on call. So, I repeat, make sure nobody bothers me at home."

It's at that point that I just completely zone out. I can't tell you what's been said after that, I just got derailed and only brought back to earth by everybody's movements as they leave the room. Pulling myself together, I also follow them and walk out.

"You don't seem so okay today, Doctor D." That's Emily, the 27-year old first year surgical registrar that intercepted me in the corridor on my way home the other day. She comes to stand before me in the corridor and puts both her hands on my chest.

-Her: "Would you like to talk about it? I'm known to be a good listener."

She asks, seductively pulling both lapels of my white coat. Her tiny voice is supposed to be seductive too, but it only sounds like nails on a chalkboard to my ears.

I've been around long enough to know when a woman is flirting with me. And Emily has been flirting with me for some time now.-Her: "We can maybe grab some coffee and go to your office to talk and ease that tension."

She's really picked the wrong day to up her game with these antics of hers.

-Me: "Take your hands off of me right now, Doctor Marais."

She slowly takes them off but her eyes keep boring into mine.

-Me: "Listen, Doctor Marais, I'm a senior surgeon around here and you're a trainee. This is a teaching hospital and you're here to learn, not to seduce your seniors. Now go do medical stuff, all the scut work, just like your fellow trainees. And I'll be in my office catching up on some paperwork, I'll only come to the floor when paged." She looks down, somewhat embarrassed.

Then without a word she turns and walks away.

As I'm still watching her walk away, my cellphone buzzes in my pocket. And it's Someleze.

Season 2 #6 "I tore down my walls. And opened my doors. And made room for one. So, baby, I'm yours." - Alessia Cara

Someleze

Today the drive from Port Elizabeth to East London seems too long. I don't know, maybe it's because I'm anxious to get to Doc and talk to him once again. We did talk yesterday and he seemed alright, he seemed to have believed my explanation about Ryan. But I still need to talk to him face to face and make sure that we are really okay and that this misunderstanding is completely solved before we move forward. I do find his jealousy kind of cute but he needs to know that he could do better without it, he already has all of me for goodness sake.

This morning I woke up pretty early and got ready to hit the road immediately. I want Doc and I to talk and be okay before the twins get here this afternoon. I don't want the kids to find themselves in a tense environment, they deserve better than that.

After three hours that felt like six straight ones, I finally reach my destination. With the remote to the motorised gate, I drive through the little complex and go park the car securely. Then with my bag in hand I get out and go knock on Doc's door. It's now around 10:00 and I know that he's only expecting me around 13:00, but I'm already here.

I keep knocking but he takes time to come get the door. I understand why though - the poor guy must be deep in his sleep, he only got home a few hours ago after finishing his last emergency surgery around 6:30. He was so touched that he texted me about it. He said it was a 37-week pregnant woman who got seriously injured in a car accident in the early hours of this morning, and they had to choose between saving her or the baby, but in the end he and his team managed to save both. Some moments later the door opens a few inches, and I glimpse the man who means so much to me hovering just beyond the threshold. He's not dressed. All he has is a towel around his waist and slides on his feet. His sexy upper body is exposed, wet and sleek, an indication that he just stepped out of the shower. Damn, I have to do everything in my power not to drool.

When his eyes meet mine for the first time today, he lets out a warm smile of excitement.

-Him: "Sthandwa sam? I wasn't expecting you 'til later."

His smile is so damn contagious, I find myself smiling too.

-Me: "I know. But I missed you. Sue me." He chuckles.

-Him: "I just might. Come on in."

He opens the door wider and I step inside. -Me: "But I thought you were sleeping, considering the fact that you only got home around 7." He closes the door and comes to stand before me by the couch.

-Him: "I got here around 8:30 actually. I stayed in my office working on that lecture that I'll be presenting at the surgical conference next week. Then when I got here I took an hour for a workout. I was gonna go straight to bed after the shower."

This house has 3 bedrooms, but Doc turned the third one into a home gym and that's where he works out to keep his body in shape.

-Me: "Oh, I see."

-Him: "But now that you're here I doubt I'll go to sleep right away."

He takes my bag off my hand, lands it on the floor then pulls me to him for a passionate kiss. With my hands caressing his wet, naked body, I lose myself to him, thinking of nothing else...until he pulls back.

He takes my hand and sits me down on the couch before sitting next to me.

-Him: "Again, I'm sorry for what happened yesterday, sthandwa sam. I swear I'm not the

overly jealous type, my jealousy has limits. And like I said yesterday, it's not that I don't trust you, it's the guys I don't trust. I don't want to see some guy touching you inappropriately, and I don't want you to encourage them."

-Me: "Encourage them? What are you talking about? I didn't encourage anyone, Thando. And Ryan didn't touch me inappropriately. The guy's a dancer, he's just used to putting his hands on his dance partners the way he did to me. I don't think it was inappropriate and it certainly didn't mean anything. Ryan would never do that to me. He respects me as a friend, and I'd like to believe he also respects his new wife."

-Him: "I didn't say you encouraged HIM. And I know all that you're saying now, but yesterday I didn't. I didn't even know that the guy was the Ryan you used to tell me about. I'm sorry, okay?" -Me: "It's okay. And I'm glad you didn't do anything stupid when you saw me with the

guy, I'm glad you decided to take some time to cool off before talking to me. I wouldn't have wanted you to embarrass me in front of my friend and I certainly wouldn't have wanted us to fight over something so stupid." -Him: "Bona, sthandwa sam, I don't want to come across as that guy who doesn't want you to have male friends. It's okay, you can be friends with whoever you want to be friends with, but they should know that you're someone's woman and that there are boundaries. That's all."

-Me: "I get it. But, baby, I want you to trust me more. You may not trust the guys I'm close with, but you should trust me. Baby, I opened my door only to you. I have room for only one man in my heart and that's you. I'm all yours, babe. I'd never cheat on you. I respect you and I respect this ring on my finger, but most of all I respect myself and the baby I'm carrying. I would never go around opening my legs for other men when there's a baby growing in my tummy and a lobola that has been paid for me, I respect myself and my family too much to do that."

-Him: "I know, I know. And I trust you, babe. Believe that."

He shifts on the couch to sit much closer to me.

-Him: "Have I told you how much I love you today?"

He asks smiling, and I smile too as I shake my head 'no'.

-Him: "Well, I..."

He leans over and kisses my lips.

-Him: "...I love you...so ...so much."

The words leave his lips between the kisses, and his hands are busy tugging at my clothes. But I push him back and get to my feet. -Me: "Follow me and I'll show you just how much I love YOU, and that I'm all yours." I'm now walking on reverse in the direction of our bedroom, my eyes on him and a seductive smile on my face as I take my jacket off and drop it to the floor. He bites his bottom lip then get up from the couch.

As soon as we get to the bedroom, his hands are all over me. He pushes me up against the door and kisses me again, harder and with more need this time. His hands move up and down my back, grabbing my ass with every pass. But when his hands come to the front and his fingers start to pull at the zipper of my jeans, I slide out from between him and the door, about to make him trade places with me.

-Me: "Today is all about you, honey. And I'm in control of your pleasure."

I shove him up against the door, pin him and kiss his lips hard before moving down to his neck. Still devouring his lips, I let one hand trail down his shoulders, down his bare chest, down his abs. I feel his hitch as I work my way closer to his waist. My hand reaches his erection and I rub it over the towel. He moans in response, and I love it.

-Him: "You had better do me hard because right now I'm all revved up."

He whispers so close to my my mouth.

With an alluring smile, I step away from him and move deeper into the vast bedroom.

Him: "And where are you going?"

-Me: "You better follow me."

I wink at him and kick off my shoes. He smirks then follows me to the bed.

-Me: "Lay down."

I give him an order as he comes to stand before me by the bed. He chuckles but happily follows my orders.

Ever so slowly, I lose my top, jeans then my bra and panties. With each article of clothing I lose, Doc's breathing gets increasingly more jagged as he ravishes me with his eyes.

Completely naked now, I crawl up to him and straddle him, spreading myself as wide as I can go.

-Me: "Don't come quickly, okay?"

I whisper close to his ear before devouring his lips. Moving away from his mouth, I kiss down his throat, gently tickling my way down with the tip of my tongue. I continue down his chest until I reach his waist. I yank off his towel, loving how his cock springs out hard as steel. I lower my mouth onto it, taking him in as far as I can before sliding back off again. I repeat the motion over and over again until my eyes water.

"Oh. My. God. Holy. Fuck."

He moans. I pull my mouth off slowly, catching my breath while I wrap a hand around the base of his thick shaft. I lick the tip like an ice cream cone before sliding my mouth back down his cock, my hand and mouth moving in unison, up and down, up and down. His hands claw at the mattress as I move faster.

-Him: "Jesus Christ, Soso, stop. Stop, stop, I'm gonna come."

I chuckle with him still in my mouth. But I stop then get on top of him, straddling him. I let him catch a breath and the climax that was

approaching to subside before I tease the tip of his cock in my wet sex, swirling it along the throbbing bud of my clit. I continue to rub and tease myself, ignoring the thrusts of his hips. My free hand goes up to one of my breasts, and I play with it, squeezing it as I continue to flick my clit with his cock. I can feel his cock pulsing desperately against my p**sy, and I smile as I see him being consumed by desire. His breath is heaving and his eyes are filled with lust.

-Him: "God damn it, woman. You are going to kill me."

He grabs my hips and tries to force me down on him but I hold my position and laugh.

-Me: "Not so fast, honey."

I crawl up to his face and display my swollen, wet sex over him. Like he was a starving man, he grabs me by the waist and starts eating me. He delves his tongue deep into me, pushing me down by my hips, penetrating me with his tongue. Fuck, that always feels so good. I moan as he drags his tongue to my clit

and starts rubbing it in long, languid strokes. At this rate I swear I'm going to come and I don't want that, so I get off of him and go down to his cock. I finally slide myself down onto his rock hard dick, slipping my wetness along his length and I watch as his body tenses. He lets out a moan as I swirl my hips and clench my inner muscles around him. I go slow, sliding all the way off his cock before going back down. I throw my head back as I start to ride him. But he pulls me down, run his fingers down my throat and down my chest, over my breasts. I ride him harder, digging my hips hard against his as his hands play with my breasts, tugging on my nipples then rolling them slowly between his fingers. Before I know it, the wave of orgasm, the hot pricks of molten pleasure starts to build up within me. I spread myself even wider, taking all of him inside of me. He forces his hips up, but I push them down, grinding against him, riding him frantically.

-Him: "Holy fuck, Soso. This feels so good." He groans beneath me as I go harder on him. Then hot waves pull me apart from within, engulfing me in a fiery explosion. I collapse on his chest, heaving.

"I hope you aren't quitting on me, because I'm not done with you yet."

He says, breathless.

-Me: "I'm not done with you either." Coming once is never enough for me when I'm with this man. I need more. I sit back up and start grinding him, harder and harder. He grabs my hips, holding me in place as he sets the pace from below. I cry out as he drives deeper and deeper into me until I feel the heavy pleasure build up again. Our hips gyrate so fast and hard, with him driving even deeper inside of me. I throw my head back and let myself get lost in the sensations. His grunts bring me back to the present, he has to be getting close but I'm still not there yet. Not wanting to be left behind, I put all my weight on one hand and use the other to reach down and play with my clit with two fingers.

"Oh my god yes."

I moan. My orgasm hit me out of nowhere, harder and stronger than the first time. Doc thrusts hard and deeper into me as the waves of pleasure rolls through my body, dragging it out as long as possible. And he soon follows me, filling me with his hot liquid as he lets out a loud, prolonged groan under me. When my orgasm subsides, I lean down and kiss him. I don't stop kissing him until he has gone soft and slips out of me. Then I roll off of him. -Him: "Damn, baby, that was hot." -Me: "It sure was."

He pulls me close and I snuggle in his arms, melting at his soft touch, back and forth, along my sides.

-Him: "I love you."

-Me: "I love you too, babe."

He pecks my lips then he drapes the blanket over us and holds me in his arms, making me feel unbelievably wanted, making me feel that he and I really belong together. I let myself savor this moment a little before rolling away from him.

. I can see that the sleep he evaded is now catching up with him, and I decide to leave him to sleep. But before I do, I need one thing from him.

-Me: "Baby, I need to cook something nice for the twins before they get here. So can you give me some money for the ingredients?" -Him: "I don't have cash, so take my card. I think it's in the back pocket of my pants on the couch. I used it this morning at the filling station."

He answers with a groggy voice, his eyes closed. He sure is a moment away from drifting into a deep slumber.

-Me: "Okay, thanks."

I go take a shower first. When I'm done getting ready, I go get the card from Doc's

neatly folded pants on the couch in the corner of the bedroom. Clearly it's the pants he was wearing at work last night.

I find the card but I also find something else. A piece of paper with a phone number and a short message: "Call me. Ems."

Who the hell is Ems now? I ask myself, as I feel my blood pressure rising. I want to wake Doc up and ask him who the hell is this Ems, but I think better of it. Let me let him sleep, he's tired, I'll ask him later when he wakes up and when I have also calmed down.

I go grocery shopping then I come back and start cooking. I've decided to make:

Spinach Soup with Creamy Mushroom Mash, Mussels with Mustard Mayonnaise, Seared Scallops with Tarragon-Butter Sauce, Garden Salad with Cranberries, Zucchini Rice Gratin Rhubarb, and for dessert a Vanilla Cream Lattice Pie. I know that it will take me hours and hours to cook all the dishes, but I like it, this will keep me busy all afternoon. When I'm done, I take out the plates and the

cutlery. Doc walks into the dining room when I'm about to start setting the table for the early dinner with the family. It's now a little before 17:00 and Doc has already showered, ready to go pick up the girls from the airport. Their flight lands at 17:05 but he's still here, I guess he was too tired to wake up earlier. -Me: "Hey. Before you go I need to ask you something."

I want to ask about that Ems but he doesn't give me the chance.

-Him: "I'm already running late, sthandwa sam. Whatever it is, I'm sorry but you'll have to ask me later. You know how much those little divas hate waiting."

He comes to peck my lips then leaves. I guess I'm going to have to wait some more, huh. Upon second thought, I don't set the table, I just put everything on it and leave it there. I'll set it with the girls later. In the meantime I prepare the croutons, and put the dressing in the salad, thick and fatty, just as Lily prefers. When they arrive I get jumped on in excitement and I receive several kisses on my cheeks. Awww my girls are really sweet and they sure are as fond of me as I am of them. The last time I saw them was in April and they've grown some more since then. They are 10 but you'd swear they are 12 or something.

Some moments later, I set the table with them then by 18:30 we all sit down to eat as a family. I hardly touch my food though, I just watch as Lily digs in hungrily while her twin, Lathi, is trying to calculate how many bites of which food she can eat so as not to ruin her diet of 650 calories a day - life of a little ballerina. My eyes move to Doc and I watch him chewing his food slowly. I can't stop wondering who that Ems is to him, but I can't ask him right now, I have to wait until we are alone. Even though I'm kind of pissed I try to act normal for the benefit of the kids and we enjoy our dinner, with the girls talking nonstop.

After dessert, me and the girls clear the table and do the dishes. Then I leave them in the lounge playing video games with their father. I go take a shower, getting ready for bed.

Doc walks into our bedroom as I peel the bed covers ready to get under them.

-Him: "You're already going to bed? But I thought you'd want to go say goodnight to the twins first."

-Me: "Yeah, I'll go."

I leave the room and go to the twins' bedroom. I kiss them goodnight then return to our own bedroom. I find Doc already in bed and I join him. As soon as i get in next to him he tries to touch me but I push him off. Hell, we need to talk first.

-Me: "Baby, who's Ems?"

-Him: "Why are you asking?"

-Me: "I'm asking because I've found a piece of paper with her name and phone number in

your pocket when I was getting the card. She wants you to call her. Who's she?" -Him: "Damn, that little devil. So she was

putting her number in my pocket."

He growls, seeming a little angry.

-Me: "Who's she?"

-Him: "Emily, the trainee surgeon from the hospital."

-Me: "Emily as in Doctor Marais?"

-Him: "Yeah. Her."

I know Dr Marais. I've seen her a number of times at the hospital when visiting Doc.

-Me: "So why would she want you to call her in her private cellphone?"

-Him: "Because she wants me. The girl's been flirting with me but I put her in her place yesterday. I thought she got the message but clearly I was wrong because here, she put her number in my pocket. I didn't even know that it was there, I just know that she tried to get closer to me in the elevator and put her hand on my behind. I told her off, but I didn't know that she was putting her number in my pocket. I swear, babe, I didn't know." -Me: "She's been flirting with you, and you never told me this before because? Do you want her, Thando? Why did you keep this a secret from me?"

-Him: "Baby, please don't do that. Let's not fight over this, please. I didn't tell you because I didn't think it was important. I'm sure you also don't tell me about every man that hits on you. Do you?...I don't want Emily, Someleze. I thought you knew me, babe. I would never do that to you. I'm committed to you, to us. You're the only woman for me, don't you get that?"

-Me: "Well, you better put this Emily in her place and make the message clear. I don't want history to repeat itself. I don't want what happened with that nurse in Jo'burg to happen again."

-Him: "It won't. Trust me. I'll deal with Emily once and for all."

-Me: "Good."

I turn and look the other way, ready to sleep. He tries to touch me again, kissing my neck from behind, and I can feel his erection rubbing against my butt but I really can't have sex now.

-Him: "Come on, babe, don't tell me you've been put off by this Emily crap."

-Me: "No. I'm just not comfortable with having sex while there are kids in the next room. They'll hear everything."

-Him: "We'll be quiet, baby. Please."

I chuckle.

-Me: "Quiet? Do we even know what that means? I want to feel free when doing it, Thando. Free to ignore my inhibitions. Free to be as loud as I want to. Free to tell you just what I want. And I can't do that with the kids next door, literally. No, I can't do this, sorry." -Him: "Fuck."

He curses under his breath, but I can still hear him. Clearly annoyed, he turns away from me and looks the other way. Not long after that his phone rings and it's the hospital. There's an emergency and he's on call.

-Him: "I'm sorry, babe, but I gotta go. I'll be back as soon as possible. Okay?"

He says already climbing down the bed.

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-Me: "It's okay."
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He quickly gets dressed then leaves without saying anything more. I just hope he won't get to meet Emily there.

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Thando

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I drive as fast as I can to the hospital even though I'm frustrated as hell by what Someleze just did to me. The twins will be with us for the next two weeks so I wonder if that means we won't have sex for that entire period. This is just bullshit. I get to the hospital, and the first person I meet upon walking in is Emily. She immediately comes straight to me. -Her: "Good, you're here, Doctor D. I'll bring you up to speed."

Season 2 #7

"You can hide behind your stories, but don't take me for a fool. You can tell me that there's nobody else, but I feel it. You can look into my eyes and pretend all you want but I know, I know. Your love is just a lie." - Simple Plan

. Thando

My first instinct is to come down on Emily like a ton of bricks right now, but then I stop myself - now is not the time. -Me: "What do we have?" My voice comes out harsher than I would have liked. And that causes her to hesitate. -Me: "Dr Marais, you're here to bring me up to speed, so do that."

I say taking strides down the corridor. She hurries after me, trying to catch up after snagging a blood bag out of a cooler. -Me: "That O negative?"

-Her: "Yeah. We've got a major bleeder in there. The patient is male, mid 30s. Bullet wound to the abdomen, teared a small part of his liver. When removing the bullet, we pulled his gall bladder and the major bleeding started."

-Me: "What's his pro time?"

-Her: "He's at 36 seconds. Like I said, we've got a major bleeder in there."

-Me: "Who cut him open?"

-Her: "Doctor Limba. It was urgent and there was no senior around. We had to stop the bleeding and remove the bullet, but it just got worse." Doctor Khwezi Limba is a chief surgical registrar, but as a trainee he needs help in a case like this.

-Me: "Tell them that I'll be there now, now." I go put on my scrubs as Emily rushes off to the OR.

Now wearing scrubs and a head gear, I also move down to the OR hall. I stick my head to the operating room to let them know that I've arrived.

"Calvary's here."

Linda, the scrub nurse, says with excitement upon seeing me. Khwezi looks up and nod, glad to see me too.

-Me: "I just need to scrub up then I'll join you."

They nod. And I move to the scrub room and begin scrubbing. When I'm done I go join the operation in progress. I greet the other medical professionals in the room who are here to do their part in making sure that the surgery goes well, then I move to the patient on the table. Khwezi, assisted by one of the junior surgical registrars, is doing his best with his steady hands. I take over from him then ask the junior registrar to step back and let Khwezi assist me. We work so intently, never looking up.

-Me: "Okay, Tony, I'm clamping. Can he tolerate it?"

I'm asking Tony, the anaesthesiologist.

-Him: "He's very sick, weak."

-Me: "Do we have a choice?"

-Him: "Go for it."

-Me: "Linda, give me a clamp."

Linda, the scrub nurse, passes me the instrument and Khwezi and I continue to work, with that junior registrar now assisting again, while a couple of other junior registrars, including Emily, are just observing. -Khwezi: "What did your woman say when you had to leave her in bed and come here, Thando? Didn't she give you a hard time? I'm asking because my wife's so jealous of this late night thing we've got going here." He asks never looking up, working. -Me: "Someleze understands."

Khwezi and I are not exactly friends but we do talk outside of these walls. We live in the same area, he knows Someleze and I also know his wife. But that doesn't give him the right to ask me personal stuff in front of everyone in this operating room.

-Me: "I'm sure he'll live. Bleeding has stopped. And we're done here."

I am now talking about the patient, the only thing we should be talking about right now. -Him: "You staying for the closing?"

-Me: "No, that's on you. I'm going home." I really can't stay for mere closing, I need to get home. I move away from the table and shed my gloves and gown.

-Him: "Hey, Thando."

I turn to look at him.

-Him: "Thanks for coming."

I want to say it's my job but I just nod then leave the room. I go back to the scrub room and throw away my hat and mask. Just then, the door opens behind me and it's Emily.

-Her: "Doctor D, can we talk?"

Someleze

I haven't stopped checking the time since Doc left for the hospital. I wish he could come back home soon, I'm seriously not comfortable with the possibility of him being in the same environment as Emily right now, especially because I know how sexually frustrated he was when he left. Girls like Emily are just like Thuso, they don't know when to stop and in the state Doc was in when he left he might get tempted. Men are men.

I sit up on the bed, my heart refusing to rest until Doc comes back home to me. As I'm still sitting there, I hear a frantic knock at my door. I wonder what do the girls want at this hour. But before I can even answer, Lily barges in. From the glow of my bedside lamp I can see her face and her shaking hands, she's as frantic as her knock was.

-Her: "Mama, please come quickly."

They both call me mama now, even though neither I nor Doc has ever asked them to.

-Me: "What's going on, baby? What's going on?"

I ask already climbing down the bed and putting on my sleepers.

-Her: "Something's wrong with Lathi. Come now."

She runs out of my bedroom and I don't hesitate, I immediately run after her. We get to their bedroom and I find Lathi having a seizure on the bed. Oh hell no! What am I going to do? I've never seen anybody having a seizure before and my anxiety is now kicking in.

-Lily: "What are we gonna do, mama? Aren't we supposed to put something in her mouth so she wouldn't swallow her tongue?"
-Me: "No, no, don't put anything in her mouth, that might hurt her. And no, she

won't swallow her tongue, there's no such

thing. Just watch her and make sure that she doesn't hurt herself, I'll call your father." I grab her phone on the nightstand and call Doc, but his phone send me straight to voicemail. What the hell? I'm not just in panic mode right now, I'm losing my mind.

"Thando, why aren't you here?"

I scream and hurl the phone across the room. It hits the wall and falls to the floor,

destroyed. Lily starts crying, I'm guessing not because of her phone but because I'm scaring her with my crazy behaviour.

Okay, Soso, stop. Stop and focus. I say under my breath, trying to calm myself down.

-Me: "I'm sorry, baby. I'm sorry. Let's just stay with your sister and make sure she doesn't hurt herself until she's fully awake. But if the seizure doesn't stop after 5 minutes we'll take her to the hospital."

The seizure stops soon but when I check, I find that she is not breathing. Shit! I immediately straddle her and start mouth-tomouth rescue breathing. When she regains consciousness and starts breathing on her own, I pull a robe over her PJs and ask Lily to

also put on some warm clothes as I carry her sister to the car. I put her in the back seat and have Lily sit with her as soon as she gets to the car. Then we make our dreadful drive to the hospital, with me still in my skimpy PJs. On the way I try Doc's number one more time but it sends me to straight to voicemail once again. Dammit, this man. My anxiety levels go sky high when Lathi experiences yet another seizure, and I take corners on two wheels until we reach the hospital. When we get there, the convulsions have stopped but Lathi is still out of it. I carry her inside, and immediately when we approach the reception a nurse comes to assist us.

-Her: "What's wrong with her?"

-Me: "She's just had multiple seizures. Please help her."

-Her: "I need a doctor over here."

She screams for help, then turns to me.

-Her: "Has she ever experienced this before?" I seriously don't know, but Lily comes to my rescue.

-Lily: "No, this is the first time. Is she gonna be okay?"

-The Nurse: "She will be okay. Anyone with a history of seizures in her family? Are you her mother?"

I don't know the answer to this question either.

-Me: "No. I'm her stepmother. And I don't know much about her medical history, but her father's here, Doctor December."

-The Nurse: "Bongi, please page Dr December now."

She's talking to the receptionist. They had better move fast because Lathi's weight is getting too much on my arms, and I can't put her down when she's still like this. As I'm about to complain about that, a doctor and another nurse arrive with a gurney and they take Lathi from me and put her on it. The nurse I was talking to tells them what I've just told her and they push the gurney away. I'm left having to fill in a form at the reception, and I'm about to do that when I spot Khwezi talking to who I assume are his patient's family at the waiting area.

-Me: "Lily, please go sit over there, baby. And don't move until I come sit with you, okay?" -Her: "Okay, mama."

She goes to take a seat at the waiting area, and I immediately walk over to Khwezi,

leaving the form I was supposed to fill out on the counter at the reception.

-Me: "Khwezi, I'm sorry to disturb but I need to speak to Thando. His daughter is sick. Is he still in the OR?"

-Him: "Hey, Soso. No, Thando left the OR about 15 minutes ago saying he was going home."

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Home? Which home? I leave Khwezi standing there and race to Doc's office.

Still in panic mode, I get to his office and knock already pushing the door. I know that I had some disturbing thoughts when I was alone in my bed, but nothing could have prepared me for what my eyes land on when the door swings open. Emily is sitting on Doc's lap, her lips on his. Shocked and in disbelief, I just stand there like a statue while Doc quickly jumps, pushing the bitch off of him.

-Him: "Baby?"

He's looking at me as if I've just caught him with his pants down, literally. Well, I might as well have.

-Emily: "Oops!"

The bitch says with a smirk on her face. And from the way she walks over to where I am standing, at the door, she's sure of herself. When she gets to me, she looks at me from head to toe as if sizing me up, then she walks out. On another stress-free night, and if I wasn't so paralysed by shock, I would probably slap the bitchiness out of this woman but right now I can't, I have neither the time nor the energy to deal with her. "Baby, I swear, it's not what you think."

Doc says after his whore has walked out. -Me: "Thando, please spare me the crap. Just come, your daughter needs you."

I finally manage to pull myself out of the shock and push words out of my mouth.

-Him: "What do you mean my daughter needs me?"

He's now standing in front of me.

-Me: "Thando, Lathi had seizures. I just brought her in."

-Him: "What?"

He doesn't wait for me to answer, he hurries out of the office, leaving me to pull the door closed. He races down the corridor and I follow behind.

When we get to the reception he asks them which room his daughter has been taken to. As soon as they tell him he hurries off without even saying anything to me. He just leaves me standing there as if I'm a worthless piece of log. Well, fuck him.

About 30 minutes later he comes back and finds me sitting with Lily at the waiting area. He plops down next to me and lets out a huge sigh. I want to ask about Lathi but I'm too mad to say anything to him right now. Hell, my anger won't even allow me to acknowledge his presence. It has built up to the max in the past 30 minutes.

-Lily: "Daddy, how's Lathi? Is she gonna be okay?"

-Him: "Yes, she's fine. But the doctors are still trying to figure out the cause of the seizures. They are running some tests and I also had them take her for an MRI. We'll know once all the results come back."

-Me: "And when are they gonna come back?" I find myself asking even though I'd told myself that I won't say anything to him. Thing is I'm worried about Lathitha. -Him: "I've had them speed things up at the lab and I think the results will be ready in an hour."

-Me: "Oh, good."

I say dryly.

-Lily: "Can I go see her?"

-Him: "A little later, baby. Right now I need to talk to your mama alone."

He looks at me.

-Him: "Sthandwa sam, can we please go talk in private?"

I'm so not doing this with this man right now. Really, not now.

-Me: "I'm not going anywhere with you,

Thando. And I don't wanna talk."

-Lily: "Is everything okay, Dad?"

-Him: "Yeah, everything's fine. Just sit still and keep quiet, okay?"

Damn him for doing this when there are kids around. Damn him!

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We sit there in silence, and I even hate taking his jacket but I need to cover up, and the night's extremely low temperatures aren't so kind on me.

About two hours later we get the results. It turns out Lathi's seizures were caused by low sugar levels in her blood. It's that stupid diet of hers, I know it. The girl literally took a few bites of food during dinner and she was done. And that's apparently what she does all the time. If why Busi has been encouraging or even pushing her to take it this far, I honestly have no idea. Does she want her daughter to grow up as a successful ballerina so bad that she would let her starve to lose weight? This is a 10 year old girl for goodness sake. What kind of a mother is she? I'm so mad right now. But then again, I'm not a mother, what do I know? I questioned this in my head during dinner but because I didn't want to sound like I'm saying Busi is a bad mother, I chose to keep quiet. She and I have a good relationship right now and I don't want to ruin it.

But anyway, I'm glad Lathi's condition is not serious, and that they won't keep her here overnight.

"I'm going to drive with the girls in my car." Doc tells me when he comes back with Lathi. -Me: "You'll do no such thing, Thando. The girls came here with me and they'll go home with me. You can stay behind and finish off what you and Emily already started in your office. Me and the kids will be fine."

I yank off Lathi's medication from his hand then turn to the twins.

-Me: "Girls, come. Let's go home." The girls follow me and we exit the hospital, going to my car. On the way home, I can't even hear a word they are saying. My mind is still stuck on what I saw in that office. But how could Thando do something like that? How could he? The way I'm so mad at him right now I wouldn't even sleep next to him tonight if I had somewhere else to go. But since I don't, I have to put up with his annoying face. I feel like dying when he pulls up behind me as we reach the gate of our complex. The bastard must have taken another route because I didn't see him anywhere in my rearview mirror. We both drive in, and I notice him leaping out of his car immediately after parking it. I don't know what his plan is but he's already in my face as soon as the girls and I are out of our car.

-Him: "Lily, take your sister and go inside now."

-Lily: "But, dad, I..."

-Him: "NOW, Lily!"

He growls, harshly cutting his daughter off mid-sentence.

Shaken, Lily takes Lathi's hand and they walk to the house. Seeing that they are now inside, Doc turns to me.

-Him: "Can we please talk now?"

He opens the passenger door of his car, inviting me to get in. Not wanting drama outside in the middle of the night, I get in. And he also gets in on his side. -Him: "Baby, what you saw in that office is not what you think? I swear."

-Me: "Oh? What am I even thinking, Thando?" -Him: "I know that you think you walked in on me and Emily making out, but that's not true."

-Me: "It's not? Khwezi told me that you left the OR fifteen minutes before I got there, Thando. But instead of coming straight home you went to your office with Emily. The same Emily you told me was flirting with you. The same woman you told me you didn't want. Do you kiss every woman you don't want, Thando? Do you have them sit on your lap?" -Him: "Sthandwa sam, listen. This is what happened. Emily came to me after the surgery and asked to talk to me about a medical case they had before I got there. I couldn't say no because assisting them is part of my job description, I had to be professional about it. So we went to my office and discussed what we had to discuss. It's only when we were done that she started her

bullshit. She sat on me and before I knew it her lips were on mine. She's the one who kissed me...The devil's timing is always impeccable, that much I can tell you. You got there just as I was about to push her off of me. I swear."

-Me: "Oh, wow. How friggin' convenient. You can hide behind your lame stories, Thando, but don't take me for a fool. We both know that you are lying to me now just as you were when you told me that you don't want Emily. Just as you always are when you tell me that there's nobody else. You can look into my eyes and play with words or pretend all you want but now I know that your love is nothing but one big, fat lie."

-Him: "Baby, that is not true. I love you and I didn't do anything to hurt you. Please believe me."

-Me: "Tell me, Thando. Why is it that it's always these women who are throwing themselves at you? What do you have that they want so much?" -Him: "Maybe they see in me exactly what you also saw when you decided to let me into your life."

Oh, he thinks this is a joke.

-Me: "You know what, Thando? Fuck you." I get out of his car and slam the door behind me. I'm so fucking angry right now. Upon walking into the house I go straight to the girls' bedroom to see if they are okay before going to my own bedroom, which I've now come to dread. To get myself warm after being out in the cold night, I go take a quick, warm shower. When I get back to the bedroom I find Doc already in our bed. Damn, how I wish he could give me some space. Irritated as hell, I slip next to him and face the other way. Immediately, I feel his hand creeping up to me, pulling me to him. -Me: "Thando, ndicela undiyeke maan tu. [Thando, please leave me alone, please.]" I move away from him and he lets me. -Him: "I love you, and I'm sorry you think I've done something to hurt you."

I don't answer, I just close my eyes and try to fall asleep. He, too, turns and face the other way. This sure is going to be tough.

When I wake up I don't find Doc next to me. I'm sure he's around though, in the home gym, but I wish he could just go away. I'm really not in the mood to be in his presence, but I'm going to have to put up with him because he's going nowhere today, it's his day off work.

I drag my tired bones out of bed then make it, before going to take a shower. After the much needed and much rejuvenating shower, I turn the water off. And it is then that I here the sound of our bedroom door opening. That must be this annoying man, and I know that he'll come straight to the bathroom to clean up. Fuck, I don't want him to find me stark naked in here. Hastily, I step out of the shower and reach for a towel, wrapping it

around my naked torso as fast as possible. Oh God! Please don't let him come in here until I walk out. Thing is I know myself, resisting him takes everything in me no matter how angry I am at him, and the worst past is that he knows it too. God please, don't let him come here, I don't want him to take advantage and I don't want to be tempted. But my prayer doesn't reach God because the bathroom door clicks open and Doc walks in already taking off his vest. He comes to stand in front of me, enveloping me with the warmth of his body. Jesus, why does he have to be so sexy? And all that sweat from working out adds to his hotness.

-Him: "Sthandwa sam, can we please talk? Calmly this time around. Please?"

I take a step back, not wanting to be this close to him.

-Me: "Talk about what, Thando? The fact that I was home alone when our daughter got sick and you were out there whoring around?" I say, the words increasing my anger levels to the max in an instant. And at this point, I no longer care how sexy he is. My anger outweighs any of that. I'm sure that he can see that I'm angry but I still notice a tiny smile playing at his lips. I don't even know why it's there, maybe it's because I just used "our" when referring to his daughter.

-Him: "I didn't do anything to hurt you, baby. What I told you last night is the honest truth. I swear...And thank you. Thank you for being there for our daughter when I couldn't. I may not have said it last night but I really, really appreciate it. I don't know what could have happened if they were home alone."

-Me: "Honestly? None of what you've just said means anything to me, Thando. In fact, I don't wanna talk to you about anything. Just step aside and allow me to pass."

I swear I can see a wave of pain washing over him as my harsh words reach his ears. He slowly steps aside and let me pass, without saying a word. I go back to our bedroom to apply some lotion on my body and slip into something comfortable. Then I go to the kitchen to prepare breakfast for everyone, pretending as if life has resumed its regular course for the sake of the twins.

Doc comes to join us at the table and I have to pretend to be interested in everything he and the twins talk about, just for peace. Thirty minutes later, the torture is over. I clear the table and go do the dishes. Then I go to the bedroom to change into something appropriate and also grab my handbag. When I come out I find the twins in the lounge and I tell them, not their father, that I'm going out. Standing within earshot, Doc overhears me and he fails to keep quiet.

-Him: "Where are you going?"

-Me: "Anywhere but here."

I walk out with my car keys and he follows me. As I pull the door car door open, he grabs it and pushes it shut.

-Him: "Soso, where are you going?"

-Me: "I'm going to see Ryan in Gonubie. I just can't be in the same space as you right now, Thando. I need some air."

Between chopping and pleeling in the kitchen yesterday, I called Ryan and told him that my fiancé and I would love to come by and see his dance studio today. I said that because I knew that Doc won't be going to work today and that the twins, especially Lathi, would love to see the studio. And Ryan's wife would also be there. So we were kind of going to make it a get-together between the two families and get all the parties to know each other better over lunch, but that's all ruined now.

-Him: "You need some air and you go to Ryan? Why do you have to go to him? Can't you go somewhere else?"

So fuckin' unbelievable. He still has the nerve to be jealous when he's the one who can't control his needs.

-Me: "Just let go of my door, Thando, and let me to go." -Him: "Soso, I'm begging you, sthandwa sam, don't do anything stupid out there just to get back at me. Don't do something I didn't do." -Me: "Just let go of the door and step away!" My voice is now raised. This man is really annoying me. He looks at me with pleading eyes for a moment then opens the door and lets me get inside.

-Him: "Please drive safely."

He says, then he close the door for me. I start the engine, put the car on reverse and drive out of there. Leaving him standing there, arms folded across the chest.

. I get to Ryan's studio less than 30 minutes later, and thanks to the GPS I didn't get lost. I call him and tell him that I'm at the parking lot and he comes out to get me. As soon as he sees me leaning against my car he lets out a smile. I meet him half way and we pull each other in a hug. -Him: "Where's your fiancé? I thought he'd be here too."

-Me: "Sorry, he couldn't come. He got called in at work."

I say lying.

-Him: "Uh that's unfortunate. My wife is not around either. She had to go to Jo'burg this morning, some family problems."

-Me: "That's really unfortunate."

-Him: "But it doesn't mean we can't have some fun inside the studio. Come, let's go inside."

We walk over to the studio entrance and I'm immediately wowed when I step inside. It is really nice, elegant.

-Me: "So this is where the magic happens?" I ask looking at the dancers stretching on the floor.

-Him: "This is where it all happens."

He says slipping his arm around my waist, pulling me to him.

The next episode will come when this and the previous post reach 2K likes and 300 comments. Let's please work together, lovies. I always deliver, so please do your part too. To those who always like and comment I really, really appreciate you. The story is moving forward because of y'all <3

Season 2 #8 [Because writing is my therapy]

"Please don't go, you know that I need you. I can't breathe without you, live without you, be without you." - Shayne Ward

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"May I have this dance?"
Ryan asks, his hands on me, already
positioned for a dance. I laugh and wiggle
myself away from him.
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-Me: "I-dance yani na wena? [What dance?] We don't even have music." -Him: "We never needed music to do our thing before. Let's just do a piece for old times sake. Let's show these kids how it's done."

By "kids" I'm sure he's referring to the dancers warming up on the dance floor some stretching, others doing a series of push-ups.

-Me: "Those were great times, but I don't do that anymore, Ryan. I'm fine with just watching. I also wanted to come with my kids, you know. Just to watch. But the other one got sick last night, so I didn't want her to come here and get tempted to take the dance floor, I want her to rest. The girl eats, drinks and breathes ballet. Temptation was gonna win if she had come through."

-Him: "You have kids, Somi?"

He asks, a little confused as he tucks his hands in his pockets.

-Me: "Well, they are my fiancé's. Ten-year-old twin girls."

-Him: "Oh. That's nice. So how's she now? The one who got sick?"

-Me: "She's okay. She just needs to rest and eat balanced meals...I just wonder what kind of mother I'll be to my own child, you know. It hurts like hell when they get sick."

I say touching my tummy.

-Him: "Wait, are you already carrying a precious cargo in there?"

I nod, smiling.

-Him: "Oh wow, congratulations. Life is really moving forward, hey. How far along are you?" -Me: "Thanks. I'm 6 weeks now. I'm excited, that's for sure. But if I'm being honest, I'm also kind of nervous. I hear being a mother is one of the most toughest jobs in the world. And my mother can attest to that."

-Him: "But I'm sure you'll be a great mother, Somi. Pity I can't say the same about Megan. Can you believe that she doesn't want kids?" Megan, is his wife. I got to know her name yesterday when I called.

-Me: "She doesn't?"

-Him: "She doesn't. But I'm hoping she'll change her mind as the time goes."
-Me: "Yah, maybe she'll be singing a different

tune a few years from now. Don't stop hoping and trying to make her see things your way." -Him: "Yeah, I don't have a choice."

-Me: "I came here hoping to see her, you know."

-Him: "I know. But she really had to go. It was an unforseen trip. And what's worse is that I don't even know when she'll be coming back." -Me: "Really? What's she doing in Jo'burg?" -Him: "Dealing with family problems. Family back home in the US. Her mother called late last night saying her father's knocking on the door to the next life. Apparently he's been sick for weeks now but they kept that from us because they didn't want Megan to worry, and they were also hoping that the big guy would recover soon. But now that things are getting worse, they had no choice but to tell us. So Megan flew out to Jo'burg this morning to take a flight out to the US."

-Me: "Yoh. I'm so sorry to hear that about your father-in-law, buddy. This must be a

stressful time for your wife. For you too." -Him: "It is. It is. I hope he'll be okay though. Miracles do happen...And I also need another miracle to happen around this studio now that Megan is not around."

-Me: "What do you mean?"

-Him: "I don't come here much often. I only come on Mondays, like today, and that's because I don't work on Mondays. On the other days I work as an assistant for Dr Pretorius, a local sports medicine physician. Megan is the one who's always here, accompanying the ballet classes. But now that she's not around I need to find another accompanist. I can fill in for her today, but what about tomorrow or the next day?" -Me: "That means you need to find another accompanist as soon as possible. But I don't think you can find one for tomorrow, that's too short notice."

-Him: "Exactly why I need a miracle."

-Me: "No kidding. And the instructors? How many do you have?"

-Him: "Just three right now. One for each class in a day. Ballet in the morning. Hip hop in the afternoon. Then the several ballroom styles are catered for in the evening, from 17:30 to 19:30."

-Me: "That's nice. So when's the first class of the day going to begin?"

He lifts his left hand to check the time on his wrist watch.

-Him: "In a few minutes, actually. At 11. And it will run for two hours. They all run for two hours."

-Me: "Oh, good. Let it start already so I can watch. I'm sure watching something I used to love more than anything will brighten up my mood."

-Him: "I'm hoping it'll CHANGE your mood so you'd consider dancing again. At 6 weeks you're still good for it. In fact, it will be good for you."

I laugh.

-Me: "Maybe I should talk with my doctor about that, not with you, hey."

-Him: "As someone who majored in dance and Biokinetics, I'm pretty sure it'll be good for you."

-Me: "Yeah, yeah, whatever."

Just then, a guy with curly, messy red hair walks through the door. From the way he walks, I'm assuming he's the ballet instructor. He walks over to us and greets politely. -Ryan: "Hey, Andy. Meet Somi, a friend of mine. Somi, meet Andy, our artistic director and ballet instructor."

I extend my hand to greet the guy properly. -Me: "Nice to meet you, Andy."

-Him: "Likewise. I hope you'll join our class soon, if not today. You have a body of a dancer."

I laugh.

-Me: "We'll see about that."

He lets out a smile then walks away, to his dancers. Ryan leaves me too, to sit down behind the black baby grand piano in the corner, ready to accompany this ballet class. Soon, beautiful piano music flows through the room and Andy starts the class.

I sit there, watching with a broad smile on my face - mesmerised by these dancers and completely forgotten about the mess I left at home. Ballet was my first love before I even knew anything about boys. Dance was what I ran to whenever I wanted to forget about the tough life I grew up living. Maybe it could help me even now. Maybe coming here every morning in the next few days will help me relax and forget about my relationship problems.

. When the class ends at 13:00, Ryan walks over to me. -Him: "So, how was it? Did you enjoy watching?" -Me: "Hell yeah, and everything you do is what I know. I'm even thinking of joining the class tomorrow."

-Him: "Really?"

-Me: "Really."

-Him: "That's what I wanted to hear. I'll tell Andy...Now come. Let's go have some lunch." We walk out of the studio and to his car. On the way to the restaurant, he receives a call from his wife. With the phone connected to the car's Bluetooth I can hear everything she's saying. I get to hear that her flight to the US is at 14:05. And I also hear things that make me so jealous as I think about my own situation. From the way they are talking with each other, there's no missing how much they love each other. I can't believe that Doc and I are no longer that kind of couple at this moment, and all because he couldn't maintain his erection.

Emily's intentions are not a mystery to me. I know that she wants Doc all to herself. And from her behaviour last night, I believe that she's the one who made advances on him. But that doesn't mean I should ignore the fact that Doc was also wrong. If he didn't like what that bitch was doing he would have immediately put her in place and show her the door, just like he'd promised me he would before he went to the hospital. The fact that he let her sit on his lap and kiss him means he wanted her to. And I can't stop thinking about what would have happened between them had I not gotten there when I did. Hell, he was even paged but didn't answer. But how could Thando do something like that? How am I ever going to trust him again now? How? Anyway, Ryan and I get to the restaurant and we get to catch up some more over lunch. I'm not going to lie, he is a more than welcome distraction. But I don't dare share my relationship problems with him. That's just personal.

After the amazing lunch, we drive to his house, which is also around Gonubie. Wow! That's the only word that comes out of my mouth at the sight of the house. I'm telling you, this is luxurious lifestyle defined. Then again, what did I expect from two spoiled trust fund babies?

He parks the car in front of the double garage then we get out and walk inside the magnificent house. With the clean lines and sparse but chic main room, it is not hard to notice every photo that gives life to the room. Photos of Ryan and his wife - on their wedding day, on vacation, the whole nine typical happy family photos. In some, the couple is surrounded by who I assume are Megan's parents and sisters. They really look happy in all the photos. And it is not hard to conclude that they have a happy life. All this just makes me wonder if Doc and I will ever get to this point - the point of being a happily married couple.

I have the time to take in all the photos because Ryan has left me to wait in the main room while he went to get the pointe shoes that I've come here to get. I'm going to use them in my first ballet class tomorrow, after taking a hiatus. They are a new pair that belongs to Megan. With the knowledge that she and I wear the same shoe size, Ryan asked her to let him give them to me when they were talking on the phone earlier. And of course, the womam didn't have a problem with that.

Ryan comes back with them in a paper bag then we leave the house and go back to his car. He drives me back to the dance studio, and we hug before I hop into my own car and drive home.

. As I've just made a turn into my street, I hear a hooter from a passing car that's moving in the opposite direction. Oh, it's Khwezi. I immediately pull up on the side of the street, and he also does the same on the other side.

Seeing him crossing the street, coming over to

me, I get out of the car and wait for him outside.

-Him: "Hey, Someleze."

-Me: "Hey, Khwezi. What's up?"

Khwezi is younger than Doc. He's maybe 29 or 30. And that's why I never see the need to be formal with him.

-Him: "How's your daughter today? Is she okay?"

-Me: "Yah, she's fine. Her sickness wasn't so serious as it turned out. Thanks for asking." -Him: "Oh, that's good...Did you find Thando still at the hospital when you were looking for him?"

-Me: "Yeah, he was still in his office." -Him: "You know, I admire how you never give him hell about the late nights he spends at the hospital. You're so understanding and that's more than I can say for my wife. She's so jealous of the late nights I spend away from home. I've been trying to make her understand but she just can't stop complaining. But maybe she'd understand if you could be the one to talk to her." Is he serious? I laugh.

-Me: "Who says I understand, Khwezi? The late nights are a problem for me too." -Him: "But you let Thando go to the hospital last night even though he didn't have to." -Me: "What do you mean he didn't have to? He was on call."

-Him: "Yes, he was. But he was at the bottom of the list of surgeons to be called. He was only to be called if the first 6 were unreachable or already busy in the OR." -Me: "And is that what happened?" -Him: "All I know is that it's Dr Marais who had the receptionist make the calls. None of those 6 general surgeons were already at the hospital at the time, and I don't believe they were all unreachable. So, I got surprised when it became Thando who came through." Oh, wow. So Emily wanted Thando to be at the hospital last night. She wanted him there so she'd do what she did. The lengths some women would go to just to get what they want though. This is just so fucking crazy. -Me: "Oh, I see."

That's the only thing that manages to come out of my mouth.

-Him: "So are you gonna talk to my wife?" This guy though. Why is he doing this to me? -Me: "Sure. I'll give myself some time to go see her."

I'm just saying that for the sake of saying it. I seriously doubt I'll do it. That's his job, not mine.

-Him: "Thanks. And once again, I'm glad your daughter is okay."

And with that, he walks away, back to his car. I'm left cursing under my breath. Emily is really going to be a problem. What is making me sick and angry is the fact that Doc is entertaining her. And what happened last night makes me believe that he wants her too. How am I ever going to deal with that? How! I continue my drive home, feeling my heart heavy against my chest.

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It is around 15:30 when I walk through the unlocked front door of Doc's house. And I'm surprised to find the house awfully quiet. Where are the twins? I make my way to the kitchen, only to find Doc sitting on one of the high chairs, his head on the counter. His laptop is open in front of him and I can see that he's been working on the lecture that he's going to be presenting at the surgical conference in Jo'burg on Monday next week. -Me: "Thando?"

He jolts up the chair, startled. He had fallen asleep on the counter.

-Him: "Baby? Thank God you're back." He's now standing in front of me, with relief painted all over his face.

-Me: "Don't be dramatic, Thando. Who said I wasn't coming back?"

-Him: "I've been calling you but your phone was off. Please tell me you didn't do anything with that Ryan. Please tell me you didn't." Is he serious?

-Me: "Oh, wow. You're so unbelievable, you know that? Thando, I'm not like you. I don't go around whoring. I told you that I respect myself, the baby I'm carrying and my family too much to do that. And I meant it. When I left here I said I wanted some space to breathe, some air, and that's what I went out to get, not to sleep around...Anyway, where are the girls?"

-Him: "They are with Zizo and Bhongo. I wanted us to have some time alone to talk." -Me: "Talk? Are you ready to tell me the truth this time around? Because, Thando, if you are going to tell me the same lies you told me last night you might as well keep your mouth shut...Don't you dare make a fool out of me, Thando. There's no way in hell Emily could have gotten up from where she was sitting, move around your desk, sit on your lap and kiss you without you noticing anything right from the beginning. It reached that point because YOU let it happen. Yesterday morning you were busy telling me not to encourage men to touch me but that's exactly what you did. You encouraged Emily, you're still encouraging her. In fact, it's clear that you wanted her to kiss you. I just wonder what would have happened if I didn't get to your

office when I did."

-Him: "I was gonna push her off. That's the honest truth, babe."

-Me: "Oh, so you're still sticking to your lies? You know what, Thando? I'm outta here." I walk straight to the bedroom and get my clothes and bag out of the closet. I throw them on the bed, ready to pack up. Doc walks through the door and comes straight to me.

-Him: "What are you doing, Soso?"

-Me: "I'm leaving, Thando."

-Him: "Sthandwa sam, please don't do that. Don't go, not like this. You know how much I

need you. I can't be without you. Please don't

walk out like this, sthandwa sam. I love you." -Me: "Thando, I'm leaving because I value the life I'm carrying inside of me. I can't sit around here and have my BP rise every time I see your face or hear the lies you keep telling. You don't hurt or lie to the people you love, Thando. You don't. So don't stand there and tell me about love. Don't do that." -Him: "Stressing you and our baby is the last thing I want, believe me...I know that my actions may sound stupid to you but I acted the way I did last night for a reason." -Me: "A reason? There's a reason you kissed another woman? Are you about to put a blame on me, Thando? Are you?" -Him: "No, no. Of course not. Just please calm down and listen to what I have to tell you. Please. I'm gonna tell you everything." He puts his hand on my shoulder and uses the other to wipe the single tear that's now escaping my eye. Then he takes my hand and sits me down on the bed.

-Him: "I think you know me by now, Soso. You know that I don't know how to raise my voice and I certainly don't know how to talk to you when you're angry. I tried talking to you last night, I even tried for humour, but you just lashed out and left me in the car. So, I decided to let you sleep and cool off. This morning I tried talking to you again but you were still angry and you just snapped. So again, I decided to just take a step back and give you more time to cool off. Trying to talk

or reason with an angry person is just a recipe for disaster."

-Me: "Just tell me what you want to tell me, Thando."

-Him: "There's one more thing I don't know how to do. I don't know how to communicate my plans until I get to see the end result." That's very true. I know that about him. I once asked why he's like that, and his answer was simple: I don't want people to be disappointed should things not go the way I'd planned, so I'd rather see the end result first then share.

-Him: "I promised that I'd deal with Emily and that's exactly what I did, in my own way. I once dealt with a sexual harassment suit in the workplace before and I wasn't about to let another woman tarnish my reputation like that again. I had to do something. And that's why I had two cameras installed in my office before I left the hospital yesterday morning." -Me: "Cameras?"

-Him: "I didn't want it to be my word against Emily's when I go report her for sexual harassment to the hospital management, I wanted hard evidence. Evidence I'd also use should she decide to go report me first after I reject her...Last night when she came to me wanting to talk after the surgery, I didn't turn her away. I had to assist her, so I asked her to go wait for me in my office. My head was still trying to figure out why the receptionist called me instead of the 6 surgeons that were supposed to be called before me. None of those surgeons were already at the hospital when I got there. So, I went to the reception and asked what had happened. Bongi told me that it was Emily who specifically asked her to call me. And it's only then that I understood why Khwezi thanked me after the surgery - he hadn't expected me to be the one to come through."

He's repeating what Khwezi just told me, so it must be true. But I'm still not getting his point.

-Him: "I knew right there and then what Emily's intentions were. I went to her in my office, we discussed what she wanted us to discuss then she started her bullshit. When she got up from her chair and made her way around my desk, I got up from mine and asked her to stop her nonsense. But I knew that she wouldn't, not when she was so determined to get what she wanted. Her determination became clear to me the moment Bongi told me what she had asked her to do...So she got around my desk, pushed me down my chair and straddled me. Before I knew it, her lips were on mine and the kiss lasted for more than a second. That was all the footage I needed and I promise you, I was about to push her off of me when you got there. I didn't even know that you'd be at the hospital at that time. I wouldn't have wanted you to witness that." Oh wow!

-Me: "Where's the footage now?"

-Him: "I have it on my laptop. You can come see it."

I follow him to the kitchen.

. . He shows me the footage, and it is exactly how he said it happened.

-Him: "It has already served its purpose. After you left this morning, I drove to the hospital to report Emily for sexual harassment. And I also gave them the footage as evidence. So, Emily won't be a problem anymore." -Me: "You really did this?"

-Him: "That's what I'm telling you."

-Me: "I uhhh...I feel so bad right now for not believing you."

-Him: "But I can't say I blame you for reacting the way you did. That's exactly how I would have reacted too if I had found you locking lips with another man."

-Me: "Sthandwa sam, I'm sorry. I should have trusted you more."

-Him: "Well, I'm sorry too. If I had communicated with you about my plans, none of this would have happened."

I just pull him to me and kiss his lips.

-Me: "I love you."

-Him: "I love you too. And, baby, you need to know that I would never hurt you like that." -Me: "I'm now certain that you'd never do it." -Him: "Good. Now let's go fetch our kids." He takes my hand and we leave the house. I can't believe I still haven't changed after everything Doc and I have been through together. I couldn't trust him enough to stop and listen to his explanation. Instead, I jumped to my own conclusion and got myself all worked up for nothing. This seriously shouldn't happen again.

We later come back to the house with the two rowdy monkeys and we start cooking dinner together as a family. We always have a great, crazy time in the kitchen with the twins and I would never trade those moments for anything.

At 20:00 we all sit at our picture-perfect table to have dinner. An outsider watching us right now would never tell that I almost moved out just a few hours ago. I'm sure we seem to be a perfect, happy family, as laughter seems to be our dinner instead of the meal we cooked. The twins are so

chatty and noisy, and we can't stop laughing at Lathi's lame jokes.

After dinner, I do the dishes then make sure that the twins are warmly tucked into bed before going to join Doc in the shower. Even though he and I both want to make love

under these jets of water, we know that we

can't. We can't have loud, crazy sex when there are kids in the next room. We have to hold ourselves until we get to our bed. Moving fast, we finish cleaning up then we make our way to the bed, already ready to get down to it. We make slow, passionate love, with Doc stifling my moans with his mouth every time they try to grow loud. I really need to practise some restraint, hey. In the morning, we both wake up and go for a slow early morning jog together, just like old times. But on our way back, shit happens. Just as we are slowing down, about to walk through the gate, I trip and fall, hurting my ankle in the process. But I don't think it's a serious sprain because I don't feel any pain. -Doc: "It's still early to feel anything, babe. Come put some ice on it."

He piggybacks me to the house, then has me elevate my foot and put some ice on it while he goes to take a shower. After the shower he goes to make breakfast and I go take my shower. When I'm done I find him in the kitchen already setting the table.

-Me: "Mmmh it smells nice in here. The girls aren't up yet?"

-Him: "I heard them in their bathroom. I'm sure they'll join us soon. For now, it's just you and me."

He grins and takes me in his arms. He kisses my neck, snorting playfully and I giggle.

"Ew! get a room, you guys."

Oops! That's one of the twins. We pull away from each, laughing, to find the girls standing in the doorway.

-Doc: "Just come sit down and eat, you two." -Lathi: "And I'm super hungry."

It's good to see her eating like she should. The last thing I need is for her to get sick again. Her father better talk to Busi and make sure that she lets the child eat a balanced diet when she goes back to Jo'burg.

We sit down and eat, then the girls offer to wash the plates while I go get ready to leave for my dance class. Doc is fine with me going, and I think my ankle will be just fine. Lathi wants to tag along but Doc doesn't let her, for the same reason I didn't go with her yesterday.

-Him: "Enjoy at the studio, babe. Just don't forget that we have a doctor's appointment at 14:30, okay?"

He says as he pulls my car door open.

-Me: "I won't, babe. Will see you soon, okay? Love you."

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-Him: "Love you more."
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I kiss him then get in the car and drive off.

An hour later I'm sitting sprawled out in the splits in Ryan's dance studio. Ryan is not here, he's at work but he told me that the classes will go on as usual. I just don't know who's going to be our accompanist or maybe we are not going to have one.

There's still a few of us on the floor, even Andy, the instructor, hasn't arrived yet. But someone else arrives before him. I look up. And my heart is in my throat in one second flat. "Oh, wow. Holy shit." I find myself saying that under my breath at the sight of him. Soso, come on, don't stare at him, I scold myself. But when my eyes are so drawn to him like a magnet to metal, that's so very hard to do. Holy hell, he's hot. Hotter than hot. This guy is GQ handsome times 20. He's probably in his late twenties. And oh Lord, that sun-kissed chestnut hair makes him look even more hotter. Oh, God. Why does he make me feel this way? I don't even know him for goodness sake.

He takes a few steps into the studio and glances at the baby grand piano in the corner. He doesn't look or walk like a dancer, so why is he here exactly? Well, he might not be a dancer, but he's definitely in great physical condition with broad, defined shoulders and back, impeccable posture, and flat abs that hide beneath his loose, light blue, button up shirt. The sleeves are rolled up to his elbows, revealing veined, muscular arms, and the top

button is undone, showing off the pinnacle of a firm chest. Just by looking at him I feel my temperature rising, my heart beating faster. What the hell? I've never felt like this about Doc when I first met him, Alex even. So why is it happening now?

Without warning, his dark, bottomless eyes find mine. I feel funny all over - a delicious ache that resides in my bones and lower abdomen. Quickly, I look away. Shit! I'm a pregnant, engaged woman for goodness sake. I shouldn't be feeling like this about other men. Why is this happening to me? Just one look from this stranger, and my lower belly fills with...lust? Why? Seriously, Someleze. Get a grip! I remind myself that these feeling aren't welcome. And it ends there. I glance at Siphokazi, the girl that I found here

unlocking the studio. She's one of the dancers and I guess Ryan trusts her enough with the studio keys. She's looking at this guy too, and her mouth is open. Ha! I guess I'm not the only one affected. And clearly this guy is new around here, Siphokazi doesn't know him either.

It's a very bad idea to look at him, but from the corner of my eye, I see him just standing over by the mirrored wall, as if waiting for someone. Who? But why should I care? This is ridiculous. He's so goddamn distracting. Can't he just leave already? I need to focus on my warm-up. And I will. I mean, I am. Over the course of the next few minutes, the remaining twenty-one ballet ensemble members slowly trickle in. One after another, they throw their bags in the corner and sprawl out onto the dance floor to stretch.

Thera-bands, tennis balls, and foot-rollers are dragged out, and the smell of tiger balm infuses the air. Other than a few curious glances, most of them ignore the sexy newcomer.

In a moment of weakness, I look up. The guy glances my way again, and when our gazes connect, a ripple of desire shoots from my heart and down my core. Shivers everywhere. Fuck! His eyes are black, intense and it's as if a sea of passion sleeps beyond them or slept beyond them, because now it would seem the passion is unleashed towards me. Shit.This is not good. So not good.

The room goes completely silent and every dancer stands when Andy walks in. He approaches the stranger and smiles. They talk in hushed voices so I can't make out a damn word they are saying. I glance around the room and the other dancers are quietly waiting. I think their ears are pinned too. Andy finally looks at us, his expression back to normal - stern.

-Him: "Dancers, please welcome Nick Walker. Our new accompanist. He'll stay with us for the next three weeks or until Megan comes back."

He explains no more than that. The guy's the new accompanist? Whoa! So that means I'll be seeing him everyday until I go back to Alice? That is so not good. I exhale sharply as I squeeze my lips together. Dammit. My entire dance class will be ruined now. But fine. Whatever.

Nick goes to sit down behind the baby grand and looks to Andy as if waiting for his cue. What...no notes? Obviously, the newbie doesn't know the ins and outs of accompanying a professional ballet class. That much is clear.

I place both hands on the barre and stare into the mirror. Focus, Someleze. Focus. Anyway, I look at myself, admiring my own body. Every day I'm thankful that I was born with an almost perfect dancer body - tall and slender. I say almost though, because the only parts of me that don't fit the norm are my breasts. Most ballerinas have very small breasts but mine aren't. They fit my body perfectly though but I certainly wouldn't mind it if they were smaller. It would make leaping across the floor a hell of a lot easier.

. Andy proceeds to give us instructions for our

first exercise - pliés - and then sits down at the front of the room. I know this and I also watched them do it yesterday, so I take first position and wait. Before I know it, beautiful piano music flows through the room. Nick is not the amateur I thought he was after all. In less than five seconds, I'm completely blown away by the breathtaking melody. But I'm not gonna look at him. I'm not. However, my gaze steals toward the dude, and a flurry of butterflies swarm in my belly. Fuck! What is it with this guy? I work through the exercises one after the other, the next melody even more beautiful than the previous one. Nick is an even better accompanist than Ryan if I dare say so, and that's saying a lot. Just then, I feel a sharp pain in my ankle, the one that got hurt this morning. Dammit. With the hot new guy here I forgot to take it easy.

I stop as Nick's eyes scan the room, stopping briefly at each dancer. For the love of God, he

shouldn't look at me. Gah! The instant his gaze meets mine across the vast room, it's as if time has stopped. Oh, fuck. His eyes are intense and demanding. So passionate I find it difficult - no, impossible to look away. I'm still staring. This is so disturbing. The longer we hold each other's gazes, the deeper I'm drawn into his nearly penetrating stare. Shit, it's almost as if he commands some unforeseen power over me that won't let me go until he says it's time to. He stops the music and somewhere in my consciousness it registers that the exercise has ended. I finally manage to avert my gaze when I recognise it's time to do the exercise to the left. I perform the combination on the other side, my eyes trained to Siphokazi as I try not to wonder if Nick is still staring at me, which would be completely and utterly inappropriate. Thankfully, I manage to get through barre

without looking at Nick again, although I can't get the image of his eyes out of my head. I change into my pointe shoes along with the rest of the female dancers and head to the centre.

Combination after combination, I do the best I can, but for two reasons, I can't give one hundred percent. First, the pain in my ankle is becoming too severe to ignore. Second, Nick's eyes follow me, his dark irises causing me to lose concentration. His stare literally makes me feel as if I'm dancing naked. Naked? No! Naked thoughts lead to naked actions, and those types of actions will not be taken no matter how much my body craves it. I have my own man to focus on.

After I complete a diagonal combination, I end up right in front of the baby grand piano. And there's the eye contact again. And the breathlessness. The look in his eyes is intense, possessive, raw. Sexual. Too sexual. I grit my teeth and frown at him, hoping he'll take the hint and stop staring.

Halfway through one of the pirouette

combinations, Andy tells Nick to cease playing. Finally! Andy must have noticed Nick's unsuitable ogling, and will ask the charlatan to stop gawking. But when Andy glares at me as if I've ruined his entire year, I immediately know that Nick's ogling addiction was not why he stopped the music. -Him: "Somi, is everything okay?" He must have noticed how off I've been throughout the exercises. I try to ignore the other dancers who have now turned towards me, their faces filled with sympathy. Clearly, they know what's coming.

Andy hates it when there are distractions in his class, I noticed that yesterday.

What do I say? I'm off because my ankle hurts and I'm off because I can't focus with the new piano dude staring at me as if he's undressing me with his eyes? No way.

-Me: "Yes, I'm okay, Andy. It's just that it's been a while since I did this."

-Him: "You are pulling everyone down with such lazy dancing. Legs not high enough, falling out of pirouette, frown on the face. Do you need to go home?"

-Me: "No, I'll be fine. I'll work through it." -Him: "Good. Do that or I'll have to put you in the class of amateurs tomorrow."

I glance at Nick who has his eyes glued to my chest. Stop staring, you asshole!

-Me: "I'll do better, Andy. I promise." -Him: "Good."

He glances at Nick and gestures with his arm for him to play again. Swallowing my pride, I walk back to the corner - the beginning point of this combination - and start over. I work through every combination as best as I can and avoid looking at Nick behind the piano because he doesn't deserve my attention. After we perform the final bow, Andy asks to talk to me. I wipe the sweat off my brow and paste on as pleasant a look on my face as I can muster. -Him: "It wasn't a very good day for you, Somi."

-Me: "I know. But I'll improve tomorrow. I swear."

I can't tell him about my ankle because I don't want him to ask me to stop dancing. I need this class.

"Perhaps there's something wrong with your ankle."

Nick says, approaching us. His voice is deep and washes through me like a warm flood of pleasure. I scowl at him with as much intensity as I can muster. However, when our gazes connect, I'm not in the least prepared for how my body detonates into a million little butterflies. Damn. This close, he's even more handsome. In fact, handsome doesn't even cover it. No words cover it.

-Me: "No, my ankle is just fine."

-Andy: "Are you sure?"

-Me: "Yeah, I'm sure."

-Andy: "Alright, I'll see you tomorrow then."

He walks away and I glance at Nick again. When he lifts an eyebrow, heat flushes from my cheeks to straight between my legs. Shit. I have to step away from him. I have to get out of here. Now. I head over to my bag next to the exit door. I pull off my pointe shoes, toss them in my bag then head for the door. "Excuse me. Somi, is it?"

A deep voice says behind me. I swivel around and Nick is standing there. I turn breathless in an instant, but I force myself to keep my expression impassive. After about five seconds, I realise I haven't said anything. A few more seconds pass. And all I can manage to do is stare at the god of a man before me. -Him: "Somi?"

He asks again with a crooked smile. Oh, God, he's so hot. I swallow.

-Me: "It's Someleze, actually."

I finally manage to say flatly.

-Him: "And I'm Nick."

-Me: "Yeah, I know. Andy told us. Nick? Is that short for Nicholas?"

-Him: "No. Dominic."

Well, Dominic, you're going to be the death of me.

Thanks for the messages, my supporters and followers. I will sure get past this traumatic experience.

Season 2 #9

"Baby, thola lendlela. Baby, I wanna know how you really feel, oh darling. Baby, funda lendlela. Ngizok' landela, baby. Ngizok' landela." - Donald

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Nick is now holding out his hand for a shake.
Oh, for fuck's sake. Figuring he won't drop the
hand until I shake it, I reluctantly give him
mine. But then something unexpected
happens. The skin on skin contact makes my
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pulse take off, and I'm as breathless as if I had just performed a long sequence of leaps across the floor. Which I just did. Although that was some minutes ago now come to think of it.

I thought I had the will of unbendable steel when it comes to guys. And I do! I'm not the cheating type. I'm not. But somehow Nick makes me want to bend my will in forbidden ways. No! No! I can't afford that. Not when I'm pregnant and engaged to be married. -Him: "May I have a word?"

He asks, folding his arms across his muscular chest. His stance is wide, and he watches me intently.

Seriously, what does he want? I can't talk to him, I can't. In fact, I need to get out of here. -Me: "No. I really have to go."

I swivel around and exit the studio. But the guy doesn't take the hint, he follows me outside. What is his problem? Even with my painful ankle, I try not to limp and I don't stop until I reach my car. I open my bag and fish for my car keys. Dammit! Where are they? When I turn around, Nick is right there in front of me. Whoa. His scent drifts towards

me, a fresh, clean cologne that makes me dizzy. He takes a small step closer. He's too close, his breath is on my face. Damn. I can't take this. I need him to step back since I can't, my back is up against the car.

-Him: "Sorry. Am I making you

uncomfortable?"

He asks, already taking a step back. What does he think? Of course, he's making me uncomfortable.

His eyes lift to mine, making me cringe, or swoon, I can't really tell. It's winter, and today's sun is weak but I'm feeling hot right now. In the studio it was warm because it is air-conditioned...but now it is hot outside? Whoa! What is this guy doing to me? -Him: I don't want to seem nosey, but the way you moved in there, it seriously made me think your ankle is injured." I can't deny it. This pain in my ankle is deep. But I'm not telling him that, it's none of his business.

-Me: "Who are you, exactly? A sports medicine doctor?"

I narrow my eyes, noting how his one-day shadow makes his angular jawline even the more touchable. I clench my fists, resisting the urge to reach up and caress his chin.

-Him: "I'm just an ordinary guy working at a bank, actually. But that doesn't mean I don't know an injured ankle when I see one."

He says casually, taking another step back and tucking his hands in the pockets of his pants. -Me: "My ankle is fine. I thought I said this earlier."

-Him: "But we both know that's not true...I might be able to loosen it up for you, you know."

Loosen it up for me? I open my bag and look for my car keys again when an image of his hands groping my ankle and sliding between my legs crosses my mind. Ha! What an absolutely horrible thought! The space between my legs starts to throb. Where the fuck are my keys? I need to get out of here, NOW.

-Me: "My ankle doesn't need loosening up, Dominic. And you're just an accompanist, not a doctor."

I say, still going through my bag.

-Him: "I'm just helping out as an accompanist because I'm on leave. As for the ankle, well, that's no rocket science."

I find my keys, but instead of getting in the car, I stand there, wanting to know more about this guy. Why though? I'm not even sure myself.

-Me: "Where did you learn to play?"

There's that crooked smile again, gracing his full lips. I refuse to smile back, afraid I might encourage him in a way. Because I...shouldn't or don't want to.

-Him: "I taught myself. It's not rocket science either."

He says, running a hand through his hair.

-Me: "Man of many talents, huh?"

Fuck! Why did I say that?

-Him: "You have no idea."

He takes a step closer. His scent is everywhere. Shit! It's time for me to go. I step to the side, his presence is just too overwhelming.

-Me: "Well, like I said, my ankle is fine. Thanks for offering your services but they aren't needed."

Does he notice how my voice is all wheezy? His eyes narrow and I swear, I see some concern in them. He tucks his hand in his pocket and comes out with his card.

-Him: "Here's my card just in case you change your mind and realise that you do need my help."

He sure knows how to push, huh. But I won't take the card...and I don't.

-Me: "I won't change my mind."

I say sternly.

-Me: "Have a good day, Dominic."

As I open my car door, he puts the card in my open bag then turns around and walks away, breaking the bizarre magnetised attraction vibrating between us. Oh, thank God, he's leaving. I exhale then get in the car.

I rest my head on the steering wheel and curse silently at myself. What is wrong with me? I have a man waiting for me at home for goodness sake. I need to stay away from Nick. In fact, I need to stay away from this studio, period. This guy might be hotter than hell, but he's not mine. My will is unbending. So damn unbending.

I take his card out of my bag and throw it out the window. I'm so not calling him. Why should I?

Just then, my phone, which I'd left in the cup holder of the car's centre consul, rings. It's Ryan. And I answer, eager to hear where he found this Nick guy. -Me: "Hey, Ryan. Why didn't you tell me that you've found an accompanist for the classes?" -Him: "I'm very well, thank you for asking, Somi."

He's being sarcastic but I won't follow him. -Me: "Yeah, you're always well, I know that. What I still wanna know though is where you've found that accompanist."

-Him: "What, is he bad at the job?"

-Me: "No, he's okay. He's...good. So, where did you find him?"

-Him: "It's more like he found me. I was talking with a friend of mine early this morning and she told me that her cousin could do the job because he's on leave for 3 weeks. She gave me his number, I talked to the guy and he was keen to help me out, for a fee of course. It also turned out we live in the same area. So I'll be seeing him for the first time this afternoon."

-Me: "Oh, I see."

-Him: "So, how was your first day?"

-Me: "It was okay. But I don't think I'll continue with the classes, buddy. I hurt my ankle. But I'll sure pay for today's class." -Him: "No, you don't have to pay anything, Somi. You're my friend...And I'm sorry about that ankle. Maybe you should come by our office and have Dr Pretorious check it out for you. I'll pay. After all, I'm the one who pushed you back into this dancing thing."

-Me: "No, that won't be necessary, Ryan. Having me not pay for the class is enough. I'll go to my own doctor for the ankle."

-Him: "Alright then. Anyway, I was just checking up on you. Talk again some other time?"

-Me: "Sure. Bye now."

I hang up and look at the screen of my phone, with Doc and myself as the wallpaper, reminding myself that he's the man I committed to. I seriously don't need no distractions. Quitting these classes is the right thing to do. No, it's the best thing to do. I start the car and drive out of the parking. But before I drive home to my family, I drive to the mall even though I haven't washed off that sweat yet. I need to buy a new phone for Lily, to replace the one I broke. It's a good thing that my ID card is always in my handbag. And the credit card I got from my father will sure come in handy because I don't have any money.

When I get home I find the twins in the lounge, playing Scrabble. When they see me walking in they abandon their board and come to me to give me loving hugs with their tiny arms. Aww, man, coming home to this much love is everything to me. I better make sure that I don't ruin it.

-Me: "I've replaced your broken phone, Lily." I say, giving her the plastic with the phone box inside. She takes it with so much excitement. -Her: "Wow! Thank you, thank you, mama." She hugs me again then go sit on the couch to open the plastic.

-Me: "I got something for you too, Lathi. You too could use a new phone."

I hand her hers.

-Her: "For me too? Wow, mama, you're the best."

Excited, she gives me a brief hug then runs off to sit next to her sister and rip off the box to see the phone inside.

I learned from Doc that with twins it's like this, you better make sure to never get something for just one of them if you don't want trouble. Besides, I could get the phones for the both of them, they weren't so expensive. So why not? My father won't mind. He doesn't care what I buy with that card, I'm free to use it for whatever I want. And I have been very responsible with it anyway.

-Me: "Where is your father?"

-Lily: "In his bedroom, working on his computer."

She says without even looking up, busy getting her phone out.

I leave them there and go to the bedroom. Indeed, I find Doc sitting on the couch in the corner of our bedroom, working on his laptop.

-Me: "Hey, baby. How's the lecture coming along?"

-Him: "Hey, babe...It's coming along just fine but it's time for me to take a break now."

He puts the laptop aside and comes to me for a hug and a peck on the lips.

-Him: "How was the dance class?"

Dear God, if only he knew what went down he wouldn't be asking me. Eish, I feel so guilty right now as if I've actually cheated.

-Me: "It was...it was okay. But I ain't going there again."

-Him: "Is it? Why though? I thought it's what you liked. You were excited about it. And I was fine with you going because I didn't want to prevent you from doing what you love. Besides, I now know that I don't have to worry about Ryan. Apart from the fact that I trust you, you also told me that he only goes to the studio once a week. So, you weren't going to be seeing much of him."

Yoh! If only he knew. Ryan is harmless, the only problem at that studio is Nick and I'd be seeing him everyday if I continue going there. But I can't tell him that, I can't tell him that I'm quitting the classes because I'm crushing so hard on the accompanist. I'm going to use my ankle as the only reason, it's a perfect excuse.

-Me: "Of course, I like dancing. But it's my ankle that is a problem. Yoh, baby, it hurts like hell."

-Him: "Really? Come, let me take a look at it." He takes my hand and goes to sit me down on the couch and takes a look at the swollen ankle.

-Him: "It is swollen, babe. You made it worse by dancing." -Me: "I know."

-Him: "When we come back from the OB/GYN we need to pass by the hospital. I'll have our radiographer check it out to see how much you've damaged it."

-Me: "An X-ray? But, baby, that's not necessary. This is not that serious."

-Him: "Do you perhaps have X-ray eyes now? You can see what's happening under this swollen skin? Your eyes can penetrate all the way down to your bones?" I laugh.

-Me: "Haybo, baby. Of course, not. But I'm sure I'd know if it was that serious."

-Him: "We are going to the hospital and that's final. Just go take a shower then we'll go see our baby first."

-Me: "Our baby. Now that's what I'm excited to see, not ankle scans."

I get up from the couch and make my way into the en-suite bathroom.

. After the shower, I get ready and Doc has me

put on an ankle brace after giving me gentle massage strokes. Then we go see the doctor, leaving the twins busy on their new phones. I thought Doc would have a problem with the kind of phones I bought for them, seeing that they are a little expensive than the ones they had. But he didn't, he just appreciated what I did. If there's one thing Doc hates the most is spoiling the kids. They also know that their father would never get them anything that's not a necessity. And I love that about him, but I also think there's nothing wrong with spoiling them once in a while.

Anyway, we get to the OB/GYN and we get to hear our baby's heartbeat for the very first time.

-Me: "Is that the heartbeat?"

I ask the nice technician who's doing the ultrasound.

-Her: "Yep, that's it. It's beating at a normal rate and the baby is developing where it should."

Oh my God, I didn't think I'd be this emotional. But then again, I'm hearing my baby's heartbeat for the very first time, I guess it's expected. I feel tears threatening to escape my eyes. Doc squeezes my hand then comes up to kiss my lips.

-Him: "That's the life we created together, sthandwa sam. Thank you."

He kisses me again then wipes the tears that are now trickling down my cheeks, I'm failing to fight them back.

When we leave the doctor's office, we leave in high spirits. Now that I've heard and saw my baby's heartbeat, it sinks in my head that I'm really pregnant, that I'm carrying a life inside me. I sure need to focus on that and on my man, I needn't be distracted by the likes of Nick.

When we get to the car, I get the sonogram pregnancy keepsake frame Doc bought, and

together we put in our baby's first picture (sonogram). We also got the digital files on a flash drive, but I love the fact that our baby will get to sign the print-out one day.

-Me: "First trimester documented. Two more to go."

-Him: "I can't wait to have him in my arms. To see him."

-Me: "Him? Who said it's a boy?"

-Him: "Well, even if it's a girl that changes nothing. I can't wait to have my baby in my arms, period."

-Me: "And I know that you'll be a great father. I love you, baby."

-Him: "I love YOU."

He leans over and kisses me. Then he starts the car and we drive to the hospital he works at. I go for the X-ray even though I think Doc is being too much. It turns out, there's nothing to worry about, it's not a major sprain. I get an injection straight to the ankle, and some tablets, including safe pain meds, then we leave. But before driving home, we go grab some pizza. No one is going to cook dinner tonight.

When we get back home, it's already around 17:30. I go warm up the pizza and we all sit on the mat in the lounge and watch a movie while we eat. With their eyes fixed on the TV screen, I steal a moment to look at all of them - my loving fiancé, and the twin girls that have come to be a major part of my life. This, right here, is my life and I'm content with it. I remind myself once again that I shouldn't do anything to ruin it.

But then, a lot later into the movie, something unexpected happens. With all the Whatsapp messages that have been coming through in my phone, one from a number I don't recognise also comes through. It reads: "Hey, Somi. It's Nick. Can we talk?" What the hell? Why is this guy following me? Can't he just leave me alone? I shift uncomfortably in my position, as if Doc can see who the message is from, but he's just focused on the TV screen, paying no attention to me or the message I'm reading. I reply: "Where did you get my number?" Nick replies immediately: "When you care about someone, you make a way." I don't reply. This guy needs to leave me alone.

The credits are now rolling on the TV screen, the movie is over. I put my phone aside and pick up the popcorn containers on the floor and the plates we've used. I make my way to the kitchen, leaving my phone behind. When I return to get the glasses, I find Doc with my phone in his hand.

-Him: "You have a message."

What? He opened it? I'm sure it's from Nick and I didn't want him to see messages from him. My first instinct is to quickly get my phone back. I take long strides to him and quickly snatch the phone away from his grip, panting. I'm definitely acting like a cheating wife right now, aren't I? Season 2 #10

"I've been hearing a lot of bad news lately, I'm just trying not to let it phase me. If I didn't have you my baby I'll go crazy. In this crazy crazy world we've got a crazy crazy love." - R. City

"And then?"

Doc asks, his eyes boring into me. He's obviously pissed by my reaction. The twins are now also staring at me, with questioning eyes. Okay, I've brought this upon myself. Dammit! What the hell is the matter with me? What the hell was I thinking? Fuck! What am I going to say now? -Me: "Did you read the message?" -Him: "Did I read the message? Have I ever read your messages before?" -Me: "No." That comes out more like a whisper. But if I'm being honest, I'm relieved he didn't open the message.

-Me: "Sorry. It's just that I saw the phone in your hand when you were telling me about the message, so I thought you've opened it." -Him: "I was picking up the glasses to take to the kitchen when the message came through. I took the phone because I wanted to take it to you in the kitchen since I was already going there."

He turns to the twins.

-Him: "Girls, it's time for bed. Get going." -Lily: "But, Dad, we still want to watch more TV with you. It's not even 20:00 yet."

-Lathi: "Yes, Dad, it's still early."

-Him: "Girls, I'm not gonna say it again. Leave the room now."

His voice is stern and the girls know what that means - he really wants them gone. They quickly get up and exit the lounge, leaving me with this pissed off man. I sure as hell am in trouble. I know that he's gotten rid of the girls

because he wants to grill me about the crazy

reaction I just threw around. Fuck! What am I going to do or say? But whatever I do I better make sure that I don't tell him the truth. No, I can't tell him the truth, because if I'm being honest here, Nick hasn't been hitting on me. I'm the one who's been having some wild thoughts and forbidden feelings about him, and there's no way I'm going to tell my fiancé that. I can't tell him that the woman he's engaged to, the woman who's carrying his baby, is now not just infatuated with another man but she's also fantasising about sleeping with that man. Oh hell no, the truth won't set me free in this case, it will just piss Doc off, and I don't know what he might do if that happens.

-Him: "Are you hiding something from me, Someleze?"

He's standing right in front of me. His hands folded across his chest. He's trying to act calm but I know that he's pissed, I can see it in his eyes. And I don't blame him. With my reaction I've given him every reason to be suspicious...and pissed.

-Me: "Yes, I am hiding something from you, Thando...I was chatting with the assistant to the designer who's making my wedding dress and she said she'd send me the complete design of the dress. So, with me thinking the message was from her, I just panicked because I honestly don't want you to get even a glimpse of the dress. I want you to see it for the very first time on our wedding day." Oh God, what have I turned to now? I'm lying to my man with a straight face. Lies are just flowing out of my mouth. Yes, I haven't formulated the lies in my head. What I'm saying did happen, but just not right now, it happened earlier in the day and the assistant has already sent me the picture of the dress design. And yes, I don't want Doc to see it, but that's got absolutely nothing to do with what's happening now. Right now, I'm lying to my man, period. Doc chuckles.

-Him: "Are you serious? You got this worked up all because of a wedding gown design?" -Me: "That's because I don't want you to see it, babe."

-Him: "Well, relax. I haven't seen anything. And I won't snoop around. I don't do that." Oh God, he actually believes me, he's buying my lies. Shit! Instead of being a relief, this is making me feel really guilty. There's nothing good about making a fool out of another person.

-Him: "Now, come. I'll help you do the dishes."

He says, already picking up the glasses he put on the coffee table.

-Me: "No, no, you don't have to do that, babe. You can go take your shower. I'll clean up here then join you."

-Him: "You sure you don't need a hand?" -Me: "Yeah, I'm sure, babe. Don't worry." -Him: "Okay then. You'll find me in the bedroom." He leaves the room and I'm left letting out a huge sigh. For the love of God, I should make

sure that I don't ever, ever find myself in this position again. I need to stop communicating with this Nick guy. I open the message he sent and it's a simple: "On the real though, I got your number from Ryan." Fuck Ryan for what he did. Fuck him. Angry, I message Nick back: "Ryan had no right giving you my number. And you had no right messaging me at this hour. I'm sure you saw the ring on my finger, I'm an engaged woman. Just stop contacting me." I hit send then block him immediately, without even waiting for his response. Huuu! I exhale loudly. That is now out of the way. What's left is for me to quickly clean up around this lounge and in the kitchen then go join my man in the bedroom.

I move fast, and I'm done in no time. I then make my way to the bedroom, only to find Doc sitting on the bed, leaning on the headboard, working on his laptop. I don't say anything, I just go straight to the en-suite bathroom to freshen up. After the shower, I

return to the bedroom with nothing but a towel around my torso. A towel that I lose as soon as I get by the bed. I let it slide down to the floor then I crawl up to Doc and fold down his laptop's display before putting it aside. -Him: "But, baby, I was still working." I just straddle him and lean over to his ear.

-Me: "I'd rather you work me instead. I want you, babe, right now."

I'm whispering in his ear, nibbling at it. I can hear his breathing getting increasingly jagged as my hand strokes his d*ck through his shorts, but he tries to remain strong.

-Him: "But, sthandwa sam, I was almost done. Can't you wait just a little longer?"

-Me: "I can't wait. I need you to take me right now. I want you to have me any way you like. As long as it's hard and dirty."

I'm now whispering close to his mouth. He let's out a crooked smile. I sure don't need to say anything any more. He wants me as much as I want him. In a speed of lightning, he rolls me over and he's on top of me, devouring my lips with his mouth. This is raw, raging passion defined. Just how I want it.

But before he goes further, he connects his phone to the powerful docking speaker that's on the nightstand. He makes sure that the music is loud before he does what he does best, which is to f*ck me senseless. With the music this loud, I doubt my loud moans reach the kids' ears. That sure works perfectly for me.

With my man's delicious d*ck deep inside me like this and me feeling the warmth of his naked skin as it rubs against mine, all the inappropriate thoughts I had about Nick quickly disappear like fog. This is working, just like I thought it would. I sure needed to get Nick's image out of my head.

Over the next few days life resumes its regular course - I don't think about Nick or his

sexy self and I've also decided to avoid Ryan too. I just hate what the guy did. I mean, how could he just give out my number without my consent? Who does that? And why the hell did he even do it? But seriously, I don't care to know his reasons. What I do know is that what he did is wrong in a number of ways. However, I won't waste my energy telling him what he already knows, and I won't even have a dust-up with him over it. I've just decided to keep him at a distance, for my own peace of mind.

Five days later, on Sunday, Doc has to fly to Jo'burg for that Monday surgical conference, and he has me drive him to the airport in the morning. The moment I drop him off I know that I'm going to miss him, but I think the girls and I are going to have some fun in his absence.

Coming back from the airport, I decide to take the girls to Hemingways Mall to burn Doc's money before catching a good movie.

We enjoy the shopping but then something

awkward happens. Holy crap! The girls and I are at Wimpy, filling up before the movie, when Mr Sexy, Nick himself, walks through with another guy. Shit! Did he have to be here at the same time as me? I was really counting on never seeing his face again. And I certainly don't want him to see mine - because as it turns out, he still has that same overwhelming effect on me. The minute my eyes land on him, my heart skips a beat and I become aware of the pulse beating at my core. Really, what is it with this guy that makes me feel like this every time I'm in his presence? But fuck, I don't have to know the answer to that. All I need to know is that these feelings aren't welcome. Period! God, please don't let him look my way, don't let him see me because I don't want to talk to him. I say a short prayer to myself while looking down, trying to hide my face. These quick, short prayers of mine don't usually reach God's ear, but I think this one did

because Mr Temptation and his friend quickly leave the quick service restaurant before he could look my way. It turns out they'd only came to get another friend of theirs who was dining at a table a little far from ours. As soon as they disappear, I let out a huge sigh of relief. Dear Lord, can't this week end already so I can leave this place and go back to Alice? Temptation seems to be in every corner here.

Doc comes back on Tuesday, in the afternoon. I'm glad that he's back but he's coming back with some terrible news. He sits me down and tells me that when he was in Jo'burg his mother shared some disturbing news with him - she told him that she has recently been diagnosed with breast cancer. They still don't know the exact prognosis yet, but this is already hectic. I can see that it is killing Doc even though he's trying so hard not to let it show. It hurts like hell to see someone you care about going through hell and you can't even do anything to help them. All I can do is be there for him, and pray that his mother survives this.

On Wednesday he goes back to work feeling a little better, even though nothing has changed with his mother. But when he comes back in the afternoon, he walks through the door looking like he's carrying the weight of the world on his shoulders. I'm sitting on the couch, busy with my dissertation on my laptop, when I see him dragging his feet in. I instantly know that something is wrong and my mind quickly goes straight to his mother's condition. Maybe the prognosis is poor. Oh God, the thought of that is enough to make me sick too.

I immediately put my laptop aside and and rush over to Doc.

-Me: "Baby, are you okay?"

He doesn't say anything, he just pulls me to him. I hold him tight in a warm embrace, avoiding to say anything too. We stand like that for a long moment, just holding onto each other as if for the very last time. My heart is breaking and I keep repeating the same prayer in my head: Lord, please let my soon-to-be mother-in-law live.

From the way Doc keeps inhaling and exhaling loudly, I can tell that he's getting a lot emotional. But I don't want to push him into saying anything until he's ready. He eventually pulls back then plops down on the couch.

-Him: "Where are the kids?"

-Me: "Hear that noise? That's them playing video games in their bedroom."

I answer, taking a seat next to him.

-Me: "What's going on, thando Iwam? Is it your mother?"

-Him: "No, this has got nothing to do with my mother. It's about Khwezi."

Okay, I'm confused. But also a little relieved. -Me: "Khwezi?" -Him: "Khwezi is gone, Soso. He died on my operating table this morning. The guy saved so many lives, but I just couldn't save his." -Me: "Oh, my God! Khwezi is gone? What happened?"

-Him: "He was working through the night. Then apparently around 5 this morning he started feeling weird. He took some tablets, but the others say he suspected fatigue. He'd been working for 22 hours, life of trainees, and he was about to knock off at 7:00. So seeing that his shift was about to be over anyway, he decided to go home and get some sleep around 6:00. But instead of getting some rest when he got home, his eyes landed on something he couldn't un-see. He found his wife in bed, their bed, with another man. Obviously his wife didn't know that he'd be home early, she thought she was safe to do whatever she liked. Big mistake. The man apparently got a chance to run off immediately when he saw Khwezi, but the wife wasn't so lucky. Khwezi, got his gun out

of the closet, shot his wife then shot himself. The wife died on the spot, but Khwezi got the chance to be rushed to the hospital. With the gun fitted with a suppressor, nobody heard anything, but their niece who was visiting found them and called the ambulance. I had just gotten to the hospital when the paramedics got there with Khwezi. He became my first OR case today and he died in my hands."

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-Me: "Oh, God, this is my fault." -Him: "Your fault?"

-Me: "Khwezi came to me and asked me to please talk to his wife. He said his wife was jealous of the fact that he was spending a lot of nights at the hospital than at home. So he thought, as a doctor's partner, I'd be able to calm her down and give her some tips on how to deal with all the demanding, long hours that kept her husband away from home. Apparently, he had been trying to make her understand but it wasn't working, so now he thought if I could be the one to talk to her maybe that would make a difference. This was Monday last week, and I promised him that I'd give myself some time to go talk to her. But I didn't do it. Maybe if I did none of this would have happened. Maybe the wife wouldn't have seen the need to cheat. This is my fault, Thando. It's my fault."

He holds my hand.

-Him: "No, sthandwa sam, it's not. For all we know the wife was already cheating. You didn't ask her to cheat. And you certainly didn't put that gun in Khwezi's hand." -Me: "I know. But still..."

He covers his face with both his hands. -Him: "Fuck! Why did this have to happen? Khwezi was still young. He was a young surgeon with a bright future. And now all of that is gone."

He removes the hands and looks at me.

-Him: "Some people don't make it out of the OR. That always leaves a sour taste in the lead surgeon's mouth, but when it's someone you know it becomes worse - it becomes a whole lot difficult...Khwezi died on my table. I couldn't save his life. I couldn't."

I can see that he's getting emotional again, and all I can do is just pull him in my caring arms.

-Me: "I'm sure you and your team did everything you could, babe. But it was just not enough. You're not God, you're just another human being, and giving life is not up to you. You can only do so much and the rest is up to God. Khwezi wanted to die, he's the one who took his own life. Let's just stop beating ourselves up about it."

He pulls back and looks at me.

-Him: "I've been hearing a lot of bad news lately, and I'm trying not to let it get to me but it's hard. This life thing is difficult. A lot of bad shit is happening in this crazy world. People are dying, some are diagnosed with

horrible diseases. There's just so much worry and sorrow. Some people are lying to their loved ones. There's just so little truth and so many lies...I swear if I didn't have you, baby, I'd lose it right now. My only comfort is knowing that with everything that's happening I can always believe in you and I. Our love is the one thing I can depend on. If I lose it too, if I lose you to another man, I don't know what I'd do. I might not do what Khwezi did but I'd sure die."

I instantly feel my heart sink to the pit of my stomach, my guilt taking over, as I think about the lies I also told him, and the infatuation I had with Nick. Lord please, don't ever let me do something to hurt this man. He'd been nothing but amazing to me. And he'd sure die or do something crazy if another wife of his could cheat on him.

-Me: "You're never gonna lose me, baby. You don't even need to think about it. I'll always be here, by your side. I love you, thando lwam, with every breath I take. Your love
gave me life and I'm never gonna let it go."
-Him: "You're the only thing that makes sense
to me right now, sthandwa sam. Your love is
what keeps me going. In fact, as crazy as it
sounds, I need it now."

He says, already kissing me with heated urgency, tugging at my clothes. No. No. I push him back.

-Me: "Baby, no. What about the kids?" -Him: "They won't hear us. They are busy making noise with their video games. I really need you, baby. Please make me feel okay." He kisses me again and I just surrender to him. The truth is I, too, need some sexual healing right now. He picks me up, carries me to the bedroom and dumps me unceremoniously on the bed. I let him take his emotions out on me, as I take mine out on him.

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Over the next couple of days, Khwezi's departure haunts us but we try to continue living our lives.

Friday afternoon, the twins fly back to Jo'burg, and Doc and I get to have the house all to ourselves. Of course, having them around was great but we can't deny the fact that we also love our space. It feels great to have no one but us in the house, because now we get to make love wherever we want in the house. This is the definition of freedom. We are both free to ignore our inhibitions. Free to be as loud as we want to.

But that freedom only lasts for a day, because the very next day I also have to leave and go back to Alice. The winter break is over for all of us. It hurts to leave my man behind, to know that I now won't get to see him everyday, but I really have to go, I have no other choice.

I put my bag in my car and we get to share one final hug and kiss before I leave. Doc opens my door, I get in the car and drive off, already missing him.

I'm not going to Alice straight away though, I'm going to PE right now. I'm meeting with the tailor who's doing my wedding gown, she needs to take my new measurements.

I drive straight to her place as soon as I get to PE. And she takes my measurements with me wearing a 7-month fake pregnant belly, because I'll be 7 months pregnant when I walk down the aisle.

My body is going to change countless times between now and the day of the actual wedding, so the tailor tells me that I'm going to have to meet up with her monthly up until the month of the wedding, then bi-weekly on that month, to make sure that the dress fits just right. This is going to be a lot of work for her, but she doesn't mind because the more work she puts in means more money in her bank account. My father doesn't mind paying either, all he wants is for his only daughter to be comfortable and beautiful on her wedding day.

I know that I'll feel like a beached whale on my special day, while my bridesmaids will look perfect and skinny in their dresses, and that is honestly hard for me, but there's no turning back. It is what it is and I've got to accept it.

After leaving the tailor's, I drive straight to my mother's house. I want to spend some time with my queen before I go to Alice. I find her sitting in front of the TV binge watching her favourite series - Revenge. I can't tell you how many times she's rewatched all the seasons but she just can't stop herself - that's how much she loves the series.

I join her and we cuddle together on the couch, just like old times. But we end up talking about my approaching wedding, instead of how classy Victoria Grayson is or how smart Nolan Ross is.

-Her: "You're not the only one getting married, you know that?"

She says, combing my hair with her fingers as my head rests on her lap.

-Me: "Who else?"

-Her: "Me. Your father proposed 3 days ago when he was here."

I literally jump off the couch, in complete shock.

-Me: "What? Dad proposed? Where's the ring?"

I ask standing right in front of her.

-Her: "I don't have one. Both your father and I didn't see the need for it...We'll get married at the venue we booked for you. We didn't cancel it, and we managed to push the date to the 30th of December."

-Me: "Just two days after my own wedding? Mom?!"

I really don't know how I feel about this. How am I supposed to feel?

-Her: "We had already put the non-

refundable deposit on the venue, baby, and we love each other so we thought, why not just use the venue for ourselves?" -Me: "I see."

-Her: "Come on, baby, don't be like that. I've found a companion, your own father. He makes me happy, Someleze, and the least you can do is be happy for me."

I guess I can do that. It's just that I didn't expect this, especially just a couple of days after my own wedding. But they sure love each other, so why not? What's the worst that could happen?

-Me: "I'm happy for you, Ma. It's just that you've caught me off guard. This was truly a surprise."

I hug her, then sit down next to her again. -Her: "At least one of us will get to have an overseas honeymoon."

I laugh.

-Me: "Oh, great, mommy. Remind me that my dream honeymoon is now going to turn into my maternity leave. But it's okay, Thando has promised to make it up to me on our first wedding anniversary." -Her: "And the fact that he proposed to you on a romantic island in the Caribbean should count too."

-Me: "I guess."

We end up sitting on the floor, doing a lot of planning for both weddings until the sun sets.

The next day, I leave her and drive to Alice to my people - Kevin and Asanda. Oh, how I missed them. It has been 3 long weeks. But as soon as my eyes land on Asanda, I feel myself cringe. She's bigger than the last time I saw her, and to know that I'll also be this big in the next months makes me extremely nervous. It'll be in February and I'll be in Jo'burg then, with Doc's family. I just hope that Doc's mother will be well enough to assist me then because I know for a fact that Doc himself won't be around. We got his mother's prognosis, even though

We got his mother's prognosis, even though she was initially scared to discuss it with her doctor. It turned out to be good. The cancer got detected early before it could spread beyond the breast, and her doctors believe that it can be effectively treated and that she can actually survive it. We are now all hoping for the best. Losing her is just something we are not ready for.

Anyway, Kevin tells me that his mother wants Asanda to move in with her in Hillcrest so that when she goes into labour, which will be at any day this week, she would have an experienced adult by her side, someone who'll know what to do. I think that's actually a very good idea because Kevin and I don't know anything about a woman in labour. So, with the advice of Kevin's mother, the couple will be moving out tomorrow. But according to Kevin, they'll be back when the baby is at least three weeks old, because there's just not enough space for all of them in his mother's house. That's still okay with me. I certainly don't mind having a baby in the house. Actually, I think it'll be a good thing, I'll

get to have some practise for when mine comes.

The next day, on Monday, I go to campus, leaving my people packing their stuff, getting ready to move out temporarily.

On my way back I pass by Standard Bank, to withdraw some cash from the ATM. I want to pay the guy who's going to turn the third bedroom in our house into a nursery for Asanda's baby. I've talked with the landlord and he's given me the go ahead. Kevin, Asanda and their baby are still going to stick around the house so they might as well be comfortable - and I want to help make that possible, I want to make the house feel homey for them. And using Sandile's money to do something good will make me feel good too.

"Somi."

I hear a voice behind me as I leave the ATM, walking back to my car. I turn to see him making his approach, looking really good in a formal attire. What the hell? He works here? I'm shocked. But at least I'm also seeing some good in this. I've just realised that the spell he seemed to have cast on me, which he didn't, is now no longer effective. I feel nothing for him.

-Me: "Nick? You work here? When you said you work at a bank, you meant this bank?" -Him: "Yes. I'm still on leave though. I just came for a special appointment."

He answers as he comes to stand in front of me.

-Me: "Why didn't you tell me that you were talking about this bank?"

If I wasn't so shocked, I'd know that this question is ridiculous.

-Him: "Tell you? You obviously didn't look at my card. And you never asked, not that we had enough time to talk that day though. Hell, I didn't even know that you live here."

-Me: "True. But how come I never saw you here? I'm using this bank."

-Him: "That's probably because I'm not a teller, I work at the back."

-Me: "I see."

-Him: "Listen, Somi. I'm sorry for what happened 2 weeks back. I didn't know that Ryan didn't ask for your permission before giving your number to me. And I'm sorry I messaged you at that hour. Trust me, causing problems between you and your man was the last thing I wanted. And I'm sorry if I came across as a some kind of a weird stalker. I was just worried about your ankle and since you didn't want my help, I wanted to refer you to a very good doctor. That's all. I'm sorry if I caused unnecessary problems for you." Really? He's apologising?

-Me: "It's okay. That's all in the past. Water under the bridge."

-Him: "I'm glad I got this chance to see you again and apologise. I really felt bad after receiving your message that day and realising that you had actually blocked me."

-Me: "Don't worry about it, it's all cool." -Him: "Thanks. Now I'm relieved. Take care." With that, he walks away, to his car - a black Benz.

Wait, is that it? That's all there was to it? He wanted nothing else from me? Whoa!

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Season 2
#11
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. "Would you mind if I still love you? Would you mind if things don't last? Would you mind if I hold onto you so that I won't crash?" -Usher

Thando

I tap my finger against my desk in the bedroom, glaring at my watch. It's one in the morning, and I should be in bed but I'm not. Apart from the fact that I've been sitting here reviewing a paper in a medical journal on a new surgical technique for hernia repair, there's also something else weighing heavily on my mind.

It's raining outside. I can hear the soft ping of water hitting the shuttered window behind me, a window I shuttered with my own fist this evening. I won't lie, Khwezi's departure is still working me, especially the way it happened. A life of a promising, young surgeon has been cut short because of a wife who just couldn't keep her legs closed and wait for her husband. I know how much it not only hurts but also pisses you off to know that your spouse has been making a fool out of you, sleeping with another person behind your back. I don't know, maybe if I was in Khwezi's shoes, if I had caught my wife with another man in MY OWN bed, I would have also reacted the same way he did. I would seriously snap if Someleze could do something like that to me.

Speaking of Someleze, I really miss her. That's just another reason why it's hard for me to get into that cold bed. This is the third night

since she left, and I've been struggling to sleep ever since. Fuck, this house feels so empty without her. And getting some sleep is always a struggle. This always happens for at least a few nights after she's left this house. I honestly can't wait to live with her under the same roof forever.

Closing my laptop, I drag myself up from the chair and go change into my PJs. I have a shift at 7:00, and I need my sleep if I want to be on my A game then.

Getting under the covers, I look at Someleze's side of the bed. Damn. I just can't stop thinking about her. The way she makes love to me. How she kisses me with her soft lips. Her touch. Fuck, the images of her spreading her legs for me keep dancing in my head. And in my ears I can hear the loud moans and screams she always lets out when she comes so hard for me, turning me on like no woman ever did. Fuck! My fingers clench the soft fabric of the silky sheets where she always sleeps when here. I shift uncomfortably, highly aroused. There's no way I'm going to fall asleep like this. Rubbing a hand down my face, I squeeze my eyes shut, debating on how best to handle the throbbing erection in my PJ pants. Groaning, I debate calling Someleze, to wake her up for some phone sex. And hell, that wins. I pick up my phone and dial her number.

. . Someleze

The Next Day

What the hell? Cursing under my breath, I bury my head under my pillow. My phone is ringing, someone is calling me, and I'm pretty sure I want to kill them. My head throbs in tempo with the annoying sound of my ringtone, making my teeth clench. Maybe they'll finally stop, I say to myself. But no, the phone continues to ring. A ring after another. Damn! Sitting up groggily, I rub my my hands over my face and blink the sleepiness from my eyes. Ugh! Sleeping only around 4:00 this morning, talking with Doc on the phone, in fact, f*cking each other repeatedly over the phone, is now coming back to bite me in my behind.

I reach for the relentlessly ringing phone, to find that it's my father.

-Me: "Hey, Dad."

l answer, groggily.

-Him: "Hey, baby. Did I wake you?"

-Me: "Yeah. What time is it?"

I ask, glancing around the room as if expecting the answer to be written in air, because I know very well that I don't have a wall clock.

-Him: "Just after 7 o' clock."

What? I gape.

-Me: "No way."

-Him: "Way. Aren't you supposed to be up getting ready to go to campus?"

-Me: "It's called oversleeping, Dad. So thanks for waking me up with your call. I was gonna be late."

I quickly climb down the bed and start fixing it up, with the phone put on speaker on the nightstand.

I only went to bed just before 0:00 last night, after spending hours and hours working on my dissertation. I thought I could still get enough sleep though but that didn't quite happen because around 01:00 Doc woke me up for an intense phone sex that lasted for three hours. So no wonder I was still out.

-Dad: "Before you run off to the bathroom, listen. Your aunt gave birth to your cousin around 05:00 this morning. A boy."

-Me: "Really? Oh wow, that's fantastic news." But wait. Isn't she two weeks early? However, I don't ask that out loud, I just let it go.

-Him: "Yeah, it is. On Saturday I'm coming down there to see the new addition to our

family. But you should go see them before then."

-Me: "What do you mean you're coming down here? Here where?"

-Him: "There in EC. In PE."

-Me: "Iviwe is in PE? But I thought she was in KZN."

-Him: "It shows that you two don't communicate much often, and that's just wrong. Iviwe only went back to Durban for a week after the wedding. Then she returned to PE to be with her in-laws. She's going to spend the rest of her maternity leave with them."

-Me: "I see."

-Him: "You should go see her and her baby, sweetheart. Show her and her husband your love and support, and they will also do the same for you. That's what family does for each other. We have to..."

I cut him off, laughing.

-Me: "Yes, yes, Dad, I know. I wil go see them. You don't have to give me one of your lectures on how important family is. I

know...But I can't go see them today or even tomorrow, I'll be busy. I'll sure drive there the day after tomorrow though. It'll be a Thursday and I hate going away during the week, but I'll do it. It's like you said, it's for family."

-Him: "Good. You do that. Family is very important, baby."

-Me: "The way you keep saying it, I might just end up tattooing it on my ass."

-Him: "Hey, what kind of language is that?" I laugh.

-Me: "Sorry, Dad. I guess I forgot who's on the other end of this call. See you on Saturday?"

-Him: "Saturday it is. Bye now."

-Me: "Bye, Dad."

I give the bed some final touches then rush to the bathroom. Dammit! I have a meeting with my supervisor at 8:00 on the dot, I better move fast. After having managed to make my morning meeting with my research supervisor, who happens to be Prof Elliott, I leave the campus around 14:00.

I've just discovered that the man is now seeing Buhle again. I guess the fact that she's no longer his student has given them some freedom. But what the hell? How could Buhle take him back after everything he did to her? They say never say never, but what Buhle did is one bullshit I don't think I would ever do. But then again, I'm not Buhle. Maybe being stuck without a job or any other thing to do has knocked down her self-esteem so much that she now believes Elliott is the only man who could ever love her. Anyway, whatever they do is none of my business. I'm just glad Buhle stood by me last year, and that the skeletons she revealed in Elliott's closet ended up being the only thing that could motivate him to fight for me so I could write my final exam - the power of blackmail.

Leaving the campus, I drive straight to King

William's Town. I want to go to Game at The Mall to buy a few things for Asanda's baby and also shop for some nursery items. I've already decided that I will shop for Iviwe's baby on Thursday in PE, and I'm also planning to spend the entire weekend with them. After getting everything I wanted at the store, two of the trolley guys help push my loaded trolleys to the parking in the basement. And they also help me load everything in the boot and the back seat of my car before they leave. "Somi? My eyes seem to land on you a lot lately, huh."

That deep voice that belongs to no one else but Nick, says behind me as I'm about to close the boot. I turn to see him standing by his own car, looking all kinds of handsome. Seriously, after yesterday I didn't think he would be interested in talking to me again. And I'm not going to lie, what he said bruised my ego a little. Of course, I don't want him but to know that I was the only one who was crushing on him while he wasn't even interested in me has done a number on my ego.

-Me: "Hey, Nick."

I say flatly. But my flat voice doesn't discourage him from walking over to me. -Him: "That's a lot of baby stuff, hey. What, you're planning a baby shower for a friend?" He asks looking at the baby stuff in my still open boot.

-Me: "Nope, no baby shower. I just bought the stuff for a friend who's going to have a baby any day now. And you? What are you doing here?"

-Him: "I came to see a friend of mine who's working at Standard Bank upstairs, then I ended up doing a little shopping of my own." -Me: "I see."

-Him: "Listen, they serve the best coffee at Archie's Coffee Shop. Would you like to grab a cup with me and just talk?"

What? He wants to have coffee with me? Really, after the way he walked away yesterday I didn't think he would ever want to have a lengthy conversation with me, let alone over coffee. But I must say, the invite makes my heart smile even though I'm not longer crushing on him like a confused school kid.

-Me: "Sure. Coffee sounds great."

I close my boot, lock the car then go upstairs with him. It's now just before 16:00 so we still have time.

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Some minutes later, we are sitting at a table at Archie's, sipping their coffee. This is my first time having their coffee, and Nick was right, it's really not that bad.

-Him: "As crazy as it sounds, my first thought when I saw that baby stuff in your car was that maybe you're pregnant and already planning ahead." -Me: "That's not crazy, actually. Not really. I AM pregnant. But this is still my 9th week, so I'm not showing yet."

-Him: "Really? Oh, wow. Congratulations to you and your fiancé are in order then." -Me: "Oh well, thanks."

-Him: "And the friend you bought the stuff for, she must mean a lot to you."

-Me: "It's a 'he', actually. His name is Kevin. He and his girlfriend are about to have their first baby."

-Him: "He means a lot to you, I can tell."

-Me: "He sure does. Thing is, I grew up as the only child, so Kevin is the only closest thing I have to a brother."

-Him: "You're an only child?"

-Me: "Yep. Only child from a working class family in one of the PE townships."

-Him: "PE? And in Alice? You're only there for work?"

I chuckle.

-Me: "Work? I wish. I'm still a student, Nick. Doing my Honours at Fort Hare. Yes, I'm also their temporary employee, a lab assistant, but I wouldn't call that a job. It does pay the bills though."

-Him: "Ummh...how old are you? If you don't mind me asking, of course."

-Me: "I'm 22. I don't have a problem with disclosing my age. What I do have a problem with though is that there's no fairness here. In the few minutes that we've been sitting here you got to know about me more than I know about you...It should be my turn to ask questions now. Starting with your age." His dark eyes sparkle as he produces a broad smile, showing his straight teeth, with long canines that suit him perfectly. Even if vampires existed he wouldn't be one because his canines are long enough to be cute, not scary. God, this guy is truly handsome. With him looking like this, who could blame me for feeling the way I did about him? -Him: "Why do I feel like I'm about to be interrogated here?"

I laugh, feeling a whole lot relaxed around him. Relaxed? I can't ignore how funny that sounds considering the fact that just two weeks ago this guy would make me feel uncomfortable and bothered.

-Me: "Well, are you gonna cooperate?" -Him: "I'll be happy to. Even though there's nothing interesting to know about me. Somi, I'm just a boring 30 year-old guy, born and bred in East London. I don't..."

-Me: "Wait. You're 30?"

I just blurt the question out. My shock undisguised.

-Him: "Yeah. How old did you think I was?" He asks, laughing.

-Me: "Honestly? I thought you were 27 or 28."

-Him: "Yah, well, I'm 30. Youngest child of three. I have an older brother and older sister, but I don't see them much often because they now live in Pretoria with their spouses and children. They work for my father's media house, making the old man

proud. They are his hope, and I'm that black

sheep who diverted from that perfect picture. Joining the family business was just not for me right from the beginning. Living under my old man's shadow was never what I wanted for myself. After matric I went to study finance at UCT, then...well, you know where I work now. I started from the bottom and worked my way up, and I'm still pushing. To say my father was pleased about my decision though would be the same as saying there's a true desert in Europe. But he came around eventually. We're now cool, and we have a healthy father-son relationship. We live together in EL but honestly, I'm mostly alone in that house because even though the old man's now retired, he still travels a lot on business. He simply refuses to just sit at home, relax, and let his two star children handle the business in Gauteng."

-Me: "I'm sure he sees his business as his baby and it's now hard to just let go of it...What about your mother? Where's she?"
-Him: "My mother passed away when I was 14."

-Me: "Oh. I'm so sorry to hear that."

-Him: "Don't worry about it. I got over it a long time ago."

I'm curious to know how she died though. But I don't want to spoil this perfect mood by asking such questions. So, I decide to change gears.

-Me: "You say your siblings are both married. What about you? Is there a potential wife somewhere?"

I don't even know why I'm asking this. I guess I just wanted to change the subject.

Nick lets out his sexy laugh, and leans back on his chair.

-Him: "Marriage? Nah, I'm not there yet. My girlfriend of two years left the country two months ago. She got a teaching job in Dubai. And because she doesn't believe in long distance relationships, she decided to just end things before she left. Of course, that's not what I wanted, but I had to respect her decision. So now I'm riding solo, just enjoying the freedom."

Everything about this guy screams player, even the way he speaks. He looks so dangerous, attractive and...fuckable. I'm just glad I'm no longer crushing on him though. Wherever he goes I'm sure he leaves behind a trail of broken hearts.

-Him: "Anyway, what are you studying?" He quickly asks before I could say something about the last line he uttered. It's as if he regrets saying it at all.

-Me: "I'm doing Biochemistry. And my research project is in the field of medical biochemistry. So, for assistance and data collection I'm working with some doctors at both Victoria and Fort Beaufort hospitals. It's a lot of work but I'm enjoying it."

I give him a lengthy answer, wanting him to relax and forget about what he said.

He shows interest in my field of study and we end up going deeper into it, and into the job he does. They say time runs out pretty fast when you're having fun. And that's exactly what happens for us too. Before we know it, it's 17:00, the shop is closing and we have to go. We were still enjoying each other's company and getting to know more about each other, but yah well,...it's time to go. -Him: "I still have your number. Can I use it?" He asks when we get to the parking. I'm sure that's his way of asking me to unblock him. After spending some time with him, getting to know him, I seriously don't see a problem with that. Putting aside the fact that he seems like a player, Nick's a decent guy. He's intelligent and he sure knows how to hold a great conversation. There's nothing that turns me off like an airhead of a guy. Iyadika indoda edom.

-Me: "Sure. You can use it."

He lets out that signature crooked smile of his.

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-Him: "See you around?"
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-Me: "Sure thing."

Still smiling, he goes to his car. I, too, get in mine. But before driving home, I take out my phone and unblock this guy's number.

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I get to Alice just before 18:00. It's winter and it's already getting dark, but as I drive down my street, approaching my gate, I can clearly see a car parked by my gate. Wait! Is that Alex's car? But what is he doing here? Isn't he supposed to be in PE with his wife and their newborn?

I pull up in front of the gate and roll my window down.

"Alex! Hey, Alex."

I call out the window, but he doesn't answer. Is he even in the car though? From my position I can't really tell, I can't see clearly. I get out of the car and walk over to his. Looking through the window, I see him with his head on the steering wheel. I knock on the glass, but he doesn't answer. This guy isn't just resting his head on the wheel, he's actually sleeping. Eshe. I knock again, harder this time around. He finally looks up, and when he sees that it's me he starts the engine then rolls down the window. Jeez! He looks like death warmed over and he's drunk as fuck. What the hell is going on?

-Me: "Alex? Are you okay?"

-Him: "Hey. You're finally here. I'm sorry but when the sky started to fall I couldn't think of anyone to come to but you."

Falling sky? What is he talking about? -Me: "How did you even get here when you're this drunk?"

-Him: "I got here a while ago, I was still a little sober then. I drove all this way just to beat you home. I wanted you to find me here when coming from campus, but I found myself sitting here for two hours. And I ended up drinking some more." He says pointing to an empty bottle of whisky on the passenger seat.

-Him: "I hope you don't mind that I waited right here."

Whatever's going on with him seems serious. -Me: "Listen, I'll drive in with my car then come back and get yours. I don't want you to even attempt driving in, you're too drunk to do that. We don't want you to end up hitting the wall, damaging your car...and my yard in the process."

He gives out a drunken smile.

-Him: "You still care about me."

I actually feel sorry for him even though I haven't yet heard what's going on.

-Me: "Just stay put, okay?"

I go back to my car and drive into the yard after opening the gate. Then I come back to get Alex. I find him already on the passenger seat, that allows me to get behind the wheel and drive his car inside. After parking it next to mine, I get out and go round to get him from his side. He's too drunk to even stand on his own let alone walk, so I have to be his pillar and help him get inside the house. Dropping him on the couch, I plop down next to him.

-Me: "Talk to me, Alex. What's going on? Is this about the baby? Is he sick? Or is he, God forbid, gone?"

He leans back on the couch and rubs his hands over his face before answering.

-Him: "That baby is not mine, Soso. Your aunt lied and used me... I know Nathi. And that baby, even though he's still so tiny, it doesn't need a genius or an experienced adult to see that it's Nathi's. He looks exactly like him. Uzigodusile, period. And your aunt is simply a lying whore."

Wait, what?

-Me: "Wait, wait. Are you serious?" He nods, with a sour face.

-Me: "And did you talk to Iviwe about this?" -Him: "I did. It was around lunch time when I asked her to tell me the truth. I just couldn't hold it in anymore. I confronted her and she ended up confessing. She told me that the baby is indeed Nathi's. You know what that means? It means, to lviwe I was just means to an end. I delivered her from the evil your father was about to throw her into. She used me and I let her. When she told me that she was pregnant with MY baby I foolishly believed her, I didn't question anything. But how could I be so stupid and gullible? How could I?"

Oh my God. I'm literally out of words right now. I just don't know what to say. But how could Iviwe do something like this? Alex feels so used and betrayed right now,

understandably so. This was supposed to be the most happiest time of his life but now here he is, miserable as they come. If I was an unforgiving person I would be laughing right now, celebrating his misfortune. But I'm not that kind of person. Besides, I was already seeing him as family, not as an ex. And like my father always preaches, family always stands together. And right now, my heart actually breaks for this poor guy sitting next to me.

-Me: "I don't know what to say. I really don't. But I am so so sorry, Alex."

That's the only thing I manage to push out of my mouth after being quiet for a long moment.

-Him: "After what I did to you, maybe this is what I deserve. This is karma dealing with me. You were a good woman to me, Soso, but I broke your heart. I crushed it...I'm so sorry. I'm sorry."

Tears are now escaping his eyes. No, I can't watch him like this. I pull him to me and let him cry on my shoulder.

-Me: "No. You don't deserve this, Alex. Don't say that. Nobody deserves something like this. Nobody."

He continues to cry on my shoulder, and I'm pretty sure the alcohol is also playing a huge role in these tears. After what feels like forever, he pulls back and looks at me with those teary eyes. -Him: "Soso, please forgive me. For everything I did to you."

-Me: "Dude, what are you talking about? You apologised and I forgave you a long time ago. That's all in the past now. Yes, you broke my heart back then but hey, these things happen. You weren't feeling me anymore and you fell in love with another woman, it happens. I got over it a long time ago, and there's no need to bring it up again."

He wipes away his tears then covers his face with both hands and exhales loudly.

-Me: "Hey, come. Let's get you to bed. You need to rest. Tomorrow's a new day."

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I help him up then to the bedroom Kevin and Asanda were using. Those two aren't the cleanest people I know but they made sure that the room is clean before they left yesterday. Fresh linen and everything. "What we had was special, Soso. I messed it up, but after I came back to my senses it was hard for me to let it go...I only married Iviwe because I thought it was the right thing to do."

Alex says as I'm helping him down on the bed.

-Me: "Just lie your ass down and stop clowning, okay?"

-Him: "My marriage is definitely ending. It didn't even last a month. What a joke." He chuckles miserably.

-Him: "Listen, I know that yours is about to begin. But would you mind if it didn't last too, so we could get another chance? I still love you, Soso. And I need you now more than ever. I need to lean on you or I will crash and burn, I'll go crazy."

This one, I don't think he's even listening to himself. The booze has got him talking crap. -Me: "My marriage will last, Alex. Thank God that crazy Natalie didn't come back pregnant with Thando's baby. If she did, well maybe my wedding wouldn't even happen."

-Him: "I'm sorry about that Nat thing. I really am."

-Me: "That's not the route I wanted this to take when I brought it up. Just stop apologising or even talking and just lie down. You'll wake up feeling a little better in the morning."

-Him: "You're still beautiful, you know that? Inside and out."

With that, he plops down the bed and before I know it, he's already snoring. Eshe.

I help take off his shoes, the belt and the jacket. Then I struggle to tuck him under the covers. Booze is no one's friend, huh.

When I finally manage to get him under the duvet, I leave the room.

I close the door from the outside then lean on it and exhale. I seriously feel for this poor guy. This whole thing is fucked up. And I know that it's going to get worse before it gets better. But I hope he won't do what Khwezi did.

As tragic as all the events surrounding Thabi's (Khwezi's wife) murder and Khwezi's suicide were, there's a lesson in that horrific and unnecessary chain of events. We have to be conscious when we make our choices and realise the ramifications of every single one, because they each carry with them a price that you have to be willing to pay should you choose that road. Thabi shouldn't have cheated on her husband, plain and simple. On the other hand, Khwezi may have been pissed by what he discovered but he also had a way out, a choice. He shouldn't have opted for murder then suicide, that wasn't the only choice he had. My only hope now is that he finds salvation and peace in his new forever home. And may his wife rest in peace too. As I'm still leaning on the door, my phone vibrates in my pocket. I take it out and read the message. It's from Nick and it reads: "Thanks for today. I had a great time with you."

My lovies, kindly add your hometown after your comment. I'd love to know where my followers are from <3.

Season 2 #12

The next morning I don't oversleep, I wake up at exactly 6 AM and go for my morning jog. My ankle is A okay, in fact, since last week. And my OB/GYN said this pregnancy doesn't have to stop me from enjoying my favorite form of exercise - jogging. She gave me the go ahead to continue. In fact, she said jogging may help me gain less weight in this pregnancy and I may also have a shorter labour. However, I need to take certain precautions to jog safely, and she provided me with those.

Forty minutes later, I walk back into my house, all sweaty. I go straight to the kitchen

to leave my water bottle and also get another glass of water. With me pregnant and all, I have to make sure that I always stay hydrated.

Leaving the glass in the sink, I go hit the shower. When I'm done I put on a robe and my morning shoes then go back to the kitchen to make myself something to eat, which is basically a sandwich with lots and lots of tomato, lettuce and mayonnaise. I eat this a lot, I even crave it in the middle of the night. I'm glad I don't have many food cravings and aversions though. So far this pregnancy is not so hard on me. Even the morning sickness, which I seldom experience in the morning but more during the day and in the evenings, doesn't get so severe. The expensive orangeflavoured PregEase tablets that I chew help a great deal, and so are the Sea-Bands that I wear around my wrists.

I sit down and eat, then I make myself some coffee. One cup a day is okay, my doctor said. And that's a good thing because there are some mornings that I don't think I can get through without my caffeine boost.

Alex is still not up yet. But with the way he was drunk last night, I'm not surprised. I really feel for him but I wish he could wake up right now and get ready to leave because, as expected, not everybody is happy about him being here. To say Doc was thrilled when I told him about it last night would be like saying the deceased have come back to life. Unlike me, he wasn't so sympathetic even after I'd told him the entire story, and that it was already late and the guy was too drunk to leave. But eventually he was like, "All this serves him right. But it's fine you can let him sleep. Just make sure he leaves first thing in the morning, okay?" Something similar to what my father said. I called him too and told him about my uninvited guest because I didn't want him, lviwe or anybody else to get the wrong idea. And I also didn't want it to seem like I'm taking sides, choosing Alex over Iviwe. In fact, I just want to stay out of this whole

mess, I don't want to get involved. But I believe helping Alex last night was the right thing to do under the circumstances, and I won't let another person tell me otherwise. The guy finally wakes up and drags his feet into the kitchen just as I'm finishing my cup of coffee.

-Me: "Hey. How are you feeling?"

-Him: "Morning... I honestly feel like crap. And my head is killing me."

He says rubbing his hands over his face as he comes to sit next to me on the high chairs.

-Me: "I have strong painkillers in my bathroom, I'll go get them for you. In the meantime you can help yourself with some coffee, I just made a fresh pot. And you can get anything to eat out the fridge."

-Him: "Thanks, Soso. For everything." He says softly, looking straight into my eyes. -Me: "Hey, don't mention it. I'll go get the pills."

I leave him and go get the tablets.

When I come back I find him sipping the coffee and I hand him the bottle of pills. He shakes out a couple then downs them with the coffee.

-Me: "So what are you gonna do about your situation?"

I ask, leaning with my elbows on the island, opposite him. As much as I don't want to kick him out, he really has to go because I don't want trouble.

-Him: "I'm not sure yet. What I'm sure of though is that I don't wanna see Iviwe ever again. When I leave here I'm gonna drive straight to Durban. I won't go home because I know that Iviwe and that bastard child will be there. They'll be out of the hospital this morning, and even though my parents are aware of the situation they still want to let them live in their house. I guess it's because they don't want our family to be the talk of the town. Well, that's just something I don't give a fuck about. I won't present a united front with a lying bitch just because I'm avoiding to be gossiped about. People will always talk, and I don't give a fuck what they'll say about me. My marriage is not the first one to end with a scandal and it certainly won't be the last."

-Me: "So, you're gonna go back to Durban. But, Alex, correct me if I'm wrong...isn't that Iviwe's house that you'll be going to? I mean she's the one who's working and has been paying the bills, not you. You're still a student."

-Him: "That's correct. But money is not a problem to me, I'll move out of that house as soon as I find my own place. Hopefully that would be before Iviwe comes back. I really don't want to deal with her, and I certainly don't need anything out of this marriage." -Me: "I see."

-Him: "Until then I'm at her mercy, aren't I?"

-Him: "This just got me thinking, you know."

-Me: "Thinking? About?"

-Him: "The way I treated you last year. I didn't just leave you for another woman but I also stopped paying your rent even though I knew very well that you wouldn't be able to afford it. I knew that if you got kicked out for not paying you would have nowhere to go, but that didn't make me care enough to continue helping you out. I was happy with my own life and I didn't care about yours. But because you're the strong woman that you are, you didn't get defeated. You rose above it all. You managed to juggle work and school so you could pay your own rent on time. You were surviving, things were working out for you until I had your landlord kick you out of that flat. You'd be surprised what money can do. As long as I gave her money, that woman didn't have a problem kicking you out even if it was just for playing music. That's what I did to you, Soso. That's what I did. I hurt you because I'm a jerk that wanted what I wanted. Yet you still found it in your heart to

forgive me. And last night you didn't hesitate to open your door to me. You opened it wide

and didn't only offer me a place to sleep but also a shoulder to cry on. That's the kind of person you are. You have a good heart, MaNdlovu, and I'm happy you didn't let what I did to you change who you are."

At this point I can feel tears stinging my eyes. The events of the day this man threw me out of his room in front of lviwe keep playing in my head. I vividly remember how he roughly threw me on the floor and didn't even care how I got up even though I had landed so hard on the cold floor and hit my head on his bed. Without even considering my feelings, he told me so coldy how he never wanted to see me again and how much he loved this same lyiwe who has now played with his heart. The way my heart was so crushed that day I never thought I would ever ever be able to forgive this man. But look at me now. It's amazing how forgiving your heart can be when you are in a good space in your life. I

believe if I didn't have Thando's love I would still be as bitter as any typical ex, there's no way I would have forgiven Alex when I did. This is why I'm grateful for Thando every day. He helped me out of a broken place and freed me from that bitterness that was weighing heavily on my heart. Holding a grudge is like a stone in your heart. When you forgive and let go, you can be free. And that's when God will show Himself and fight for you. After all, He

said in Psalms 46:10 "Be still, and know that I am God..."

-Me: "Let's not talk about the past, Alex. Let's just leave it where it belongs."

I say, wiping away the tears that are now trickling down my cheeks. I may have forgiven him but now that he has reminded me of the past, he has opened up old wounds.

-Him: "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to remind of the hurtful past that you had already forgotten about."

-Me: "It's okay. Forget about it."

-Him: "Even though I was drunk last night, I remember what I said to you. It's something I wouldn't have had the guts to tell you if I wasn't so drunk. It's also something I know would never happen. I got my chance and I blew it. You're now happy where you are, I gotta accept that and deal with it. I don't even know why I came to you yesterday. I guess it's because I know the kind of person you are. I knew that you would be sensitive enough to show me some compassion, but also tough enough to not pity me. I knew that you wouldn't tell me that everything's gonna be okay, but you'll just be there for me. And that's what I wanted, to know that there's someone who cares about me without being judgemental...Thank you, Soso. But it's now time for me to go. I need to deal with my life alone, far from you. I've realised that me being here is kind of inappropriate. I'm your ex and I'm sure Thando won't like this. Not to mention the fact that my wife is your aunt, so

I'm very much putting you in an awkward position."

Everything he's saying is true. And I'm glad he's leaving on his own, but I just can't stop worrying about him.

-Me: "Just tell me one thing, Alex. Are you gonna be okay?"

-Him: "I will be. I don't have a choice."

-Me: "Please be, because I don't want you to do something stupid out there."

-Him: "If by something stupid you mean killing myself or squeezing the life of that bitch lviwe, you can relax because that's not gonna happen. I won't hurt myself or even land myself in trouble for a whore."

-Me: "That's good. And I know that you're angry but please tone down on the name calling."

-Him: "Right. Sorry. Iviwe is still your aunt after all."

-Me: "How about she's a human being? Anyway, come wash up before you leave." -Him: "No, I'm gonna make you late. It's fine, I'll go without taking a bath."

-Me: "Don't worry, I'm in no hurry. I can't let you leave like that, as if you slept in your car." He nods with a tiny smile on his face. I lead the way to the guest bathroom and I give him fresh towels and a new toothbrush to use. Kevin's toiletries that he left behind will also come in handy.

While he takes his bath I go get dressed, getting ready to go to campus. When he's done, I'm done too and I walk him to his car. "Hey, Alex. Stay strong, okay?"

I say, as he opens the door of his car.

-Him: "And you stay good, okay? And thanks for everything."

I let out a brief smile and nod.

-Him: "Listen, I've seen that my presence around you opens up some old wounds. And I hate that, I hate hurting you again. Which is

why staying gone this time around is my

sincere promise to you. I know that you forgave me, but I also understand that your forgiveness doesn't give me the right to just rock up at your door. People can forgive and forget. You forgave the treachery, and now I also want you to forget the person who committed the mistake. I want you to erase me in your memory, Someleze. It's better to be completely forgotten than to be furiously remembered with all the wrathful memories. And I want your pain to be completely gone. So please forget me. I'll stay away so I could no longer disturb your balance. So I could stop making waves that might start another series of outrage emotions. So you could freely love without being reminded of my betrayal all the time. I want you to be free of me. You deserve better, and I'm giving you a space in this universe without a trace of me. I'll be far enough that you wouldn't even feel that I once circled around your axis. I want you to be completely happy. A radiant life

without me anywhere around you,

MaNdlovu, it's what you deserve. I'm sorry I forced my way into your family. And I'm sorry I broke your heart. I'm sorry for everything I did to you. I'm really, really sorry." As much as Alex apologised to me before, I never thought I'd ever receive a sincere apology like this one from him. And now that it's out I can't help but be an emotional mess. My tears are falling freely out of my eyes, I just can't fight them. Alex comes to me to give me a hug, but he then stops himself when his arms are just inches from closing around me.

-Him: "I'm sorry. And I better get going. Goodbye, Someleze."

He steps back and get's in his car. I'm still standing there as if my feet are glued to the ground when he starts his car and drives out of my driveway. I only get myself together when his car has disappeared from my eyes. Leaving the gate still open, I go get my stuff inside the house then come back to get in my own car and drive to campus. This day has sure started with an unexpected turn of events. But everything has left me satisfied. Now I can say, without a shred of doubt, that I got complete closure when it comes to Alex.

"Okay, guys, it's now 12:25 and that's all the time we have for today. I'll see you at 14:00 hours for your practical session."

I say to the students I'm tutoring. Since the beginning of the year I've been tutoring 2nd year Biochemistry students 3 days in a week. I'd be tutoring first years but we don't have Biochemistry at first year level. I don't even get paid for doing this. Prof Elliott just asked me to do it because he knows how good I am in this course, and I agreed to do it for free. I couldn't be a paid tutor and a lab assistant at the same time, even though I would have loved to be paid for both. "Sorry. Could you please explain to me once again how to correctly write a report after a practical session?"

Says one of the students, a guy sitting in the back row.

-Me: "Guys, come on, this is second year level. By now you should know how to write a good lab report. If you missed how it's done in high school then you should have grasped it last year. Even last semester, I taught you over and over again how it's done. But when marking your papers I kept noticing that it's not only Jali over there who's still struggling to get it right. What seems to be the problem, people? I seriously don't get it. But it's okay, I'll explain it to y'all once again before the practical session commences this afternoon." They nod then get up and leave. Seriously, I don't think I could ever be a teacher in my life. This shit is exhaustive. And I commend the teachers who keep it together out there. Repeating the same thing over and over to learners who still just won't get it requires a

lot of patience, something I don't possess. I

simply get annoyed when a student can't get what I'm saying no matter how hard I try to break it down and explain it in layman terms. Even now, this tutorial ended with me just 5 seconds away from losing it. And my pregnancy hormones aren't making things easier for me either. I think this is now too much for me. And the truth is I work three times harder than their paid lecturer. Now left alone, I take a seat and exhale loudly. Feeling drained, annoyed and nauseous. I reach for my bag, take out one ginger-flavoured Preggie Pop and desperately suck on it. These lollipops are just another thing I use to deal with nausea when it hits. Still busy with the lollipop, I decide to call Doc just to vent. But his phone just rings unanswered. He must be busy at work, I get that but it doesn't make me feel any better. I'm even more annoyed when I hang up. Jeez, this man. I rest my head on the bench; taking long, deep breaths.

As I'm still sitting like that, my phone vibrates in my pocket. Taking it out, I find that it's Nick.

"Hey, Nick."

I answer with less enthusiasm. It's got nothing to do with him though, it's just the mood I'm in right now.

-Him: "Hey. Are you busy?"

-Me: "Not really. Why?"

-Him: "I'd like to see you. I'm around Alice. I came in for yet another special appointment with a special client, and what I can tell you is that it didn't go very well. I'm pissed as we speak. And I don't wanna risk driving home when I'm still like this. I could use someone to talk to, someone like you. It won't take long, I promise."

-Me: "Actually, I'm not doing so great myself. I could use some of your lame jokes before I meet with these students again at 2." He laughs lazily on the other side.

-Him: "Lame? Did you just say my jokes are lame?"

I laugh too.

-Me: "But I love them. That should count for something, right? Anyway, where should I meet you?"

-Him: "You see the coffee bar opposite Standard Bank? That's where you'll find me." -Me: "Okay. I'll be there now-now."

I hang up. Then grab my bag and make for the exit.

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Ten minutes later, I walk through the coffee bar and I immediately spot Nick sitting alone, busy thumbing his phone. Oh God, he looks so handsome in a black business suit and an equally formal shirt, black on black, including the tie and the shoes. Despite telling myself that I'm no longer attracted to him, I just can't deny how completely stunning he looks. Lifting his eyes, he spots me still standing by the entrance and his lips quickly part to form

a beautiful, bright smile. Wow! Dragging my

eyes away from such perfection, I dig my nails onto my back to ground my racing pulse. God, but I thought I was over this feeling.

-Him: "Come on over. What are you standing over there for?"

It takes me a few seconds to recover. I swallow audibly, clear my throat, straighten myself, and start walking towards him. -Me: "Hey."

I say hesitantly when I reach his table. -Him: "You look absolutely beautiful today." He utters the words through his faltering lips as he gets up from his chair to stand in front of me. Beautiful? Me? There's no such. I'm dressed casually in cropped jeans, unbuttoned denim jacket, a white T-shirt and white sneakers. My hair is untied, and I'm wearing very little make-up.

-Me: "Thanks. I guess."

He pulls me to him in a hug. The moment his arms wrap around me my breath suspends as I inhale his fresh scent that I now know very well. And my heart starts beating like a drum against my chest cavity. Shit! This shouldn't be happening. I quickly wiggle myself out of his embrace.

-Him: "Sorry."

I don't answer. He pulls out a chair for me and I sit down, then he goes back to his. We sit like that for a long moment, just looking at each other.

Finally, when the comfortable silence starts to become awkward, I decide to say something. "What? Why are you just looking at me? Why aren't you saying anything?"

I ask hesitantly.

-Him: "You really look beautiful."

-Me: "Are you flirting with me, Dominic?"

I really need to know what's going on here.

His lips stretch to form that crooked smile of his then he looks straight into my eyes.

-Him: "Do you want me to flirt with you, Somi?"

-Me: "What? No. Of course not."

I answer, my lips faltering.

-Him: "Then you have nothing to worry about. I don't flirt with taken women, especially if they are pregnant. You too made it clear in that message you sent me that other week that you don't want that...So, relax. I'm harmless."

He says, that evil smile not leaving his face. -Me: "That's good. Because really, nothing will ever happen between us."

I say, as much to myself as him.

Season 2 #13

"Rainbow shaker on a stallion twister. Bareback rider on the eye of the sky. Stormbringer coming down, meaning to stay. Thunder and lightning heading your way." -Deep Purple

Staring at a blank white screen on my laptop, I rub at my tired eyes. I have to resist the

strong urge to hurl the depressing laptop across the room. Two hours, two bloody hours, I've been staring at this empty Word page and nothing is happening. This little line that keeps blinking every time I touch the trackpad I swear is taunting me.

My body is aching, strung out. Under normal circumstances I could use my sexual frustrations to my advantage, venting it out on the page. But this is ridiculous. I can't concentrate. I've been staring at this new "Discussion" page of my dissertation and I can't seem to proceed.

My body craves sex like a man in the dessert craves water. Fidgeting on the couch, I try to remember the last time I actually had real sex, not just phone sex and me servicing myself. I have to count on my fingers. No, that can't be right. I count again. Yup, three long weeks.

Slumping back on the couch, I mindlessly watch an episode of "Kourtney & Kim Take Miami" on E! Entertainment. I always have the TV on when I work on my dissertation, not to watch, just to listen. I just can't stand the silence.

Glancing around, I take in the house that's been feeling quite empty since Kevin and Asanda left. It is really lonely. Loneliness and frustration mix in with my raging hormones. It's a vicious cycle.

The last time I saw Doc was on Friday last week, 8 days ago. He'd surprised me with lunch on campus, but he couldn't stick around long enough to come home with me even for a quickie. He's always busy lately. If it's not work, it's research. If it's not that, he's reviewing articles in different medical journals - something he can't really put aside especially because he, too, is going to publish his research in a peer-reviewed journal. I just have to be an adult about the whole thing and understand. I've also had my hands full lately anyway with the wedding preparations and this dissertation that I need to finish and submit by October - only two months from now.

I know that three weeks ago temptation came knocking at the gate of my high-walled compound in the form of Dominic, the vibrations even reached my steel front door and the door threatened to come off at the hinges. But thank God nothing happened, my walls didn't come crashing down and my door remained intact.

Amanda is really a godsend. She's always been that friend who would cheer for me so loudly, vuvuzela and all, when I've done something good or achieved something. The one who would pull me back on track when my feet begin to wander off. The kind who would never sugar-coat any bullshit I try to perfect. Even now nothing has changed even though we're living hundreds of miles apart. She's still that voice of reason in my ear. We may not even talk often but every time I have good news she's always among the first people I'd share with. Same thing also happens when I find my feet stuck in mud, she's one of the people I'd call on to help or offer advice, and she'd always be there for me.

But when it came to the temptation Nick was throwing my way I felt uneasy about calling her, afraid that she would give me an earful before actually giving me the advice I needed. But then, knowing how much I needed her, I eventually picked up the phone that reminded me so much of Alex and called her. Surprisingly, she calmly painted me a vivid picture of the destination I'd reach if I proceeded down the dark alley I had already put my foot in. I knew exactly what was at stake, what I would lose should I let temptation win, but I guess I needed to hear it from someone else. After l'd talked to her l saw things more clearly. I knew what I had to do and I did it - I completely cut ties with Nick, I haven't seen or talked to him in three weeks and I'd like things to remain that way.

Speaking of dark alleys and Alex. He also took a wrong turn into a dark alley after what lviwe did to him. It's unfortunate that it took him overdosing on drugs to realise that he was now running off track, that he needed to pull himself towards himself and not let his life fall apart. As much as I know that what happened to him, the pain he was and probably still is going through, is possibly the price he had to pay for what he did to me, I actually felt sorry for him - but at a distance, of course. Him coming to me that night then giving me an honest apology in the morning gave me complete closure I didn't even know I still needed. After he disappeared from my sight I managed to shut that door for good. I now no longer have to have any dealings with him,

especially since he's no longer even part of my family.

Two weeks ago he sent me an email though, informing me that he would soon be leaving the country. I remember when we were all together at my father's family home in

Mthatha in April, he'd mentioned that his

former research supervisor from Fort Hare had approached him wanting to help him apply for a full PhD scholarship and admission at the University of Cambridge in the UK. Although he knew that it would undoubtedly be a good opportunity should he get accepted, he said he'd only do it for the old man's benefit, that he didn't see himself leaving the country. I'm guessing he didn't want to leave lviwe and their baby behind. However, now that he knows that the baby isn't his and has already had his marriage annulled, he doesn't have any reason to let the great opportunity pass him by. In the email, he stated that starting afresh in a new place with new people is probably what he needs right now, and since he's been accepted by the university he would leave and join them for the new academic year which commences on the 1st of October. I honestly wish him all the best wherever he is right now. But according to my experience,

you can never completely start over or move on without dealing with your past first. There can never be a new beginning if your heart is still burdened with old grudges and past painful memories. In order to completely heal and move forward you need to forgive and let go of the past. I hope one day he'll learn to forgive lviwe, and most importantly - forgive himself.

A lot has really happened in the past three weeks, but the greatest of all has got to be the birth of Kevin and Asanda's baby, Michaela. She's such an adorable, cute little girl. I don't even know why but the first time I held her in my arms I couldn't help but be a mess of feelings - one that became clearer than any though was love. I instantly fell in love with the little princess, and now I can't wait to have mine in my arms. I'm still at 15 weeks, but I'm already tired of waiting. Doc and I still don't know the sex yet and we don't ever want to know until the delivery day. But I'm secretly hoping it's a boy. I've always loved boys and besides, Doc already has girls. Despite everything, his busy schedule and the fact that the baby will come so early in our marriage, I hope he would be a good father to him as he is to the twins, the kind Kevin also is to his daughter.

Kevin? Seeing that I'm bored and lonely right now I would call him just to hangout, but I know that he's occupied with his little princess. So maybe I should call Ryan. I've been avoiding the guy ever since he gave Nick my number without my permission. But seriously that's old news now, I have got to reach out to the guy. In one of the texts he's been sending me, most of which I have been ignoring, he was telling me that his wife was now back from the States and that her father was now doing okay even though they thought he would be pushing daisies by now. I love it when God shows Himself and pulls His people back from the mouth of the grave. Just like He's been standing by my mother-in-law's side who is now doing okay after the breastconserving surgery she underwent. She's even dealing with the side effects of radiation therapy better than I thought she would.

Having decided to call Ryan, I eye my new phone on the couch. It is new because keeping the one I got from Alex just didn't feel right anymore, so I got rid of it and bought this one. I pick it up and dial Ryan's number.

"Hey, stranger." He answers with only a pintsize enthusiasm. I can't say I blame him though after the way I've been treating him. -Me: "Hey. How are you hanging?" -Him: "High enough to not feel low when an

old friend can't even make time to answer my calls and texts."

-Me: "I know, I know. And that's why I'm calling. I want to apologise and make it up to you, in person."

He chuckles.

-Him: "You mean that?"

-Me: "Of course, buddy. Maybe I could come by, in that way I'd also get to meet your wife, finally. Pretty please."

At this point I can hear that he's smiling on the other side. Some things never change, hey. This guy always had a soft spot for me back then, he could never stay mad at me even if he tried. And nothing has changed, so it seems.

-Him: "I'd love that. We're actually having a braai at the house this afternoon. We'll be hosting a number of people and I'd love for you to be one of those people. You can also bring your man, everybody will be bringing their partner."

Fantastic! Maybe being amidst a bunch of strangers is the kind of fun I need as a distraction right now.

-Me: "Great. I'll be there around 14:30. But I'll come alone, Thando is working."

-Him: "That's still okay. And 14:30 is fine. I'll see you when you get here."

-Me: "See you soon."

I hang up and check the time. It's now 11:30. I need to get up and get ready.

After freshening up, I put on a sleeveless, floral dress and flat sandals. It's an informal braai on a sunny day anyway. As for make-up, I don't even attempt to use it, I like my natural look. I just give my lips some loving with a lipgloss. By the time I finish brushing my straightback cornrows I know that I look effortlessly beautiful. I grab my handbag and walk out the front door. But before I drive out after getting into my car, I call Doc to tell him about the braai I'm attending. His phone, however, just rings unanswered. I'm sure he's busy at work, so I text him instead. But as I drive past Fort Hare farm a few

minutes later, he calls me back.

"Sthandwa sam." I answer with this big goofy smile on my face. I can't believe he still makes me feel this way whenever he calls.

-Him: "Mamakhe, unjani?"

-Me: "I'm good, thando Iwam. Just missing you."

I really do miss him. Yes, I hear his voice everyday because we call and text each other numerous times a day, trying to close the distance between us, but I miss seeing him right in front of me. I miss his touch.

-Him: "I miss you too, sthandwa sam. Maybe you should grace my cold house with your warm presence this evening when you leave Ryan's place."

-Me: "Yeah? But I thought you were going to attend a patient case at Livingstone Hospital this afternoon."

He's been called in by the hospital in PE to assist during a radical bladder cystectomy procedure in a woman who was diagnosed with bladder cancer.

-Him: "No longer going today but tomorrow morning."

-Me: "Oh, great. That means I'll be with you tonight. I can't wait."

The excitement in my voice is unmissable.

-Him: "Neither can I. Have fun at the braai, okay? Just let loose and enjoy. You've been working hard lately so you deserve it. But whatever you do just make sure that you and our baby are safe, okay?"
-Me: "Of course, babe. Of course."
-Him: "I love you. See you tonight."
-Me: "Love you more."
I hang up and floor the car down the R63 route. I'd love it if I could reach my destination before any of Ryan's guests arrive.
I'll hate being the centre of attention as I walk in alone.

. I don't feel the drive, I get to Gonubie before I know it. I guess it's because I've been happy all the way, singing along every song playing on Algoa FM. I love it when they play songs I know, but of course that's not why I've been happy. Obviously, I was happy because I'm

finally going to be with my man tonight. The

plant that hasn't been watered in three weeks

is finally going to get some water tonight. Mmmh! I get wet just thinking about it. But I shouldn't be thinking about that right now. I need to ring this intercom staring at me at Ryan's gate. He lets me in after I've rang it and I drive up the driveway to park next to the only car parked there. I guess this means most of the guests haven't arrived yet. Great!

From the passenger seat I grab the bottle of Ryan's favourite wine and the box of chocolates that I've bought for his wife. Before driving to their gate I made sure to pass at the mall and get them this little something, umngena-ndlini. I really hope Megan will like the chocolates though, or I'll be disappointed.

"Somi, right?" She asks with a warm smile after answering the door. Oh my word, the pictures of her that I've seen don't do her any justice, this woman is much more beautiful in person. -Me: "Yes. And you must be Megan."

I answer with a smile too.

-Her: "That's me, babe. Come on in."

I step inside and hand her the wine and the chocolate box.

-Her: "Oh my, how did you know that this is my favourite chocolate? I love these. Thank you, you're a sweetheart."

-Me: "Pleasure. I'm glad you like them."

I really am. And I'm sure it shows in my smile. I was really going to be disappointed if she didn't.

-Her: "I'm glad you came. I've been hearing a lot about you from Ryan."

-Me: "Only good things, I hope."

-Her: "80-20, I'd say."

She says laughing as she ushers me to the kitchen. She really seems like a nice person. This day is going to be fun, I say to myself.

-Me: "At least he's honest. I can't be all good, no person is."

-Her: "His honesty is what attracted me to him."

She says smiling as we join another lady in the

kitchen. I'm guessing she's the owner of the car in the driveway. Megan introduces her as Lungi, a friend of hers who's also from around EL. She seems nice too because when she sees me she immediately wipes her hands on her apron and steps away from the bowl of salad to come and attack me with a hug. "Thank God for you, now I'm not going to be

the only black around here." She says jokingly. This one is crazy.

-Megan: "There ebony goes again with her dry humour."

-Her: "You love me anyway, Meg. Somi, you better grab an apron, sweetheart. We need to be done with these sides before the guests get here."

-Me: "I'm all for that, as long as you won't give me anything that's got to do with onions or eggs. Those are my biggest aversions." I'm already feeling comfortable here. And this gourmet kitchen is every woman's dream. It's elegant and inviting. It's nice to be a trust fund baby, huh. And to have parents with deep pockets.

-Megan: "But before she touches anything, Lungi, I need to take her to see the boys." With that she leads the way to the back covered patio which opens to a well manicured green garden.

. We find Ryan chilling by a built-in braai with another guy that Megan introduces as Josh, Lungi's husband. Oh, it turns out ebony married ivory. The true beauty of our modern South Africa.

Megan doesn't stay long after the introductions, she goes back inside, leaving me with the boys. They are drinking beer and I just grab a soda can from a cooler next to Ryan's chair as the three of us engage in a mild general conversation. But not long into it, I ask to talk to Ryan aside. He turns to Josh and tells him to make sure that the lamb

chops don't turn into coals, then he gets up

and walks with me to stand by the sparkling swimming pool. These two really have a nice house here. It is situated above the beautiful Gonubie river. And the beach is not far either. Such exquisite views. I wish Doc and I could also have something like this some day. -Me: "Ryan, I'm sorry about the way I've been treating you. I.." But he cuts me off. -Him: "Hey, don't worry about it. Listen, I'm sorry too. I know why you've been weird towards me over the weeks. It's because I gave your number to Nick without asking for your permission first. Yes you went overboard with the way you handled the whole thing, you should have just talked to me about it instead of avoiding me, but I'm sorry. I shouldn't have done what I did. It's just that from the way you talked to me about the guy on the day you first met him I thought you liked his work and that you wouldn't mind if he called you. But I now know that I made a mistake, and I'm sorry."

-Me: "It's all in the past, buddy. The whole thing was just stupid anyway, come to think of it."

-Him: "No kidding. Truce?"

-Me: "You got it."

We both smile, but I can't help noticing that his quickly vanishes.

-Him: "I hope you won't mind the fact that he's also gonna be here today."

Is he talking about who I think he's talking about?

-Me: "Who? Nick?"

He nods. You have got to be shitting me. Really?

-Me: "And you didn't tell me this earlier because?"

-Him: "I didn't know that he was coming either. The person I invited is the friend of mine who referred me to him when I needed help, his cousin. She only told me about an hour ago that she'd be bringing him along as her partner. And I couldn't tell her not to, not without sounding crazy or like an ass." I don't know how I feel about this. But then again this is not my house, Ryan has a right to host whoever he wants to host in his house. And he really had no reason to tell the guy not to come. It's not like the guy is my ex or anything like that anyway. But I was really hoping to never see him again, you know. It doesn't seem like it's going to be a great day after all, does it? But I can't leave now, I'm already here.

-Ryan: "What, you don't want to be around him? What is it with you and that guy anyway?"

I don't have an answer to that question. I really don't.

-Me: "It's okay, Ryan. I don't have a problem with Nick. We are all adults here, so everything is gonna go well."

I say the words as much to myself as him.

After a few minutes I excuse myself and go inside the house to join the ladies even though I'm no longer feeling this whole thing. But then maybe there won't be any awkward moments between Nick and I. Maybe everything will indeed go well.

I'm helping out with the instant mash potato they bought from Woolworths when the intercom phone rings. It's the other guests, I'm guessing. Megan goes to answer it then goes to wait for them at the front door. "Ladies, meet my husband's friends, Dominic and Emily."

She says a few moments later as she walks back into the kitchen, obviously with the guests. I have my back on them, busy adding butter to the mash on the stove, but when she mentions Dominic's name my heart stops for a moment. Only for it to start racing when the name Emily sinks in, thinking about the Emily who was after my man. But then again, I guess Emily is a common name. I turn with a fake smile, ready to greet them. But that smile quickly fades as fast as it appeared when my eyes land on the one and only Emily Marais standing next to Nick. Oh hell no! She's Nick's cousin? What is this? Have these two been playing some kind of a sick game on Doc and I? I don't know how the spoon I've been using slipped off my grip, I just hear the noise it makes as it lands on the marble floor. The storm is not yet over, is it? These two are stormbringers, and I have a feeling they won't stop coming our way until they get what they are after, whatever it is.

Season 2 #14

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"He was long gone when he met me. And I realise the joke is on me. I knew you were trouble when you walked in. So shame on me now." - Taylor Swift

Thando

It looks like it's going to be a long day, and I honestly have zero energy. I've been

overworking myself in the past couple of weeks, and the one before that I was in Jo'burg to be by my mother's side and support her during her surgery. I don't even remember the last time I actually had enough time for myself or Someleze. But my lack of energy is more of an emotional thing than physical. All I'm trying to do now is get

through the day.

After my rounds this morning I had to prepare for a surgery I had already scheduled. I stepped into the OR for my first case of the day, an appendectomy, at 9:30. I performed it laparoscopically and it went well, the patient should be able to leave tomorrow morning. Subsequently, I got summoned to the Emergency Department to see a patient who had come in with a suspected perforated ulcer. She was in a bad state and I had to have her rushed in for surgery right away. Her surgery went well too. So, it's two down, but I don't know how many more to go. All I know is that I have one scheduled for this afternoon at 16:00, a complex hernia repair. The patient wasn't even mine though, he was my colleague's, Dr. Fandesi, but I'd rather take his surgery than go to PE. And I hope between now and that surgery I won't get a lot of calls

from the Emergency Department. I'm really not feeling good.

Following my short "tea break" at 12:30, I throw the sandwich wrapper and soda can in the trash bin before making my way back to work. But along the way I realise that I've left my phone on the table I was occupying. I immediately turn back and fortunately, I find it still lying where I'd left it. Checking it, I notice that I have a missed call from Someleze and a text message, and I call her at once. I don't, and would never, have a problem with her going out to spend a day with friends...and strangers, as it turns out. In fact, I think it will be good for her. She needs the air; she's been working a lot lately, and I trust her to be responsible.

"Have fun at the braai, okay? Just let loose and enjoy. You've been working hard lately so you deserve it. But whatever you do just make sure that you and our baby are safe, okay?"

-Her: "Of course, babe. Of course."

-Me: "I love you. See you tonight."

-Her: "Love you more."

I hang up and continue down the corridor with this strange feeling in my heart. As much as I want her to have fun I just had to tell her to be safe. I had this weird dream last night, and I couldn't fall asleep afterward. Someleze, pregnant as she is, was drowning in a body of water and all my attempts to save her were futile. Every time I tried to haul her out I would get swept away by this strong wind until she sank below and never rose again. It was a nightmare, one that's still haunting me even now, hence I don't feel so good. I've never been one to believe in dreams but this one's different, it felt so real. But it was still just a dream, right? It was just a dream.

Dreams are exactly that, dreams. They don't mean anything, right? Come on, Thando, pull yourself together, it was just a dream. Just a dream. Just a dream. In an attempt to make myself feel better, I keep repeating the same phrase in my head as I walk down the corridor, up until I feel a firm touch on my shoulder. I stop rather abruptly.

"Thando. Are you okay? I've been calling your name." Zizo says, giving my arm a tug. -Me: "Hey, Zee. Sorry I didn't hear you, my

mind was miles away."

-Her: "Yeah, I can see that, and the fact that you haven't been yourself since morning. Are you okay? Do you perhaps wanna talk about it?"

Her voice holds some concern as she wraps her arm around my shoulder for some comfort. This one can be dramatic sometimes, but I like how much she cares. -Me: "I can't share without sounding crazy and paranoid. So I'd rather I keep this one to myself. Hope you don't mind." -Her: "Okay, I'll respect that. But tell me, are you gonna be okay?"

-Me: "I hope so."

-Her: "But whenever you need to talk just know that I'm here, okay?"

She says softly as she removes her arm around me. And I nod with a slight smile. -Her: "I hear you've changed your mind about the Livingstone case. That you're no longer going to PE but you're sending Fandesi. Why though?"

-Me: "Because I don't want to go anywhere today. I want to be with Someleze this evening."

-Her: "Soso. Is she okay?"

That concern is now back in her voice.

-Me: "She's fine, don't worry. I just want to spend some time with her."

-Her: "Okay, lemme get this straight. You've turned down this case so you could just spend time with your woman? Do you know what being part of that surgery would mean for you and that patient?" -Me: "Fandesi is as good as me, the patient will be in good hands. As for my rep in this field, well, that's not my priority at this point. I just want to make time for my family. Of all people you should understand that, Zee. You're married."

Seriously, all I want is to have Someleze next to me and see that she is safe. That's the only way I'll be able to sleep peacefully tonight. -Her: "Fine. I get it. Anyway, who will be assisting you during the surgery you've taken over from Fandesi?"

I chuckle.

-Me: "What, you wanna assist? Well, I already have enough people on my team. Even now I'm headed to a briefing. Just do me one thing, okay? Don't mention this to Soso. I lied to her, I told her I'll be going to PE tomorrow morning, I didn't tell her that I've cancelled. I don't want her to think I'm abandoning my job for her, you know how she can be like sometimes. You'd think she'd be happy that I've chosen to put her before my job but then be surprised when she doesn't show the desired reaction. She can be so unpredictable sometimes."

-Her: "Don't worry, my lips are sealed." -Me: "I'm just hoping for a slow afternoon, you know. Less emergencies. So I can go home less tired this evening." -Her: "You and me both, buddy. You and me both."

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Someleze

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"Somi?" The bastard Nick says, looking surprised.

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-Emily: "You know her, cuz?"
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-Him: "Yeah. Kind of."
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I may not know what these crazy cousins are up to but I do know that they are acting right now.

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Oh God, I can't believe I let Nick kiss me. Yes, you heard that right. The day after our
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rendezvous at that coffee bar in Alice he called me, and against my better judgement I agreed to meet up with him. We were sitting in his car, just talking, when it happened. It happened so fast, before I knew it he had leaned over and placed his lips on mine. But to be honest, for a moment there I enjoyed it.

A part of me wanted to not only return the kiss but also surrender to the paralysing feeling that had overtaken my entire body. Blood was thundering through my veins like liquid fire and I just wanted to let go. But thank God, I managed to quickly switch where the blood supply was flowing, I turned my brain back on and leaped out of that car in a hurry. That was the "wake-up" moment for me. The point where I decided to put everything aside and call my friend, Amanda. And subsequently I decided to never get close to Nick again.

If I'd ever pictured the scene where I'd bump into him again though, it had certainly been much different than this. I get a sinking feeling in the pit of my stomach as if I have a giant rock sitting there when it becomes clear to me that this guy never cared about me. Even when he acted as someone who was only interested in friendship, it later became clear to me that that was his strategy to lure me in then pounce the way he did. The truth is, I was in his sights from day one. That's why his eyes were always on me the first day we met at Ryan's dance studio, he was there for me. He had found me and now all he wanted was to get me alone and draw me in. He wanted what he wanted from me, whatever it is, and he was going to take a step back immediately after getting it, leaving me high and dry. Thank God I'm the one who took a step back first, before any of that could happen. But I'm still ashamed for letting things get as far as they did. Shame on me for letting him get that close even when deep down I knew that he was trouble. At this point I can't stop wondering what he and his cousin must be chasing. Thing is, I doubt Emily would go this far just because she wants Doc. There's definitely more to this.

Just then Ryan and Josh enter through the kitchen's back door.

-Ryan: "Hey, Ems. You made it."

-Her: "What is this one doing here?"

She asks pointing at me. In fact, she's

demanding as if she has a right to do so.

-Ryan: "I invited her, Emily, don't be rude. You know her?"

-Her: "Unfortunately, I do. I'm now at Makiwane because of her and her man...I'm sorry, Ryan, but I can't be in the same space as her."

You have got to be kidding me. She's actually blaming me for what happened? Can't she take responsibility for her own actions? -Ryan: "What, you want me to kick her out? I'm afraid I can't do that, Emily. Somi is my friend and she's staying."

Okay, I've had enough of this shit. Why do they keep talking about me as if I'm not in the room? -Me: "It's okay, Ryan, I'll leave. I don't feel like being here anymore anyway. I'll call you, okay?"

I say, taking off the apron, putting it on the island. Megan and Lungi exchange looks. -Ryan: "No, Somi. You're not going anywhere."

-Emily: "Fine, she can stay. Nick and I are leaving....Cuz, let's get outta here."

Ryan keeps quiet, he doesn't even attempt to stop them. They walk out and Megan follows them. To see them off and also open the gate for them, I assume.

-Me: "Ryan, can I talk to you in private? Josh and Lungi, you don't mind, right?"

They both shake their heads no. Ryan leads the way outside.

. He goes to stand by the pool once again. -Him: "What's going on here, Somi?"

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He asks as soon as I come to stand beside him.

-Me: "That's a million dollar question. All I know is that Emily and Nick are after Thando and I for God knows what. Emily got transferred to Makiwane Hospital because she was busy seducing Thando at work and Thando reported her for sexual harassment. Nick then did the same thing with me. That can't be a coincidence...Ryan, I've always known you as an honest person, and Megan also agrees. So I want you to be honest with me even now. Do you know anything about what those two are up to? Are you also in on it?"

He stares at me in astonishment.

-Him: "I can't believe you just asked me that. It's absurd to the point of being offensive. Somi, we are old friends. I thought you knew me. I thought you trusted me."

I don't fail to pick up that his voice is laced with hurt and anger. God, now I feel bad. But I just had to be sure. -Me: "I'm sorry, buddy. I just wanted to be sure. I'm sorry I came across as someone who doesn't trust you. I do trust you, Ryan, I do. Believe that."

He doesn't say anything. His eyes leave my face and drift thoughtfully to the swimming pool, as if trying to calm himself down.

-Me: "Tell me, how and when did you become friends with Emily?"

He lets a moment pass before answering. -Him: "I got to know her in May when I started working for Dr. Pretorius. He is her stepfather...As for Nick? I don't know much about the guy, only that he helped me out when I was in desperate need of an accompanist. Before that I didn't even know he existed."

-Me: "Please tell me everything you know about Emily. Maybe I'll be able to figure out some things about her."

-Him: "Nothing significant can come out of my mouth. I don't think I know anything worth telling." -Me: "Please let me be the judge of that." -Him: "What I know is just general stuff. Like the fact that she was born and bred here in EL. Her parents divorced when she was a teenager, I think. Then her mother, who's a GP with a private practice in Vincent, married Dr. Pretorius. She has a younger sister, Molly, who's 21. And most importantly she has a long-term boyfriend who's a psychologist." -Me: "A long-term boyfriend?"

- -Him: "Yes. They are even talking about marriage. Which is why I don't understand why she would seduce your man."
- -Me: "She would if she wanted something more important than just getting into his pants."
- -Him: "Something like what?"

-Me: "That's what Thando and I will need to figure out...Have you ever mentioned my name to that woman before today?" -Him: "Um...maybe just a couple of times. The first time was when she came to my dance studio for the very first time. We were talking about dance and I told her about this girl who

was once my best on-stage Juliet. I then mentioned you again the morning I was telling her about my search for an accompanist. I mentioned that I had found you again and that you had just joined my dance studio, and I didn't want to disappoint you. That I wanted everything to go okay, which was why I needed to find an accompanist ASAP. That's when she said her cousin could help."

-Me: "Did you tell her what my name was?" He nods. "Did you call me Somi or Someleze?" -Him: "Someleze. I only refer to you as Somi when you're around."

-Me: "Did she ever show interest in me during any of your conversations?"

-Him: "Not really. The first time I mentioned your name she asked what your surname was, because apparently there was another Someleze she knew. When I told her that you're Ndlovu, she said you were not the one she knew. That was all." -Me: "I don't know what's going on here but it's scaring me. When you told her that you wanted an accompanist I believe that's when she saw an opportunity to use her cousin to get to me. You had inadvertently presented the opportunity to her after she had failed to seduce her way into Thando's life. I'm willing to accept that everything that happened before that was just coincidence, but after...no, no coincidence. Nick went to your studio that day knowing very well that I was there. He took the gig because he wanted to get close to me. I bet he even knew how I looked like, with the availability of social media these days that is pretty easy." -Him: "But what do they want from you and Thando?"

-Me: "I don't know, Ryan. But I think the actual target here is Thando, I was just a tool they were going to use to get to him." -Him: "What are you gonna do now?" He asks with some concern. -Me: "I'm afraid I'm gonna have to leave. I need to be alone and try to figure things out. I'm sorry."

-Him: "It's okay. Don't worry, I understand. But if you need anything down the road, just shout. Okay?"

-Me: "Thanks, Ryan."

I motion for us to walk back inside. I need to say my goodbyes to Josh, Lungi, Megan and any other guests who may have arrived while we were out here. I make a mental note to tell Doc everything about Nick this evening, including the kiss. Time for keeping secrets is long gone.

. . . Thanda

Thando

Around 13:30. After discussing the 16:00 surgery with my team, they walk out, leaving me going through the patient's file one more time. Only to be interrupted by my pager, a summon to the ED. I drop everything and rush out. So much for that slow afternoon, huh. I was hoping for a miracle anyway, considering that it's a Saturday.

I find the trauma resuscitation suite a tightly controlled chaos, with a number of emergency doctors, including Zizo, and other medical personnel. According to Linda, the nurse who brings me up to speed, there has been an automobile accident on the N2 between Port Elizabeth and East London. For some reason a taxi lost control, overturned and rolled to the opposite side of the road. It hit an oncoming car and subsequently caught fire. Eleven patients incoming but only 2 are critical, one of which was in the car and not in the taxi.

One of the critical patients is already here. I see Dr. Summers, the head of our department, standing at the foot of a gurney directing two doctors as they cut off the clothes of the critical patient, a female who has sustained burns when the taxi caught fire.

Some of her clothing is melted and peeling away like plastic wrap. Wait a minute. Is

this...Iviwe? Someleze's aunt? Oh my God, it's her. But why was she in a taxi when she has a car? My first instinct is to jump in and assist but there are already enough doctors attending to her, and there's another incoming critical patient who needs me. Shake it off, Thando, shake it off, I say to myself as I try to focus.

"It's time to rock and roll, sport." Zizo says, her adrenaline rising as she, Linda and I step out to receive the second critical patient. We meet a paramedic already pushing her away from the ambulance, and she doesn't look good.

-Paramedic: "Patient's name is Molly. Twentyone years old. Multiple lacerations,

hypotension, gravid tender abdomen."

I look at her lying on the stretcher, her neck stabilised in a brace, her body covered neckto-toe in a red thermal blanket. She's conscious, if only barely. I briefly lift up the blanket at her legs to reveal the many lacerations on her white skin perfunctorily bandaged. I also notice that she's pregnant, and for some reason the dream I had last night about my own pregnant Soso instantly comes back to me.

-Me: "She's pregnant, right?"

I'm asking the paramedic.

-Him: "32 weeks."

-Me: "Hear any fetal heart tones?"

Not wanting Molly to hear, he shakes his head no. I motion for all of us to transfer her onto our gurney. She looks up at me as if looking at the face of mercy.

-Me: "Try not to worry, Molly. We're going to make you better now."

Zizo pushes the gurney, surging to the trauma suite.

-Molly: "The baby...Is the baby...?"

She can't speak long enough to complete the sentence but we all get what she's anxiously asking.

-Zizo: "We'll find that out as soon as we can. For now, I need you to stay as still as possible," then she turns to me and whisper, not wanting Molly to hear. "Her pain's got to be high. We should give her 50 of Fent." I quickly look at her chart that I got from the paramedic and shake my head.

-Me: "No. BP's too low." Then I turn to Molly. "Can you tell me where you are, Molly?" -Her: "P...PE?"

She was on her way to PE, she didn't get there. In fact, she was still close to East London. The wrong answer prompts me to stop the gurney and lift up the blanket to get a better look at her body, which is riddled with dozens of glass-filled lacerations, all discharging blood in drips and rivulets. Oh God, she's in a bad shape but I put in a brave face and look up at her.

-Me: "You are doing really great, Molly. Hang in there."

Now we are pushing her down the corridor, where Zizo shucks and jives, sliding under the gurney to be on the other side and assist. I push the gurney as she runs the ABCs and Linda writes them down.

-Her: "Airway, clear. Breathing, stressed but within acceptable limits. Circulation, low, 80 over 60."

At this point I'm more worried about the baby.

-Me: "Maybe we should get a hand-held Doppler to check on the baby."

-Zizo: "All in due time. Best way to save the baby is to save the mother."

Just then a bandage covering one of Molly's abdomen lacerations comes loose, causing blood to geyser. Hell, we got a major bleeder here! Zizo tries to reach the bandage across Molly's belly, but when she can't, I hoist myself onto the gurney, straddling Molly and applying pressure on the vessel with my thumb.

-Zizo: "Always flexible, huh."

This is nothing to me. I just shrug.

-Me: "Reposition and pull this bandage over."

She does and we make sure it is pulled tight as Linda pushes the gurney and enter the bullpen of our suite.

. We find Dr. Summers doing what he does best in front of the doctors. You'd swear this guy is an orchestra conductor or a sports coach.

-Him: "All eyes on me, people. Calvary, take 'Pregnant Multiple Lacerations' into trauma One. And I need an update every 10 minutes on the 'Third Degree Burn Woman' in Trauma Five. Let's move, people."

He takes Molly's chart from Linda and just briefly scans through it before handing it to a trainee.

-Him: "I need 50 of Fent in her, like Caster Semenya fast."

-Me: "That's not gonna happen. This is my patient. And I'm saying 50 is too much for her. You didn't even read her chart." -Him: "Your patient, my department. Don't defy me."

This old man is full of shit. And I'm not in the mood for taking any of it today. In fact, I'm going to address it right now.

-Me: "You know what, Dr. Summers? I'm tired of your crap. You don't see me at all. You started by pushing for Dr. Emily Marais to be transferred to Makiwane Hospital instead of facing the consequences of the sexual harassment complaint I had filed against her a month ago. What the fuck is your problem with me? Huh? Tell me, if the roles were reversed, if it was Emily who was at the receiving end of the harassment, would you have done what you did? If I was a woman, I'm not even gonna mention the skin colour, would you have stood by me instead?" -Him: "December, you are way out of line." I'm aware that this word-exchange is being monitored by a dozen pair of eyes, but I don't care.

-Me: "Am I? Really?"

-Him: "I had nothing to do with Dr. Marais' transfer. I'm not the CEO of this hospital or even high up in the management, I don't make such decisions."

-Me: "Don't you dare patronise me. I know for a fact that you're the one who pushed for that transfer to happen. Like you keep reminding us, this is your department. And since Emily was working for your department, you had a say in what happened."

-Him: "Listen here, Dr. Marais went to Makiwane because that's where she was supposed to do her training right from the beginning."

-Me: "What do you mean?"

-Him: "She wasn't supposed be a trainee here but she made a special request. That's what I mean. Keep throwing these accusations around and disrespecting me in front of everyone, December, and you'll be out of here before you can even say Christmas." I don't pay his threat any attention, my mind is stuck on what he just said about Emily. She wasn't supposed to do her training here? She made a special request? Why? What does that mean?

"Guys, this is not the time or the place for your squabbles. What matters now are the two critical patients on this ward. Thando, let's go. Dr. Summers, please assign us a trainee to work with."

Zizo says as she starts to push Molly's gurney to Trauma One.

•

In there, my team and I remove the glass riddling Molly's body then press and stitch her up, with her mildly sedated. But when we're cutting the last stitches, she regains consciousness and starts thrashing anew, having gained some strength due to the work we have already done on her.

-Her: "Where...Where am I? My baby? Is the baby...?"

-Zizo: "Molly, you need to stay calm."

But no, Molly thrashes even harder, her sutures tearing. This is not good.

-Her: "The baby's dead, isn't he?"

-Zizo: "No, the baby's not dead. Just stay calm."

Hell, the baby can't be dead, not when I'm here. I grab a portable Doppler and try to get the baby's heartbeat, as I instruct the trainee to hold Molly still. He's trying but Molly continues to fight us.

I try to get the baby's heartbeat but I'm hearing nothing on the Doppler. I try again, still nothing. Molly continues to thrash. She's bleeding and alarms are going off. Zizo quickly turns to the trainee.

-Zizo: "Her pressure is better. Gimme 100 of Fent to knock her down a bit."

The trainee grabs a needle, but I quickly stop him. I can't have that. I need this baby to survive.

-Me: "No. The sedative we've already given her is already too much for the foetus." Zizo whispers close to me, with some urgency in her voice.

-Her: "Well, no mother, no foetus. And without the Fent she's going to continue to fight us and open everything back up again. She's gonna bleed to her grave."

I get her point, but there has to be another way to calm Molly down without giving her that much sedative. I snatch the Doppler again and put it on my own wrist without Molly seeing, catching my own heartbeat. -Me: "Hear that, Molly? Your baby is fine. No need to get all worked up."

The heartbeat is too slow for the baby, but Molly hears what she needs - hope. She thanks me then goes quiet. Mission accomplished. Zizo gives me an appreciative smile. And we continue to work.

About twenty minutes later we're done, and I exit Trauma One satisfied because we've finally managed to get the baby's true heartbeat. Now I need to go find out how Iviwe is doing. A part of me wants to call Someleze and tell her but then I stop myself. No, I'll tell her later when I have all the details, plus I don't want to ruin her day. I find Dr. Summers exiting Trauma 5, where Iviwe is. I know that we had an altercation earlier but that won't stop me from asking about my in-law.

-Me: "I think we've got a handle on Molly's bleeding. What happened to Iviwe, the burn patient?"

-Him: "She had airway issues, almost asphyxiated and died, but the team established a surgical airway. They are still working on her, you can't go in there." Not wanting to argue with this man, I retreat. At least I know she's still alive.

. Just when we think Molly is doing much better, that we've had a handle on all her lacerations, we realise that she is still bleeding internally. We suspect a joint fracture and after we've taken her to angiography we manage to close up the last two bleeders.

Now with everything looking good, we can get her to a room where she can recover. Linda wheels our semi-conscious patient out of the OR and to the elevator. She wheels her inside, then we all climb aboard. Zizo and I lean back, it's finally over. But then Molly starts to moan.

-Linda: "We have a problem here?" Zizo and I both look at Molly.

-Her: "My right ear. I can't...hear anything." She's increasingly upset now. Zizo and I step around the gurney to see blood trickling out of her ear and staining the white sheet on the gurney. As I'm still looking at that...

-Zizo: "Um...Thando..."

She's alarmed. And I see why. Molly's nostril is dribbling too. She is leaking and blood droplets begin to pool. Oh damn, this doesn't make me happy. Zizo and Linda try their best to stem the bleeding while I'm busy in Molly's ear with an otoscope. I learn that one of her crash wound lacerations has opened back up again. I inform Zizo who quickly grabs the otoscope, wanting to confirm.

-Her: "Not possible. I closed the Eustachian wound myself and it was solid."

As she peers into Molly's ear another sutured laceration, which is located on the side of Molly's neck, begins to bleed. Molly is now anxious, and she keeps asking what is happening to her. The truth is, we honestly don't know yet.

-Linda: "B.P is way up. 160 over 95." It doesn't make sense. If she's opening up her blood pressure should be going down. My eyes jump back and forth on her body, then it hits me.

-Me: "The baby."

-Molly: "What about the baby?"

-Me: "The baby is fine, Molly, but it may be putting a strain on your system. Zizo, check for contractions."

She moves toward Molly's lower half to check for contractions which could send her B.P through the roof and cause the wounds to leak.

-Her: "Yep. We've got contractions." At this point Molly becomes hysterical, screaming that it's too early for the baby to come.

-Zizo: "We take her over to OB, fill her with Terbutaline to stop the contractions. They are probably just Brixton Hicks anyway." But I have other plans. It doesn't matter what the contractions are, Molly needs as few stresses on her system if she and the baby are to make it. At 32 weeks the baby is viable. And I'm not going to waste another minute, by the time we get to OB it could be too late. We are going to have to deliver this baby ourselves. I tell Zizo, and even though she doesn't fully like the idea she compromises. I send the elevator back to the OR hall. And when it opens we quickly get Molly off and surge ahead to the room we used to close her joint fracture. Luckily we get there just as the nurses are starting to turn the room upside down, and we stop them. The lag has actually worked to our advantage.

Molly's bleeding is now intensifying; we really need to get this baby out, NOW. Zizo and I quickly prepare for the C-section, as Linda calls in for reinforcements.

We finally get to pull the baby out, but he looks lifeless. I try to clear the airway passage, but nothing...nothing...just nothing. I'm now frantic, desperate to get him to breathe. If he dies on me I'll be in trouble. Plus, for some weird reason, I feel like I would have failed again, just like I failed to save Someleze and our baby last night in my dream.

-Me: "Come on, baby. Come on, breathe. Breathe for me, please."

Still nothing. The baby is dead--, but then a wave of relief washes over me as I see a

twitch, a little feet squiggle, and hear a weak cry escaping his mouth. The baby is alive, he's alive! I finally exhale as Zizo gives me a smile of relief.

-Her: "Next time remember to never take any case personal. It clouds judgement." She's right, I took this case too personal because of the stupid dream I had last night.

But now that I've saved the baby and knowing that Molly is also going to be okay, I feel like I've reversed the outcome of the dream I had. Am I going crazy?

Season 2 #15

"Suddenly I was in another room. Terrified, cannot scream, cannot move. Paralyzed with fear. Where am I? Is this the end?" -Hypocrisy

. Someleze I'm not being paranoid, I know for sure that Emily and Nick are up to something sinister. And I'm willing to bet my pathetic month's salary they won't stop until their mission is accomplished.

My grip tightens around the steering wheel as I think about all the drama Thando seems to always attract. I know that he never asks for it but still, we could use some peace and quiet in our life. Geez, is that too much to ask? This whole thing is draining, and I always get sucked into it. As my car moves forward I mull over the various possibilities of what he has attracted this time around and how dangerous it is.

Pulling up at the entrance of the small complex he lives in, I press my palm down on the horn for the security to open up for me. I would let myself in if I had the remote to the automated gate, but I left it in Alice. The only key I have in the car's glove compartment is for the house. The security comes out of his quarters and when he catches a clear view of me, he lets me in. I greet with a forced smile as I drive past him to park in the parking area.

I can't believe that just a few hours ago I was excited about being with Thando tonight, but now I'm only filled with apprehension. How is he going to react when I tell him about Nick? Oh God please let it not be ugly.

I get inside the house and go throw myself on the couch. Laying there, I rehearse how I'm going to break the truth to Thando. I try to string words together to convey how ashamed I truly feel about my own actions in the whole thing. He has to know everything. If we are to figure this Emily-Nick thing out, I have to be completely honest with him.

Thando

"Thando, wait for me." Zizo says as we walk out from the handover. We are both already carrying our bags, ready to leave these walls. I stop and she catches up to me.

-Her: "I looked for you before the handover but I couldn't find you."

-Me: "I was outside. I needed some air after my last surgery."

I say as we continue down the hallway.

-Her: "This was one long day, hey."

-Me: "Long? Nah, try weird."

-Her: "Weird?"

-Me: "Remember me telling you that I know the burn patient from the taxi?"

-Her: "Yeah. Soso's aunt, you said. Did you tell Soso about it? Did you call her?"

-Me: "I was wrong, as it turned out. After my last surgery I went to the ICU to check on her. She was obviously out of it, she couldn't talk to me. But I checked her chart to see how bad she is, and guess what I saw in there. The name she gave out when she was still conscious is not lviwe, and the listed emergency contact is someone I don't even know."

-Her: "For real? So what does that mean?" -Me: "I don't know. All I know is that that's not lviwe in there. After the confusing discovery, I called Soso but she didn't answer so I decided to call her mother in PE. Her mother told me that lviwe was sitting right next to her as we spoke, breastfeeding her baby. Yes that was shocking but it answered the question I had when I first saw that patient lying on a gurney: why was lviwe in a taxi when she has a car?"

-Her: "So that means the patient we have is just someone who looks like her?"

-Me: "But how can two strangers look so alike, Zee? I also talked to Iviwe herself, and she said she had no idea who that person could be because she has no twin or even a sister. Confirming what I already knew." -Her: "This is indeed weird." -Me: "Tell me about it. But at least now I know that my in-law is safe at home, uninjured."

-Her: "Yeah, it should be a relief. Anyway, on a more lighter side: Molly's mother wanted to see you when she got here. She wanted to thank you in person for saving her daughter and her grandson. But unfortunately, I had to tell her that you were in theatre."

-Me: "Good thing she didn't find me. You know that I'm not good with praise, Zee. What's the big deal anyway? I was only doing my job. My salary at the end of the month is all the thanks I need."

-Her: "Point is, Molly and her son are alive because of you. Take the credit, sport, it's all yours."

-Me: "We both know that a surgeon is only as good as his or her team. I didn't do it alone, you were there and so was everybody else who was in our team."

-Her: "Come on, you're the one who fought for that baby, Thando, when all I cared about was saving the patient I could see - Molly. You

did great in there, man. Even took a risk...Of course, we do not wear capes with superhero names, we don't even appear on daily news all glamorous and fancy but what I do know is that we value human life. When Molly came in, she had so much faith in us and you made sure we gave her good results. You can give yourself a pat on the back, buddy, it's allowed. And please adopt a new attitude when you talk to Molly's mother tomorrow. She still wants to meet you and please don't run, I know you."

-Me: "Well, in that case I guess I'll see her tomorrow then."

She gives me an approving smile. But just then her phone rings. She takes it out and glances at the display.

-Her: "It's Bhongo. I gotta take it."

-Me: "Well, I guess I'll see you tomorrow too. I won't wait until you finish talking, I gotta get home to Soso."

-Her: "Please kiss her for me."

-Me: "I'll do more than just kiss her." Her eyes go wide as she gasps naughtily. -Her: "Too much info, dude. Just get outta here."

This one and her dirty mind. I laugh and wave her off as I walk away. Leaving her answering her call.

I get to my car and pace it home. I honestly can't wait to get there. Yes I may not have meant what Zizo's dirty mind jumped into but I sure am looking forward to a night of passion with my woman. I can never be too tired for that, not when it's been this long.

. . Someleze

Startled by the sound of the front door, I jolt upright in the couch but my eyes only land on Thando walking in. Oh my, it's already after 19:00? I must have been really tired after over-indulging in that Hawaiian pizza I ordered earlier, and that exhaustion must have pulled me into a deep sleep. That's no surprise though, lately I'm always tired because of this pregnancy.

Thando flips the switch and light illuminates the room. Putting his bag on the end table by the door, he walks over with a smile. That smile usually makes my heart smile too but not today. Now all I feel is trepidation.

I suck in a gulp of air and a cold clamminess spreads its way across my palms as I force my bare feet to move across the tiled floor to meet him halfway.

-Him: "Sthandwa sam."

He says opening his arms and pulls me into an embrace. Oh God, this is going to be difficult. For a moment I resist the temptation to surrender, but his embrace is electrifying as always and I find myself passionately returning his affection. His personal scent that I missed so much captures me and I completely melt in his arms. With him holding me like this I feel my anxiety levels dropping significantly. This man always has this effect on me, no matter the situation. Pulling back, his smouldering eyes gaze into mine and his hand gently brushes the little bump that is to become his son or daughter as a broad smile adorns his handsome face.

-Him: "Are you two okay? I tried to call you earlier but you didn't answer."

-Me: "Sorry, I didn't hear it, I fell asleep on the couch. But we are okay, especially now that you're here. Just a little exhausted though." I answer with a smile.

-Him: "Are you exhausted even for this?" He leans in and softly captures my awaiting lips in a passionate kiss. With common sense seeming to have deserted me and my heart ready to burst I wrap my arms around his neck and pull him even closer. This seems to make his desire grow and he deepens the kiss. Our tongues dance to a single rhythm, igniting my longing after so many dry weeks. Even with the few kilos I've gained I'm still light enough for him to pick up and carry. He picks me up and I wrap my legs around his

waist as he carries me to the couch, our lips still joined. He gently puts me down on the Lshaped couch and continues to to kiss me. We are tugging at each other's clothes when I finally switch my brain back on and stop him. -Me: "Baby, wait. We need to talk first." -Him: "Ha.a, babe. Can't it wait?"

He asks leaning in to kiss me again. I can see that he can't hold himself and I can feel his hard erection rubbing against me, but I gently push him back.

-Me: "No, it can't wait, sthandwa sam. It's important."

He groans, frustrated, then draws back to sit on the other side of the couch. I ease myself next to him into the soft cushions and pull my legs into an Indian-style position. Perspiration breaks at the back of my neck as my anxiety levels skyrocket once again. I feel my stomach turning as I narrate the story to the man sitting next to me. I can't help but kick myself for letting Nick that close. It's only when I'm done talking that I manage to look at Thando who's been quiet all this time. For a moment I find his face unreadable. And when I finally get to read it, the only emotion I get out of him is not anger but hurt. He quietly looks at me for a long moment, and my palms get slippery with sweat while my heart heats like a drum against my chest

my heart beats like a drum against my chest cavity. What is he going to say?

He gets up from the couch and sits on the coffee table right in front of me, his eyes boring into me.

-Him: "So what you're telling me is that you made out with another man while you have my ring on your finger and my baby growing in your belly. What is that, Someleze? What happened to your principles?"

His voice is strangely calm, demonstrating not even a hint of anger.

-Me: "I didn't make out with him, baby. He's the one who kissed me. But I'm sorry."

-Him: "Don't. Please don't do that. From what you just told me, you had feelings for the guy, probably still do, and you entertained him. You wanted him to kiss you, you enjoyed it." -Me: "No, Thando, I didn't say that. I didn't want him to kiss me. Yes, I did feel something for him but it certainly wasn't love, and it's long gone by now. It was just a stupid crush that didn't mean anything. I was lonely, I felt neglected, you weren't there, he was, that's why I found myself entertaining him. I was vulnerable."

-Him: "So you're blaming me for this?" -Me: "No, no. I'm not. I'm just..."

-Him: "Save it. Just tell me, Someleze, are you even ready to get married? Did I maybe move too fast for you? Are you ready for a commitment? Do you even know what that is?"

Yoh, what a low blow.

-Me: "I uhh...I understand why you're talking like this. But this is what I need you to know: if I didn't want to commit to you I wouldn't have said yes when you proposed. I didn't have to, 'no' was also an option. Yes some doubts made rounds in my head when you popped the question, reasons to say no, but the reasons to say yes outweighed those doubts. Thando, I may be young and inexperienced but I know what I want, and that's you - spending the rest of my life with you. I was sober-minded when I said yes to you, I didn't make a mistake. The only mistake I made was to entertain Nick. It's a mistake..."

He cuts me off.

-Him: "It's a mistake you'll repeat, isn't it? I'm not going to stop working, Someleze. Yes, I'm gonna cut down in the near future but I'm not going to stop. So tell me, what's going to happen the next time I'm busy working, the next time you feel 'neglected'? There will always be a lot of Nicks out there. Are you gonna run to one of them for a kiss and God knows what else every time you feel lonely? Do you want us to end up like Khwezi and his wife?"

Yoh, the last line creeps me out to a point where I feel like my arm hair is standing at

attention like an army of obedient soldiers. Would he really do what Khwezi did? -Me: "It's not a mistake I will repeat, Thando. It's a mistake I learned from. I stopped Nick and got out of there not only because it was wrong but also because I respect and love you. I couldn't betray you like that, I would never betray you like that. You and our baby are my life. I don't want to lose you, Thando, and I mean that."

He keeps quiet, just looking at me.

-Him: "You say you think this Nick is working with Emily and they were going to use you as a channel to get to me?"

He says finally. He's now changing gears to what matters the most at this point. I don't know if he believed any word I said, and I don't even have time to ask. It's time to talk about what's important. -Me: "Yes. Do you know what they possibly want from you?"

-Him: "No idea at all. But what you're saying makes sense. Today I learned that Emily was deployed to rotate at Makiwane Hospital in preparation for her Intermediate exams, not at Frere. She was to join our stable at a later stage in her training but she made a fully motivated request to the Department to join us and her request was acceded to. My guess at this point is that she made that request knowing very well that I was there. It may have taken her a few months to get close to me but she finally did."

I go unplug my phone from the charger and look for Nick's photo.

-Me: "You said Nick's name didn't ring any bells to you. What about the face?"

I ask showing him Nick's picture. He grabs the phone from my hand and looks at the picture intently.

-Him: "No, I don't know this guy. But his face does look familiar."

He says after staring at the picture for a long moment.

-Me: "Familiar? Like you've seen him before?" -Him: "No, as in I've seen someone who looks like him before, but I'm sure it wasn't him." -Me: "Who was it then? And where did you see him?"

-Him: "That's just the thing, I can't remember."

-Me: "Please remember, sthandwa sam. We need answers."

-Him: "I will. But now I need to go take a shower."

He absently hands me my phone back and get up from the coffee table.

-Me: "Should I join you?"

I know I'm pushing it right now, but a girl has got to try.

-Him: "No. I'm tired and I'm gonna go straight to bed after."

He says walking away. I know very well that he's not tired, if he was he wouldn't have jumped me the moment he walked through that door. He just doesn't want to be with me. I'm definitely not getting any tonight. But I can't really say I blame him.

I'm left sitting on the couch, absently watching the TV.

It's only an hour later, when I'm sure he's already in bed, that I get up and go to the bedroom. But instead of finding him in bed, I find him sitting at his desk, behind his laptop. -Me: "I thought you'd be sleeping by now." -Him: "There's something I need to check online first."

This man was definitely not tired. I nod even though he's not even looking at me. Not feeling myself, I drag my feet into the en-suite bathroom to take a shower too. When I come back I find him still in that same position. I don't say anything, I just get my PJs out of the closet, put them on and get into bed. It helps that I keep some of my clothes here.

I lie awake under the covers, waiting for this man to at least come join me, but he takes his time. It's only after eleven that he finally puts whatever he was doing away and comes to bed.

"Goodnight." he says as he slides into bed next to me. Obviously, he can see that I'm still awake but he doesn't even attempt to touch me. He just gives me his back. I don't move, I don't even return his "goodnight", I just lie there motionless. He tosses and turns beside me, unable to fall sleep, until my own transport to slumberland comes to pick me up.

Despite the situation, I sleep soundly until I get woken up by him in the morning. I open my eyes to find him sitting next to me on the bed, already ready to go to work.

-Him: "I'm going to work. Have a great day with the little one. I've made you breakfast, it's in the kitchen. And I'll see you in the evening."

His voice might as well be coming out of a freezer.

-Me: "Thanks. Have a great day too, and work well in PE."

He gives me a peck on the lips then walks out. I'm sure he just did all of this out of a sense of obligation because he's still as cold as ice towards me. I hope he'll come around soon though. I can't stand this tension between us even though I'm the course. But at least now he knows everything. Emily and Nick can never use that card against me.

. . Thando

I can see my car moving forward but I don't feel myself driving it. I'm not feeling myself at all. I can't believe I cancelled my surgery in PE yesterday so I could be with Someleze, only for her to ruin my entire week by telling me about her feelings for another man. Was I angry when she told me that? You bet. But my anger got overshadowed by hurt, disappointment and feelings of uncertainty. Yes, Someleze loves me but love and commitment are two different things. Love alone is not enough. Maybe she is not ready for marriage or commitment. She's still young and inexperienced after all. She probably still wants to explore. But where does that leave me? Why did I move so fast anyway? I

probably shouldn't be asking myself this question but I just can't help it. Maybe it's time we went for that premarital counselling I've been putting off all this time. I see the need for it at this point.

I pull up at the parking lot at work and drag myself out of the car and into our facility. I'm feeling even less energetic today than I was yesterday. What's making it all worse is that I'm not being haunted by a dream but a sour reality today.

"Morning, sport. Don't forget to smile when you meet Molly's mother later, okay?" Zizo says laughing as she meets me at the entrance. Smile? I don't even know what that is right now.

Someleze

It's now around 11 and I've been sitting on this couch for some time now, trying to figure out a way to make things right with Thando. But then I get disrupted by the ringing of my phone. When I check the display I'm surprised to see that it's Prof Elliott, my research supervisor. What does he want from me on a Sunday? I answer curiously, only for him to tell me to email him Chapter 5 of my dissertation right now so he could start looking at it today and be able to give me feedback tomorrow in the afternoon. Oh no, this is going to be a problem. Putting aside the fact that the chapter he's asking for isn't finished yet, the problem is it is saved nowhere else but in my laptop's hard drive in Alice. This means I'll have to drive to Alice right now then come back in the evening because Thando and I still need to talk. Then

in the morning I'll have to repeat the same drive all over again, I'll have to drive back to Alice so I could go to campus. This up and down is going to cost me time and money. But I don't have a choice, I have to do it, Prof won't take anything else.

I call Thando to inform him but he doesn't answer, he's probably busy, so I text him instead. Then I leave the house and go get in the car with only my phone and keys. As I leave East London behind I notice something weird behind me, a white Dodge Journey that seems to be following me. I could swear I saw this very same car parked across the street when I was leaving Thando's complex. So has it been following me since then? But why would anyone follow me? Aren't I being paranoid right now? I probably am but I don't stop checking the rear view mirror frequently as I drive up the N2 road between East London and King William's Town. The suspicious Dodge doesn't seem to drive past, but the driver doesn't close the

gap between us either. Maybe it is not following me, maybe I need to lose this paranoia that seems to be getting the better of me.

However, I quickly swallow those words as I distantly approach Breidbach, a surburb of King William's Town. The Dodge quickly closes the gap but still doesn't drive past. Oh hell! This is really creepy, I'm not being paranoid here. With the road less busy at this time of the day I step on the accelerator, flooring my car. The Dodge easily keeps up, getting dangerously close to me. Both our cars barrel up the road. What the hell is going on here? I'm now freaked. And I don't doubt that this car is after me. But why? Hell, I can't wait to find out, I need to do something, I need to call Thando and let him know about this situation RIGHT NOW. I press his number and put the phone on speaker but again, the guy doesn't answer. Fuck! This doesn't surprise me though, he doesn't always pick up when he's at work. But I still need to tell someone that

I'm being chased. And I choose that someone

to be my father even though I know very well that he's all the way in Jo'burg and can't exactly do anything to help me at this moment. I also have him on speed dial, just like Thando, and I dial him with my foot still all the way down on the accelerator. I can't afford to slow down, not when this mid-size crossover SUV is still chasing me.

Unfortunately for me though, his phone doesn't even ring, it sends me straight to voicemail. Oh God! He's probably busy at some golf course with some potential clients. Dammit! Who do I call now? Who do I call? It's not like I can call the 10111 call centre, there's no time for that anyway. I'm panicked right now, losing my mind. I know that I can't call my mother either because she's in church right now. So what do I do? Kevin. Yeah, I should call Kevin. I dial his number panicking, with one hand on the

steering wheel while my eyes keep going up to check the rear view mirror. Unlike the two men I've already called, my brother from another mother answers on the first ring. -Him: "Hey, S. I'm at work and my battery is about to die."

-Me: "Listen, Kev. I'm approaching Breidbach and there's a car that's chasing me. It's a white Dodge Jour..."

I don't finish the sentence, the annoying 'end call' tone beeps. I'm sure Kevin's phone has just died. Oh God! Why am I being chased anyway? And by whom? As I'm still frustrated but Kevin's phone dying on me, I miss noticing the Dodge zipping past me. I only see it when it swings back onto my lane, right in front of me, almost giving me a heart attack. Then it makes an immediate stop. What the fuck?! To avoid the collision, I instantly slam on the breaks. Tyres screech and a horn from the car behind me blares. My German machine, however, doesn't come to a stop before its bumper smashes into the rear of the Dodge, throwing me forward. The whole thing happens so fast. My head crashes into the

steering wheel, as my body is held back by the seatbelt. Dammit! Where the fuck is that airbag? Doesn't this crash warrants its deployment?

I sit stock still for a moment, feeling dizzy, my forehead probably bleeding. Shit! When I manage to lift my head up, my door opens and two unfamiliar men, obviously from the Dodge, roughly haul me out of my car. What the hell is going on? Who the fuck are these people? I try to fight them off but they are obviously stronger and they overpower me. But even though they've overpowered me they still suffocate me with chloroform when they are about to throw me inside their Dodge. As I drift into unconsciousness I wonder if this is the end of me and the baby I'm carrying. Why is this even happening to me? That's the last question I ask myself, then it's lights out for me.

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I couldn't type because I broke my arm while participating in King Monada's Malwedhe Dance Challenge. [LOL. Just kidding]

Season 2 #16

"I've been caught up in someone else's mess up. But now I got a hunger in my eyes to fight the fire." - Layla

•

Thando

"Emily is your daughter? But I thought she was a Marais and you and Molly are both Pretorius."

I ask stunned as I come to a halt by the ER exit. I don't even know how I got the dozen and a half words past the bile rising in my throat. I've been walking and talking nicely with this woman following her visit to her daughter's ward. I also paid Molly a visit in

the ward this morning during my rounds.

She's recovering well and her son is also a strong, little fighter in that incubator. I thought her mother would want to have them transferred to a private hospital but I guess not. They are doing okay here anyway. Everything looks good. But this woman just had to spoil my mood by telling me that she's also a mother to the woman who's hellbent on being my enemy - Emily. What the hell? -Her: "I remarried. My youngest daughter, Molly, changed her last name to that of her stepfather while Emily retained her father's." -Me: "I see."

So I actually saved the life of Emily's little sister yesterday. The same Emily who's plotting against me. I guess that's life for you. I'm just glad I didn't have this piece of information yesterday though. Who knows how it could have affected my professional judgement as a doctor when I was treating Molly? We are professionals who are bound by ethics, we are not supposed to use our emotions when treating patients, but sometimes lines get blurred and it becomes hard to not take things personal. We are still human after all.

Had I slipped up yesterday, if something had gone wrong, I would have given Summers exactly what he's been looking for. The man has something against me. He would never cut me any slack even though he did give Emily a pass after I had laid a complaint against her, a complaint I wanted to be dealt with internally in the disciplinary hearing by the hospital - and he took advantage of that. If I wanted I could still take this whole thing, especially how he and the management dealt with it, to the Eastern Cape Department of Health, but I don't have time for that hassle. I'm just glad Emily is no longer around this hospital to cause trouble for me.

"Here's my card. Should you need anything, anything at all, don't hesitate to call me. I mean, we're both in medicine so I may be of help to you some day, we can never know. I know that saving lives is our job as doctors but still, I'm grateful you saved my daughter and my first grandson."

This woman's sing-song voice sounds so sincere. I could actually believe her. As a doctor I never expect or get drunk in any form of praise from my patients or their families, that's just me. But things could be different with this woman standing beside me right now, only if she wasn't Emily's mother. Now that I know that she's her mother I can't help but wonder if she's also got ulterior motives. She probably doesn't because when looking at her I see a woman of integrity, someone who's honest and trustworthy. But being cautious won't hurt. I won't even let my feelings show, I just fake a smile and accept the card.

-Me: "Thank you, ma'am. But right now I gotta go. Back to work."

-Her: "Of course, of course. I need to get going too, my practice is waiting."

I nod then turn and walk away, putting the card in my pocket. I won't throw it away, just in case I need it some day.

. "I told you that Molly's mother was sweet." Zizo says as I meet her by the nurses station. I want to tell her that she's also Emily's mother but she doesn't give me the chance.

-Her: "Anyway, have you seen the message on our WhatsApp group? More details about Sbu's launch party?"

Sbu, the IT guy who once helped me get into Nat's computer, is launching his startup cybersecurity company this coming Saturday. He's my friend and I'm really happy for him, but I no longer think I'll be able to honour the invitation.

-Me: "No, I haven't seen it yet. I don't even think I'll be in attendance maan, Zee. I need to make time for my family."

-Her: "Your family? Is your mom okay?"

She's now concerned.

-Me: "My mom's coping, don't worry about her. I'm going to see her next week, but for now I'm talking about Someleze, assisting her with the wedding preparations."

The truth is Someleze and I need to sort out a few things in our relationship before showing up as a happy couple at any event, but I don't want to tell Zizo that.

-Her: "Oh, I understand. The wedding is drawing near. I'm sure you're both feeling the pressure now."

At this point I search for my phone in the pockets of my scrubs to contact Sbu and turn down the invitation before I forget. But I don't find my phone anywhere in my pockets. -Me: "How could I see the message? My phone is not even with me. I probably left it in my office or the break room. I have this tendency of just leaving it lying around lately. Not on purpose, of course, I just forget about it. I would sit down, take it out, use it, put it down, then forget to take it with me when I leave."

-Her: "And if Soso calls? Dude, she's pregnant."

-Me: "You heard the part of not doing it on purpose, right? Zee, there's just a lot going on in my head lately, including my mom's treatment, I guess that's why I'm now forgetful. And it's also of this very reason that I always ask a scrub nurse to count then recount all instruments, sponges and other tools before I close a patient up in the OR, I do not want to make mistakes where people's lives are concerned. As for Soso, she knows to call the front if there's an emergency, and I'd be paged down."

-Her: "I've noticed that in the last couple of days you haven't been yourself, Thando. You walk around these corridors with this dejected expression on your face, and I know that it's got nothing to do with your mother. Yesterday you didn't want to talk about it but today I'm not walking away until you talk to me. What's going on?"

I know that she means it. She won't let this go until I talk to her. And I also know that she's doing this because she cares.

I take her hand and pull her to the side, to sit down on the bench.

-Me: "Zizo, as someone who knows me too well, do you honestly think I'm ready to become someone's husband again? Thing is, I don't want to fail for the second time." -Her: "Where's this coming from now? You just said you want to help Soso with the wedding preparations. Now what are you asking me? Don't tell me you're having some doubts. Cold feet?"

-Me: "Just answer the question, please." -Her: "Well, only you know the answer to that question. And I believe you knew it before you even proposed to Soso. The only thing I'm going to emphasise one more time is that you deserve to be happy Tee, and Soso does make you happy. Moving on was the best decision you could have possibly made for yourself. And don't you dare let your bad experience with Busi get in the way of what you currently have with Soso. Soso is not Busi, Thando. She won't do to you what Busi did. And don't tell me you still believe that you're the reason things didn't work out between you and that woman, that you're the reason she cheated. Hell no, Busi made that decision all on her

own. Let it go now and stop putting pressure on yourself."

-Me: "Here's the thing, Zee. I feel like history could easily repeat itself. I get busy, Soso also gets busy, and we'd go maybe two or three weeks without being together, if you know what I mean. Yes we'd talk everyday and see each other maybe once or twice a week but not actually 'be together'. At the beginning I used to try to make more time for her, you too know this. I'd sometimes ask you to cover my shifts and I'd also turn down some projects just so I could accommodate her. And I wanted to try even harder but she

asked me not to. She was like 'I know and

understand that you get extremely busy sometimes, so don't feel guilty about doing what you need to be doing, what you should be doing. I do not want to be the one holding you back in your career because I know how important it is to you. I also get busy sometimes, and I wouldn't want you to ask me to neglect my research project for you. My studies are very important to me and I wouldn't want you to hold me back in them either. So if we do not want to end up resenting each other let's just do what we're both supposed to do to better our lives as individuals, freely.' That's what she said. I should have known that women don't always mean what they say, because last night she told me how neglected by me she sometimes feels, as though she had forgotten what she said with her own mouth. I didn't even attempt to remind her, I just didn't see the point...You know what else she told me? That with me unavailable she found herself

attracted to this other guy, but apparently it

didn't go further than just a simple 'meaningless' kiss. Seriously, is that supposed to make it all okay? If I'm being honest, Zee, I'm now left feeling uncertain about the future. I mean what's gonna happen the next time I'm unavailable and she meets another guy? Won't the available become desirable? Can I really trust her? Ain't it possible that we took our relationship to the next level too soon? Are we really ready to get married? I mean, I know what I feel and what I want. I want Someleze. I'm in love with her. Crazily, passionately. And I know why I'm marrying her. But is it possible that I moved on too quickly after my divorce, before I could even completely deal with the scars Busi left me with? Is Soso even ready for a lifetime commitment? Does she even mean anything that comes out of her mouth?" Zizo keeps quiet for a long moment, probably trying to figure out what to say next.

-Her: "I uhhh...I don't know what to say. Do you think she only agreed to marry you because she felt compelled to?" She says eventually.

-Me: "Would I be off the mark if I thought so?"

-Her: "I wouldn't know. Did you talk to her about all of this?"

-Me: "No, not yet."

-Her: "I think you should, the sooner the better. Sit her down, tell her how you feel, ask the questions you want answers to, share your fears with her and encourage her to also open up to you. Moreover, I recommend that you see a professional. I can hook you up with a premarital counselor, the one who helped me and Bhongo before we tied the knot. She's really good. She'll help you two put things into perspective before the big day, and that's really important."

Talking with Zizo always strengthens my spine and lends me calm. -Me: "I was also thinking the same thing, that Soso and I need to see someone. Thanks, Zee. Thanks for listening."

-Her: "Always. I may not always offer advice but I'm always willing to listen."

-Me: "I know and I appreciate you. Now let me go look for my phone. Maybe I've already missed a lot of important calls."

-Her: "Go find it. I'll see you in our meeting in a few minutes."

Sure thing. We have a multidisciplinary team discussion with Pathology and Oncology in a few minutes, but I need to find my phone first. I get up and make my way to my office, hoping that I'd find it there.

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Thank God, I find it on top of my desk. Upon checking it I realise that I have 8 missed calls, 2 of which are from Soso. I immediately open my WhatsApp because I know that Soso usually leaves me texts or voice notes on WhatsApp when she can't get get hold of me. I get her text saying she's going to Alice because the hard-headed Prof Elliott insisted on seeing her dissertation today. But there's

no message after the second call. Why is that? I call her back immediately but her phone sends me straight to voicemail. I don't understand. She called me 10 minutes ago, and now her phone is off? I don't know but I have a bad feeling about this, a strange feeling that something has happened but I don't know what. And recalling the dream I had two nights ago only makes things worse, I panick. Hell, I'm going home right now to check if she's not there still. If she's not, then I'm going straight to Alice.

I quickly take off my scrubs and change into my street clothes. Then I gather my things and hurry out of the office to the meeting Zizo was talking about. I scurry down the hallway, almost running, wanting to get there in no time. I want to talk to Summers and I find him amidst the other doctors, already 'preaching'. This man loves hearing the sound of his own voice, it's not even funny. I request to talk to him in private and he hesitantly agrees. We step to the side and I tell him that I have a family emergency and that I need to leave at once. He understands and wishes me well, surprisingly. Before walking out I signal for Zizo who's standing across the room, to let her know that I will call her later.

As I rush out of there my phone rings, and it's Kevin.

"Kevin. I was about to call you, man." I was about to call him and ask if Soso didn't say anything to him.

-Him: "What's going on, Thando? Soso called me less than 15 minutes ago, hysterical. My battery was about to die but I heard what she was trying to tell me. She said she was approaching Breidbach and was being chased by a white Dodge Journey. I couldn't ask her any questions though because my battery died. I'm at work and I had to have them plug it in for me inside and wait a few minutes for it to have some power before calling her back. I just called her back now but her phone's now off. What's going on?" He is speaking fast, as though he doesn't even have time to breathe. He's evidently shaken, just as I am. I feel my physical energy leaving my body and I stop walking and reach for the wall on my left for support. Oh God, my worst fear is now confirmed. Soso is indeed in trouble. The dream I had has just became a reality. But I swear, it won't end the same way it did that night, not if I can help it.

I feel bad about not answering when Soso called, but deep down I know that it wouldn't have changed anything, the outcome would still be the same.

-Me: "Thank you for letting me know, Kev. I'm not sure what's going on but you've shed some light. Now I need to do something about this."

-Him: "What kind of trouble is Soso in? Are you gonna call the police?"

-Me: "Like I said, I'm not sure. And no, I won't call the cops. Leave this to me."

I say firmly, with more confidence than circumstances allow.

-Him: "Are you sure you can handle this if you don't even know what it is about? Thando, I'm worried about Soso here. She's like a sister to me."

He sounds really worried, depressed even. -Me: "I know that you care about Soso but like I said, leave the cops out of it. I'll ring you when I have something pertinent to tell you. But rest assured, Soso will be okay." After that I hang up and pull myself together. Soso needs me. I rush down the stairs, anxious to get to my car. Is she really going to be okay though? I don't even know what I'm dealing with here, but I have a pretty good idea who. There's not even a single shred of doubt in my mind that it's Emily and that Dominic guy. I'm sure they now have Soso. But what do they want exactly? Well, I still don't know the answer to that question. Last

night I laid awake trying to figure it out but I couldn't. Whatever it is though, I'm realising now that it is more serious than I initially thought. I may not know what they are after but I know that I will find Soso, or I will die trying.

I get to my car and pull the door open. As I settle behind the wheel I can't stop wondering if my actions of the past may have been the trigger that has set the present events in motion. But what did I do? What do these people want from me? Honestly, I would never forgive myself if something bad happened to Soso and our baby because of me.

From the centre console of the car I take out Ryan's card which I got out of Soso's purse this morning while she was still sleeping. I wanted to talk to the guy myself and ask him some questions about Emily and Dominic, hoping to be able to figure out what they could be after. I know that Soso said the guy doesn't know much either. But sometimes to get the right answers you need to ask the right questions.

I dial the number and cross fingers as the phone rings unanswered on the other side. Lord, please let him answer, I say under my breath. Some people don't take calls from numbers they don't know, but please let him take this one. He answers on the 6th ring, just as I'm about to hang up.

"Hello." He sounds like someone who doesn't want to talk but I'll make him.

-Me: "Ryan, it's Thando. Someleze's fiancé." -Him: "Oh, Thando. I've been hearing a lot about you but I haven't had the pleasure to meet you yet."

All of a sudden his voice sounds welcoming, upbeat.

-Me: "We'll get to meet some day. But listen, this is not a social call. I need your help."

-Him: "Oh? What do you need?"

-Me: "I believe you already know that Emily and Dominic are up to no good, that they are after me and Someleze for God knows what. Now what I want to know from you is, does

either of them drive a white Dodge Journey? I'm asking because a car like that has been following Someleze and I can't think of anyone who could follow her but them." I don't have time to go into details. This is enough. This is all he needs to know anyway. -Him: "They are following her? Now this is getting creepy. And yes, one of them has a white Dodge Journey - Nick. The black Mercedes he sometimes drives belongs to his father."

That's the answer I needed. I don't care about the extra information he's volunteered, I didn't even know that this Dominic sometimes drives a Mercedes.

-Me: "Thanks, Ryan. That's all I needed to know."

-Him: "Where is Someleze now? Is she okay?" How I wish I knew.

-Me: "I'll call you later and let you know. Right now I gotta go." I hang up then scroll down to the number of the next person I need to call - Soso's father. I know the kind of man Sandile is, he is going to want to handle this himself. And that's the major reason why I didn't want the police involved.

But before dialling his number I take a moment to think about how I'm going to tell him that his only daughter has possibly been abducted. Won't he be an avalanche down on me for not protecting her? I know how hectic that man can get. But whatever happens, he needs to know. I anxiously dial his number, but it sends me straight to voicemail. Oh God!

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Sandile

For comfortability I shift on the couch, but that doesn't work. So I open my jacket and reach down to adjust the piece of steel, a Beretta PX4 Storm Compact, holstered to my waist. That's better. Now I get to comfortably

lean back on the couch, just across from the Toses - the weird family that wanted my sister to be married off to their son. Mr Tose, the evil prophet, and his fake prophetess of a wife are sitting on one couch, while their son Nathi is seated on a single couch next to theirs. They are now all staring at me with fear written all over their faces. Okay, it must be the gun they are seeing.

I got to their home in one of the Mthatha villages about 20 minutes ago, and I've been trying to reason with them but to no avail. However, I guess now that they are seeing a gun they'll be motivated to assimilate every word that comes out of my mouth. For a man like me 'carrying' is a norm, for protection more than anything else. Even now I didn't come here with the intentions to use this weapon in any way, not even to threaten these pathetic souls. It's only

attached to my waist because that's where it belongs.

-Me: "I've been talking nicely with y'all but now you're pushing me. Nathi, I'm gonna say it again, stay away from Iviwe. Stay away from my sister. When I told you this very thing last year I thought we understood each other, but it turns out I was wrong. Well, if I hear that you were anywhere near her again I won't warn you for the third time, I'll just act. Do you understand?"

This is no threat by any means, I mean every word.

-Him: "I can stay away from Iviwe. But how do you expect me to stay away from my child?" -Me: "Listen here, pal, I don't care what you've heard on the streets but that baby is not yours. And I'm not gonna say it again. Just stay away from my sister and her baby or you and I are going to have a big problem." -Mrs Tose: "Mfana, that is our grandson, we know it. Both God and my ancestors showed me the truth." -Me: "Mama, woah, wait. I'm still coming to you and your ancestors. I still need your son to tell me that he got what I just told him." On Friday Iviwe called to tell me that Nathi was in PE demanding to see the baby, even talking about going to court. A lot of bullshit. I didn't want to do anything about that up until Mandisa, Someleze's mother, called yesterday with some shocking information. There's a young woman who looks just like lviwe who's a patient where my son-in-law works. He took pictures and sent them to Mandisa, then Mandisa sent them to me. I saw the pictures. The breathing tubes connected to that woman couldn't hide the resemblance between her and my sister. In fact, I felt like I was looking at lviwe because they look exactly the same. Hell, there's no way that's just resemblance. I know in my heart that that woman is my sister. Mrs Tose is just going to have to tell me how she got separated from Iviwe at birth. That's the major reason I left Jo'burg last night and drove down here but I

also saw an opportunity to address this Nathi issue - killing two birds with one stone. -Me: "Did you get what I just said, Nathi?" Eveing the gun on my waist, he nods. -Him: "Fine, fine. I'll let it go." I'm not stupid, I know he doesn't mean that. He's just seeing the load on my waist. -Me: "Good. Now you, Ma. 26 years ago you and your husband said you'd help my parents protect their next baby following the passing of 4 of my young siblings. When my mother fell pregnant a year later you ordered her to come stay with you so she and her unborn baby could be protected from the 'evil spirits'. You said you'd help her with everything and that she didn't even need to see a doctor. You made her believe that doctors were useless, they couldn't save her last 4 children anyway. Later that year she gave birth in your house, you were her midwife. She gave birth to lviwe who indeed lived past her first birthday and grew up to be the woman she is today. But what you didn't tell us was that Iviwe had an

identical twin. You stole her twin and gave her to someone else to raise. Now tell me, did your god and ancestors tell you to do that?" It is at this point that Mr Tose jumps in. -Mr Tose: "Young man, this is my house. We serve God here. How dare you come here and accuse us of stealing babies? We are no baby stealers, dammit. We didn't steal any baby." The nerve of this old man is just too much for

me to comprehend.

-Me: "Tata, don't do that. Don't take me for a fool, I'm too busy to be playing games. You didn't hear me asking whether you and your wife stole that baby or not, did you? That's because I already know that you did it. You stole my sister when she was still a baby. And now she can't speak, she's lying in ICU in East London following a taxi accident she got involved in when she was travelling from Port Elizabeth. The only thing I want to know from you two is, who did you sell or give her to? You tell me that and I'll walk out of here quietly, I give you my word. But if you continue playing games with me you'll regret it... Now, are you ready to tell me what I wanna know?"

-Mr Tose: "Young man, we don't know anything. We don't know what you're talking about."

-Me: "You sure you wanna do this? You sure you wanna push me?"

My voice has been calm all this time but now I'm certain that it's another kind of calm, the kind that's not only intimidating but also sends chills down one's spine. And I'm sure the gun on my waist is amplifying their fear. The quivering Mrs Tose looks at her husband and they communicate with their eyes. Then they both turn to me.

-Mrs Tose: "Fine, we'll tell you what you want to know. We took the other twin and gave it to my cousin who couldn't have children. She raised Milani in Mdantsane and that's where they still live."

-Me: "Milani? That's my sister's name?"

-Her: "Yes. That's the name my cousin gave to her. She raised her as her own child, she loves

her. Please don't do this now, don't tell Milani the truth. My cousin will be broken."

Whatever she's smoking must be A-grade. And I don't have time to entertain her.

-Me: "Nathi, go grab a pen and paper. I want your mother to write down her cousin's name and address in Mdantsane. That's where I'll be headed when I leave here."

The guy hesitates but he eventually gets up and walks towards the kitchen.

-Me: "Hey, don't even think about doing something stupid over there, okay? In fact, come back and put your phone on the coffee table."

-Him: "This is ridiculous, it's not like I'm gonna call the police on you. There's not even a signal here."

-Me: "What do you mean there's no signal?" -Him: "I mean exactly that. There's no cellphone signal here." I pull my phone out of my pocket and check it. Indeed there's no signal. Some places, huh. -Me: "Well, that doesn't change anything. I still need to see your phone on the table." He follows my orders then go get the pen and paper. When he comes back his mother writes what I've asked her to write then hands me the paper.

-Me: "I hope for your sake this is a correct address. And if I were you I wouldn't even think about calling your cousin to warn her...Now, this is what's gonna happen. You're all gonna stay away from my family and I'll forget this ever happened. But if y'all give lyiwe any problems you will go to jail for stealing a human being, keeping her away from her real family for 25 years. And that would be the lightest punishment you could ever get for stealing 25 years of my sister's life, for robbing us time with her. My parents died not knowing that they have a daughter out there, all because of you two. You don't even deserve to go to jail for what you did,

you deserve far worse than that...Whatever plan you were thinking of executing, Nathi, you better abandon it. Or going to jail would be the least of your parents' worries. Be an extreme pain in the butt and I'd be the judge and executioner."

I get up from the couch and walk out without saying anything more. God, I'm glad my sister didn't get to marry into this evil family. Now I need to pass by my home in Mthatha Central to see if the housesitters are still doing okay over there before I drive to East London. I couldn't get the chance to go home earlier because I wanted to deal with these people first.

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. Shortly into my drive my phone rings, I guess there's signal in this area. In fact, that's obvious. I've been hearing messages pouring in on my phone but I haven't checked any of

them, not while I'm driving. I don't want to

take this call either, but I decide to check who

it is before ignoring it. It's Thando. My son-inlaw never just calls unless there's a very good reason to, so there must be one even now.

Maybe he wants to update me about my newly-found-sister's condition in hospital.

Maybe she's passed away. I need to answer. -Me: "Talk to me."

-Him: "Mashiya, I've been calling but your phone's been off."

-Me: "There was no service where I was. What's going on?"

-Him: "Umh...I'm afraid I don't have good news. I have reason to believe that Soso's been taken, abducted."

What? What did he just say?

-Me: "Say that again."

-Him: "I believe it happened less than an hour ago when she was driving to Alice. The last person she talked to says she said she was being chased by another car, thereafter she became unreachable. The tracker in her car puts the car exactly where she said she was when she was being chased..."

At this point his voice just echoes in my ears, I don't hear any other word he's saying. I'm thrown. Who the hell could have taken my daughter and why? Whoever they are though they are going to regret even breathing in her direction. Trust me, they do not want to bear the brunt of Sandile's family love. It looks like this Beretta is going to be put to use after all. I don't like being tested. The monster inside of me is now running wild.

-Me: "Thando, listen, I'm in Mthatha right now and I'll be in EL in less than 4 hours. Hold it tight."

I hang up and press my foot down on the accelerator, taking corners on two wheels, generally pushing city driving to the hilt. Going home can wait, I need to get to get to EL.

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Someleze

When I come to I'm lying on a bed in a room I don't recognise, staring up to a ceiling with exposed beams. Where the hell am I? When I remember what happened, I spring off the bed and run to the door. Please God, help me get out of here, help me get out of here. I repeat the short prayer in my head as I frantically twist and turn the knob even though I can see that the solid wood door is locked. Defeated I feel like screaming but I can't afford to draw the attention of whoever is on the other side of this door. Why didn't they tie me up anyway? Maybe it's because they know that there's no escaping this place. Oh God, the thought of that is enough to drain every little bit of energy in my body. I look at myself for the first time and notice that I'm still wearing my clothes - my black leggings, white top and white All Star sneakers. These people didn't hurt me in any way but for some reason I feel a little woozy,

with a slight headache. My eyes move to a clock on the wall and I realise that it's been 3 hours since I got dragged out of my car. I hope Kevin got what I was trying to tell him so my family could at least have an idea of what happened to me. What do these people want with me anyway? God, I need to find a way to get out of here before I find the answer to

that question. I move to the only window this room has and I yank the curtain off to the side. But, of course, the window has a burglar. Even if it didn't have one though, even if I could jump out of it, where would I go? It looks like I'm in the middle of nowhere, all I see beyond this garden this wooden cabin is set in is an open veld with scattered acacia trees and gradual hills. Oh Lord, where am I? And who's keeping me here? Will Thando and my parents ever find me again? As I think about the possibility of that not happening my headache multiplies in an instant, and I feel an itchy spot on my neck as I try to massage it with my hand. I go stand in front

of a mirror in the corner of the room to check the itch. There's a small bruise on the surface of the skin of my neck, just below my right ear. This sure looks to be an injection site. Those guys must have injected me with something. That would explain why I feel slightly woozy and why I was out for this long - because I know from Chemistry class that chloroform wears off in less than an hour.

Whoever has abducted me though still has a heart because they have cleaned and dressed the small cut on my for head with a band-aid. As I'm still standing there, looking at myself in the mirror, I hear the door behind me open. Frightened, I quickly turn around to see who it is. Only to be met with a familiar face. What the hell?

-Me: "Dominic? I should have known. What the hell do you want from me?"

-Him: "I'm glad you're awake. They didn't hurt you, did they?" His calm voice and demeanour as he tucks his hands in the pockets of his pants makes me sick.

-Me: "Just answer my fuckin' question! What the hell is this about?"

I'm angry and that's evident in my voice. But Nick doesn't seem to care. He slowly walks over to the bed and sits down. Then he motions for me to join him.

-Me: "I don't want to sit down. Just let me go home."

-Him: "You're not going home, Somi, not before I get what I want. And if you really want to know what this is about you'll come sit down and listen."

He is still calm and collected, annoying the hell out of me. Lacking any other choice, I take a deep breath and go sit on the bed, but I make sure not to sit next to him. He's by the headboard and I take the opposite end. -Him: "You want to know what this is about? Well, it's about revenge. Avenging my mother's death. You remember me telling you that my mother died when I was 14, right?" -Me: "Yes. But what's that got to do with me?"

-Him: "You never asked how she died. Well, she died giving birth to my half-sister who ultimately passed away too. A biracial bastard child fathered by the mighty Mbulelo December."

What? Mbulelo December? But that's Thando's father. He impregnated another woman while married? Whoa!

-Nick: "Yeah, that's right. Your precious soonto-be father-in-law was having an affair with my mother and he impregnated her. I only got these details last year in November after years of my father avoiding to tell us the truth. And you know what I thought after that? Had Mbulelo not done what he did, had he not impregnated my mother, she'd still be alive today...That day in King William's Town I told you that I was now fine, that I'd gotten over my mother's death a while ago, but that was a lie. No one ever gets over the death of their parent."

-Me: "Listen, Dominic, I'm really sorry about what happened to your mother, I really am. But it's got nothing to do with me. Why are you keeping me here?"

-Him: "You remember what you said to me that day when I told you about my father who doesn't want to completely retire and let his children run his business? You said he probably sees his business as his baby and now it's hard for him to just let go of it. Well, guess what? I'm pretty sure that's how your fiancé's father also feels about the construction company he built from the ground up. If he loses it he'll feel like he's lost a huge part of himself. And that's exactly how I want him to feel. I want him to feel the pain of losing what he loves, just like we also lost our mother. That's worse than dying, trust me...He and his partner, the co-founder of the company, sold 40% of that company to 4 shareholders when they opened the Cape

Town branch. And then they were each left with 30% stake. His partner then sold 5% out of his own 30% two years ago. And last year in January Mbulelo signed 10% of his own shares over to his only son, your fiancé, when he quit his job as a surgeon. I guess that was his way of getting him to clean up his act and join the family business, but we both know that it didn't work."

. This is news to me. I had no idea that Thando had a stake in his father's company. He never mentioned it to me, not even once. -Me: "Let me guess. Now you want Thando's 10%. A foot inside his father's stable so you could wreck havoc from the inside." -Him: "I always knew you were smart. My brother and I want those shares but Thando won't sell. My brother approached him in December last year, wanting to buy. He made him a very good offer but Thando turned him down. He wouldn't budge."

Oh, this is it. This is why Thando said Nick looked familiar last night. He once met up with his brother.

-Me: "So you resorted to playing dirty?" -Him: "Desperate times call for desperate measures, Somi, you know that. And my cousin, Emily, was happy to help me."

-Me: "And by helping you, you mean she was to seduce Thando, sleep with him, then what? Cry rape?"

I can't believe this guy.

-Him: "She was going to have physical proof of their encounter. And with Thando's history of sexually assaulting his surbodinates, a second complaint was not going to look good for him. It was going to ruin his career." -Me: "Hey wena, Thando never sexually assaulted anyone. That nurse lied and that complaint never even reached the HPCSA because it was false, just like Emily's was also going to be." -Him: "You and I both know that, but the department and the council work with evidence. And I doubt Thando would have wanted to let things go that far. He wouldn't have gambled with his career like that."

-Me: "So you were going to blackmail him. If he didn't want to gamble with his career he was going to have to sell to you."

-Him: "That was the plan. But I guess from that first accusation he learned to be cautious, so our plan didn't work."

-Me: "And that's when you decided to change your strategy and use me instead."

-Him: "The opportunity presented itself and we grabbed it."

-Me: "What was your plan exactly? To sleep with me, then what? Blackmail me with a sex tape? Threaten to post it online? And what good was that gonna do you? I don't have any shares. I don't have anything."

-Him: "But you have someone - Thando. Someone you wouldn't have wanted to know about your side shenanigans. Forget the internet cliché."

-Me: "So you were going to threaten to expose me to him if I didn't...what? Convince him to sell to you?"

-Him: "You're smart indeed."

-Me: "You're probably right on that one because I didn't fall for your stupid tricks." -Him: "But what's important is that you're here with me now. We were still back to the drawing board, devising another plan, when you saw me and Emily together at Ryan's. From there we knew that you and Thando would put two and two together and we'd never get a chance to act again, so we decided to act now before the window of opportunity closes. You are here because we've improvised. And don't worry, no one's gonna hurt you here. Be comfortable, you're safe. We just want what we want and once we get it you'll go home. But if we don't get it things will get very rough for you."

-Me: "So you're gonna call Thando and demand ransom. The shares."

-Him: "For anything we offer him, probably half the market value. Let's both hope he cares for you enough to give up his family legacy. But if he doesn't, I'm sure the precious cargo you're carrying will be motivation enough for him to care."

-Me: "You're sick, you know that? You're sick!"

-Him: "The only person who's sick here is the man who impregnated another man's wife. My brother and I have already acquired 40% of his precious company. We've anonymously bought the shares from the Cape Town shareholders. If we get Thando's 10%, guess who's going to be the major shareholder of that company? Guess who's going to be calling the shots? With his 20%, Mbulelo won't have a deciding voice and that's going to kill him. Even with both his and his initial partner's portfolios they would still be standing at 45%." If I could say I saw this coming I'd be lying. I didn't know that this whole thing was about shares I didn't even know existed. About avenging something I knew nothing about. I can't believe I'm now in this position because someone else messed up before I even knew him. I guess loving Thando isn't easy, huh. He's always surrounded by drama and I keep getting sucked into it. But there's no way I'm going to let these people use me. No way.

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Thando

I pull up in front of Mrs Pretorius' private practice in Vincent. I used the card she gave me earlier, I called her and asked to see her urgently, stating that it's a matter of life and death. Fortunately for me, she didn't give me the run around, she just asked me to come meet her here. If she's the honest woman I think she is she won't have a problem shedding some light on where her daughter might be keeping Someleze. She promised to be of help to me after all, and now it's time for her to deliver on that promise. I'm just taking a chance though. I know that most parents would never sell out their children no matter how wrong they are.

I get out of the car and walk inside feeling a little unsure. I don't know how this is going to go but I don't have a choice, I need to try. I need to get this information before Sandile gets here. He and I need to find Someleze and bring her home. I can't believe the last time I saw her, which is this morning, I was ice-cold towards her. Now I might never get to see her again. And the whole thing that happened between us seems so stupid right now. "Doctor December. I must say, I didn't expect to receive a call from you so soon." Mrs Pretorius says as she comes out of the consultation room to meet me in the waiting area.

-Me: "Trust me, I was hoping I'd never have to make the call." That's me being too honest. -Her: "Don't worry, just follow me." Season 2 #17

"Ndizakubamb' egxeni mihla yonke yokuphila kwam. Ndizakukhuthaza nob' izinto sezibhek'ecaleni. Umlingani ngowani na xayengasoz' akupholis' amanxeba. Ntombi ndiyabulela zang' undishiy' enyanyeni. Ndiyakuthembisa ntomb' entle ndizabalidwala lakho kude kuvalwe." - Ntando

. Thando

Mrs Pretorius covers her face with both hands after hearing the reason for my visit. Is that good or bad for me? I guess I'll have to wait and see. It takes her a long moment to remove the hands and look back at me. -Her: "I wish I could say I'm surprised by what you just told me, but I'm not. Not really." What is she saying? She better not be saying what I think she's saying.

-Me: "Meaning what exactly? That you've known about this all along? Even when you were being nice to me this morning? Are you...?"

She breaks in before I can finish.

-Her: "No, no. That's not what I meant. What I mean is I know Dominic very well, he's my late sister's son. I know what he's capable of. I won't say he's always been problematic but when he wants something he would do anything to get it, I mean anything. Kidnapping a pregnant woman sounds exactly like something he would do. And Emily? Well, she's my daughter but I don't always agree with the way she does things. That's why even now we don't see eye to eye. She prefers her stepfather over me because he has a very soft spot for her. I'm even sure that he's the one who helped get her request

acceded to when she wanted to rotate at

Frere Hospital. He's also a medical practitioner and he knows people at the Bisho office and the National Department. I can't say Emily's spoiled because of him though. She's always been like this. She and Dominic have always been close, he's always liked her and I guess that's because she's susceptible to his manipulations. So I'm not surprised to learn that they are both involved in something this horrific."

I wasn't expecting a fat paragraph about the history of these two psychos. But hearing it is enough to freeze my blood. If they are capable of anything then what does that mean for Someleze? They may go as far as taking her life. Oh God, no. Please don't let that happen. But why are they doing this? What do they want exactly? The way I'm so scared for Someleze and our baby I just turn into a carved god of Egypt in my chair; I can't speak, I can't move. -Mrs Pretorius: "You say you have no idea why they are doing this but I'm positive that Dominic wants something from you. And I believe you'll find out soon enough what it is that he wants when he calls for ransom." How typical. She's now shifting all the blame to Dominic, away from her own daughter. -Me: "Ransom? How sure are you that they'll demand ransom? What if they only want to hurt me by hurting my woman?" I finally manage to push words past what feels like a block of ice stuck in my throat. Images of them hurting Someleze keep playing in my head, and I just lose it. I jolt off the chair, kick it back and start pacing around this woman's office. The way I keep scratching my head I swear if I do it one more time it'll bleed. I stop, turn, then charge towards Mrs Pretorius. My motion is as quick as it is violent. I grab her, lift her off the chair and pin her to the wall with my forearm wedged

under her throat.

-Me: "I don't want to involve cops just yet, so you better tell me where your bratty daughter and nephew are keeping my woman, right now!"

-Her: "Hey, I'm on your side here. I'm on your side."

That's not the location. I press deeper into her neck even as she rattles off the details of her campaign for release.

-Her: "Come on, my...daughter and grandson are alive...because of you. So I'm also willing...to help you...save your family. Let me...call Emily."

She struggles to speak but she manages to get her message across. I push off her and she stumbles to a safer distance. Looking at her coughing I realise what I've just done. I can't believe I just did that, I can't believe I went that far. In my life I've never been violent to a woman and now that I have, it scares me. -He: "I'm sorry. I'm really sorry, I didn't mean to do that. I just lost it." She looks at me with unreadable eyes then shakes her head as her fingers gingerly touch her now reddish neck.

-Her: "I'll call Emily. She's still my daughter, I can get through to her. I can convince her to give up your wife's location before this goes too far. I also don't want to see her get into more trouble. She's still my daughter." -Me: "Go ahead. Call her and put the phone

-Me: "Go ahead. Call her and put the phone on speaker."

She does but she doesn't ask her anything, she only requests her to come to her office right away. Emily replies by saying she'd be on her way because she wasn't doing anything anyway, that she was just chilling at home since it's her day off.

About fifteen minutes later, which felt like eternity to me, she arrives. But when her eyes land on me in her mother's office she goes wild. -Her: "What is this, Mom? What is he doing here?"

-Mrs Pretorius: "He's here because his fiancé's missing." She answers with a calm voice. -Her: "So? Is this a police station? We open missing person's cases here?"

-Mrs Pretorius: "Emily, I know about what you and Dominic have been up to. And Dr. December here believes that you two have now abducted his fiancé. Baby, I need you to tell me where she's being kept. You can still get out of this before it gets ugly. Abducting

an innocent, pregnant woman would never look good no matter how you look at it. What were you thinking getting involved?" -Her: "Why do you always think the worst of me, Mom? Do you honestly think I'd be involved in something like this? You believe what this man is saying about your own

daughter?!"

Such disrespect! She's not talking she's shouting, at her own mother.

-Mrs Pretorius: "I believe that Dominic put you up to this. But you can still get out before things go from bad to worse, before you get into more trouble. Plus, we owe it to Dr. December to get his fiancé back to him unharmed. Your sister and your nephew are doing okay now because of this man. They

made it because of this man's dedication and willingness to go an extra mile."

Mrs Pretorius' voice is calm but her words have definitely made their mark because Emily now calms down and looks at me with...appreciative eyes?

I'm still in awe of Mrs Pretorius' gratitude, you know. I don't get this often. As a doctor I've been saving lives for some years. Earlier there was a sense of fulfillment because patients would express gratitude. But now that sense is lost. Saving life isn't anything great for our society. It has become a mechanical job expectation from doctors, just like a paid service of a machine. -Emily: "You are Molly's doctor?" -Mrs Pretorius: "How could you have known? You haven't even been to the hospital to see your sister. But that doesn't matter now, what matters is that poor woman out there. Where is she, baby? Where is she? Speak up, put an end to this madness. Don't let Dominic drag you down with him again."

Emily sits down on the only available chair in the office, the second chair facing her mother's desk, right next to me. Then she turns and looks at me with a soft face. -Her: "I wasn't part of this abduction, Dr. D, I swear. Yes, Nick told me about his new plan yesterday after we left Ryan's place but I tried to talk him out of it. I thought it was extreme and unnecessary, but he obviously thought otherwise. He said he'd go ahead and do it without me if he had to, and I guess he did." -Me: "Is that so?"

I definitely don't trust her.

-Her: "It is. But I may have an idea where he could have taken her. His friend's family's

game farm in Adelaide. It's isolated and ideal for this kind of thing."

For some reason I now believe her. I don't know if I'm being gullible or what but I can see the sincerity in her eyes and I can also hear it in her voice. I'm about to ask her why they have been doing all of this but my phone distracts me when it rings. Maybe it's Someleze's father wanting to tell me that he's now in EL.

-Emily: "I'm sorry for everything I've done to you, Dr. D. And I'll make things right by taking you to the farm."

She says as I take my phone out of my pocket. My heart stops when I realise that it's not Someleze's father, that the call is actually coming directly from Someleze's phone. I know that it can't be Someleze who's calling, not after I've seen her car with a wrecked bumber surrounded by cops near Breidbach less than an hour ago - before I came here. I know that it's Dominic and this can't be good, I feel it in my blood with a sudden mean certainty, a sense of things falling miserably into place.

"Who's this?" I answer anxiously.

"Definitely not your bitch. But don't worry, she's okay and she'll remain this way if you follow my instructions."

A man's voice answers on the other side. I'm not familiar with this voice but I know that it's that Dominic. I feel my temperature rise as my anger builds up.

-Me: "Dominic, if you hurt her..."

But he quickly cuts me off.

-Him: "You'll do what? Haven't you heard what I've just said?"

-Me: "What do you want? What do you want from me?!"

-Him: "Simple. Your shares of your father's company. My brother tried to get you to sell, remember?"

Oh, now it dawns on me. This piece of shit looked familiar on that photo Someleze showed me last night because I met up with his brother last December. He and his lawyer tried so hard to convince me to sell to him but unfortunately things didn't go their way. I couldn't just sell a portion of my father's company, a company he worked so hard to build. Those shares belong to me only on paper. They are being controlled by my father, he has my proxy, I'm not in any way involved in the company. I'm not even taking

the dividends. And that's because I never wanted to be part of that company to begin with, my father just forced the shares on me because he was trying to 'bribe' me to join the business after I'd quit my job. But his strategy obviously didn't work. I don't want to lie though, learning that this whole thing is about the damn shares has just thrown me to the land of disbelief. What is it about those shares really?

-Me: "Listen, I need to know that Someleze is okay before I do anything you say."

I hear some shuffling on the other side then I hear him telling who I presume is Someleze to talk to me. "Thando, don't do it. Don't give him what he wants." Someleze, the woman who means so much to me, speaks fast but without any hint of fear in her voice. That sends a wave of mild relief my way. However, that wave quickly recedes and sinks into the sand when I hear what sounds like a slap on the other end of the phone, followed by Someleze's painful scream. What the hell? Did he just slap her? -Me: "What have you just done? What have you done, dammit?!"

I don't know how I got up from the chair but I find myself on my feet in an instant.

-Him: "Get the share transfer process in motion, my brother will contact you. Do that and you'll get your woman back. Don't do it and I'll make what you've just heard seem like a tickle. You know what else, Thando? I've always loved your profession, I've always wanted to be a surgeon. But the thought of studying for so many years before I could be registered as one discouraged me. However, my love for the profession is still burning inside me. And I might just practise on your pregnant bitch if you don't get me what I want. I'd sure love to grab a scalpel and cut her belly open then watch her blood pool up on the floor as I pull the foetus, YOUR blood, out. I'd love to watch her bleed to death. Just like my own mother died giving birth to your half sister."

I hear the last sentence but it doesn't register, all my mind can do at this point is imagine the graphic ruthlessness this asshole has just painted with words. I feel like I'm coming out of my skin. And him hanging up immediately after saying that shit doesn't help either. -Mrs Pretorius: "Was that Dominic?" She asks as I put my phone back in my pocket, but I don't answer. I just start toward the door, pushing Emily, who's now also standing, out of the way. As she babbles self-righteous speak I just turn and face her mother. -Me: "Just make sure your daughter doesn't leave here." Then I pull the door open and walk out. I fucking need some air.

When I get into my car I let out a loud scream, ropes of spit shooting from my mouth. Love and rage in equal quantities. My scream probably shreds the birds from the trees and echoes into the streets of Vincent, but I don't care. I just want to let it all out.

. . Someleze

Now frightened of this monster I once thought was handsome I draw my knees to my chest, the bottom of my chin grazing the tops of my knees on the uncomfortable bed. I can't believe that the man I once thought was nice and funny has not just abducted me but he's also just saw it fit to raise a hand to me, giving me a hot slap that has caused my nose to bleed. Dominic Walker is one sick bastard, that much is now clear to me. After the blood chilling picture he's just painted for Thando on the phone he hangs up and looks at me with that signature crooked smile of his.

-Him: "I'm sure by now you hate yourself for once having feelings for me. See, I know how you truly felt about me, Somi. I know what you felt for me. You wanted me but you were just scared and in denial."

Add being a mind-reader to the list of everything I already think he is. Looking at the blood stains on my white top I feel so disgusted at myself for once feeling something for this pig.

-Him: "Don't worry, you weren't the first one to get weak at the knees at the sight of me. I have that effect on women."

Disgusted mostly by the grin that

accompanies his words, I find myself dry-

heaving twice. This piece of shit is so full of himself.

-Him: "Just don't fool yourself by thinking because I once kissed your lips I won't hurt you when I have to. If you and your fiancé try to be little heroes you'll both pay with your

blood. The blood that has come out of your nose is nothing compared to what I'll do to you if you pull another stupid stunt."

-Me: "You're a fucking psychotic sadist, you know that?"

-Him: "Maybe I am because trust me, hurting you would be so much fun for me. Easy too because I don't even like you that much. Pity you once thought I did. The truth is, I don't do your kind, sweetheart."

-Me: "My kind?"

-Him: "You're the wrong race."

-Me: "Fucking racist. I'm sure you flipped when you heard that your mother died giving birth to a baby fathered by a black man. That's why you're doing all this, be honest with me and with yourself. If she had an affair with a white man you wouldn't be doing this. Well, news flash, your mother loved that black man because I don't recall hearing you say she got raped. She fell pregnant for him because they loved each other regardless of their races or their marital statuses. Now why should Thando and I pay for your mother's adultery, betrayal, whoredom, and immorality?"

I soon regret saying that when Nick strides towards me and grabs me by the throat. My eyes widen in horror as I see no mercy in his. -Him: "Say my mother was a whore one more time and you'll regret it. Hear me?!" His big hand presses deeper into my throat as another pulls me by the hair. My eyes are now probably bulging as I try to get free from this barbaric monster. He eventually lets go of me and pushes me to lie on my back on the bed.

-Him: "Bitch, you are at my mercy in this remote place, so you better play nice if you want to still be breathing when you leave here."

His eyes are blazing with anger and I shrink in my position, trembling and coughing. Oh God, please let my family find me before things get worse in here. With everything in me, I'm

hoping Kevin got what I was trying to tell him on the phone and passed it to Thando. If he did, then I'm positive that my father will turn this province upside down until he finds me. Nick seems to have done some research on Thando but he forgot one crucial aspect, doing some background check on me before deciding to execute this kidnapping. I'm sure all he knows about me is that I'm from a middle-class family headed by a single parent in PE. Well, he's in for a surprise. He thinks he's boss, but let's wait until my father finds him. Him brutalising me like this has just earned him a spot in my father's kill list. I brace myself for anything that may come next as he hovers over me. But he just yanks off the diamond pendant hanging on a chain around my neck, the queen chess piece Thando bought for me.

-Him: "This looks real."

Real enough to be his, evidently, because he sticks it in his pocket then steps back and

walks out of the room, banging the door behind him. Oh, thank you, Jesus, he's gone...for now. I let out a huge sigh of relief as I say a short prayer in my heart, asking God to protect me. That pendant means so much to me, not just because it is expensive but because of its sentimental value. However, I won't even try to get it back, my life is even more valuable than it.

Thando

Having sent my location to Someleze's father after he'd called to say he's now around EL I lay on the bonnet of my car in front of Mrs Pretorius' surgery, waiting for him. I'm looking up at the sky, my hands tucked under my head. Wind is now blowing and the pillow-like clouds that have been adorning the sky are now replaced by big, dark ones. It looks like it's going to rain at any minute and I can't

help but feel like this sudden change in weather is a bad omen. I cannot shake the feeling of impending doom that is threatening to overcome us. Tears trickle out of my eyes as that one horrible, ear-piercing scream from Someleze keeps echoing in my head. I'm sure I look pathetic right now, but I don't care. The thought of Someleze being hurt just breaks my heart. I'd do anything and give up everything to avoid that from happening again, even give up those shares - my family's legacy. I've made up my mind, I'm going to give these people what they want and get my wife back. Yeah, I'm doing this. Still mulling over how I'm going to tell my father, I hear a sound of screeching tyres. I spring off the bonnet in an instant only to see Sandile's car 180'ing about 10 feet away from me. Feeling embarrassed, I quickly wipe away my tears as he leaps out of the car and walks over to me, leaving the car door behind him

open. I guess he's got no time to shut it.

"Where's she? Where's this Emily who knows something about my daughter's kidnapping?"

He asks, his eyes burning with anger. I brought him up to speed when he called but he just lost it and hung up on me before he could even hear the decision I've made.

-Me: "She's waiting inside the surgery. But please don't be too harsh on her, I don't think she's involved in the kidnapping."

-Him: "Let me be the judge of that." He turns and starts to walk toward the entrance of the surgery, but I try to stop him. -Me: "No, Mashiya, wait."

He stops and turns to me.

-Him: "Listen here, son ... "

Just from the tone of his voice I can tell that annoyance is rippling through his entire body as he comes to stand right in front of me. I won't lie, every time he calls me 'son' I find it weird considering the fact that he's only 9 years older than me - the things we do. -Him: "My daughter is out there, kept against her will. Who knows what they are doing to her as we speak? Every second we waste talking is one second too long for her." -Me: "But they won't hurt her if I give them what they want. I'm willing to do it. I'm willing to give up those shares to get my love back." My father-in-law reacts to that by taking a step closer, he's now too close, our faces only an inch apart, his eyes boring into mine. We hold the look for a long moment before he

- finally speaks.
- -Him: "Are you losing it, Thando? Because I don't have the time or energy to clean up another one of your messes, not when my daughter's safety is concerned."
- -Me: "I'm not losing it. What are you talking about?"
- -Him: "Then why would you want to give in to their demands? People like that, kidnappers, are sociopaths that can't be trusted. You don't make no deal with people like that. How certain are you that they'll release my daughter once they get what they want? I won't even talk about their weird demand."

-Me: "I'm not certain of anything."

-Him: "Exactly. So you're not giving them anything. We're going to get Soso out of there ourselves, right now. Stand your ground like a man, Thando."

I get his point, it's just that I'm scared, I'm scared for Someleze.

-Me: "It's okay, we'll do it your way."

-Him: "Good. Now go get this Emily so we can be wheels up."

Like an obedient son, I nod then walk away to get Emily.

Her mother easily lets her leave with me, and Sandile instructs us to get in my car and follow him to his house in Nahoon Beach around EL. When we get there he tosses me a set of handcuffs to cuff Emily's hand to a steel post in the lounge.

-Me: "Is that necessary?"

I mean, I believe that Emily is willing to help us. If we treat her this way, won't we destroy this already fragile alliance? -Him: "It is necessary, I don't trust her...Do it then take her cellphone and follow me upstairs."

He says already taking the stairs. I've studied my father-in-law very well since I got to know him. I learned that he's used to giving out orders and he always wants them followed. He wants things done his way all the time, and if you want to be in his good books you better not argue with him. Even now I don't exchange words with him, I just do as he says. Leaving Emily cuffed to the post, I go upstairs and find him in his vast bedroom. From his safe comes a .45 automatic, two empty clips and a box of Glazer ammo.

-Him: "How good is your precision, son?" -Me: "If you're asking if I've ever carried a gun before, the answer is yes. For years I used to hit targets, bullseye, at a shooting range with my father. It was just a hobby, but my precision is pretty good. However, I've never carried a gun outside of the shooting range and I've never hit a human target." -Him: "Well, there's a first time for everything. When you get a shot on that farm don't do what you see on TV, don't hesitate or talk, just point and pull the trigger. Shoot first, ask questions later."

-Me: "Are we gonna go into that farm hot? Guns blazing? But won't that put Someleze's life in danger?"

-Him: "Are you being serious right now? No one ever goes to war unarmed, son, or your blood will decorate the grounds. Just take the gun. You're a man."

He already thinks I'm soft and he obviously doesn't trust me enough to be able to protect his daughter, but I'll show him. I'll show him how much I love his daughter. I'm willing to do anything to get her back home safely. If it means taking a life for it to happen, so be it. I take the weapon with pleasure. I check the action, and heft it for weight. Then I begin loading the clips. When I'm done I take one loaded clip and slam it into the butt of the .45. I jack the slide back and let it slam home - chambering a round.

-Me: "Ready?"

A slight smile tugs at his lips, then he checks the magazine of his own weapon before holstering it back to his waist.

-Him: "I am. But the clothes you're wearing won't do."

I look at myself still wearing the same formal clothes I wore at work, I couldn't get the chance to go home to change.

My father-in-law opens his closet and pulls out a neatly folded pair of jeans and a T-shirt, then a jacket from the hanger and hand them to me. Okay, we now wear each other's clothes? To me, this means he doesn't blame me for what's happening to his daughter. -Him: "I'll wait for you downstairs." He says, then walks out. I quickly change into the clothes then follow him down.

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All three of us ride in his car and we get to Adelaide 2 and a half hours later, just after 19:00. It's spring but it's already getting dark, I guess it's because of the rainy weather. And the way I see it, it's probably raining in most parts of the Eastern Cape.

Probably out of fear more than anything else, Emily gives us the directions to the farm, saying it's situated about 10km from the town of Adelaide, in the Smaldeel.

I notice that Sandile is finding the going on the steep gravel road difficult because it's muddy and slippery. And the deeper we go the more the vehicle starts to slip and slide, but he is able to control it and keep it moving at a steady but slow pace.

I keep quiet along the way, just staring out into the dark beyond the headlights. I'm worried about what will happen when we get to the farm. And thinking about the kind of man we are chasing, the things he's capable of doing and what he did to Someleze while I was listening on the phone, makes me wish I could just jump out of this car and run and run until I catch up with that scum, tear off his cock, stuff it into his mouth and choke him with it until his eyes pop out of their sockets. "How far, Emily," I finally break the silence "to the farm?"

-Her: "We're almost there but we better leave the car at the gate and hoof it from there. We don't want to run out of luck and get spotted."

That's exactly what we do, we leave the vehicle behind, but with Emily inside, cuffed to the steering wheel. We just can't afford to go in with her.

Now on foot, we don't follow the direct road, we jump over the fence and walk through the veld, past established game species as well as a few hundred pecan trees before we get closer to the farm house. We are now drenched, but at least we make out flickering lights shining through the windows of the house. My mind is numb and my thoughts are going round and round like a Ferris-wheel: is Emily's intel correct? Is Someleze really here?

If she is, will we find her still okay? Will we be able to save her or we'll just make things worse and put her life in danger? I would never forgive myself if the latter happened. I love that woman and I would not know how to live without her, that much is now 100% percent clear to me.

"No gung-ho stuff, Thando. But remember what I told you."

Sandile says, derailing my train of thought. I respond by pulling down my baseball cap that I took from my car before I left it in EL, then we both loosen the guns in their holsters and start a careful approach, moving from tree to tree. Getting closer we make dark shapes of two cars in front of the house. Then as we get even more closer I notice that one of the cars is a white Dodge Journey and the other a black Mercedes Benz. Ryan did say that Dominic sometimes drives a Mercedes, right? "Looks like we've hit a jackpot. We're at the right place." I murmer with hope. And I'm about to charge straight up to the house when Sandile puts a restraining hand on my arm.

-Him: "Hey, what did I just say about gung-ho stuff? You can't help anyone getting yourself killed. We have to check out what's going on inside first, without alerting them."

He's right, I just got excited. We carefully make our way towards the front of the old farmhouse. Avoiding the porch, we press ourselves close to the peeling cement walls, Sandile walking right in front of me.

Lifting his head carefully, he glimpses through the window by the front door and take in the situation with one look. Then he moves away and motions for me to follow. We both silently retreat into the cover of the acacia trees.

-Him: "Two men are in there, busy playing cards."

He whispers.

-Me: "Looks like it's good time to go in."

He nods then we cock our guns and proceed to the front door with caution. Now caution aside, Sandile kicks the delapidating door open and we charge in with our guns trained. The two tall, heavyset thugs who were playing cards jump off their seats, trying to reach for their guns on top of a sideboard by a TV stand. Stupid guards, getting too relaxed on the job.

-Sandile: "Uh-uh. I wouldn't do that if I were you."

He says cockily, stopping the two in their tracks before they could even lay their hands on their weapons.

-Him: "Or you wanna bet whose bullets would leave the chamber first? I'll paint these dirty walls with your grey matter before you can even put a finger on those guns."

His own finger now moves to the trigger and mine also does the same. The two morons now realise that if they try to move forward they'd be signing their death warrants, so they retreat back to the couches. -Sandile: "Good. Now where's she? Where's my daughter?"

But none of them answers.

-Sandile: "Oh, we're mute, aren't we? Well, let's be motionless too. Cuff yourselves together."

He says tossing them another pair of handcuffs with one hand, still holding the gun with the other. Without wasting any time, Dominic's lackeys do as Sandile says. Then he motions for me to search all the rooms of the house while he keeps an eye on our hostages. Someleze is possibly guarded by Dominic himself in one of these rooms, I just have to figure out which one before he shows himself.

With my gun trained, I start at the kitchen then carefully proceed to check all 5 bedrooms of the house, but it seems like luck is not on my side. There's no sign of Someleze or Dominic anywhere in here. What the hell? Where are they? I drop the gun and slide down the wall of the last bedroom until my behind reaches the wooden floor as every bit

of hope I had quickly vanishes. However, my pathetic ass gets woken up by a gunshot coming from the lounge, where Sandile and the thugs are. I spring off the floor, ready to go check what's going on, but a cry I recognise as Someleze's stops me in my tracks. It's not coming from inside the house but from the back. I take a couple of long strides to the bedroom window and peering through it I spot a log cabin out in the back. That must be it! That must be where the bastard is keeping my wife. I don't waste any time, I don't even go check on Sandile in the lounge or even inform him about my move, I just jump out the window and land on my feet on the ground, then rush to the cabin.

. Someleze Shortly after I've heard a gunshot coming from outside, Nick barges in from an adjoining bedroom and grabs me by the arm, pulling me down from the bed.

-Him: "What did I say to you about your man trying to be a hero? Looks like it's gonna be lights out for you too."

His eyes and rasping voice are threatening. Lights out for me too? What does that mean? That Thando came for me and is now dead? Oh God, no! Was that gunshot taking him out? No! Not my Thando. Not him! My hope is now gone and my first instinct tells me to run outside and see Thando's body instead of falling down and crying like a child here. I rush to the door and fumble with the bolt but I don't get it to open before I feel a hand grabbing my hair, hauling me brutally back, lifting me up and throwing me down. My arms move instinctively to protect my belly before I land on the floor. I hit my head hard on the corner of the bed, and through blurred vision I can make out Nick walking to the

door. He opens it then slams it shut and shoots the bolt. He then turns and smirks at me.

-Him: "Do you believe in coincidences, Somi?" He asks, waving his gun. I don't answer, I just look down, nursing my throbbing head. -Him: "Life is about perfection. Every incident that happens, no matter how colossal or small, is an aspect of a divine plan that works to the end. There is no such thing as coincidence in God's scheme. Anything and everything that happened leading to this day has been His plan. And, according to His will, this is how it will all end."

He cocks his gun and points it at me. But he doesn't get to pull the trigger even if he wanted to because just then the door breaks open and a familiar face walks in, armed, prompting him to quickly pull me off the floor and use me as a shield, his gun pointed to my head.

-Me: "Thando? You're alive."

For one second my eyes light up and the thought of 'He came for me, he really loves me' goes through my mind. But then remembering the brute of a man standing behind me with a gun, I freeze. -Thando: "Drop it!"

-Nick: "No, you drop it or I'll drop her." I've seen Thando angry before but not this much. Rage is burning brightly and clearly in his eyes. I don't know whether it's due to that very anger or a bolt of fear, but I notice that his hands are trembling around the gun he's holding. However, before I know it, a gunshot thunders through the room, and quicker than I could even blink or scream I feel Nick dropping behind me. Instinctively, I jump to a safer distance and look at what has just happened. I see Nick's body lying motionless on the floor, bleeding from a hole in his forehead. He's dead, that's for sure. I guess there was no wisdom in using someone who's shorter than him as a shield. Thando aimed higher and planted a bullet in his skull without even thinking twice. Thank God, I'm now safe, it's over. I turn to look at Thando who remains rooted at that same spot, by the door. Our eyes connect and we hold the look for a couple of seconds before he drops the gun and moves to meet me half way as I take strides to him. He pulls me into a warm embrace and I bury my face in his chest and let my tears fall. I used to see scenes like this in movies, but never have I thought it would happen to me. I can't believe Thando is here, I can't believe he came for me, or that I

thought he was dead.

-Him: "Sthandwa sam, are you okay? Are you hurt?"

I can't get the words out, I just continue to cry on his already wet chest as he gently brushes my back. I don't even ask how he got to know my location. I'm just happy he's here. -Him: "I'm sorry, sthandwa sam, I'm really

sorry. Don't cry, I'm here now. I'm here."

"Is she okay?"

An all too familiar voice prompts me to pull back from Thando and look to the door. There he is, standing just beyond the broken door, in the adjoining room.

-Me: "Daddy!"

I scream in excitement and rush out the broken door to his awaiting open arms. I bury my face in his neck like a child as his caring arms wrap around me tightly in a warm embrace. Just like Thando, he's also wet, but I don't care.

-Him: "Are you okay, baby?"

-Me: "I knew you'd come, Daddy. I knew you'd come for me."

He pulls back and starts patting my torso for any injuries. I'm sure he's seeing the blood on my top.

-Him: "Did they hurt you? Are you injured?" -Me: "No, Dad, I'm fine. It was only a nose bleed."

-Him: "I'm glad you're okay."

His eyes now move away from me and to Thando who's still separated from us by the broken door. His body soon follows his eyes and he ends up right in front of Thando. But he first takes in Nick's dead body on the floor before saying anything to him.

-Him: "He's stopped breathing?"

-Thando: "Yeah."

My father nods and gives my man a pat on the back as if to say "good job". Thando also returns the same courtesy.

-Him: "What about those two guys?"

-My Dad: "Still breathing, and hog-tied. I aimed low and took a knee from one of them, he was trying to pull a stunt on me."

-Me: "What do we do now? Run and leave everything as it is?"

-My Dad: "No. Running would be the worst move. We call the cops and wait for them to arrive."

-Me: "Cops? Thando has just killed a man, Dad." -My Dad: "In a clear case of self-defense and the cops will establish that. They will obviously have a problem with the fact that we took it upon ourselves to find you but no one is going to go to jail, not if I can help it anyway. However, the fact remains: someone has lost his life and that won't look good next to your name, Thando. But I, on ther hand, don't mind."

-Thando: "Meaning what exactly?" -My Dad: "I'll bear the cross, you take my daughter to safety. The gun is mine, it's registered under my name, so I'm the one who did the shooting while saving my daughter. Simple."

-Thando: "No. I won't let you do that. In my life I've never ran away from my

responsibilities or from facing the

consequences of my actions. I took the shot so I'll face the cops."

-My Dad: "You sure about that?"

-Thando: "Of course. And it's not something to be discussed."

I see a slight smile playing at the corners of my father's mouth before he gives Thando a nod of approval. I guess he's impressed. -Him: "Okay then, let me call the cops." -Thando: "And I'll talk with Soso in private." He takes my hand and walks me outside. We

stand in the rain at the front of the cabin that's illuminated by the light coming from inside. Thando turns his face to the dark and forbidding sky, rain pouring down on him as if washing away the sin he's just committed. After a moment he looks at me.

-Him: "MaNdlovu, I'm sorry. I'm sorry I dragged you into this. I'm sorry you..." But I cut him off.

-Me: "No, thando lwam, stop. None of this was your fault."

-Him: "Of course, it was my fault. The shares they wanted are in my name. And I'm sorry I never told you about them. Thing is..."

I cut him off again.

-Me: "Thando, I said stop."

I tell him the whole story, the story behind Dominic and his brother wanting the shares. -Him: "I'll be damned. So we are here because of what my father did almost two decades ago? His adultery?"

-Me: "See? You did nothing wrong. This wasn't your fault. Your father just had an affair and impregnated a married woman with sick racists for children. That's why we're here."

-Him: "But still. You've gone through all this because of my family. Baby, I'm sorry."
-Me: "Don't be. I'm just glad you came to my rescue. It shows just how much you care about me. How much you love me."
He leans closer and kisses my lips. We kiss as the rain showers us with the water from the skies. It's a little cold but none of that matters, we are in our own little world.
-Me: "About what happened between us last night, about me and Nick, once again, I'm sorry. I didn't..."

But he jumps in before I can finish.

-Him: "Don't worry about it. It's all behind us now... I just want you to know that I'll forever stand by you as your pillar of strength and protector. You must have been so frightened, and this traumatic experience you've just endured will possibly have after-effects, it's gonna be rough but I want you to know that I won't leave your side. As your man, your partner, I'll support you all the way. It's my

job to."

I smile through the rain.

-Me: "I love you. And I promise to also support you through anything that may happen following tonight's events." -Him: "I thought you'd want to leave me after this, but I'm glad that thought didn't even cross your mind. Thank you." I chuckle.

-Me: "Leave you? For this? Come on, babe. I know that I act crazy sometimes but there was no way I was gonna leave you for this." -Him: "I love you, mamakhe [baby mama]. So much. I don't ever want to lose you. My worst fear was leaving this farm without you or with you in a body bag."

-Me: "None of that happened. I'm here, safe and sound. And it's all thanks to you." He pulls me to him one more time and kiss my lips, pouring his entire soul into it. The worst is over.

Sorry for the wait, everybody. I didn't do it on purpose, believe me.

Season 2 #18 [+18SNL]

"I want to be your dominated love slave. I want to be the one that takes the pain. You can spank me when I do not behave. 'Cause I love feelin' dirty. And I love feelin' cheap." -Green Day

Thando

"I wish I could be the one leaving, hey." Zizo says as my shift ends, hers beginning. It's 7:30 in the morning, I was on-call last night and now I've just updated the day shift team on a patient injured in a car crash who required surgery last night to remove a ruptured spleen, and a ballistic trauma victim who also needed an emergency operation.

-Me: "I wish I was heading home but I'll be in my office preparing for that self-assessment exam."

I say as we both step aside, away from the rest of the team.

-Her: "It's a good thing you're not leaving then. I'd like to seek your input on the best approach for my elderly patient who's scheduled for a colostomy reversal."

-Me: "Okay, come to my office when you're done with your rounds and I'll be happy to help."

I have a vast experience when it comes to a case like this and Zizo knows it. With a team like ours, there's always someone who has

seen a similar case and can provide advice. It's what we all do - we usually consult each other as colleagues.

-Her: "Thanks...You know what else, Tee? I really admire your strength."

Okay, what is she talking about? And what's it got to do with anything?

-Me: "Huh?"

-Her: "I mean you're moving on with your life. You're not letting what happened on that farm or the murder charge hanging over your head hold you back or affect your work." It's now Friday, 5 days after I shot a man dead, and Zizo and her husband have been very supportive...to me and to Someleze. I don't want to lie though, I was nervous before I pulled that trigger, but I knew that if I didn't do it I'd be sending Someleze straight to the grave. That psycho was going to shoot her. Seeing her at his mercy, the barrel of his gun pressed to her head, blood stains on her top, I immediately knew what I had to do. It was evident that the bastard had been rough with

her and that he would be happy to go all the way. He had said it, that he would drop her. And looking into his eyes, I saw a merciless monster who didn't seem to be bluffing. A monster befitting the ruthlessness he had a said to me on the phone earlier. I had to do what I had to do to save Someleze and our baby. That's all that mattered to me at that moment. And after she was safe, I felt a wave of relief washing over me. But when it sank in my head that I had actually taken a man's life, cold clamminess spread its way across my palms and my knees began to wobble. I was completely shaken by the act I had just committed, but I just had to act strong, for Someleze's benefit. In my life I never thought I would ever kill a person, but I guess some situations force us to do things we never thought we could possibly do. Do I regret what I did though? The answer is a definite no. To protect the love of my life I would do it all over again. Pity I'm now facing a murder charge. I can't say I'm surprised though, in our country the law is on the side of the assailants, every time. You have to jump through a lot of legal hoops to reach the point of justifying lethal force, and the burden of proof is on you. It's just sad.

When the police arrived that night they arrested me, I got questioned like a murderer down at the police station and then I got charged with murder. On Tuesday I appeared in front of a magistrate and I'm now out on bail as the guys in blue are still 'investigating' further. I wish the charges could just be dropped, you know. But I'm seriously not counting on it, hence I got myself a good criminal lawyer. However, I think my fatherin-law has another plan. When I asked him about it though, his only response was, "You're not going to jail, son. That's all you need to know. And I'll also be the one dealing with Dominic's family." I honestly don't know what he meant by that, I guess I just have to wait and see.

-Me: "The going is probably still gonna get tough, Zee. My career could be another casualty, but I'm not letting the whole thing phase me."

-Her: "Good for you, Hlubi. I'm sure the quidnuncs around here already have a lot to say about the whole thing."

-Me: "Actually, a lot of people are on my side. So it's all cool."

Last night was my first time walking through these doors after the shooting incident, and I thought I'd have the other staff whispering behind my back, gossiping, because news travels fast, but that hasn't happened...yet. -Me: "Really? Now that's great. Really great...Listen, we'll chat a little later, okay? Time for rounds. Just stay strong, buddy. Stay strong."

She pats my shoulder then walks away with her group.

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Walking into my office I throw myself in my chair behind the desk and take a deep breath.

Just thinking about the man I've respected and idolised for so many years as my father is now enough to make me want to puke. He is still my parent, my father, but he now repulses me, and that's me being frank. I can't believe I've been so blind for this long, not seeing his adultery ways. And my mother sure knows how to cover and make excuses for him, because there's no way she's been in the dark all this time. My sister, Anathi, wasn't. She told me that she's always known about our father's affairs, including the current one. A current affair?! I couldn't believe my ears when I heard it. My mother is sick for goodness sake, she's going through the most right now but her husband of 35 years, a whole 55 year old man, still has the time to go around pursuing an affair instead of being by her side. He'd use business as an excuse for being away from home but, as it turns out, the only business he's been taking care of is

between the legs of a woman he never made vows to. I'm also a man but I would never understand that part no matter how hard he tries to justify it. Not that he would though, because when I talked to him on the phone on Tuesday he showed not even the slightest remorse, even after he'd found out that his pregnant daughter-in-law got kidnapped because of his ways, and that I'm now facing a murder charge all because of him. It's like he doesn't care. The support I'm getting from Sandile is more than I can hope for from him -

my own father.

The way he angered me, after that phone call I made up my mind: I no longer want to have anything to do with him. I don't even care how he will fight to get his company back from Dominic's brother who's already a majority shareholder - owning 40% of it. The way I'm so pissed at him I'm even considering dropping his surname and take that of my mother, then stay as far away from him as I possibly can. When Someleze heard me speak like this she said I'm being overly dramatic and that I just need to calm down, but I don't think I will ever change my mind when it comes to this. Someleze is only speaking that way because she didn't hear how that man spoke to me, she didn't hear how stinging his words were.

Speaking of Someleze, I should text her and tell her that I'll be home a little later than she expected. After that fateful night she came straight here, in EL, to stay with her father who decided to put everything else on hold and stick around to have time for his daughter and also support me, while creating a bond between him and his newly-found sister who's slowly but surely recovering in our hospital. Someleze's mother also came to be with them. But when I got released from custody two days later Someleze moved back to our townhouse and that's where she still is even now. She hasn't been to Alice yet but Kevin, the man who also played a role in getting her back home, brought her laptop so she could still continue with her paper and also send the required chapter to her supervisor. He's truly a good friend, and I've never had a problem with their friendship. A number of people helped us bring Someleze home, including Emily, surprisingly, even though she flipped after learning that I shot her cousin dead. I'm now keeping my eyes peeled for any stunt she or the rest of Dominic's family might want to pull next. At least her mother doesn't seem to be singing from the same hymn sheet as her. I really didn't know that treating Molly would work for me to this magnitude.

Anyway, I take my phone out and start typing the message to Someleze.

Someleze

Waking up in an empty bed, I get some time to think about what the future holds for

Thando. But I trust my father to come through for him. In fact, I'm certain that he'll do whatever it takes to help him. I trust him to take care of Nick's brother too before he embarks on a journey of avenging his brother's death.

Nick's brother? I haven't met the guy but I believe he was also at that farm at some point, after those two men I didn't recognise had thrown me into that cabin. I reckon he was there because I heard Nick talking with someone he referred to as "brother" in the next room after he'd strangled me and yanked my pendant off my neck. I also suspect that the pendant is now with him wherever the hell he is because we never found it on Nick or anywhere in that cabin, the farmhouse or Nick's cars.

Still ruminating on that day's events, which still haunt me, my phone vibrates - a WhatsApp message coming through. It's from Thando saying he's going to be home only around noon. Oh no, I was hoping he was already on his way. I was already anticipating what he'd do to me once he walks in. I really miss him, I miss him fucking me. Of course I love lovemaking, but that's all we've been doing lately and now I seriously want to be fucked...hard. I need my man to fuck me into oblivion, and maybe I'll feel better about everything afterwards.

Almost instinctively, my hands drift south, and I sigh deeply as I open my legs; raising my knees and parting my thighs to allow my fingers entry under my underwear. Simply opening myself is so erotic. I think of Thando's eyes on me, watching closely as he commands me to spread myself open, stretch my pussy lips open to his inspection, to pleasure myself, to bring myself to climax, to fuck myself so that he can watch and enjoy, and to take me when he wishes. I think about his fingers probing my juicy core or his tongue licking long, slow strokes up through my glistening folds, delving deep or lightly, barely brushing skin. I think of his eyes, dark in the

glimmering candlelight, intense with desire, brilliant in lust, looking at me, as he instructs me in his wishes. I am to have no secrets. He must see it all. And I respond and obey, my arousal rising sweet and hot from within under the power he has over me when he's in his dominating mode.

My fingers slide through my folds as I think about the father of my baby tonguing me to a quivering orgasm before bending me over and fucking me from behind, ball deep inside me, to his own climax.

He hasn't done anything like that to me in a while and I now miss it. My fingers slip past to my nub as I wonder if he would like me to wax anew. I know that he likes my pussy smooth and naked for him so that he can see my slit, there for him, glistening with moisture as juices trickle down my thighs. My pussy juices flow at the thought of his mouth around me, sucking me. A flash of heat stabs up through my sex and I feel my flow starting again, my slit swelling and my breath

quickening. I work my clit, rubbing and

circling, slipping back the hood to reach the sensitive bud within. As I flick it, I think of his tongue encircling it, probing with the tip, exploring my pink folds, lapping slowly at my pussy juices, tasting me as he slides fingers inside me and probes me within. My heart begins to pound and I wish that I had a vibrator to use. I want to feel something inside me so bad. One hand still playing with my swelling nub, the other slides inside, one finger, two, then three. I want my man inside me, but this will have to do. I reach in and up, stretching fingers for my g-spot, massaging hard. I think of Thando bending me forward, to take me from behind, his cock testing and teasing my slit, gently seeking inside me, an inch only, against my entrance, making me twitch and moan and shudder before ramming into me, hard, and turning my moans into screams.

Rubbing hard at my inner walls, electric arousal sparks flames in my head. I can feel

my thighs wet and hot, and the bed damp

under me. I am moaning again now. My pulse is racing and I am sweltering under the sheets. I throw off the covers, and lie naked and writhing, sleek with sweat as I plunge my hand deep into my cunt. Again and again, I try to bring Thando within me, taking me with his cock, filling me hard until I can see nothing but him, feel nothing but him. I want him in my pussy. I want him in my mouth. I want to feel him judder and spasm as he cums, spurting his load into me and on me. I want him to orgasm over me, over my face and breasts and pregnant belly, into my aching pussy, into my mouth, letting me milk him, lick his cream from my lips and face. Harder and harder I work myself, plunging my fingers in, as deep as they will go, desperate for a substitute for my man's dick inside me. My hand is slick from fucking my own saturated pussy, its lips hot and swollen, pulsating with need and the desire for release.

Fuck! I won't come. Orgasm just won't arise within me. I need more. Running into the kitchen, I grab a thick, green banana and rush back to my bed. It will do.

Grabbing the banana I slide it inside me. My aching cunt welcomes it as I plunge deep inside, fucking myself hard, again and again. The banana is now slick with my juices, but I ram it home, over and over. At some level, I am conscious that the headboard of the bed is clattering against the wall, but I don't care. No one will hear. Now my orgasm builds, tension mounts, blood pounds in my ears, my body archs rigid, thighs shudder and tremble in my search for climax. With an unquenchable heat, orgasm takes me. My pussy sends pulsating spasms through my body. My thighs and stomach throb and clench in a rhythm that takes me completely, and I cry out, still working the banana inside myself, making the ecstasy last as long as I can. Pumping away at myself, I hold onto the crescendo as long as I can, before it becomes

unbearable and, with a gasp, I whip the banana out of my still spasming cunt and lie gasping and panting on the mattress. The climax was good but I'm still yearning for the real thing, and I can't wait until Thando comes home, he'll probably come back tired anyway. So I'm going to him. If he can't bring his delicious dick home, I'll take my wet pussy to him.

I quickly climb down the bed and rush to the bathroom to take a bath.

Thando

For some reason my head is now quite at peace and it's a good feeling, it gives me time to think about my woman who has just sexted me. I wish I could be by her side right now, to feel that she's with me in the same space, under the same roof. Feeling that I have her near. After what happened I don't feel good whenever I'm away from her. But if all that

has happened has taught me anything it would be to not take her for granted. She ended up being lured in by Dominic because I was unavailable, and that has now become a serious wake up call for me. As Bongo said, difficult situations impact relationships in one of two ways: they either tear people apart or strengthen their connection, binding them together tightly. And for us the latter has become true. But we are still going for that premarital counselling, our first session is Tuesday next week - after I come back from visiting my mother this weekend.

I reply to her sext with fire emojis then try to concentrate on what I'm working on so I could quickly leave these four walls and go home to be with her. If I could work from home I'd leave right now but she's too much of a distraction, I won't do any work there. I try to focus and clear my mind of her image but it does not disappear, when all of a sudden, I hear a knock at the door. -Me: "Who is it?"

But no one answers. I stand up, about to go open when the door pushes open, and then I see that smile that always captivates me. It is her - Someleze. She has never surprised me at work looking all kinds of sexy and I'm about to ask her what the occassion is, but I get tongue-tied and I instantly smile as she seductively walks over to me and gives me a passionate kiss on the lips.

She looks beautiful as always, but a little provocative. Not that I mind though because I know that it's all for me. She looks extremely sexy in a short skirt and a white blouse that she has opened down to her breasts to alter my morning. And her high heels complete the look. I know that I'm now being corny but each and every day I spend with her I find her more beautiful.

-Me: "You look beautiful."

-Her: "Thank you. I've decided to pass by because I simply couldn't wait until you got home." She says, licking her lips. I smile, already seeing where this is going.

-Me: "Is that the reason you've locked the door, making sure no one could get in?" The answer I get is a smile and her right hand further opening her cleavage. She sits on my desk, and it's a good thing there isn't any clutter on it. It is tidy. I'm not one of those people who have to check ten times if they've locked the door and turned off the stove, but my space has to be in meticulous order. I always keep my desk and my entire office tidy and organised. That's discipline. And I believe I wouldn't be where I am today if it weren't for discipline.

Before I can say anything more she grabs my hands to put them on her waist. Then she undoes the the buttons of my shirt so that her hands can freely caress and fondle my chest and abs with her masterful sensual movements. She is starting to excite me and I worry that someone might come knocking, but I release my fear when she slowly takes my left hand and bring it up to the space between her thighs, under her short skirt. I find that she's wearing no panties and I open my eyes in amazement. Then she slowly brings her mouth up to my ear to whisper something, I presume.

-Her: "I left my panties in the car." She says while she caresses me, and that excites me even more. I cannot wait and I start stripping her body of all the remainder of the clothes she is wearing, covering the beauty of her nakedness. I leave her totally nude on my desk and before making any other movement I keep gazing at her for a long moment. And my cock hardens in response to the erotic sight before me. Her body is perfect. Even her small baby bump is making her more sexier. I love it, although I can tell that it makes her a little bit selfconscious every time she's naked in front of me. I adore it because it is what makes her more of a woman to me.

I let my lips run through her skin, kissing through her back, all the way down, biting her softly.

-Her: "Please don't stop."

She says with a ragged voice. With every bite I fall for her all over again, her skin charms, bewitches and captivates me.

She pushes me and I fall sitting in the chair that I have behind. Then she starts undoing my pants, roughly pulling them down together with my boxers and my erect cock springs free, the head already glistening. I see her fierce eyes in this very moment. In the quietness of her pleasure, she pushes me back but this time I fall to the ground and she sits on top of me. The floor is cold, my back feels it, but the hot moisture coming from between her legs makes me ignore it. I don't know what I'd do if someone could see us right now but I don't care. At this point I don't care if someone could somehow walk in on us or if the planet is round or square. In fact,

doing this here is all the more exciting, giving me that adrenaline rush.

Soso parts her legs and slides down on my rock hard cock. I don't feel like I have an upper hand with her at all today, but I like it. My cock burns as the muscles of her hot pussy grip me tightly. Harder and harder she rides me until I think my balls will burst. I push her up, off of me, then bend her over the desk to take her from behind. I know she likes this.

-Her: "I want you to fuck me hard."

She says, sending a burning sensation down my already hot crotch. I direct my swollen appendage into her awaiting wet pussy, entering her slowly. Then I up my pace, going faster and faster. Her moans are now getting louder, driving me insane, and for a moment all my thoughts stray, because all I can hear are her moans. But then my thoughts come back and I remember where we are, that I can't have her making too much noise. I cover her mouth with my hand so no one could hear us as I ram harder inside her.

Soon she reaches the finish line. She squirms and her vaginal walls tighten around my cock as she releases her juices. She spears endless moans under my hand as I continue to move inside her, prolonging her climax while building my own.

Not long after her, something great happens. She takes me to ecstacy and I start to buck as I empty myself into her, finding it hard to restrain my groans. Spent, I fall on her naked back. I remain still for a few seconds, quiet after so much pleasure. Then I pull out of her and turm her around to give her the biggest kiss. In the kiss I deliver all the love I have and feel for her in my soul - a soul that has her name on it.

-Me: "This was a nice surprise."

I say, smiling at her.

-Her: "I'm glad you've enjoyed it as much as me."

She bends over to pick up her clothes from the floor, but suddenly there's a knock at the door. Damn, that was close. We hurry to get dressed. Now ready to pull the door open, she puts her hand on my crotch and stop me from opening the door, only to give me a kiss then step behind the door to hide like a school kid. How I love her.

I pull the door open to see Zizo standing there. She's here because I asked her to come. Jeez, I had already forgotten about that. Aware that the office now smells of sex, I step outside to speak with her while walking down the corridor - also giving Someleze a chance to walk out. While I attend to her, the smell of Someleze's body lingers on me, it does not let me concentrate. I just want to go home. To be with my woman, to be inside her again and again. And whisper in her ear how much I love her and always will. My wait won't be for long though, I just need a couple of hours and I will be done here.

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When I walk back into my office, I find my phone with a message from Someleze. "I know that you are into hardcore BDSM even though you always hold back with me. But when you come home today I don't want you to hold back, I want to give you full control of my body. I want you to do anything you want to and with me, to give me sweet pleasure that comes mostly from pain." The message reads. What? I feel my member hardening just from the thought of it all. I sure love to kinkily dominate my woman in the bedroom, but I never wanted to go all the way down that route with Someleze. She's just too delicate and fragile for that kind of stuff. Especially now that she's pregnant. "Are you sure you wanna do that? Baby, you're pregnant." I reply.

"I've never been more sure. I want you to punish me then fuck me hard. Don't worry about the baby, we'll play it safe enough not to hurt him in any way." She types.

Him? She thinks it's a boy, and I'm hoping it's a boy too, but we want to be surprised when he or she arrives.

"I guess I'll have to go do some shopping then before I come home." I reply already excited. She replies with multiple fire emojis. I smile then put my phone aside and go back to concentrating on my work. When I'm done, shopping is indeed where I go.

The way home becomes tortuous. Unbidden images of Someleze naked for me invade my mind, but I have to concentrate on the road. More than once I get brought back from my reveries by the honking of cars behind me. I feel ashamed at first but then chuckle, thinking that I should probably pay more attention to the red lights changing to green if I am so anxious to get home.

It's so not easy, unfortunately.

I get to another red light. And Someleze appears in my mind again, kissing my lips,

pressing her whole body against mine, her hand sliding down from my chest to my abdomen, down to my crotch, rubbing my hard cock with the palm of her hand. Someone honks behind me. Shit, I've done it again. The light is green but I'm still not moving.

"Sorry." I say as if the driver behind can hear me. I better step on the accelerator and get home as fast as I can.

Happy 2019, everybody. Let's all enjoy sex responsibly this year. Sihule sijongile.

Season 2 #19 [+18SNL - Read at own risk] [Unedited]

"I want to be your dominated love slave. I want to be the one that takes the pain. You can spank me when I do not behave. 'Cause I love feelin' dirty. And I love feelin' cheap." -Green Day

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"Voila!" I exclaim as I put the perfectly baked lasagne on the kitchen island. Thando loves lasagne but I've never prepared it for him and that's because I didn't trust myself enough to be able to, at least not the way he likes it. But today I've managed to pull it off. It is just the way he prefers. This is going to be a perfect lunch, I say under my breath. Satisfied, I carry it to the dining table. It was the only missing piece in this perfectly set table for one. Thando is probably on his way now, and that means I better go get ready. I rush to our bedroom then straight to the en-suite. Wriggling out of my sweat pants and T-shirt takes only a moment and my moist and sticky panties follow. I turn on the shower and step inside. The water feels wonderful on my skin, taking sweat and tiredness with it. Stepping back I scrub my body, the lather slippery and smooth. I massage my breasts, getting them ready for my man's touch. My hand moves

down over my pregnant belly, gently

caressing; sending the heat throughout my entire body. My fingers find my clit and begin stroking gently as fingers from my other hand enter my steaming pussy and slowly do the fucking. At the feeling, my legs begin to tremble but I will not allow myself to cum, not before Thando gets here. I'm finding the torture exquisite. I want to cum but I know I shouldn't, it's my man who will take me there. My shower finished, I step out and dry myself off, stoking gently so as to not destroy the excitement I have created for my man. I want today to be really special for him. I want him to eat then I will satisfy his wild sexual fantasies. I've known that he's into BDSM for a while now but I've been too shy to do anything about it until today. I kind of suspected last year, the day he said he would never take it any further with me after he had tied me up in his bathroom and played with my body before fucking me into oblivion. Then I became sure when I used his laptop

three days ago and came across some

information. He should really clear his web history if he doesn't want anyone who borrows his laptop to know that he sometimes watches porn, or the type of porn he watches. I've always known that once in a while he indulges in porn when I'm not around and feels like fapping, he told me, but he never told me the kind he watches - which is hardcore BDSM. I probably should have felt some type of way after invading his privacy and discovering that, but I only felt burning pleasure taking over my body and I began to feel wetness between my legs - just as I'm feeling right now.

Now dry and lotioned, I put on nothing but a black apron with white frills around the edges. I hope Thando likes role playing or has a thing for maids, otherwise I will feel really stupid for doing this. All done, I go wait on the couch in the lounge. My ears strain for a sound of a car driving into the complex or the click of the door latch opening. But ten minutes passes without any of that happening, and my nervousness increases. I want to peek out the window, see him drive up, watch him walking up to the door but I decide to sit and wait quietly, hands clasped in my lap and legs clenched tightly together. Sitting here I wonder what he has planned for me. I yearn for his touch, his kiss and the sound of his voice.

My heart jumps when I finally hear footsteps coming up to the door. That must be him, and I quickly get up from the couch. Grabbing the broom, I pretend to sweep the floor. I position myself so that he won't be able to see my exposed ass as he comes in, but once he reaches around behind me, I know that his hands will find it.

As the door opens, I look up from the floor and meet his eyes with mine. I see them change from surprised to intrigued. And a devious smile comes across his face as he closes the door behind him, making me feel a little embarrassed to be dressed like this, but I know it will be worth it if it will please him. -Him: "Well, hello there, beautiful. Who might you be all alone in my house?" Oh, great. He gets that this is role playing. -Me: "Sorry, sir. I'm the new maid." I answer innocently. He sets his bag down and tosses his jacket on the end table by the door. I love how he has untidied his look; his shirt unbuttoned all the way down from the neck to the end of the sternum and the sleeves rolled up to the elbows. I wonder what he has in that bag. He said he would go shopping and now I wonder what items has he bought from the adult shop and how he will use each of them on me. The anticipation of the pleasures

that will soon follow makes me all wet down there.

I avert my eyes and play the part of a shy little maid, just here to do my duties. He walks over to me and grabs the middle of the broom to prevent me from sweeping. -Him: "Did my fiancée hire you?" I bite my lip and remain quiet, my heart beating as he claws at my bare back. He moans with a surprised delight as his other hand comes around behind me to meet my bare ass. Tossing the broom to the side, he pulls my body up against his. I can feel my arousal building some more as he commands my actions and slides both his hands slowly down to my ass.

-Him: "You are one bad maid, walking around my house half-naked like this? You are here to tempt me, aren't you?"

Still, I don't answer. I avoid eye contact, but I can feel the heat of his stare as he exerts his dominance. Slap! One of his hands lands hard on my ass then leaves it for only a second before he brings it back down again...hard. The strength of his hand on my tender ass forces out a tiny whimper from between my lips.

-Him: "Tell me, dear. Are you here to tempt me?"

-Me: "I can't say." I reply quietly.

Slap!

-Him: "Why's that?"

-Me: "I... can't say."

-Him: "You are an uncooperative little tease, aren't you?"

Slap! My ass stings more and more with each of his firm spanks. I can feel the juices building up between my legs already as he takes control. My body is loving this pain.

-Him: "Do you know what I do to girls who don't cooperate?"

He asks as he digs both hands into my burning ass cheeks.

-Me: "No."

I whimper. He leans in close, his breath hot on my ear.

-Him: "I guess we're going to find out then." He whispers. I can feel my knees getting weaker as his fingers intensify the stinging sensation on my ass. I surrender all of my power to him as he spins me around and bring my butt up against his bulging cock. He rubs himself against me before he leans back down to my right ear.

-Him: "Does this give you a better idea? Is this what you had in mind when you decided to strut your naked ass around here for the man of the house to see?"

He growls but I remain quiet, something that earns me another hard spank on my ass.

-Him: "I asked you a question."

-Me: "Yes. Yes."

I whimper, my ass burning.

-Him: "Yes what?"

Slap!!

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-Me: "Yes, sir."
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Damn! I'm sure he's about to give me one of the most electrifying experiences of my life and I am becoming more excited in anticipation.

Before I know it he turns me around to face him. I can see the lust burning in his eyes, firing me up with desire too. In a stern and demanding tone, he menacingly whispers into my ear. "Strip! Slowly."

-Me: "But, sir, I've prepared some food for you. Won't you eat first?"

-Him: "I said take it off."

His hand reaches from behind and lands on my ass so hard that I let out a loud whimper. Obediently, I now comply. He sits on the couch, watching my apron drop to the floor. Naked, I face him, bow my head, and quietly declare, "Sir, do as you wish with me. Make me your pain slut. I deserve it. I've been a very bad maid."

No response from him. He just sits there, seeming pleased with the effect of having his eyes feast on my naked body. My body has slightly changed with this 4-month baby bump, and in any other day I would feel selfconscious about standing naked in front of him but not today, right now I find it all so erotic. I stand before him, head lowered, eyes downcast, hands clasped behind my back, and legs spread wide. Several more minutes pass and my anxiety increases. Did he hear me? Why is he just sitting there? I am horny as hell and need to be fucked. He hasn't even kissed me. What is he planning?

. Finally, he gets up and steps closer to me. I gasp as I feel his hands touch my bare back again. He kisses my neck, creating goosebumps along my skin. Then his lips move to mine and kiss me as his hands gently caress my breasts. As I'm still enjoying that, he pulls back and I exhale as I feel his warm breath against my ear.

-Him: "You look absolutely beautiful, you know that? You are a temptress."

He whispers and I smile to myself at the compliment. He steps away from me and commands me to bend over and hold the arm of the couch, displaying my ass. Submissively I obey, dropping down to rest on my elbows on the arm of the couch, head well down so that my naked buttocks are presented for him. -Him: "Good girl. Now stay there."

He strides to his bag and extracts a paddle in red and black leather. I immediately know what's going to come next, it's pain but I already know that, for some reason, it excites me. He walks around me, stroking me with the paddle; sliding it over my spine. Lightly, he taps a bare buttock with it and I quiver in anticipation.

-Him: "You like that, huh?"

The rhetorical question is followed by a spank to the other buttock, harder this time, making me yelp.

-Him: "Be quiet."

He commands as another hard spank follows. A tingle runs down my spine as I feel my body's response to the spanking. Biting my lip, nonetheless, my pussy juices flow, trickling down my thighs.

-Him: "I can see that you're enjoying this. Now.... a question for you. I can either fuck you from behind, or face-fuck you. Which is it to be?" -Me: I don't mind, sir. You choose."

With a thwack! that makes me gasp, the paddle slaps across my rear one more time. -Him: "Wrong answer, little maid. Now, do I shove my cock up your cunt or do I shove it down your throat?"

My ass smarting.

-Me: "My pussy, sir. My pussy.

Thwack! The paddle again, but this time even more harder and I yelp.

-Him: "Your pussy? What about your pussy?" -Me: "Shove your cock in my pussy, sir. Fuck me hard."

The paddle drops to the ground beside me and this time, instead I feel his hand slap across my butt, hard this time, really hard. I yelp in pain, but he is not fooled because my throbbing pussy gushes.

-Him: "I still think you're enjoying this, little maid."

His fingers ram inside me, pumping in and out of my wet pussy.

-Him: "Ask nicely. If you want me to fuck you, ask nicely and tell me what you want me to do."

-Me: "Please, sir. Fuck my pussy hard. Make me cum."

-Him: "And then?"

Thwack! This time the hand slaps not my buttocks, but my aching and streaming cunt. It really hurts and I almost rise up from my position. But as I start to rise he pins my head low again.

-Him: "Did I tell you to move?"

-Me: "No, sir."

I answer, gasping. He continues to work me and soon I feel my orgasm building. The sheer scale of the stimulation is beyond bearing and I am about to cum uncontrollably. But he stops, obviously feeling my building orgasm. By now I am almost delirious with the desire to cum and my legs are trembling, head still bowed.

-Him: "You said something about food?" -Me: "What?" I raise my head to look at him. Is he really suggesting that we stop so he could eat? -Him: "Not that I answer to you, but a man's gotta eat."

I stare unbelievingly. What the hell? -Me: "You can't be serious. After all this, you want to just break off and I'm supposed to...." He interrupts.

-Him: "I'm not going to give you what you want. I'm not going to fuck you just yet. Orgasm depriviation will be your punishment for being a bad, little maid. And a good fuck will be your reward if you behave...Now the food?"

Fuck! This is torture. My pussy is throbbing, I want to be fucked, I want to cum. But what can I do?

-Me: "It's okay. You'll get what you want, sir. The table is already ready."

-Him: "Good. But first things first."

He reaches into his bag and pulls out a pink object that is shaped like an egg. I have no idea what it is but in a moment I hear a low buzz, then a high buzz. He is actually controlling it with a little, matching pink remote in his hand.

-Him: "Just something to keep you occupied while I eat."

He says and pushes the vibrating egg up inside me. He does it slowly, sliding it along my engorged pussy lips and up past my aching pussy muscles so that I feel every inch of movement. It is small and I'm wet, so there is no resistance at all, but I can't keep the small gasp from exiting my lips. Not at the size of the egg, no. Because it is nothing compared to what I'm used to - his dick. It is the vibrations the vibrator sends up much deeper than the vibrator itself can reach. I bite on my bottom lip, standing still and silent for a moment after he has put it in place. -Him: "Now get me something to drink before I eat. Something strong. Whisky.. on the rocks."

-Me: "Yes, sir. I'll go get that for you."

But shit! How am I going to walk or even make it until he finishes eating with this thing inside me if I can barely stand a few seconds? Still, I find a strange sense of excitement in thoughts of feeling this way for several minutes - having to walk around the house, serving my man, all the while being pleasured between my legs.

-Him: "Hold that vibrator in, grip it, don't let it slip out. And don't you dare cum unless I give you permission to. Disobey and you will be punished."

Oh no! I hold back moans beneath my breath, having a feeling that I'll be doing this a lot until he takes this thing out of me. I walk slowly over to the mini bar, naked and being stimulated. Already, I can feel myself nearing an orgasm. The small vibrator between my legs continues to vibrate vigorously and my wetness is already spreading down the insides of my thighs, I can feel that much. Every step I take I can feel the toy moving slightly within me. I keep my eyes down, trying my best not to show Thando that I'm already nearing an orgasm.

I pour him the whisky, put in the ice then walk back to him. He is still seated on the couch but now sprawling a little, arms raised, hands clasped behind his head, eyes not leaving my naked body. As I'm walking I can feel it; the tensing up of my lower muscles, something brewing in my abdomen. And suddenly, a wonderful feeling of release. I fight off the urge to moan as I come to a stand still. Shit! I've just orgasmed without Thando's permission and that means there's a punishment I'm going to have to endure. Lifting my eyes I find him still looking at me, a naughty smile painted across his face. I feel so embarrassed right now, and my juices are running down my thighs, making me even more embarrassed.

I have to wait a few moments before I can continue walking. And as I do, I can feel my juices still rushing down around the vibe in my pussy. What am I doing? This is crazy. I consider simply pulling the thing out, but if I want Thando to finally fill me up with his delicious cock and give me an amazing orgasm I have to obey, I have to keep this thing in.

-Him: "Just put it on the coffee table for now, then come here. Stand in front of me." He says as I hand him the glass of whisky. Again, I obey, placing the glass on the table and myself before him, his face level with my hips.

-Him: "Closer. I want to be able to smell you." I move closer, my dripping sex now almost brushing his face. He leans forward, one hand caressing my hip and thigh as he inhales deeply. His warm breath against my pussy sends goosebumps all over my body. I close my eyes, anticipating his tongue on me, to lick my juices off, but it doesn't come. I only feel him slightly pushing me back and getting up from the couch, and that's when I open my eyes. -Him: "While I eat you are going to kneel on the floor by the table, with your back to me and bend forward so that your face and tits are on the floor with your ass in the air. You will keep your knees wide apart but still holding the vibrator inside. That's your punishment for coming without my permission."

What the hell? But obediently, I do as I'm told. Keeping the egg inside is so hard with my thighs spread wide like this but I try. My drenched cunt and ass hole are displayed for him as I keep clenching my pussy muscles around the damn egg that keeps assaulting my wet hole with its vibrations. He continues to eat at the table, occasionally commenting on how wet and juicy my cunt is, how greedy my ass looks and generally what a dirty, little cock teasing slut of a maid he has found. This is shameful and humiliating, but it is this humiliation and feeling cheap that turns me into a wild horny mess. Knowing that he has his eyes on me in this embarrassing position

has me delirious with lust. Lust is ruling my universe and is driving me to perform unspeakable acts. My mouth and cunt are drooling with oceans of liquid in anticipation of being used.

I feel another orgasm building and I ask for permission to cum, but he doesn't grant it. What the hell? My hips squirm, trying to fight the orgasm off little by little. But my attempts seem to be futile, I'm about to succumb to my second orgasm. I bite down hard on my lip, tightening my fists on the cold tiled floor, trying so hard to stop it. If I cum now I can forget about receiving his cock, he will punish me by denying me a good fuck, that much he's made clear.

Seeing that I am struggling, he comes to me and reaches inside my love hole with his fingers then pops the damn thing out of me. Shaking and panting after being brought back from the verge of an explosive orgasm, I let him help me up from the floor.

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He carries me to the bedroom and gently puts me on the bed, then he leaves me all alone, wondering what he has in store for me and when he will finally fuck me. A few moments later he comes back with his bag and takes out two pairs of fluffy handcuffs and cuff my wrists to the legs of the square leather headboard. Now with me bound, he takes out a silk scarf and uses it to blindfold me. I am now lying there, blindfolded, my arms stretched wide above my head, chained to the bed. I'm stark naked, there's not even a partial barrier to my flooding pussy. My legs are spread and between them, kneeling I think, although I cannot be sure because I cannot see, or even move very well, is the father of my baby who is now taking me to another world, a world I've just been fantasising about. And I'm willing to let him have his way with me, I'm willing to give him whatever he wants, whenever he wants it.

I think he is still clothed. I feel the fabric of his designer pants rubbing against my open thighs, his erection pressed against my pregnant belly. His lips are suckling at my left nipple. His tongue manipulating and kneading it, sending electric currents of desire, shockingly, down through my stomach, hips and aching cunt. He switches to the other nipple, and I feel him forcing my legs further apart with his knees, arranging me to his satisfaction. His hot breath on the sensitive skin of my beasts is making me flush and sweat, and I feel his tongue trail along my cleavage, licking me dry. My breath is rapid and shallow, and as his tongue rides back to a nipple, he bites, not hard, but enough to startle me and I half gasp, half yelp at the

almost-pain of his nip.

-Him: "Hey, no noise. This time I want you completely silent."

This is going to be difficult. He bites the other nipple and I arch my back and shudder, trying, obediently, to be silent through my panting. One hand slides across my breast, pinches a nipple, then tweaks and teases until I know that it is a solid, erect bud, crinkling rose against my pale skin. The other nipple gets the same treatment, and I writhe under him, my hips beginning to judder with the need to have him inside me. So far, he has touched only my breasts, belly and neck, not yet venturing near my streaming pussy and swollen clit.

-Him: "Tell me, dirty little maid, what do you want?"

He asks in his deep, rich voice. What does he expect me to say? I want him to plant his mouth over my slit and suck me dry. I want him to fuck me until I can't stand. But all I can do is moan incoherently. I hear a buzz, then feel a sharp pain in one nipple, then the other, as he clamps what I figure are nipple vibrators to my small, firm nipples. This is too much and I struggle against the handcuffs, trying to escape the electric arousal spiking through me. My pussy gushes and I moan, trying to thrash against or into the sensation. -Him: "What do you want? Tell me. You have to tell me."

-Me: "I want... I want...Oh damn! I want you inside me. Please. I want you inside me."

-Him: "That's better. Go on."

Lust is driving me insane, I can barely think straight.

-Me: "I want you to fuck me. Please just fuck me already. I've been a good girl, I've obeyed."

l cry out.

-Him: "How do you want to be fucked?" I am not sure how to answer, and I hesitate, my panting growing ragged.

-Him: "I asked! How do you want to be fucked? Tongue? Finger fuck? Or do I get myself ball deep inside you and pin your pretty brains to your skull?"

The image this question conjures up is too much and I moan again. It is about the only thing I can do, bound and blindfolded. -Him: "Enough noise. If you can't ask nicely for what you want, I think I'll shut you up." After a moment I feel his fingers pry my mouth open, forcing something inside and then tying around at the back of my head. A ball of some kind? It is soft and rubbery against my tongue but my mouth is held open against it. This is ball gag. I am effectively gagged and now my helpless moans are muffled.

-Him: "You look good like that, with your mouth held open. I might have to think about what else I might put in there. But now, a little more stimulation, I think."

After another moment, I feel a sharp pain in one nipple and then the other. I try to yelp, but cannot. Then my already sensitive nipples start to vibrate, gently at first. I am just beginning to handle this exquisite sensation when the vibrators increase violently. I convulse, my hips bucking, my urgent cries blocked by my gag. I try to speak, but cannot. -Him: "Too late now. You had your chance to speak."

He lifts my left leg by the knee, passing something under it. A rope? A belt? A cuff? Blinded as I am, I cannot tell. Then he does the same with my right knee. Suddenly I find both legs being spread and parted at the knees, lifting me from the hip and displaying my throbbing pussy. For a moment, my weight is suspended, quite painfully, as my knees are pulled back and towards my face, but then he pushes something under my hips, a pillow or cushion, supporting me and the pain subsides, I'm now comfortable.

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I lie, almost crucified on the bed, blindfolded, gagged, arms chained and legs pulled apart widely, pussy splayed.

-Him: "Not quite wide enough."

He says. And the ropes pull my knees further apart. He adjusts the cushion under my hips

making sure I'm comfortable, but I'm sure my dripping pussy is now even more exposed. -Him: "That's better. Now I can see you properly."

I am so ready for him. Frantic with arousal, crazy with lust, I just want him to plunge his cock inside me and pound away at my core. Instead, I feel the lightest of touches. Fingers part my pussy lips, stretching them wide. His face is so close to me, I feel his warm breath over my swollen and pulsating labia, then his tongue curls around them, over and around, continuing on to my pussy where he pushes in, licking me inside. The pressure of his face against me tells me he is licking as deep as he is able, probing with the tip, tasting my juices. His whole mouth fastens around me, and he starts chewing at my me, tongue working me all the time as I heave and struggle and squeal against my bonds, the gag, the exquisite pleasure-pain of it all. I try to scream against the ball-gag in my mouth, but it fights against me and only muffled cries escape.

Then he withdraws, leaving me shaking and shuddering, hips jerking and bucking against

my ties. My pussy is hot, drenched, engorged and I am desperate to have him inside me. Suddenly, he removes the gag.

-Him: "Anything to say? Any requests yet? You know you have to ask for it first." My mouth dry from the gag, jaws aching from being held open, I have trouble speaking. -Me: "Inside me. Please, sir, inside me." -Him: "That's better. You are learning nicely. I'll take your training a little further after today."

Oh, we are going to do this again? Honestly, there's nothing I'd love more.

Suddenly I feel him slip something inside me. That vibrating egg. He slides it easily against my slick pussy lips and for a moment, it simply sits inside me. Then it starts to vibrate to a pulsing rhythm. I convulse again, but still I am pinned.

-Him: "Calm down. We've barely started."

He probes with a finger inside me, pushing the vibrator in deeper, pressing it in as far as it will go.

-Him: "Now, I want to hear you yelp for me." He turns the power up, and this time the part moan-part howl that comes from me is loud and long. Mercilessly he wraps his mouth around my clit, sucking hard at my swollen bud. I struggle and wriggle, trying to escape the sensation overload but at the same time glorying in it. The combination of vibration on my nipples and inside my pussy, pulsing from within, and his mouth clamped over me, tormenting-pleasuring me is irresistible. From within, orgasm swells and rises. But he instantly takes his mouth away from my clit, then inserts his hand and flicks the egg out of me before pulling the clamps off my nipples. Suddenly the blindfold is ripped from my face and I see him shirtless, and undoing his straining belt. Unbuttoning his pants, his erection bulges from the fabric, standing upright as he releases it, rigid against him.

He climbs onto the bed and uncuffs me from the headboard. He commands me to be on my knees on the bed. I obey, and he takes out a locking wrist and ankle spreader bar from that bag. He securely ties my ankles apart so he could give himself easy access to my dripping pussy. With my face pressed against the mattress, ass up in the air, he gently pulls my arms under me to tie my wrists to the wrist straps on the spreader bar that is holding my ankles apart. Then as a final touch he pulls the blindfold over my eyes once again.

My legs spread-eagled by the bar, my pink and swollen sex open and displayed to him, he settles between my knees, the tip of his penis kissing my pussy lips which are still twitching with the effect of coming so close to an orgasm. At this point I can't stop begging him to fuck me, even crying. I just can't take this torture anymore, I need him inside me, I need to cum. As he touches me, my inner muscles convulse

again at the thought of his thick shaft penetrating me. With his fingers he opens my pussy wider then his erection presses against my smarting lips before thrusting inwards. I moan at the satisfaction of finally having him inside me. I am slick and slippery. There is no resistance as he pumps into me, hard, meeting my inner walls. But I want more of this, I've been aching for it for so long. -Me: "Harder, please. Harder!"

My wish is his command because I feel him grasping my buttocks, holding me still as he fucks me harder. Over and over again, his shaft spears me. I cry out in rhythm with his thrusting, again and again as he plunges deep inside me. I cannot move. I cannot see. Blind and spreadeagled, all I can do is scream in response to the pain and pleasure of him fucking me. Climax wells up from within, mounting and building, threatening to take me completely. Then in a shattering crescendo, my heart pounding and pulse racing, orgasm overwhelms me and my cries turn to screams at my body's release. Still he pounds inside me, prolonging my climax. Then he withdraws and unties me, steadying me as I stand a little uncertainly on the floor. He removes the blindfold. My breathing is still quick, and he is flushed and panting, sweaty and disordered.

-Him: "Don't move. You haven't finished. Kneel in front of me."

I do as he tells me. He draws level with my face and seize hold of my straightback cornrows, pushing my head toward his still erect cock.

-Him: "Open wide and finish me off."
I open my mouth and he pushes inside. But I pull back only to ask him a question.
-Me: "May I use my hands as well, sir?"
-Him: "Yes, you can massage my balls while you lick me clean, then suck me off."
One handedly, I massage his balls, tight and crinkled. With the other hand I support his huge erect penis as I lick away my own juices

and his. With one hand kneading his balls and

the base of his erection, caressing and stroking, fondling and rubbing, I can feel the growing throb and cadence of his rising climax. His hips start to quiver, and then, as I feel he is going to spurt into my mouth, I slide the tip of my tongue into the slit of his penis, tickling, probing and stimulating at this, his most sensitive moment. In response, he exhales with a gasp, leaning forward and pulling me by my cornrows deeper in. He spurts into my mouth in a creamy cascade, then pulls my mouth free of him and finishes his climax over my face, his stream surging over my eyes and lips, dripping down into my breasts. As he shoots his cum over me, I lick and suck where I can, taking what he gives, as he rubs his cock and balls and cum over my face. This is exactly what I wanted. Both spent, he helps me up from the floor and carries my satisfied body to the bathroom. He runs me a relaxing bath with scented bubble bath, bath salts and a couple

drops of essential oils. We get in the tub together and he washes me, gently caressing my body. He's now my loving Thando and I'm his Soso, no more roleplaying.

-Him: "I love you, sthandwa sam. So much." He says after helping me out of the tub.

-Me: "I love you too, thando lwam. You have no idea how much."

-Him: "Today was special, amazing. Thank you."

His arms envelope me as his lips take mine in a passionate kiss. Breaking the kiss, we dry ourselves, get dressed in nothing but PJs then move back to the bedroom. Getting in bed, I immediately doze off in his arms. Who could blame me though? I'm tired.

I only wake up when he calls my name.

Opening my eyes I see him sitting next to me on the bed, already ready to go to work.

Checking the time, I notice that it's already around 7 in the evening, meaning I've been out for 4 hours. -Me: "No, baby. Why didn't you wake me up sooner?"

-Him: "So you could do what? You were tired, sthandwa sam, you needed to rest." He's sweet, isn't he? My smile broadens when he tells me that I won't even have to cook supper, that he has already prepared some for me, a treat I deserve for making him a perfect lunch earlier. Isn't he sweet?

The next morning, on Saturday, he comes back from work and immediately gets ready to fly to Jo'burg to be with his mother for a few days. We part ways as I also get in my car and drive to Alice. I got the car back from the garage yesterday, and the bumper that was wrecked is now perfectly fixed. I pace it to Alice but when I pass Breidbach, the spot where I got roughly hauled out of it by those thugs, I feel my body cringe and I slow down without even realising it. What happened still haunts me, I was so scared, I thought Nick was going to do the worst to me. But Thando came to my rescue and he has been supporting me ever since, just like he said he would.

If I could say I saw it coming that he would kill for me without even thinking twice, that would be a false claim. Of course I knew that he loved me but I didn't know that I meant that much to him. I didn't even know that he would easily stand up and be willing to face the consequences of what he'd done. But he showed me, once again, that he is a real man who's never afraid to stand up for himself or his woman. Once again, he proved to me that he's all for me, that every time he tells me that he loves me he means it. If there was ever any doubt in my mind about marrying him, all that is now gone. I'm certain, in my heart and in every fibre of my being, that I have found myself a real husband in Thando December. He may not have any kind of armour but he's still my knight. He even got

me a trauma therapist to help me deal with

what happened. My first session was yesterday and I'll continue seeing her until I see some change. I know that it won't happen overnight though, but I'll get there.

It seems like I'll be spending a lot of hours in counsellors offices these days. If I'm not alone with the trauma counsellor, Thando and I will be in our premarital counsellor's office -

starting on Tuesday. But I'm not complaining, it's all necessary.

My thoughts stop when I get home to a happy house; finding my people - Kevin, Asanda and their little bundle of joy in the nursery.

They've moved back in on Monday, and living with them again will be really great. I'll get to practice motherhood on their daughter all I like - or at least when I'm not on campus. But on Tuesday I don't drive straight home to them when I leave campus, I drive to EL. Thando is back and we have that counselling session to go to. If I want our marriage to have a strong base I believe I have to be with him in giving these sessions a shot. What I do not feel okay about though is finding myself

being Mrs Phiri instead of being Mrs December. Thando is going ahead with changing his last name, in fact he has already gone to Home Affairs when he was in Jo'burg with his mother and completed the BI-196 form. I don't know how good or sufficient his written reason for the change was, but he submitted it. I tried to have him drop the whole thing but I was just wasting my time, when his mind is made up about something there's no changing it.

Anyway, I come back to Alice after the session. Only to have a special visitor on Friday - my father. When I come back from campus I find his car parked by my gate. What is he doing here though? He didn't tell me he was coming. However, I have to admit that this is an amazing surprise.

"Hey, Dad. This is a nice surprise." I say after knocking on his car window. He smiles then invites me to join him, to get in the passenger side. As I do, he attacks me with a hug then shows me something I recognise.

-Him: "I believe this belongs to you."
It's the pendant Nick stole from me.
-Me: "Yes, this is mine. It's my pendant. But,
Dad, how did you find it? Wasn't it with Nick's brother? Did you meet up with him? Dad,
what did you do to him?"

-Him: "Some things you can't fight with law, baby. And you can't leave everything to karma. Sometimes karma takes so friggin' long, you have to handle things yourself."
-Me: "And what does that mean?"
-Him: "The threat has been eliminated."
-Me: "Eliminated? How? Tata andifuni ubanjwe [I don't want you to go to jail].
Thando is still not off the hook and I don't want you to suffer the same fate."
-Him: "No one's going to jail, baby. And Thando's off the hook you're talking about."
-Me: "Huh?"

Season 2 #20

"Twelve months have passed. I think it's time we celebrate, celebrate our first anniversary. I know that we have a future, yeah. We've had good times and bad. They said we wouldn't make it this long, but our love is strong." -Serani

"The ridiculous charges have been dropped," My father says casually. "Thando wanted to call and tell you himself after he heard the news from his lawyer but I asked him to let me tell you in person."

The charges have been dropped? I don't understand. From what Thando's lawyer said, the prosecutor took this personally and was eager to prosecute the case. According to him and the cops, Thando went to that farm with the intention to kill Nick, otherwise he would have contacted the police with the intel and let them handle the whole thing. The fact that he and my father went there armed suggests premeditation, according to them. They didn't seem to care that Nick had a gun to my head, threatening to drop me, they just argued that Thando should never have taken the law into his own hands. And that there were other ways he could have handled the situation without taking that fatal shot.

Those cops were so full of it that they even added that Thando shot Nick dead because he was angry that he almost lost me to him when I fell for the guy, something they got from Emily. Crazy, if you ask me.

-Me: "The charges have been dropped? How? Did you have anything to do with that?" -Him: "Actually, it's Thando's lawyer who put in all the work."

-Me: "Really?"

-Him: "I had nothing to do with it."

I don't believe him, but I know better than to push. I know he won't tell me the truth anyway, so I just let it go. Either way, it doesn't matter how it happened, what matters is that we got the desired results.

-Me: "So Thando's really off the hook? It's all over?"

-Him: "I believe that's what I said. There was no murder here anyway."

-Me: "This is fantastic news, Dad. Thank you for coming to tell me...And Nick's brother? What's his name again?"

-Him: "Seth. His name was Seth. He died yesterday. Natural causes."

-Me: "Natural causes?"

-Him: "Who said a healthy 34-year-old can't have a heart attack and drop dead?"

-Me: "Let me guess, an induced heart attack."

-Him: "I can't tell you that."

-Me: "Plausible deniability?"

-Him: "Something like that."

-Me: "I understand."

-Him: "You see, the best murders are the ones nobody sees as murders, those that look like accidents or natural deaths." That to me is confirmation of my suspicions. The realisation of what he's done should probably have me shaken, but it only makes me revel in the knowledge that I have a protector out there, someone who'll always be willing to do anything and everything to protect me.

-Him: "Look, baby. I'm no saint and I never claimed to be one. I've made a lot of mistakes in my life and the biggest of them all was leaving your mother to raise you all by herself. I can't say I'm now making up for that, not really, I'm just trying to be the best father to you, the father you deserve. Mntanam [my child], I love you. You are the centre of my universe, and anything or anyone that comes anywhere near that centre to wreck havoc is my enemy. Those Walker brothers hurt you, you're now having nightmares at night because of what they put you through. Yes Seth wasn't the one who became physical with you but he was as much involved in that kidnapping as his brother, and I just couldn't

let that slide. Nobody hurts my family and not incur my wrath. Nobody. Revenge is the only

kind of justice I understand. And by that I'm not talking about an eye for an eye. You take my eye, I take your entire face. That's just how I operate. Now, a question for you: are you gonna judge me?"

But how could he ask me that? Yes I know that I judged him for killing Thuso last year but things have changed in a major way since then. I'm no longer that naïve girl who saw the world as black and white. No.

-Me: "No, Dad. Of course not. How could I judge you after everything you've done for me? I could never. I love you, Mashiya." He stares at me then slowly his lips curve to form a cute, loving smile that lasts for a long moment before he speaks.

-Him: "Well, I'm happy to hear that. I thought you'd be throwing tantrums, but I didn't really care, I did what had to be done."

-Me: "I hear you. But I'm still worried about the rest of Nick's family. His father and sister. Won't they be a problem? And, Dad, you can't eliminate everyone."

-Him: "They won't be a problem if they know what's good for them. See, I know that boy's father, Mitchell Walker. Our paths have crossed more than once in the line of business. Let's just say he knows me too well to know not to step on any of my toes. After what happened on that farm I paid him a little visit, just to let him know that Thando is my son-in-law and that the young woman his sons had abducted was actually my daughter. Then I told him that I had no intention of taking the feud any further and that I would appreciate it if he, too, would take a step back and not get involved. I think he got my message loud and clear, he knows what I meant by that."

-Me: "Well, as long as you're sure that he won't be a problem I'm cool."

-Him: "He knows better than to mess with me. Listen, baby, I'd like to stay longer and chat but I can't. I gotta go, I have a flight to catch, to Cape Town. I told you about the

appointment I have with the specialist I want to help Milani with her burns, right?" -Me: "Yes, you did. I just find it weird that with all the technology we have available today he still wants to talk to you face to face before he even sees the patient. But anyway, I hope he helps Lani."

It's funny that just a year ago it was just me and my mother. But now I have a loving father, and not one but two aunts. The whole thing was weird at first but now it feels really great.

I haven't built any solid relationship with Milani yet but when I was in East London I'd go visit her in hospital. The burn wounds she sustained, on her abdomen and arms, aren't pretty. And now my dad wants her to get the best care possible.

-Him: "I believe that everything's gonna be okay. But before I go, I have something for you." He pulls a small gift box out of the glove compartment and hands it to me. Anxious to see what's inside I quickly open it and toss the lid aside. My eyes land on a beautiful, white gold bracelet with two words engraved on it -"Familia Omnia".

-Me: "This is for me? Wow! Dad, I love it. It's beautiful."

-My Dad: "I'm glad you like it. I had it customised just for you. In Latin, 'familia omnia' loosely translates to 'family is everything'. And that's the message I want you to carry with you wherever you go, baby. Your family will always have your back and I want you to have their back too, even when I'm no longer around."

I'm sure he's saying this because he thinks I'm only pretending to have accepted Iviwe as family, that even after all this time I still haven't completely forgiven her for that Alex thing. But that's not the case. Seriously, the whole thing is 100% behind me, I've been moving forward. -Me: "You got it, Dad. I promise... And thank you. Thank you for this bracelet. Thank you for everything you've done for me and Thando. And thank you for being my father. I love you, Dad."

He responds by pulling me close to him, wrapping his caring arms tenderly around my body.

-Him: "I love you too, baby. I love you."

He squeezes me tighter, letting the hug linger. And I sure feel the love.

-Him: "Let me get going. I'll see you soon,

okay. Take care of my first grandbaby."

He says with a smile when he eventually pulls back.

-Me: "Will do. Just do me one favour, will you?"

-Him: "What is it?"

-Me: "Stay safe."

-Him: "Always."

He starts the engine and I lean over for a peck on his cheek before I open the door and get out. I take a moment to watch his car drive away, smiling to myself. I can't believe at some point I was unsure about letting him into my life. He sure is a thug in a suit but he's also the best father I could ever ask for. And the fact that he wasn't in my life for years no longer matters, it is long forgotten.

After driving my car inside the yard I go park in front of the garage. Then I pull out my phone and dial Thando's number. I'm too excited to wait until I'm inside the house before I speak with him, I need to do it now. And I know that he's not at work but at his tailor's in PE with Bongo and the rest of his groomsmen for the final fittings.

"Sthandwa sam." He answers with an upbeat voice.

-Me: "Hey. I was just with my father and he told me the good news. Thando Iwam, I'm so happy."

-Him: "That makes the two of us. I was so afraid that if this goes to court I'd be radioctive no matter the outcome, but now I no longer have to worry about that. Listen, why don't you come tonight so we can celebrate?"

-Me: "I'd love that but tonight won't work, hon. I'm babysitting for Kev and Asanda, remember?"

Kevin is taking Asanda out on a special date in Grahamstown. They are going to spend the night and they asked me to babysit for them. -Me: "I already said yes, babe. I don't think I can pull out now. Besides, I'll be with you tomorrow, so why don't we just celebrate then?"

I'm going to be in East London tomorrow for Sbu's startup launch party. It was supposed to be last week but there were problems with the venue, it turned out it was double booked, so he had to postpone to tomorrow. And Thando and I are in a good space to go. -Him: "It won't be the same, sthandwa sam. I want us to do it tonight."

-Me: "Okay, fine. I'll see what I can do. I'll call you, okay?"

-Him: "Cool. Hope to see you soon."

I hang up and go inside. Kevin is still at work and Asanda is at her parents'. It's only now, after 5 weeks, that her parents have thawed their hearts and called her home so they can see the baby. But I wouldn't bet on them babysitting for her tonight. Which means if I don't want to disappoint Kevin I need to come up with a plan.

Sitting on the couch in the lounge, it hits me. Kevin's brother, the one who's a cop in Fort Beaufort, could help. He and his live-in girlfriend have been coming around to spend some time with the baby, they love her and I think they won't mind babysitting for the night.

I quickly call him and just like I thought, he's more than willing to babysit his niece. Great. I text Kevin informing him about the new arrangement then I call Thando and tell him that I'll sure be with him tonight. Now with that out of the way, I should go get my stuff and get going.

It's around 18:00 when I get to Amalinda, and just as I drive down our street Thando calls to tell me that they are still on their way from PE but he'll be home soon. Okay, I guess I'll have the house all to myself until then. No problem there.

But as it turns out, Thando has other plans. When I walk into the house I'm welcomed by dozens and dozens of rose petals on the floor. What? I smile, surprised. This is how we are going to celebrate? This man is so full of surprises, that much I have to say. But I thought he was in PE, so when did he get the time to do all this?

As I'm still standing there wondering, a single rose amongst the petals draws my attention.

Picking it up I notice that attached to it is a note that reads:

"There's a little something waiting for you in the bedroom. Please get ready xx"

Okay, what's going on? We are going to have a romantic dinner in? Or perhaps out? Excited I take strides to the bedroom, and on the bed I find a nice black dress with a long, deep vneckline and a bejewelled empire waist. The length reaches all the way down to my ankles, and that's exactly how I love my evening gowns. It is really nice, I think it looks great on the hanger, and I hope it will look great on me too.

Trying it on, I wonder if it doesn't make me look fat. I turn around, looking at myself from all angles in the bedroom mirror. No, it fits perfectly. It covers my baby bump exquisitely. And it's sexy too.

I don't know what Thando has planned but I better get ready as per his request. I quickly take off the dress and go to the bathroom to freshen up. When I enter I see the mirror filled with printout pictures of me and him. What's going on? There must be a hundred photos covering the entire mirror, some are from his last year's birthday party where we shared our first kiss, pity there are none of that kiss, others are from when we had just started dating, some from our Bahamas baecation, others of the actual engagement, our Western Cape getaway, the twins birthday party this year, and a lot others. Every picture shows us happy together, and I realise just how deeply I love him, how deeply we love each other. I could spend hours looking at all the pictures, but stuck on top of all the photos is a post-it note that reads: "Happy 1st Anniversary, sthandwa sam xx." Oh my God, it's our first anniversary together. Today last year we were in his bedroom and for the first time we shared the most sensational sex I had ever known, then he topped it all by telling me that he loved me. How could I forget that? Isn't it usually guys

who forget stuff like this? Now I understand

why he insisted on having me here tonight, it had nothing to do with celebrating his charges being dropped but everything to do with celebrating our first anniversary. How could I not remember it? I honestly feel so bad right now. But what would make me feel even worse would be for him to get here and find me still not ready, so I better get a move on.

After a quick, hot shower, I slip into my new, ridiculously expensive dress, and flat sandals. I neatly tie my relaxed hair, then apply light make-up and put on some accessories. The bracelet I just got from my father fits perfectly around my wrist and the pendant also goes back to where it belongs - around my neck. Butterflies keep swarming in my stomach at the anticipation of how great tonight is going to be.

Thando doesn't use his key but rings the doorbell at exactly 19:00, I know that it's him because none of our neighbours ever comes knocking here. I delightedly hurry to open the door and it's indeed him. He's wearing nice black pants, a crispy white shirt and a wine red jacket with black lapel, no tie. He looks amazing, handsome and so damn sexy. Hell, I think I just forgot my name, as if I'm seeing him for the very first time.

He walks in with a smile painted across his handsome face and gives me a hug which leaves me drunk in his to-die-for cologne before he hands me the bouquet of red roses he has in his hand.

-Him: "Happy anniversary, mamakhe." His voice is full of joy and expectation. My internal guilt-o-meter goes all the way up at this point because I know that I had forgotten about the anniversary. But I won't tell him that now, I don't want to ruin the moment. -Me: "Thank you, thando Iwam. These are beautiful."

-Him: "Well, not as beautiful as you are. You look..." he rakes his eyes from my head to my feet and all the way back again until our eyes meet once more. "...breathtaking." I feel heat rise in my face as if he's never complimented me before.

-Me: "You look very handsome yourself. And happy anniversary, thando Iwam...I saw what you did in the bathroom, reminding me of where we come from, and I loved it. But, babe, how did you get the time to put it all together? You were in PE."

-Him: "Well, I have a confession to make. I came back early, around 14:00. When I called saying I was still on the way back I was actually at Bongo and Zizo's."

-Me: "You sneaky man."

I say, playfully punching his chest.

-Him: "We're going out, so we better get

going now before you break my ribs."

He says laughing.

-Me: "And where are we going?"

-Him: "Out. Just for dinner."

-Me: "Where?"

-Him: "You'll see."

-Me: "Okay, let me put these beautiful

flowers in water, then we'll go."

Moving to the kitchen I get a vase, half-fill it with water and put in the flowers. Then I go grab my bag and return to Thando. Reaching for one of my hands, he tugs me gently towards the door.

He takes my arm, like a perfect gentleman, and leads me to his car that is parked right in front of the house. The atmosphere outside is warm and slightly humid, the air velvet-soft against my heated skin. This sure is a beautiful night.

Thando gets my door, helps me inside then walks round to get in beside me. As the car moves forward I can't stop wondering where he's taking me, where we are going to have this dinner, but we continue to talk about things that bring us together and a few other things, including the charges being dropped. Thankfully, by the time we get to our destination my anxiety levels have dropped significantly. Guiding me out of the car, he takes my arm and escorts me towards the entrance of this oceanfront restaurant in Quigney.

-Him: "Have you been here before?" -Me: "With who? Of course not."

I answer with a chuckle. In a moment we are at the entrance, and my stomach tickles as we walk inside. But why is it so quiet and dimly lit in here?

-Me: "Where's everybody else, babe?" -Him: "We have the entire restaurant to ourselves tonight."

He whispers close to my ear as a cheerful thirty-something man, dressed in a black suit and golden tie, appears and comes to greet us. What? He booked the entire restaurant? -Thando: "Good evening. Is our table ready?" -The Guy: "Of course. This way, Mr. December."

He leads us to our perfectly set table with lit candles and rose petals on a crispy white tablecloth. This is beautiful, but what's making it more beautiful is the perfect view of the ocean we have from this position. The guy introduces us to our waiter for the evening then leaves.

We sit down and I look over at Thando and, once again, I have to catch my breath. I can't believe he did all of this.

"Can I get you started on some drinks?" The waiter asks, bringing me back to this planet. -Thando: "Yes, please. What I pre-ordered." -The Waiter: "Right away, Sir."

He walks away, and I'm left wondering when did Thando plan this whole thing. But just as I'm about to ask, I hear beautiful piano music filling the entire room. I know this song, it's a classic, Lionel Richie's "Endless Love". But where is it coming from? I turn to my left and a new light that's brighter than on any other part of the restaurant draws my attention, leading me straight to the baby grand piano that's delivering the music in the corner. Oh, nice. But wait. I know the guy sitting behind that piano. That's Ryan. Thando has been

planning this with Ryan? Wow, that's

unexpected but pretty cool. Ryan's eyes meet mine and he gives me a broad, honest smile, his fingers still working the piano keys. Suddenly, his wife, Megan, appears through the door behind him, already dropping vocals to his instrumentals - with a soulful voice. Haha, what? This is totally amazing. I turn to Thando with a broad smile on my face. -Me: "Baby, you had all this planned? Wow. It's...I can't even find the word to describe it." -Him: "Well, I won't take all the credit. I was talking with Ryan and Megan on Tuesday telling them about what I was planning for tonight and they came up with this idea. They are the ones who decided to use their skills and talent to brighten up your evening even further."

-Me: "And they have succeeded."

At this point the waiter comes back with our drinks. I absently take a sip, my eyes on the amazing man sitting across from me, ears listening to Megan's beautiful voice and the sound produced by Ryan's skillful fingers. "Ready for your starters?" Through my euphoria I somehow make out the waiter's voice.

-Thando: "Yes, you can bring them. Thank you."

Once again, the waiter disappears, leaving us alone. Thando tells me that he already picked everything he wanted on the menu for the evening, and that he hopes I like everything. Is he kidding me? I'm sure I'll love everything. Besides, he knows all about my food aversions, so I'm sure none of those are included in the menu.

In a moment the waiter comes back with the starters and we dig in, but I can't tell you how these prawn parcels taste like because I'm fully focused on Ryan and Megan, loving what they are delivering. I can't stop smiling, my heart is in paradise. Nothing impresses me more than someone who puts in all the effort, and Thando is a pro in that field.

. When the music stops, Ryan and Megan come to our table, all smiles, to congratulate us. -Me: "You guys, that was...really sweet. Thank you." I say rising from my chair, and hug them both. "I can't believe y'all knew what Thando was planning but didn't say anything to me." -Ryan: "Tell you and ruin another man's surprise? Of course, we couldn't do that."

He answers laughing.

-Thando: "Well, I'm glad you two came through for me. Thank you, once again."
-Megan: "Bring it here. Bring it here."
She says opening her arms for a hug. Thando welcomes the hug then turns to Ryan for a brotherly handshake.

-Ryan: "Well, our job here is done. My wife and I will be on our way now and leave you two love birds to enjoy the rest of the evening." -Megan: "Once again, congratulations on your 12 months together. May you continue to grow as a couple."

-Thando: "Thank you. Now will you two please get your behinds outta here? We need some space."

He says jokingly and we all laugh before this married couple leaves us. Now left alone, the background music plays softly from the restaurant's speakers.

-Thando: "May I have this dance?"

He extends his hand across the table to take mine.

-Me: "I'd love that, but there's something I need to admit to you first."

-Him: "What is it?"

-Me: "I'd forgotten about our anniversary. Totally. It didn't even cross my mind. I'm sorry."

-Him: "Is that it? Come on, babe, don't worry about it. I remembered it for the both of us. And I thought we should celebrate it. When we started dating the odds were against us and most people probably didn't think we'd make it this far, but here we are and we are still going strong. Yes, we do come across some speed bumps along the way, just like any other couple, but our love remains strong. I'm seeing a bright future for us. I love you, Someleze, and I wouldn't have it any other way. You are the only one for me." I find myself getting emotional. My God, I love this man. I can't believe I once felt something for another.

-Me: "I love you too, Thando. I do. The first time you held me in your arms I felt like I had finally come home. And today that's what you are to me - home. You're my home, thando lwam. And I don't ever wanna do this life thing without you. Thank you for loving me for me. You are one amazing man." His smile broadens, showing his beautiful

white teeth.

-Him: "Well, now I'd like to propose a toast. To our future together." -Me: "Meant to be. I'll definitely drink to that."

Laughing, we raise and clink our glasses. After taking our sips we leave the table to have our dance. By the time we return to the table I can't stop laughing at this man who can't dance. I know that he doesn't have two left feet, he's just clowning. He can be really crazy sometimes, and I love it.

The main course arrives and we eat while talking and laughing non-stop.

The night is naturally beautiful but Thando has made it even more so.

-Him: "You really like Ryan and Megan's house, don't you? When we were there on Tuesday I noticed how you couldn't stop admiring it even though it wasn't your first time seeing it."

He says, now changing gears.

On Tuesday after our counselling session we passed by Ryan's place just to see them. I wanted them to finally meet my fiancé.

They've been talking on the phone since the

kidnapping incident and it was now time for them to meet. The visit was great, they all clicked, but shortly I had to love and leave them with Thando and rush to Alice before it got dark.

-Me: "It is out of this world, I just can't get enough of it."

-Him: "Maybe we can also get a place like that."

I laugh.

-Me: "With what money, babe? Unlike those two, we are not trust fund babies. Yes, we've talked about getting our own place after we are officially married, a place to raise our kids, but as a startup home I think we should get something small."

-Him: "You do know that I'm not a volunteer, right? I'm employed and I get paid. I'm capable of providing for you and our children, Soso."

-Me: "And I don't doubt that, babe. But I don't think we can afford a big, luxurious place with only your salary. It's only you who's working right now, I'm not, remember? So I think a smaller place will do for now. And I also think we should go 50/50 on the deposit, mine will be covered by my father. He and I have been talking about this and he said he'll be more than willing to help when we are ready to invest in a property. I know that I shouldn't have spoken to him about this without your knowledge, and please don't think I'm undermining your abilities as a man, it's just that I want to chip in in everything, I don't want everything to be on you just because I don't have a proper job. I hope you won't take this the wrong way."

-Him: "Nah, it's okay. We are a team after all." I don't know if he means that, but from the tone of his voice it sounds like he does. -Me: "I'm sure my father will be willing to help us with humble digs, not a mansion. Your father on the other hand, well, there's no love lost between you two, so we can't ask for his help. Which means a smaller place it is, right?" -Him: "We'll see."

From there we continue planning our future, with a little spice of humour, until we leave after over-indulging on dessert.

We pull up in the parking area at our complex, and Thando looks at me.

-Me: "I really had fun tonight. Thank you, thando Iwam. I can't believe I almost chose babysitting over this."

He doesn't answer but his smouldering eyes stay on me. The oxygen in the car suddenly becomes sparse, and the energy that seems to always be pulling us together, that delicious magnet of fire, rises to hazardously high levels and my heart rate shoots through the roof. He leans over and take possession of my lips with his. I let out a soft moan as I respond to the kiss. And we keep at it until another tenant's car pulls up next to ours. -Me: "Ummh..I think we should take this to the house."

I say against his mouth.

-Him: "Agreed."

Leaving the car and walking to our front door, I feel my desire growing stronger until it floods my senses, so much that I can't even walk in a straight line. He hands me the key to the door, and I fumble a few times, trying to insert it into the lock. Once I manage to get it in and turn it to open the door, I feel his breath on the back of my head. Suddenly, he turns me around and crashes his lips to mine. His hands hungrily grope my body as he guides me across the threshold, walking me into our lounge. The door slams shut behind us, and coming up for a quick breath of air, he turns on the lights and quickly takes off his jacket, his eyes never leaving mine. But as I'm still anticipating his lips on mine again, his phone rings. I beg him not to answer but when he sees that it's the hospital, he answers.

-Him: "I'm sorry, babe, but I have to go. That was the hospital and they want me in. I'm really sorry."

He informs me after hanging up. What? I am crushed, I won't lie, but I fake a smile.

-Me: "That's fine, we'll continue with this when you're back."

Immediately after he walks out my eyes fill with tears. I am being ridiculous, aren't I? It's not like I didn't know that he's on call tonight. And I also know that he loves me just as much as he ever did, I just have to keep being the understanding partner.

Taking a deep breath, I head straight to the bathroom. I'm sweaty and sticky, all I want is a cold shower then go straight to bed. What a fucked up ending to a perfect night. But when I return to the bedroom after the shower I find Thando laying on the bed. What, he's back? But why? I didn't even hear him come in. But the shower water was making noise anyway. -Me: "Baby? Aren't you supposed to be at the hospital? Why did you come back?"
-Him: "Well, I couldn't be away from you tonight, so I made another plan."
He gets up from the bed and quickly closes the distance between us. Embracing my body with his strong arms he pulls me towards his body and kisses my lips with loads of passion.

Season 2 #21: Season Finale Part #1

"I'm about to dive in. Baby girl, hold your breath. We about to get so wet. Swimming in your body, let me dive in. You know ain't no running 'round this pool. Going under just for you, baby you watch me stroke, left stroke, right stroke, back stroke." - Trey Songz

The sexually-drenched "Dive In" plays softly on the bluetooth speaker seated on the nightstand. Trey Songz is setting the mood with his suggestive metaphors that equate lovemaking to taking a swim.

It doesn't look like it's going to be a lonely night after all. I'm really happy Thando has chosen us over his job tonight.

-Me: "I'm glad you came back home, babe." I mutter against his lips.

-Him: "There's nowhere I'd rather be but right here with you, sthandwa sam."

He covers my lips with his in a slow, sensual kiss. His tongue slowly dips into my mouth, and his hands move lower to my ass as our tongues mingle. We continue to kiss, the song a serenade in the background. Then suddenly the song comes to an end, leaving only two apparent sounds in the room - the sound of our beating hearts and the slight yet relaxed rhythmical breathing of our two souls in the dim light afforded only by the bedside lamps. This is a warm, embracing light that softens the darkness, and enhances the warmth in the room. Another mood setter. Coming up for a quick breath of air, Thando swiftly gets rid of the towel around my torso. It drops to the floor, leaving me naked, with only my panties on. Now I feel his minty breath on my face as his lips come to meet mine again. He kisses me so tenderly that I let out a soft moan.

"I love you." He whispers as his sweet lips brush mine, sending shivers up my spine. Waiting for no response from me he lifts me off the ground and carefully lays me down on the bed. Then with his deep voice he tells me to close my eyes and keep them closed until he tells me otherwise. I do that with pleasure because it always magnifies the remaining senses.

A few seconds pass and I feel like I am alone in the bedroom. I hear no sound around me, but I know that Thando is close by. I can feel his presence at the bottom corners of the bed. After a few seconds the silence is slightly broken by him shuffling from one side of the room to the other. I guess he's also getting rid of his clothes. Can't he just hurry up and come to me already? I long for his touch. I need to feel his strong yet gentle hands on my body.

Just as I'm about to tell him to hurry up I feel him between my legs. His moist tongue licks me from my foot all the way up to my inner thigh where he plants tender kisses. Soft moans escape my mouth with each touch, lick and kiss. Electric-like pulses gently surge up through my leg and all the way to my heart as he repeats his actions on my other leg. With me still savouring that feeling, goosebumps speckle my skin in a flash as his lips gently, ever so softly, descend and touch the skin of my pregnant belly. My breath quickens and I tremble at the softness of his kisses, the promise of his gentleness permeating the air. He takes his time worshipping my round belly with his kisses before his wet lips slowly trail up my body until he reaches my breasts. My nipples are already hard from the anticipation.

My lips part slightly and the last breaths I've

been holding escape with a low, sensual sigh as he traces his tongue around one of my nipples, encircling it around the most tender part. With my eyes closed, I feel every sensation threefold. He blows on me gently, the silken air causing me to tremor and breathe heavily. He takes one of my breasts into his mouth and gently sucks on it. Oh, my! I tremble, feeling wetness drenching my panties. The electricity between us is amazing, not great like a surge but gentle and undulating like a low charge traveling just under the surface of the skin. I sigh and roll my head back, arching slightly as I become pleasantly yet agonisingly aroused to his mouth on my other breast, gently sucking and nibbling at my nipple. I want him inside me more than I can say but at the same time I want to postpone the inevitable joining so as to make it last all that longer. To terminate this glorious feeling too soon would be a sin.

His breath quickens, probably because he perceives my arousal. I can feel that he wants

to move his mouth quicker as he sucks on my breast but it seems like his heart won't let him. It slows his movements to draw out the pleasure he is both getting and giving from this intimate motion. He, too, doesn't want it to end even though he craves fulfillment. My moans grow louder, and my hands land on his head and gently brush it as he continues to work my breasts. We both move together and separately in a dance of sensual expression. Finally, he brings his lips up my chest to my neck then to my mouth, letting them brush me across my top, and then bottom lip. Suddenly, they press against both my lips in a tender kiss. They are soft as a feather, and wet as rain. His tongue delves into my mouth and I meet him in a greedy kiss, my body trembling with each labored breath. But he pulls away all too soon.

"Gosh, I love you. Every part of you." He whispers against my lips. The inability to see him makes me even more aware of his deep, thick voice and the emotion that accompanies it. My eyes instantly water, my emotions high, as what he's just said lands directly into my heart. It is at this point that his mouth finds mine again, hard and passionate, his hands moving lower as our tongues mate with each other. I moan into his mouth as his fingers softly glide over my pubic mound, stroking over the white lace of my panties. I can feel myself becoming wetter and wetter by the second. But his hand withdraws and moves back to my breasts. His fingers stroke around them, his

thumb teasing my nipples, hardening them even more. His lips lift from mine and gently fall to my soft spot on my neck, slowly licking and kissing, forcing a loud moan out of my mouth. His hand now leaves my breasts and move down again. He starts to explore inside my panties, lightly stroking my puffy lips, taking care to use just a single finger to plant his energy wherever he touches - lightly, lovingly with care and deliberation. Each time the finger catches my clit I jolt and groan in ecstacy.

He withdraws the finger and trace it with my juices to my breasts then follow with his tongue, lapping up the moist trails. I rise to his touch and the need grows from my love centre up through my body making my breasts swell and tingle, as loud moans escape my lips. I wish this sweet ecstasy could never end, and I breathe out a low sigh that eloquently speaks of pure sensuality.

. I feel him go all the way down to the bottom of the bed and slowly pulls my panties down. His kisses follow the white lace creeping down my legs. Then I feel him between my legs and his strong arms lift my knees over his shoulders. Breathing in syncopation, he draws his face close to my honeypot and ever so softly lays a trail up the inside of my thigh. He waits for the anticipation to build then his fingers open up the lips of my womanhood. A loud moan escapes my lips as his skillful tongue enters me, impaling me and licking my walls inside.

"Ohh god, Thando... don't stop...

ohhhhhhhh." I scream.

Using his shoulders I am able to lift myself further off the bed, wanting and needing his tongue deeper inside me, my loud moans encourage him. I can feel tingling spread throughout my body as his tongue thrusts in deeper, twisting and probing, drinking my juices. Involuntarily I heave and gulp, locking my ankles behind his head to open myself fully to him. As his lips purse over my clit I cannot help myself, I groan and writhe at the exquisite fire stabbing up through my core. His teeth nibble gently at my bud, then his tongue circles it, flicking and manipulating it. He keeps going, licking deep. Incoherent words stream from my mouth as fire burns between my thighs. My hands go to his head

and push him down on me some more. Faster now, his tongue darts in me, fire raging through my body. His finger rubs my exposed clit and seconds later my world explodes, my juices gush onto his mouth.

"Oooooh... Yesss... Ohhh." I scream, my hips bucking against his face, the heels of my feet digging into his back. My legs grip his neck like a vice, holding him there as he rides the erotic storm in me, lingering deliciously as he drinks from me.

As my orgasm subsides, my legs unclench and release him from me. His tongue gently licks my engorged lips and clit. -Me: "Ooohh, baby, that was great."

I say, heaving. His mouth leaves my honeypot and trails over my belly button. His warm breath making my skin tingle once more. He licks and kisses my breasts, gently nibbling on my nipples. I feel his breath on my cheek, then his flavoured tongue on my lips. I suck his tongue into me, moaning as my tongue dances with his. He pulls away from me, and my head lifts off the bed trying to melt back into him. But I feel his breath on my ear. -Him: "What do you want now, babe?" he whispers.

-Me: "Make love to me, please. Make me come again."

I reply with my breathing still ragged. He lifts himself from me and with his legs he spreads mine apart. I raise my hips to invite him in. I feel his hardness against my opening and he slowly plants himself in my slick sheath, inch by inch, deeper and deeper. His labour breathing an indication of how hard it has been for him to hold back for so long. Together we move in sequence. I can feel his warm breath on my breasts as he licks and teases them with his tongue. I run my fingers over his haircut and down his back. My nails trace down his back, digging in as I scale his skin. His body slows down on mine and I feel him lift off of me.

-Him: "Open your eyes."

I snap them open and I am welcomed by his intense eyes staring deep into mine. Gosh, I just melt in them as he starts moving again. -Him: "I love you."

He says in a shaken voice.

-Me: "I love...you too."

I whisper brokenly, and hear his groan of satisfaction as he buries his face between my breasts. He continues to move inside me, a steady rhythm building but still gentle and soft. I lift my hips to meet his, wanting him deep inside me, as I wrap my arms around him. Losing my mind in this ecstacy, my hands leave his back to gently touch his face then pull him to my lips and I kiss him passionately. I brush his hair then direct his mouth to my hard nipples. His teeth tease them as my nails dig into his back.

He pulls out as far as he can, then slowly deeps himself back in. His finger lightly touches my clit, building me to my second orgasm. I place my hands on his buttocks and pull him hard into me, his hardness impaling me faster as I groan louder and louder. His fingers creep away from my clit and he trails them to my mouth. As I suck them in, he pushes harder into me, deeper and deeper. My legs begin to shake as I gyrate my hips into him, feeling myself losing control. Pulling

his fingers out of my mouth, he presses my arms into the bed with every push. I pull on the satin sheet beneath me as the tingling returns. My screams turn into howls, as he moves faster and faster, the sensation tripling. He grunts louder, his carnal sounds thundering through me as a reminder that he has taken full possession of me. Soon my wicked orgasm erupts as he drives me, shoves me, flings me over the edge.

He continues to stir inside me, building his own orgasm. He kneels, pulls my leg up, rests my ankle on his shoulder and now uses all his strength to drive himself inside me. Fucking hell, he is so deep in this position, and he moves skillfully, hitting all the right corners. His moves push me further on the bed and I use the headboard as a buffer. Thank God, it's padded.

At this rate he is going to make me come a third time and I can't wait to experience it. He grabs hold of my hips and concentrates on building me up again, the groans coming from him an indication that he, too, is nearing the finish line. It doesn't take long for him to make me come again. And soon after me, he also finds his release. As he does he yells my name and thrusts into me one more time, emptying himself deep inside.

I'm still clinging to the sheets when his head sinks to my forehead. We're both sweating and panting, feeling our aftershocks surrounding each other. He gives me a delightful kiss and strokes me as the both of us recover, our bodies sweating as one, entwined in the soft satin sheets crumpled around us. He looks up at me and softly whispers, "Happy Anniversary, I love you." -Me: "Mmm I love you too. This was amazing, baby. Really amazing."

I plant a kiss on his lips.

We take a moment to rest before we clean up then cuddle up for the night. It is such a beautiful, tender feeling. We lay in each other's arms, holding each other so close that we almost become one, delighting in the afterglow of our passion. I feel warm and safe in his arms, like always. This man is the most passionate lover I've ever been with in my life, not that I've been around a lot though. His love, wildness, and passion towards sex is something I adore.

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I'm awakened by his fingertips gently tracing my cheek. I'm tempted to open my eyes but I don't. Slowly past the cheek, his finger traces the line of my lips and over my chin and down across my gently rising chest, then his lightly cupped palm comes to rest on my round belly. No, why is he stopping? I open my eyes and turn to look at him laying beside me.

-Me: "Morning, baby daddy."

-Him: "Hey. It's already afternoon actually." -Me: "Huh?"

-Him: "Yeah. It's around 15:00."

He pulls me to him and plants a tender kiss on my lips.

I'm not surprised I'm only waking up now though, we didn't get much sleep last night. We drew the night out, not wanting it to end. We talked, laughed, kissed and made love over and over again before exhaustion tugged us into oblivion around 5:30 a.m.

-Him: "We need to get up and get ready for Sbu's launch party. We have less than 3 hours to get ready and get there."

I groan, not feeling like waking up.

-Him: "I know, I know. I don't feel like going either. Apart from wanting to spend the rest of the afternoon in this bed with you, I also don't feel like being in that kind of scene today. But Sbu is my friend, I have to be there to show him some support. And I need you there with me to make the evening bearable." I feel like cuddling with him all afternoon, but I understand that we have to go.

-Me: "Okay then, let's get ready. But I'm hungry, I need to eat first."

-Him: "No problem, I'll make you something to eat while you take a shower."

-Me: "Thanks, babe."

I kiss him. Then we both get up and make the bed together before going to brush our teeth side by side, with him teasing me about wasting toothpaste. After that I get in the shower while he just cleans his face and hands then goes to the kitchen.

Done with the shower, I join him for our late lunch in the kitchen. We don't get to savour the moment though because we are running out of time. We eat in a hurry. Then I clean up while he goes to take his own shower.

All done, we dress up, me in a red dress, him in a blue suit. I feel good in this dress, but I'm not so sure about the kind of event I'm attending.

We arrive at the venue around 15 minutes after the set start time of the exclusive event, and the place has already hit capacity. It is filled with current and future clients who are ready to start signing with Sbu's new cybersecurity company, a company that specialises in protecting large companies from cyber-attacks. The who's who in the business world in the province are here. I just wonder how Sbu's company has been able to pack a room full of exactly the people it needs when it is a brand-new startup that has bootstrapped its way to launch. I guess the 10 years he spent working as a senior network engineer, a professional hacker, in his industry before he decided to go out on his own has helped him. Within that timeframe he has built a list of contacts. And I'm hopeful that those contacts will help his company ride the wave to success.

The event planner has worked her magic here, everything is on point, especially the decor. The women are all dressed in reds and rich oranges, the men in formal whites and ice blues, to honour the theme of the party. From the lighting to the floral arrangement, the theme is ubiquitous, executed throughout the party with a tasteful flair. The guests mingle and network around a champagne fountain and oyster bar. Subtle ambient music creates a feeling of instant cool, taking the seriousness out of this business affair. This is all nice but it is just not my scene. -Me: "I'm already feeling lost in here, you know? Business events are just not my

scene."

I say, looking at Thando beside me. -Him: "I know right. But you'll get used to it when we move to Jo'burg. My old friends over there are in business, they are into this kind of life. I used to get invited often and I believe nothing's gonna change even now." Move to Jo'burg? What is he talking about?

Before I get to ask, he takes my arm and leads me through the party, with him reminding me to relax and just go with the flow. We weave our way in, greeting and moving on, greeting and moving on, until we spot Sbu. When he sees us approaching he quickly excuses himself from the two men he was speaking with, and we get to congratulate him.

The rest of the event becomes plain torture to me, but I keep reminding myself that I'm here for my man's friend. And Zizo, who's also just another guest feeling out of place, keeps me company every time our men get whisked away but other guests.

Really, I'm a township girl, I'm not used to these kind of events. The language here is foreign to me. I don't even see the need to mingle anymore.

Feeling bored, I walk away from Zizo to get myself another drink from one of the servers. But as I turn around with the drink I bump into someone and almost spill the virgin cocktail on his expensive suit, but thanks to my on-point reflexes I manage to twist the glass so the liquid could land on the floor. -Me: "Oh God, I'm so sorry, Mister. I didn't see you there."

-Him: "Don't worry, no damage done." He says with a smile, then stretches his arm to take my hand in his. He pulls it to his lips and kisses it. Corny. He introduces himself, and I try being polite by introducing myself too, faking a smile.

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But my smile falters when I see Thando looking at us from across the room. He's standing away from the centre of the party, talking on the phone, but his eyes trained to me. Please don't tell me he's jealous, I don't even know this guy. When he hangs up and approaches us, I excuse myself from the guy and walk over to him, to meet him half-way. -Him: "Baby, I have good news. Great actually."

He says with a smile. Oh good, he doesn't care about that guy.

-Me: "Really? What is it?"

-Him: "I got a job at this private hospital in Sandton."

-Me: "What? I didn't even know you were looking for a job, you didn't tell me."

-Him: "I didn't want to tell you until everything was finalised, and the call I just had was the final stamp I needed. But remember three months ago when I told you I was gonna cut down? Well, I was talking about this sort of thing. At that hospital I will be the general surgeon that I am, not a trauma surgeon by force. And I definitely won't double as any other emergency doctor because of shortages. I knew that I wouldn't last in the hospital I'm with right now, not while working under Dr. Summers who hates my guts, so I opened my eyes to other possibilities." I'm not sure how I feel about this, particularly him keeping me in the dark about such an important decision. A decision that won't only affect him but me as well.

-Me: "This is good news alright. But, baby, I thought we were gonna stick around the province, have a home here. We talked about that. And now you're telling me you had other plans in your head? Is this what you meant when you said when we move to Jo'burg I'll be used to scenes like this one?"

-Him: "I'm sorry, okay. You know me, I don't know how to communicate my plans until they come to fruition. But still, I'm sorry. And, baby, I think this is actually gonna be good for us. I need you to join me me, well next year. I already got us a place there, a house not far from the hospital."

-Me: "A house? You got us a house? When you were talking about us buying a luxurious house yesterday you knew that it was already taken care of? Is that it?" -Him: "I wanted it to be a surprise, babe. From me to my wife."

-Me: "A surprise? How did you even finance it?"

-Him: "Can we please talk about that when we're home?"

-Me: "You do know that this decision you've made without me is going to affect my own plans, right? Plans that I shared with you. You know that I already have a Master's scholarship to study at Fort Hare next year. I already have a project, Thando. We talked about me leaving the baby with my mother and going back to varsity after I give birth in February, remember that? Now how's that gonna happen if you're asking me to move to Jo'burg? Or what, you don't care about my own education because you already have your MMed? Is that it?"

I'm honestly angry right now but I'm trying to control myself because we are in a room full of people. -Him: "Yoh, you're now turning this into something else. I do want you to study, Soso. I do. And moving to Jo'burg doesn't mean you won't study. If you still want to study at Fort Hare that's okay, you can always study parttime. Look, I'm sorry I didn't communicate with you first but please, please do this with me. I can't move to Jo'burg and leave you here, not when we're married. It's already tough as it is living in different towns, how much more living in different provinces? I would have to worry about guys like Nick and the one you were just with right now, won't I?"

Dear Lord, is he being serious right now? Please tell me he's kidding.

-Him: "Look, baby, moving will be good for us. A lot of bad stuff has happened here so it'll be good to start afresh somewhere else, in another province. And we'll be close to the twins. Those girls are my life, I need to be close to them, spend more time with them." Thando is good at manipulating situations to get what he wants. He did this last year when he wanted me to quit my job, he made it look like he was doing it for me whereas in reality he was doing it for himself. Yes, it did work for me at the end because I managed to pass all my modules well, graduated cum laude and landed a scholarship, but still. He's being a manipulator even now, mentioning the kids and the bad things that have happened to us here. What the hell?

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Note from the Admin: Let me just put this here. I, Philisiwe Mbali-Enhle Makinana, the head writer of this story, love sex. I love talking about it, I love writing about it, and I love having it (but only with my husband). My husband knows this and it's a good thing that we both have the same level of appetite in the bedroom. Last December we were celebrating our 6th wedding anniversary, and sex is still the most important part of our marriage.

There's just something I don't understand though. Why is talking about sex taboo, especially amongst women? Why do women avoid talking about sex or call those who are free to talk about it names? Why is it that we feel uncomfortable talking about what we do almost every night? I'd be with my married girl friends and they'd openly share their worries about their kids, households and spouses, but when I come up with the sex talk they'd be uncomfortable and quickly change the topic. I think this is ridiculous. They'd be like sex is private. Private? I say, fuck that. Movies, politics and ads can be all about sex all the time and that's fine but when it comes to sex between two people who have committed their lives to one another, the topic is suddenly taboo. What the hell? I honestly think this privacy thing is contrived and unnecessary. Think about it. If married women (or any adult women) talked

about sex, we could share our secrets and

desires and have them validated. We could empower one another to ask for what we want. We could support one another in never faking another orgasm again. We could easily tell men that putting tab A into slot B is not sex but merely one component of sex. That foreplay is not a thing but it is sex, and our pleasure cannot be an afterthought. Women have sex. Women like sex. Women want sex, all kinds of sex and all of those kinds - and that's okay and good as long as they are between consenting adults. Sex is self-care. It's not just okay to want it and to have it. I believe it's also good, really good, for us mentally and physically. There's no reason for us talking about it to be taboo. Not a good reason at all. If we want to be satisfied sexually, which is nothing wrong, we need to talk about sex.

We have best friends who we confide in. Maybe we talk to them a little about these things. But we should be able to talk to them about everything — sex toy

recommendations, new positions, how to talk to our partners, near misses and home runs, the whole 9.

Sure, people engage in sexual activities but talking about it is seen as dirty. You have got to be kidding me!!! Talking about sex should not be a generalised taboo. When information about sex is shared in the same way as information about food or travel or beauty, then sex and sexuality become as "normal" as food and travel and beauty. How are we ever going to be comfortable talking to our children about practising safe sex if we can't even talk about sex with other adults? Again, I think the whole "sex is private" thing is ridiculous. Who's with me?

Season 2 #22

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"I'm gonna love you 'til the end. I'm gonna be your very true friend. I wanna share your ups and down. I'm gonna be around." - MLTR

3 months later

I'd like to think every little girl dreams about her wedding day, at least in my case I know that to be true. I pinned all my hopes on the one time when I could be the centre of attention as I walk down the aisle. I knew exactly what I wanted to wear and envisioned how I would look like on my big day. But we don't always get what we want, do we? Today is the 28th of December, my wedding day, but because of this 7-month baby bump I'm not going to walk down the aisle in the mermaid silhouette gown I envisioned myself in as a little girl. I somehow feel robbed of being in the spotlight as an amazingly beautiful bride, but I wouldn't have it any other way. My baby was obviously not planned but now I wouldn't trade this pregnancy for anything. My baby is

the reason I wake up every morning and push harder to build a bright future for myself as an individual so I could be able to give him or her an even brighter future no matter what happens between me and his or her father in the unforeseeable future.

However, planning a wedding while pregnant is not something I would wish on any other bride. Planning a wedding is stressful enough but doing it while pregnant means the stress gets doubled. But thanks to my understanding and patient wedding planner, my supportive mother, my loving fiancé and surprisingly, Iviwe, I had most of that burden taken off my shoulders three months ago. They pulled together and got everything done while I just focused on finishing my dissertation, getting my wedding gown to be perfect under the circumstances, as well as taking care of myself and the little life growing inside me. I managed to finish and submit my dissertation on time and I am, without a doubt, graduating next year. I can't believe

that me, the little Someleze Ndlovu who's

always been a nobody with nothing but a dream and a supportive mother, is now going to be a registered Scientist. This is only one step closer to my dream though. My ultimate dream is to get my Doctorate and finally change my title to Dr. I'm going to have to get through doing my Master's part-time before I get there though. Studying part-time at Fort Hare is the only option I have considering that I am moving to Jo'burg with my husband after the wedding. I'd just study in Jo'burg if I didn't have a strong sense of loyalty, but because Prof Harisson believed in me more than I have ever believed in myself I feel obligated to work with him. He wasn't even my supervisor during my Honours year, Prof Elliott, who is now leaving Fort Hare and moving back to Nigeria, was. But when he saw my Honours work he got impressed and asked me to work with him next year. Because of him I now have substantial funding and a very

interesting research project to work on next year, so I am not dropping him.

Am I happy about moving to Jo'burg though? Well, I can't say I am, but I've accepted it. It is what it is, a done deal. However, that doesn't change the fact that I was absolutely angry when Thando first shared the news with me. I was enraged because I actually felt disrespected and bullied even though he said making me feel that way wasn't his intention. He had no right to make such a decision without consulting me first. The fact that I'm 10 years his junior no longer has any relevance, I'm his partner which means I'm his equal and we have to make such decisions together.

When we got home that night I voiced out my feelings about the matter, there was no way I was just going to let it slide. He apologised non-stop and refrained from trying to justify himself. That to me was very admirable and it's the reason I forgave him. My heart found reason to surrender and accept the decision he had already made. And discussing the whole thing at length during our counselling sessions also influenced my decision. I saw how much he was willing to try harder to work on his major flaw, which is his whack communication skills. And since then I'm very much seeing the difference. That's one area the counselling sessions helped us on, and there are many others. So, thanks to Zizo who hooked us up with that premarital counselor.

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Me being certain about marrying Thando, however, doesn't make me feel any less nervous right now. It is normal to be nervous on your wedding day, right? But with me I think it's more than just the normal wedding anxiety. I have this strange feeling that something bad is going to happen, but I don't know what. When that feeling strikes me again my heart starts pounding, sweat moistens my palms, and I struggle to breathe. I'm having another panic attack, a second one this morning.

"Hey guys, I think she's having another panic attack." My already hysterical hairdresser says, dropping the curling iron and stepping away from me. Even through my struggle I can see her eyes growing wider in the mirror I'm sitting in front of. She's really freaked out. My friend, Amanda, springs off her chair and comes to me.

"Chomi, eyes on me. Look at me and take a deep breath. Take slow, deep breaths with me."

She flew in late yesterday and got here at the Grande Roche Hotel, where the wedding is going to be held, just a few minutes before the set start time of the wedding rehearsal. She couldn't miss the wedding for the world, especially because she's my maid of honor. She was my obvious choice because she's my childhood friend, she knows me better than anyone in this room. She's also the one who helped me when I had the first panic attack this morning. Being a yoga instructor back in Jo'burg she knows very well how instantly beneficial to the mind and body a few slow, deep breaths are. Holding my hand, she takes the breaths with me, slowly calming me down before giving me a glass of water to drink.

-Her: "Chomi, this is a second panic attack you've had this morning. You need to stop worrying, okay? This is a happy day, your big day. Please be calm and enjoy every single moment, girl."

There is some concern in her voice but it is disguised under her sweet smile.

-Anathi: "Everything is going to go okay, sweetheart. Don't worry yourself. The day is beautiful, you also look beautiful. All that's left is for you to finsh getting ready and go marry your man. My brother knows how lucky he is to be the one who gets to marry you. Now calm down and let us all help you get ready for him."

My only sister-in-law says, brushing my

shoulder. She and her parents got here just after us yesterday, with her father riding in a seperate car. Her father and mother are going through divorce, something that makes me feel bad. I feel bad because they had to come down here to attend our wedding while their own is going to hell after 35 years. But Thando is not sharing my worries, he's actually happy that his mother is finally divorcing his cheating father. Sure, I have no doubt that it's the best decision for her but still, I feel bad that my own parents are getting married in two days and my husband's are splitting up.

-Zizo: "Think about the baby, Soso. Your anxiety is affecting it too. Relax, babe, relax. You're marrying the love of your life here, you should allow yourself to be a little happy, alright? Nothing is gonna go wrong. This is the man who knew he wanted to marry you even before you two actually got together." Okay, what is she talking about? -Me: "Huh?"

-Her: "What do you mean 'huh'? Didn't he tell you?"

-Me: "Tell me what?"

-Her: "What I just said. That he knew that you would be his wife even before you two got together? Well, that night at his birthday party last year he said it to us. But it wasn't the right time to even ask you out yet." Really? I didn't know that, Thando never told me. Now that I've heard it it should probably bring a smile to my face, but I just can't bring myself to smile right now. The rest of my bridal party is now hovering over me, pushing my anxiety levels through the roof once again. I feel like I'm suffocating.

-Me: "I need my mother. Please, I need my mother. Where's she? Where's my mom?" I'm getting frantic with every word that comes out of my mouth. I'm not trying to be a brat here, I just think it's only my mother who can manage to totally calm me down. Hearing from her that everything's going to be okay will make all the difference, or at least I think so.

-Milani: "The last time I checked she was helping lviwe with the baby in her room. The baby has been crying non-stop since lviwe got here this morning."

Milani, my most recently-found aunt, is also a member of my bridal party. They are 5 in total, including the maid of honour. It's Amanda, Anathi, Zizo, Asanda, and her -Milani. She came on board only a few weeks ago after I got let down by Megan, Ryan's wife. I guess that's what happens when you don't have a lot of friends in your corner. But thank God my aunt came through for me, otherwise we were going to have a problem because Thando has 4 groomsmen, excluding the best men. When I asked her I wasn't sure she would want to come on board though, I was just trying my luck but she surprised me and said yes with so much joy. I guess it's true that family will always have your back. Her going along with my request came with only

one condition, a dress with long sleeves to make sure that her arms are not exposed. She's had two surgeries in the past three months to correct her burned skin, with my father settling the bill, but she still has a long way to go before she can be able to show off those arms without any worries.

-Me: "Please go check her for me, Lani.

Please, I need to see her. I need to see my mom."

She is now totally a member of our family but I still don't see her, or Iviwe for that matter, as an aunt. I see them as sisters instead, and that's probably because they are only 3 years older than me. As someone who grew up as an only child, having them feels really great. I now know how it feels like to have a big family, and I wouldn't trade that for anything. Milani hears me but before she can answer, there's a knock at the door.

-Asanda: "That's probably her, your mom. I'll get the door."

She goes to open, and I hear her talking to the person.

-Her: "Dude, what are you doing here? This room is for girls. Us. And the last time I checked you weren't a girl."

It's obviously not my mother.

"I'm here to see my friend. Please let me in." I have my back to the door and these girls are still hovering over me so I don't see who it is but I recognise that voice, I can tell who it is. -Me: "Is that Ryan?"

-Amanda: "Yeah, it's him. I just sent him a text asking him to come. Let him in, Asanda."

I swivel my chair around to face the door as he walks in.

-Amanda: "Ladies, let's give them some space to talk."

I'm a little confused. Why did she ask him to come to my room? But I don't ask, I just let them all, including the hairdresser, walk out. They are already done getting ready anyway, it's only me who needs to pull her shit together and let everybody help me get ready.

. "Hey. I hear the wedding anxiety is getting the better of you." Ryan says as he takes a seat on a chair next to mine.

Oh, now I see why Amanda called him. I think she's wasted all of our time though because I don't see how Ryan is going to help me. I know that this is more than just wedding anxiety but I don't feel like telling that to anyone, I do not want to sound like a paranoid fool.

-Him: "Have you eaten? I hear bananas help. And I've brought you some potassium tablets. They are completely safe and they help deal with nerves that are difficult to get under control."

He hands them to me.

-Me: "I'm pregnant, Ryan. My baby forced me to eat this morning even though I didn't want to. And I've already had a banana but nothing seems to be taking my worries away. What if things don't go as planned? What if something goes wrong?"

-Him: "And why would it go wrong? Two people who love each other and want to spend the rest of their lives making each other happy are getting married today. Everything is already in place for the ceremony and the reception. So, why would anything go wrong?"

-Me: "You don't understand, Ryan. You don't."

-Him: "You're right, I don't understand. But what I do understand is that this is the day you always dreamed about. The day you get to marry the man you love, a man who also loves you in return. Thando is that man, and this is that day."

-Me: "How do you know that for sure?" -Him: "Is that supposed to be a trick question? Dude, I was already in your life as a friend when you started seeing Alex,

remember? You were happy alright, but not

as much as you are with Thando. This is the most beautiful and happy I've seen you. And I always see the love in your eyes whenever you talk about Thando, they just light up. The same thing I see in him. You should have seen the look on his face the evening he was telling Megan and I about your first anniversary celebration 3 months ago. Trust me, I know when a man loves a woman. I can spot a man in love. And that's exactly what I saw in Thando that evening and I've been seeing it ever since. Hell, the guy even took a life for you. You guys are good together, and getting married was the next logical thing to do. You're not making a mistake here, if that's what you're worried about."

-Me: "No, that's not it. I'm not experiencing cold feet or anything like that."

-Him: "Then just relax and enjoy your big day...Remember a month into your Juliet role in Romeo and Juliet? Our artistic director was already regretting giving you a shot, he

wanted to cut you and give the role to your

understudy because according to him you were not in touch with your sexuality, you seemed inexperienced when it came to dating and that showed on stage. Everything he said was true but I knew how hard you had worked to get that role and just how devastated you'd be if you lost it. So, I..." -Me: "You offered to teach me everything I needed to know in order to nail it. And you did without hitting on me even once." -Him: "I know I was still a jerk back then, hitting on everything with paired X chromosomes, but you were different, I respected you. I was seeing a true friend in you and I didn't want to ruin that by making a stupid move on you. But I did ask why you were still a virgin. And you told me you were serious about your studies and guys were just going to be a distraction. You were like 'call me old-fashioned but when I finally give myself to someone for the first time I want it to be someone I see as a potential husband.'

However, a year later you started dating Alex. And I was like 'What the hell? No. This is not the one for her.' I seriously didn't approve and I didn't hide that from you. Neither did Amanda."

-Me: "But I was too much blinded by love to even listen to you guys. And it turned out y'all were right about the guy."

-Him: "And I believe we are right even now. Thando is the one for you. You made a right choice. Not that you need to listen us, but both Amanda and I are your friends and we want only the best for you. And Thando is exactly that, the best for you. This is the day you always dreamed about. Now please cheer up."

-Me: "It looks like we both got what we wanted, huh. You always said you would marry a woman from a foreign country and that happened."

-Him: "I guess dreams do come true after all...But I just can't stop wondering how in the hell did a guy like Thando get to pick a messed up girl like you."

He says wearing his signature mischievous smile. I know that he's joking and I find myself laughing.

-Me: "You know what I'm gonna do to you, right?"

I ask with my hand already ready to land on his face, hard. He jumps off the chair,

laughing. I'm about to leave my chair too when my cellphone rings.

-Him: "You better take that and the pills. I'm just gonna leave you to it and see you outside during the ceremony."

-Me: "You got off easily, you know that? Lucky monkey."

I grab my phone and check the check the caller ID as Ryan makes for the door, laughing. It's Busi. What? Why would Thando's ex-wife be calling me today of all days? Yes, we sometimes talk when it's something concerning the twins, but now why is she calling? I hesitate to answer and look up at Ryan who's about to walk out the room. -Me: "Hey, Ryan."

He stops and turns to look at me.

-Me: "Thanks. Thanks for coming to talk to me, for the pills and for attending the wedding."

-Him: "Are you kidding me? I wasn't gonna miss this wedding for anything. Too bad Megan is home, she would have loved to come."

With that he walks out, leaving me to answer Busi's call.

. "Busi, hi." I answer, slightly apprehensive. -Her: "Soso, how are you doing? Listen, don't worry I'm not about to be the definition of trouble on your big day. There's just something I need to say to you. But before I do I want to apologise for not being able to send the twins down there to witness you walk down the aisle."

-Me: "It's okay, Busi. You explained why they couldn't come, and Thando and I both understand."

-Her: "Right. Now let me just get straight to it. Soso, I know how it was when you had just started dating Thando. I know that I became a total bitch to you, something you didn't deserve. When my twin girls came back home from visiting their father and started ranting and raving about his cool new girlfriend I snapped and did the stupidiest thing. It took you sitting down with me and giving me facts for me to understand that your role didn't include competing with me or jeopardising my relationship with my girls. My fear and insecurity won, but only for a short time until you came and made me see things clearly. MaNdlovu, I sincerely apologise for the ugliness I once spewed your way. And I humbly thank you for stepping up and becoming another mom to my kids. I

understand that it can't be easy being an

instant mom, especially at your age, but you were up for it. You are doing it with so much grace and utmost respect for me, something that made me love you even though I was honestly hesitant to at first. You loved the girls the very first time you met them. I kept waiting for you to change and be this monster but that hasn't happened yet and I trust that it would never happen. Thank you for loving, protecting and embracing them as your own children. Now whenever they visit I know that they would be in good hands. Two months ago, at 5 months pregnant, you dropped everything that mattered to you and drove all the way up here, alone, just to be there for Lily's chess tournament and Lathi's dance play. You stepped in as their parent when Thando was drowning in work and I was all the way across Namibia trying to impress a client of the company I'm working for, a company that's not even mine. You did all that not because you had to but because you

chose to, because you love those girls as your

own. I know that I thanked you back then but I feel like thanking you once again. Actually, I don't think words are enough to express how much I'm grateful, not only for that but also for always being there for the twins when they need you. You often put yourself behind their needs, something you sure as hell didn't sign up for. You are one special woman, Soso, and I see why Thando is marrying you. I believe this day will be the most beautiful day, beautiful as you will be when you walk down that aisle. Congratulations on being Mrs Thando. And from today onwards I know that the twins aren't just mine and Thando, but they are yours too. Enjoy every minute of today, and I wish you all the best in your marriage. I'm now 100% certain that Thando was never meant to be with me." Awww, this is sweet. And if I can say I expected it I'd be lying. Her words have touched me so much that my eyes are now watering, messing up my make-up.

-Me: "Busi, I uhh...I honestly don't know what to say. I'm completely speechless, but thank you. You don't know how much this means to me. You've just made my day."

-Her: "But don't get too emotional now, okay? We don't want you to ruin your make-up or be a bride with red eyes now, do we?"

-Me: "Definitely not."

I say laughing through my tears.

-Her: "Let me leave you to get ready, okay? Cheers, my kids other mom."

-Me: "Thanks. Bye."

I hang up and stare at myself in the mirror for a long moment, in disbelief. Okay, it looks like it's indeed going to be a bright, beautiful day after all. I let out a huge sigh of relief then dab my eyes with a tissue.

I better take the pills I got from Ryan before my anxiety sets in again. Reaching for the glass jug of water, I pour myself some in a tumbler then down two pills after reading everything about them. Just as I put them away I hear a knock at the door, then the door pushes open. When I turn around to see who it is my eyes land on someone I didn't expect to see here.

-Me: "Thando? Baby, you aren't supposed to be here. Don't you know that it's bad luck for the groom to see the bride before the wedding?"

He just starts searching his pockets as he comes to stand right in front of me.

-Me: "What are you looking for?"

-Him: "Fucks to give. And it looks like I don't have any."

He answers with a silly smile etched along his mouth. This one can be so silly sometimes, and I can't help but laugh.

-Him: "I don't care about that superstitious nonsense, sthandwa sam. And it's not like I'm seeing you in your wedding dress anyway, you're still covered in this silly bathrobe. And I'm in...whatever the hell this is."

He says referring to his sweatpants and Tshirt. -Me: "You are one crazy man, you know that?"

-Him: "Crazy about you... Listen, I just had to come see you. I didn't get much sleep last night, nervous about today, but I couldn't wake you up with a call. Even when we talked on the phone this morning I didn't get what I wanted to hear from you, so I decided to just come see you in person. I had to come ask you one more time if you haven't changed your mind about marrying me."

-Me: "You're joking, right? Baby, I could change my mind about anything else but not about marrying you. In fact, I can't wait to say 'I do'. We are doing this, babe. We are doing it."

He looks at me and his lips slowly curve to form a smile.

-Him: "I love you. And I, too, can't wait for us to exchange our heartfelt vows. I can't wait to officially make you mine forever. I'm sure you'll be beautiful out there. And don't worry about this baby bump, it suits you." He pulls me to him and presses his lips on mine. I respond, parting my lips for his tongue to move into my mouth. We drift to our own little world but that is cut short when the door opens behind us.

"Oh, hell no! Bhuti, wenzan' apha? [Big bro, what are you doing here?] Don't you know that it's bad luck for you to see the bride before the ceremony?"

As soon as we hear Anathi's voice we step away from each other laughing.

She walks in with the rest of the girls.

-Thando: "Can't a guy just come and see if his bride is okay? Now that's not fair, is it, Sis'?" He asks smiling at her.

-Anathi: "Well, that's just how things are. Now please leave. She still needs to finish getting ready. You too need to get ready. Don't you know that you should be done before the bride?"

-Him: "Okay, fine, I'll go. But I'm already ready, I just need to put on my..."

-Zizo: "...your expensive suit, sport."

-Him: "Yeah, something like that."

-Anathi: "You're still here? Bye-bye."

He just laughs and walks out.

-Amanda: "Now, chomi, let these ladies finish getting you all dolled up for your chessinspired wedding."

The make-up artist and the hairdresser get on with their job.

My mom also comes to be with her only daughter and see if everything is going okay. When we are finally done, my dad comes to get his baby, to walk her down the aisle. This is really happening. I'm now going to share my life with this man who found me at my lowest, who understands me, who loves me. My best friend.