

BAD

GIRLS

CLUB



Minenhle Khumalo

PART TWO – THIRTY ONE – FIFTY NINE

THIRTY ONE

Awkward tension passes between Betty and Malibongwe. He steals a glance at her before heaving a sigh. She's on her phone absentmindedly typing. They arrive at their destination and Malibongwe shakes her lightly. She looks up and realises that they have arrived. She grabs her bag before opening the door and heading out. He chuckles lightly before following suit. Betty's nerves are more than she can handle. As much as she does this regularly it is always nerve wrecking when she does.

Their appointment went well and both of them came out negative. They heaved a sigh of relief when they got the results. They decided to take this next step in their relationship because they felt like it was time and Bongwe was getting tired of having a rubber between them.

"Are you okay Betty?" He asks.

"Yeah." She responds softly.

"How do you feel?"

"I've never slept with a man without a condom so you're going to be the first and I'm scared." She says.

Malibongwe looks at her with shock spread out across his face. He didn't expect that. He knows that some clients prefer to have it raw so for her to say she's never had sex without a condom is shocking.

“Not even your boyfriends before?” He enquires.

“Not even them. When I say you’re going to be my first raw act I mean it. As reckless as I’ve been I’ve always been careful. Not only am I not ready to be a mother but unwanted diseases are lurking around and I’m not willing to spend my life on a catheter.” Betty says.

“Or you can just say you were waiting for me.” Bongwe says with a smirk across his face.

They share a laugh. Bongwe looks at Betty with nothing but love in his eyes. He can’t believe that he found her and he is not planning on letting her go anytime soon. He knows that they’ve got a very long way to go before their relationship is stable but he’s willing to put in the work.

“You’re so full of yourself.” She says smiling.

“Ungithanda nginje.”

“That’s what you think.” She shoots back.

He chuckles and takes her hand in his then kisses the back of it.

“I love how it fits perfectly in mine.” He says with so much intensity in his voice.

She looks at him and smiles faintly. He thinks she doesn’t notice these random moments where he disappears into a dark space in her presence. She wants him to open up but she knows not to push him.

They drive in complete silence until they arrive at his place. Hand in hand they make their way up to his apartment. They step in and Malibongwe disappears to the bedroom while

Betty heads to the kitchen. She's come to learn that he sometimes needs his space and she respects that.

"So taba ya mahadi re etsa jwang?" Tebogo asks.

Mandy heaves a sigh and shrugs. She keeps brushing off the lobola conversation because she doesn't have any clear answers for him. The only family she remembers is her mother and since she's passed away she has been on her own. After her mother's burial all her extended family members disappeared and she hasn't heard from them since.

"I don't know Tebogo like I have no family. I have no one. So I don't know." She says with tears threatening her eyes.

He scoots over and pulls her into his arms. She hates how vulnerable he makes her. She has never been one to cry over such issues but since they started conversing about the marriage she has been in tears all the time.

"Re tla etsa plan baby even if it means us getting my friends to stand on your behalf then we can do that. Fuck we will turn this world upside down as long as by the end of it all you are standing next to me as my wife." He says kissing her head.

"Why do you love me?" She asks faintly.

"Because you love me." He says.

He pulls her in for a deep passionate kiss pouring his all into it. In this moment all the doubts that she had slowly fade away. She can feel that he will do just about anything in his powers to ensure her happiness.

“Fuuuuck Betty shiiit!” Malibongwe groans out loud.

Betty is going ham bouncing up and down, riding his dick. She’s going in on the reverse cowgirl which is driving him insane. Seeing his cock being swallowed by her ass is fuelling him.

“Shit Bongwe I...I can’t.” She says trying to get off of his dick.

He grabs her waist and pounds her from underneath. She screams out loudly as her orgasm washes all over her as he continues thrusting until he reaches his pinnacle. He groans as he shoots up his soldier’s right up her nirvana.

“Fuck it feels so good to have you without anything between us.” He says chuckling.

She shakes her head lightly before getting off of his dick. Their juices run down her legs and she grunts.

“I don’t think I’m going to like this.” She says.

He rushes over to the bathroom and comes back with a towel. She cleans her up before carrying her to bed and cuddling her from behind.

“Have I ever told you how beautiful you are?” He whispers.

“Every day Bongwe.” She says warmly. “Actually what attracted you to me?” She adds on.

He tightens his grips around her body and places a kiss on her shoulder. He thinks back to the day her first saw Betty.

“Your eyes and your smile. They drew me in and they still do. It wasn’t your body, it wasn’t your great ass. It was your eyes Betty. They spoke to me and yeah.” He says.

“Do you ever sit and think ‘damn it I’m dating a prostitute?’” She asks.

“Never! I’m dating a phenomenal woman and that’s all there is to it. Which reminds me, Betty how old are you?” He asks laughing.

She joins in and they share a good laugh for a few minutes.

“You’ve been sleeping with me without knowing how old I am vele?” She asks.

“Because it doesn’t matter futhi this isn’t a very conventional relationship.”

“hmmmm.” She says.

“So?”

“I’m 24.” She says.

“And I’m 26.” He adds in.

“I know.” She says proudly.

“Kanjani?” He asks laughing.

“I have my FBI ways.” She says innocently.

He laughs softly before turning her around and capturing her lips in his.

“I love you so fucken much Betty.” He murmurs against her lips.

A single tear rolls down his cheek and before he can pull himself together a couple more follow. Betty deepens the kiss while wiping his tears with her thumbs. He grabs her ass and pulls her closer.

“Betty.” He says faintly.

“It’s okay baby. I’ve got you.” She says pulling him closer.

THIRTY TWO

Betty has been awake for a few minutes and she has been watching Malibongwe sleeping. She can't believe that this tall, dark man with thick soft lips is all hers. Her heart swells when she thinks back to the past couple of days they've been spending together. Since the night he broke down in her embrace he has been clingy. So clingy that he checks in on Betty throughout the day. When she asked him why he was so vulnerable he just told her that he didn't want to ever spend his life without her. She promised that for as long he treats her good and loves her then he would never have to be without her.

She gently caresses his face then pecks his nose. He grunts causing her to giggle lightly. He pulls her closer and holds her in his arms.

"Good morning Betty."

"Good morning Bongwe."

"Did you sleep well?" He asks.

She nods lightly while chuckling.

"Come on baby you know I don't to open my eyes so khuluma." He says sulking.

"Malibongwe o tloba late so vuka." She says placing a kiss on his lips.

He deepens the kiss and Betty welcomes it. When his finger finds her clit, she jumps out of bed laughing. He lazily opens his eyes and chuckles. Betty shakes her head and grabs her gown. She knows that he doesn't want to go to work and he was going to use morning sex as an excuse to skip work.

“While you get ready I’ll fix you some breakfast.” She walks out.

He lies back on the bed with a full blown smile on his face. His heart is filled with joy and happiness. He knows that he wants to spend the rest of his life with Betty and he doesn’t need any more convincing. He rolls out of bed then heads to the bathroom to prepare himself for the day ahead.

“It’s not much but I made you a burger for lunch.” She says handing him a lunch box.

He smiles widely and makes his way towards her.

“I’ve never had anyone make me lunch before. Thank you Betty.” He says pulling her into his arms.

They hold onto each other for a while until Betty pulls out. She fetches his keys then hands them to him. He takes them along with his lunch and laptop bag then heads out after giving his lady a passionate kiss that leaves her yearning for more.

Betty is sipping on some champagne with Mandy at her apartment. The girls haven’t seen each other in a few days and today is a proper catch up session. They have wings, ribs, pizza and champagne obviously.

“So you’re telling me that there is absolutely no one that we can ask to negotiate on our behalf?” Betty asks.

“Yho babe no one.” Mandy says shrugging.

“Fuck le nna I don’t have family that I could ask to step in. Eish maybe we could ask Bra Jo.” Betty says.

They look at each other before bursting out into laughter. Bra Jo is the head of security at the club and he takes care of all the girls like they are his own. He would probably step up if they approached him but they’re definitely not going to do that.

“Argh Tebogo said he’ll make a plan and I trust him.”

“Are you happy though?” Betty asks genuinely.

“Happy? Yes but relaxed? Now that’s where the problem is.”

“What do you mean?”

“I mean Betty I left my job for this man because I love him but I feel like I didn’t love myself enough to actually secure myself before everything you know. I’ve got my savings to sponge off of for a little while but after that I’m done for. Yes he’s promised that he’ll take care of me kodwa you know I’m not the type to be kept. Ngapha I don’t even know what I’d want to do with my days ngoba he said he’s ready to pump money into whatever project I want to do.”

“I hear you love. Bona nna I’m not going to lie and say I’m not happy about the fact that you took a chance on love. It’s hard to let go of the one thing you’ve always known as your it thing empa in the end it will be worth it. Look you used to say to me that if you had the kind of money I had you’d open a boutique so that should give you an idea of what to do.” Betty says.

Mandy heaves a sigh before grabbing a bottle and refilling her glass. She downs it in one go then refills it again.

“I will do some research on that. Anyway how are things with the mysterious Mr Dance?” Mandy asks squealing.

Betty chuckles and rolls her eyes.

“Mysterious.” Betty responds.

“Huh?” Mandy says in confusion.

“I don’t know this man. I mean look yes we’re getting to know each other and I have basically moved into his space but like yho it’s hard trying to get this man to open up. He has his random moments where he lets me in but the rest of the time is just us winging things. I know I love him and he loves me wholeheartedly and right now that’s what we’re capitalising on but you know.”

“Nawe Betty I doubt you’re letting the guy in so cut him some slack. Don’t rush things. The pace you guys are going at is working for you so don’t try and fly into the whole thing. You guys are gelling well so just take that.”

“Babe.”

“Hai Betty just love the man and let him love you. You’re the one who told me to let go and let Tebogin in so please.” She says dramatically.

Betty chortles while shaking her head.

“I love and appreciate you yeswa.”

“Yees baby you’re trying futhi kumele vele ukhulume isiZulu ngoba indoda ngum’Zulu.”

“Oena o tla bua ne neng hobane monna ke moTswana?”

“Hai phela he’ll learn Zulu.” Mandy says laughing.

“You’re so full of it.” Betty says.

The girls spend their afternoon catching up and engaging in heartfelt conversations that leave both of them in tears at some point.

“Betty.” Malibongwe shouts stepping into the apartment.

Betty emerges from the bedroom and runs into his arms. They share a brief kiss before making their way into the bedroom. She sits on the bed and watches as he changes out of his suit. He strips until he’s left in just his boyleg. Betty wants to pounce on him but she is keeping her cool.

“Actually get dressed we’re going somewhere.”

“Where?” She asks.

“To my parents.” He says coolly.

She shakes her head. She’s not ready to meet his family as yet.

“Betty.”

“No Malibongwe I will not meet your family not now.”

He makes his way to her and takes her hands in his then places a kiss on both. He gazes deep into her eyes before breaking into a smile.

“I love you and I see a future with you. It hasn’t been easy accepting that you are the centre of my life now but I can’t fight it anymore. Betty me wanting you to meet my family should tell you just how serious I am about you. You are IT for me baby uyangizwa?”

Betty nods lightly before hiding her face on his chest. She wants to tell him that she’s scared but she knows that he knows that. Thinking about it she has never gotten to meet any of her previous boyfriend’s families so this is a huge step for her.

“Okay let’s go.” She says.

“I love you B.” he says smiling.

“Family.” Malibongwe shouts as he and Betty make their way in the dining room.

The family turns to look at them and in this moment Betty wants the earth to open up and swallow her up. Malibongwe on the other hand looks as cool as a cucumber. He has Betty's hand firmly in his and the more she tries to discreetly pull hers out the tighter he squeezes it.

"What the hell is this Malibongwe?" Zobuhle shouts.

"This is Betty, my girlfriend." Malibongwe announces.

"A fucken prostitute Simphiwe!" Zobuhle shoots out causing Betty to cringe.

She wasn't expecting this kind of reception.

"Zobuhle." Langa says sternly.

"That prostitute better be out my house when I get back." Zobuhle continues as she gets up from her chair.

"If she goes then I go and you will never see me again." Malibongwe says coolly leaving the rest of the family gobsmacked.

"Then get out of my house and don't look back." Zobuhle says walking out of the room.

Lwandle gets up and goes after his wife leaving everyone else in awkward silence. Betty has tears threatening her eyes while Bongwe has rage burning throughout his entire being. He didn't expect his family to know about Betty's scandal.

"Hello Betty." Sibahle greets her.

“Hi.” Betty says softly.

She squeezes Bongwe’s hand hoping that he will get that she wants to leave. He turns to look at her softly and nods lightly.

“We’re leaving I guess.” He says.

“Let me talk to you before you do.” Langa says getting up from the chair.

They walk out of the room and leave a distraught Betty with Sibahle. Khanyile walks into the room shouting something and pauses when she sees Betty. She steps up to her and gives her a warm hug.

“You’re very beautiful.” She says.

“Thank you.” Betty responds awkwardly.

“Ask your dad to tell you the entire truth and only then will you be able to fully heal and move on.” She says before walking out leaving Betty shocked.

“She has a gift.” Sibahle says. “Come sit Betty.”

Betty settles next to her and fidgets with her fingers.

“I’m not going to ask whether you love him or not because the fact that you have made it to this stage of your relationship says a lot. I am however going to ask you to be patient with him. I think you’ve realised by now that he isn’t exactly the guy next door but he is very loving and the fact that he wanted you to meet his parents says a lot about his feelings for you.

I'm sorry about what just transpired. Bongwe's mom is very protective of him and that was just mama bear ready to kill for her cub. I think that--

They're interrupted by Langa and Bongwe walking back into the room. Betty gets up like the chair she is sitting on has suddenly been thrown into a sea of thorns. Bongwe makes his way to her and takes her hand in his.

"I'm sorry." He whispers.

"Betty alright?" Langa asks.

Betty nods absentmindedly. She doesn't even hear when Langa bids them farewell. They head out and the second she gets in the car her tears cascade down her cheeks leaving Bongwe broken.

THIRTY THREE

“Do you think you family would ever accept me?” Betty asks softly.

Malibongwe heaves a sigh and pulls her closer then places a kiss on her head. It’s been a week since the drama at his parent’s house and he hasn’t spoken to them since. A part of him understands but a very large part of him is angry and doesn’t care. He feels like his mother should have listened to him before going off like that. He thought that his mother would be happy that he is moving on with his life.

“I-” His ringing phone interrupts him.

“Hi sis.”

“Dude what is this I hear about your girlfriend being the minister’s daughter?” Nqobile asks.

Malibongwe chuckles lightly. He’s happy that she called her the minister’s daughter and not a prostitute.

“Hello nawe Nqobile.”

“Argh shut up and answer me. Like dude this is huge considering she was in the news and all. Ei nawe how could you sneak her up on us like that? Like why couldn’t you sit your parents down and let them in on what is what? Ai.”

“I know it was a dumb decision on my end.”

“A very DUMB decision.” She emphasizes.

“I know but whatever I’m done with them anyway.” He says coldly.

“Wow Bongwe just wow. Ngenxa ye kuku? You start chowing and suddenly your parents are public enemy number 1? The very same people who lost a few years of their lives because you were losing yours? The very same people that gave their all for you? Wow Malibongwe.”

“What do you expect me to do Nqobile? You weren’t there. You didn’t hear what your mother said!” He says with his voice slightly raised.

“What the fuck did you expect her to say? Did you want her to her some tea and crumpets? Bona mo papa your girls scandal was all over. Her clients were also out here singing like canaries, we know the gory details so please explain to me how MY MOTHER seeing as though she’s not yours anymore, was supposed to react.” Nqobile says getting worked up.

“Baby calm down I can hear you all the way from the kitchen.” A male voice says to Nqobile.

“You know what fuck you Nqobile.” Bongwe says.

“Well fuck you too Malibongwe yezwa! Fuck you!” Nqobile says before breaking out into a sob.

Malibongwe’s heart constricts. He hates it when his sister cries and he realises that he went too far. Another thing is he knows just how much her man doesn’t want to see her crying and he isn’t afraid to put him in his place when he messes with his woman regardless of her being his sister.

“Malibongwe what did you do to your sister?” He asks.

“I didn’t mean to. Please give her the phone.”

“She doesn’t want to talk to you. I swear Malibongwe if-”

“I’m sorry. Please tell her I’m sorry.” Bongwe says before hanging up.

Betty chuckles while shaking her head before getting out of bed. She puts on her shoes then heads out of the bedroom. Bongwe rushes after her and holds her front behind. She pushes him off and walks towards the fridge. She stands there looking for something until she gets frustrated and roughly closes the door. He stands there watching her as she moves around the kitchen doing nothing in particular.

“Betty.” He calls out to her.

She ignores him and continues with what she’s doing. She switches on the coffee machine then makes her way back to the bedroom with him following closely behind. She gets in the bathroom and fills in the tub while he watches.

“Betty khuluma yini?”

She shoots him the eye and he raises an eyebrow.

“Are you going to tell me or do I have to force it out of you?” He asks.

“Oh are you also going to cut me off?” She asks cheekily.

“What?”

“I don’t like how you disrespected your sister and your mother just now.”

“I was defending you Betty.” He shouts.

“No you were defending your decision to be with me, not me. Even so to tell your sister to fuck off was just unnecessary. Ke dutse mo right now with no family and that fucken hurts! It hurts so much and I don’t want you to experience that. You don’t pull that stunt for nothing! Dammit we’re just dating and even if we were at a much deeper stage I still wouldn’t want you to do that.

Yes what your mother said hurt but then again who would want their son dating a well known prostitute? I can understand your hurt and anger towards your mom but your sister? What did she do to deserve you swearing at her?”

“Betty.”

“And I can tell just by looking at you that you don’t regret it. You still have that arrogant face on which I don’t understand.”

“I’m not sorry vele.” He shoots back.

“And I will not be held responsible for you being without your family. Go make things right with them. I’ll be going back to my apartment today.” She says dropping her gown.

He struts towards her and pulls her into his arms. He kisses her passionately and she melts into his arms. He picks her up and she wraps her legs around his waist.

“Sex doesn’t fix everything.” she murmurs against his lips.

He holds her up against the wall before lowering his briefs and inserting himself all the in. Betty cries out as she feels him all the way in his belly. She tries to push him out but he tightens his hold against her and goes to work. He is moving in and out of her like a possessed man.

“Wait you’re too deep.” She cries out.

He ignores her pleas and continues thrusting. He groans out loud as he reaches his destination.

“You can’t leave me Betty.” He whispers against her neck.

“I said you’re too deep.” She says crying.

“Don’t leave me.” He says softly before capturing her lips in his.

Betty grabs her keys and makes her way out.

“Betty.”

“Just make peace with your family.” She says before making her way to her car.

THIRTY FOUR

“I’m going out on a date.” Molemo blurts out.

Betty sets the knife in her hand on the counter and turns to look at her while Mandy just sips on her juice. Molemo gives them an awkward smile before burying her face in her hands. Mandy chuckles lightly while Betty keeps a straight face.

“Oa jola Molemo?” Betty asks.

“No sis it’s just a date. I swear we’re not dating.”

“Where did you meet?” Mandy asks.

“At the library.” She responds softly.

“I see and how old is he?”

“24.”

“I see and how old are you?”

“19.”

“Huh.” Betty says.

She goes back to chopping her onions while Molemo looks at Mandy who just shrugs. They understand that Betty is overly protective of her baby sister. Molemo signals for Mandy to talk to Betty and she shakes her head. She has never had to deal with mommy Betty before so she doesn't know where to start. She doesn't know how hectic Betty might get.

"Betty man, allow the child to go and enjoy herself. Molemo is a good girl and I'm sure she wouldn't have agreed to this date if she didn't think that the guy is all good, so relax. Futhi she will let us know where she is going and she'll give us his picture and details angithi nana?" Mandy says.

"I know that but I'm just a little worried you know after everything that's happened."

"I promise I will be safe Betty." Molemo says walking towards Betty.

She hugs her from behind and places a kiss on his cheek. She is grateful to have met Betty in this lifetime. To have someone who cares about her more than she's ever been cared for in her life.

"As long as you also promise not to slack off on your school work because of a boy." Betty adds.

"I promise I won't waste your money like that."

"It's not about the money Molemo. It's about you obtaining a qualification and making something of your life. Look I could twerk once and we'd make up that money so really."

"Whoooah don't let Mr Mystery hear you say that ngoba he would kill umuntu yhu." Mandy says dramatically.

The ladies share a laugh. Betty's heart constricts a bit at the thought of having not spoken to Bongwe in a week. He rejected a few of her calls and blue ticked her texts on WhatsApp. She doesn't understand why he's behaving this way when all she did was encourage him to make things right with his family.

"You should invite him over for dinner or something and I'll cook." Molemo says excitedly. "Actually Mandy you should bring Tebogo as well so I can spoil my brother's in love." She adds on.

"Do you think Tebogo and Mr Dance would get along?" Mandy asks.

Betty shrugs and goes back to her pots. Mandy notices that something is off with Betty and she makes a mental note to chat to her about it later.

"I think they will." Molemo says innocently.

"I think so too nana, anyway what time is your date?" Mandy tries to change the subject.

"At three."

"Niyakhuphi?"

"The Spur by the library." Molemo says shyly.

Mandy is looking at her with amusement written all over her face. She can tell that Molemo is really taken by this guy. She finds it cute and she is all for it because she feels that Molemo needs to have fun and experience life. She never got to enjoy her childhood because she was always looking after the household and her mother. This is actually her first chance at enjoying herself and life.

“Number, full name and picture please.”

“Of course.” Molemo walks out the room leaving the girls alone.

“Out with it, what’s wrong? You haven’t been to Malibongwe’s place this week.”

“Argh it’s nothing.” Betty says.

“When Molemo leaves we’ll talk okay.”

Betty heaves a sigh before nodding. She doesn’t want to talk about it but she knows Mandy won’t let it go.

Molemo walks into the restaurant and spots him the second she steps in. She makes her way towards the table with her heart in her knees. She admits that she likes this guy but she doesn’t want to come off as desperate because she doesn’t know where he stands. Is he only after friendship or does he want more. They speak almost every day over the phone and see each other at the library sometimes. She enjoys his company and hopes that she can get to enjoy it for some time.

“Hey.”

He looks up and breaks out into a broad smile when his eyes land on Molemo. He gets up and they share a warm hug.

“You look amazing.” He says breathlessly.

"Thank you." She says shyly.

They settle in their seats and a waiter comes to take their order then walks off. Molemo texts her sisters to let them know that she arrived and that she will call them should anything feel off.

"So Molemo."

"So Bongani ."

"You're very beautiful."

"Thanks."

"So were you able to come alright with your assignment?" He asks.

She nods lightly. She was frustrated by an assignment and he tried to help her but that proved to be difficult because he's an art student.

"Submitted it and I'm hoping for the best."

"I know you've got this man."

"Ke a leboga."

"So how are your sisters?" He asks.

“They’re good thanks and your siblings?”

“Still driving me nuts but they’re good.”

“And is your mom feeling better?”

“A lot better. She has an appointment with the doctor next week and we’re hoping for the all clear.” He says heaving a sigh.

“Hey.” She puts her hand over his. “Have faith that she will be fine.”

He takes her hand in hers and gives it a gentle squeeze. Molemo feels butterflies in her stomach. She can’t contain her excitement as her heart begins to race uncontrollably. He has an effect on her and she can’t hide it.

“Thank you for being here.”

“You’re welcome.”

“I like you a lot Molemo.” He says softly.

“Bongani.”

“I know you might have your reservations but I promise you I will never hurt you, not intentionally anyway. I want to be the one to make you happy at all times Molemo. I want to be the one who hold you when your days aren’t going well and you need to be held. I want to be your man.”

Molemo tries to open her mouth to respond but no sound comes out. She can't believe that he just asked her out. She wants to jump on top of the table and do her happy dance but she knows she has to contain herself.

"Like I don't get it Mands, why is he acting up like this? Yes his mom went off but he sprung this on them, heck on us and I think her reaction could've been worse. Yes it hurt but it was the truth akere."

"Try look at this from his perspective."

"I'm trying but I don't see it. Why is he not talking to me Mandy? Why is Malibongwe hurting me like this? I just wanted him to sit down with his family and have a conversation with them, make peace you know. Argh shoot me for caring." Betty says rolling her eyes.

"You know what, we need to forget about le drama ka Mr Dance so we are going to go clubbing. We're getting pap drunk and forgetting all about our problems for a little while."

"Mandy."

"Hai Betty nami I need to get my mind off of this whole lobola thing so please. Block heels because bitch we are burning the dance floor all night long!" Mandy says causing Betty to chortle.

As much as she doesn't want to go out she knows that Mandy is right, they need to let loose, they haven't been out in a while and what better time than tonight. They decide to get some rest before burning the dance floor all night long.

THIRTY FIVE

“Baby Betty and I are going out to the club so I probably won’t be able to answer your calls but I’ll ping you our location.” Mandy says.

“Okay baby just be safe.” Tebogo responds.

“You know we will baby.”

“Don’t accept drinks from strangers and keep your drinks on you at all times.”

Mandy chuckles lightly while her heart flutters. The fact that he cares so much about her warms her whole entire being. She can’t believe that she bagged herself such a caring and handsome man. The fact he accepted her despite everything proves just how much he loves her and wants her in his life.

“You know I don’t guzzle down on those lousy drinks so you best believe we ain’t accepting drinks from nobody. We’re buying our own drinks baby skawara.”

“I love it when you speak my language even if it’s just a mere word but I’ll take it hobane soon you’re going to be crying and screaming in my language.” Tebogo says chuckling.

Mandy giggles sweetly and buries her face in her hand. She bites her lip as she thinks about being pinned under him while he makes love to each and every part of her.

“Baby stop it. You’re making me horny.”

“Are you wet for daddy baby?” He asks in his husky voice causing Mandy to shudder.

“Baby.”

“Do you want to touch yourself for me?”

“I want you here.” She says breathlessly.

“You can take care of that itch on your own baby but you better hurry because I know Betty is about to come knocking.”

“Tebogo.”

“Use your fingers motho waka while imagining me on top drilling the fuck out of you.”

Mandy’s breath hitches and she squeezes her legs together. Tebogo knows his woman is stubborn and she might not do as instructed but as long as he has her hot and bothered then he has achieved something.

“I’m so going to get you for this.” Mandy says giving her breast a tight squeeze.

“I love you too, now enjoy your night and let me know when you get home.” He says and hangs up.

Mandy grunts and flops herself on the bed before getting up and finishes getting dressed. She has an itch to scratch and she plans on doing it right.

Betty takes a good look at herself before grabbing her bag and heading out. She is rocking a pair of cheeky shorts with a body suit tucked in and a denim jacket on top. A pair of black heels completes the look. She heads to Mandy's apartment and just as she is about to knock the thick goddess opens the door. She is wearing a short red romper that has her girls out to play but in a sexy manner. Her hair is tied up putting an emphasis on her gorgeous face.

"You look smashing." Betty says.

"And you look yummy. Ngena phela your plate is in the microwave." Mandy says walking back in.

They settle in the kitchen and feast on their pap and chicken stew. Betty is going in on the meal like it is her last.

"The chicken is so succulent, I swear even Bongwe can't make it this good." She says before frowning when she realises she just mentioned him.

"You miss him and that's understandable babe."

"Argh whatever let's just finish up and go."

They finish off their meals in silence with Betty's thoughts on Malibongwe. She can't take the unnecessary silent treatment when all she wants is to be in his arms with her head rested on her chest. They request a cab and head out with the intention of getting wild.

The ladies arrive at the club and are immediately ushered to the VIP section – the perks of knowing the manager. Their order of champagne is brought to them and they don't waste

any time as they get into it straight away. They haven't been there for long but already they have attracted a number of men.

"I can't believe that men actually think that we live for their company and compliments like bitch please." Mandy says downing her drink.

She reaches over and refills her flute.

"Nawe Betty uphuza slow tjeeer."

"Hai phela you drink champagne like it's water." Betty says laughing.

The beat drops and the girls lose it. They down their drinks and make their way to the dance floor. As promised they're letting their hair loose. Betty is twerking the hell out of the song while Mandy cheers her on. A crowd has gathered around them and most of them have their phone put and are documenting this moment.

He slowly makes his way towards her and starts dancing. The crowd cheers them on and they give them a show. At some point he has his hand around her waist but she quickly shakes him off. They continue dancing until Betty has had enough and makes her way back to the VIP section.

"Dammit I missed seeing your sexy ass doing its thaaang!" Mandy screams as they settle back on the couch.

"I haven't danced like that in a while."

"Giirl and that fire man you were dancing with yeses if I wasn't accounted for I swear I would have him."

“He sure is fire.” Betty adds in.

“Hai I need the bathroom. Asambe.”

They grab their bags and head to the bathroom while going on and on about how sexy and yummy he is.

Mandy has Betty pinned against the cubicle door and is kissing the living hell out of her while giving her ass a tight squeeze.

“Mandy.” Betty murmurs against her lips.

“Yes baby.”

“I’m itchy.”

“Me too.” Mandy says unzipping Betty’s shorts.

They drop to the floor and she steps out of them leaving her with just her bodysuit on. Mandy wastes no time in shifting it to the side and inserting her finger as Betty moans out loud. She moves it around in circles for a bit before inserting another one.

“Maaand.”

“Shhhh.” She says deepening the kiss.

She continues working her way around Betty's pussy until she feels her clenching her walls around her fingers. It's not long before she falls apart and holds onto Mandy tightly.

"I love making you cum Betty."

The ladies are swapping spit in the elevator as they go up to their apartments. Betty has Mandy's boob cupped in her hand while Mandy has her ass in her hands. The alcohol in their system is also adding on to the fuel that is the slightly attraction that is between them.

"Goodnight."

"Goodnight." Mandy murmurs back.

The doors open and Mandy steps out and makes her way to her apartment. The lift doors open into Betty's flat and she drops her shoes, bag and jacket on the floor before walking further in. She is surprised when she finds Malibongwe sitting on her couch sipping on some whiskey.

"Hi." She says softly.

"Ubuya phi?!" He roars.

She frowns slightly. She can't believe that he just walked in after ignoring her for a week and demands from her.

"I went clubbing, not that it's any of your concern."

“FUCK!” He throws his glass on the floor. “YOU WENT OUT TO GO AND FUCKEN HOE ANGITHI? THAT’S WHY HE HAD HIS ARMS AROUND YOU AND THAT’S WHY YOU ENJOYED IT. YOU FUCKEN GIGGLED AS HE HAD HIS DICK PRESSED UP AGAINST YOUR ASS.” He continues roaring.

Betty stands there looking at him with terror in her eyes. She can’t believe that this man standing before is the same man that makes her feel giddy inside. He’s pacing around with his hands on his head.

“Please calm down.” Betty says faintly. She’s never seen Mr Dance in such a state before.

“Don’t tell me shit Betty.” His voice filling the room and sending chills down Betty’s spine. “You ain’t shit Betty. You’re just a dirty prostitute. You’re filthy. You’re a fucken hoe Betty.” He pauses then starts chuckling. “I don’t know what I saw in you. She’d be so disappointed to know that I replaced her with a dirty stripper, a fucken slut. You are nothing like she was and you never will be. Fuuck man.” He kicks the side table over and walks out.

Betty stands there shaken by what just transpired. Her heart shattered into a million pieces. She never thought there would come a time where he would utter such cruel and repulsive words to her. She sinks to the floor and hugs her arms around her knees as her tears trickle down her face. The words he just threw at her keep ringing in her head causing her to breakdown further.

He walks back in, grabs his keys and walks out without uttering a word. Feeling like keeping it in will kill her, Betty lets out a gut-wrenching cry that could pierce through the coldest of hearts.

THIRTY SIX

Malibongwe lays awake in bed thinking about Siyanda. He thought that he was over her, or getting over her rather but it turns out he hasn't been doing such a great job. He wonders whether or not she is looking down on him with a frown or a smile in her face. He wonders if she is happy that he is with Betty considering her previous occupation. Tears run down his face when his thoughts rush off to the first time he laid eyes on Betty. It was her first week at the club and when she walked on stage his heart stopped. Her eyes and smile reminded him so much of Siyanda that he was convinced they were related. After conducting intensive research he found no relation between the two ladies.

After that first encounter he began frequenting the club more often until he eventually established some sort of relationship with Betty. She became the only girl at the club that could get close enough to dance for him. He enjoyed her dancing, how she took her time each time, how at some instances she would look deep into his eyes. He felt like she could see parts of him that others couldn't. He felt a connection with her but was scared to explore that because he knew at some points things would get tough and he wasn't ready for that.

The day he had Betty watch him fuck Mandy was an attempt to repel Betty away because he knew that as much as she had an effect on him, he had one on her too. He couldn't stand the attraction and he thought by having her sit in, that attraction would somewhat fade away but he was wrong. As the days went by he longed more and more for her until he couldn't hold it in anymore. He never wanted to fuck her at the club because he didn't see her as one of his random fucks. When he got the chance to taste her, he knew at first thrust that he was screwed because he knew he wanted more of her and wouldn't be willing to share.

He vigorously wipes his tears but they continue to fall. He knows that he screwed up by uttering those words to Betty. He didn't mean to but seeing that video of her dancing in the club brought back all the anger that he harbours and unfortunately Betty was at the receiving end of his wrath. He gets off the bed and grabs his keys and heads out.

With tears blinding his vision he flies down the highway. He safely arrives at Betty's and makes his way up to her apartment. He finds her wrapped up in a ball in the same spot he left her in. His heart constricts at the thought of her having slept on the cold hard floor with nothing on. He makes his way over to her and picks her up in his arms but she wakes up before he can even take a step. She jumps out of his arms and steps back. He takes a step towards her but she shakes her head and moves back.

"Get out." She says faintly.

"Betty."

"Malibongwe Mkhize get out of my apartment please." She continues.

"Betty I'm sorry sthandwa sam I was just angry I didn't mean any of it."

She shakes her head vigorously with tears falling down her eyes.

"Tsamaya please just go. Get out." Her voice is still faint.

"I can't Betty, I can't leave yo-"

"GET THE FUCK OUT OF MY APARTMENT" She interrupts him with her roar.

He's taken aback a bit but nods lightly and heads out. The second the doors close, she slides to the ground and continues crying. She can't believe that he uttered such words to her especially after she had asked him if he ever thinks about her prostitute title and he said no. She remembers how he said he is dating a phenomenal woman and that's all he sees.

She knows that the prostitution will always be an issue especially after his mother pointed it out but she didn't expect him to also share the same sentiment. She never thought that he would turn around and use that against her. Now she understands why Mandy was so apprehensive about letting go of her financial security for love.

She wipes her tears and gets up from the floor. She makes her way to the bathroom and steps in the shower with her clothes on and allows the water to fall on her. She wishes that she had a mother who cared for her and would take the time out to listen to her. A mother who would come rushing in this moment just to hold her in her arms while rocking her back and forth. Her mind drifts off to what Khanyisile said and she can't help but wonder what her father is keeping from her. She decides there and then that she is going to ask him and hopefully he will tell her the truth.

Betty dresses up in her onesie and gets into bed. She grabs her phone and without thinking twice calls her father. It rings for a while for her answers.

"Betty."

"Ntate."

"How are you my child?"

"I'm fine. Ntate who is my real mother?" She asks.

Ntate Moloi heaves a sigh.

"Ntate please."

“I’ll see you in a few hours.” He says.

“Don’t come here if you’re not planning on being honest with me ntate. If you’re going to come here and apologise then I suggest you stay mo le mosadi oa hao and if you’re thinking of bringing her with then just know that I am going to kick her out and I will not be apologetic about it.” She says before hanging up.

Malibongwe has been blowing up Betty’s phone to the extent of her blocking his calls. She knows he will come here and demand that she talk to him but until then she doesn’t even want to see his name pop up anywhere. He sent her a lengthy text about how sorry he is and how he isn’t in a good space and seeing that video made him lose it. She deleted the message and decided that she was done with him.

Ntate Moloi calls Betty to let her know that he has arrived. She heads down to fetch him and silence engulfs the elevator. The doors open and they step inside and make their way to the couch.

“Can I make you some tea?” She asks.

He shakes his head and heaves a sigh.

“You don’t look well. Ho etsa halang Betty?” He asks with concern dripping all over his words.

“Ntate for 24 years of my life I’ve felt out of place like I never belonged. When I overheard you and mme, I mean your wife talking it all made sense. I just don’t understand why you as the man that was supposed to be my superhero would pick everything over nna, your child. Anyway that’s beside the point, just tell me who my mother is.” She says coldly.

“Betty.”

“I never had parents nate,I was always alone. Even when he, when he- I just want a mother. Tell me who she is, maybe she might just accept me and your will never have to deal with me again.” She says crying.

“Even when who did what Betty?”

He pulls her into his arms and comforts her. He knows that he failed his daughter and that it might be too late to try make up for it.

“It hurts so bad nate.”

“I’m so sorry ngoanaka, I am so sorry.”

“Who is she?”

“MaMoloi is your mother Betty in every sense of the word.”

“Okay get out.” She says untangling herself from his hold.

“Betty.”

“The truth or you leave and never look back.”

He rubs his face in frustration and heaves a sigh.

“Your mother is MaMoloi’s sister.”

THIRTY SEVEN

“I was still a young man when your mother and I got married.”

“Your wife.” Betty says sternly.

Ntate Moloi heaves a sigh while shaking his head.

“Moleboheng and I met when I was in my final year of varsity. From the second we started talking we just clicked and the more we spoke the more I fell for her. Not only was she gorgeous but she was intelligent as well and unapologetic about her beauty, smarts and attitude. I fell for her deeply, so deeply that a few months into our relationship I proposed. I was a nervous wreck but clearly I had no reason to be because well here we are married.

I did right by her family and we got married. We obviously had nothing at the time and were staying at my parents house in the backroom outside. I had never thought I would meet a woman who would understand my love for politics and the need to change the lives of my people but she got it and she shared the same sentiments. So she supported my studies and ideas and when I graduated a few months later she was there holding my hand and cheering me on. That day was one of our happiest days ever. We made a decision to hold off on having kids at least until I was in a stable position within the political party.

Things slowly started working out and it was three years into our marriage when I was offered a job at Luthuli House in Johannesburg, obviously she couldn't come with because she was working full time as a clerk at one of our municipal offices in the Free State. After a lot of tears we came to a decision that I would go to the big city because it was good for my career.

Things were going well job wise but I was missing her everyday and it hurt that I couldn't go home as often because we needed to save every cent we got. She was also always cranky because of the distance. It was hard Betty. Eight months after I moved I was able to bring her up to come visit me for a week. Things weren't the same, the distance had put so much

strain on our relationship and with Moleboheng's attitude it was hard to try and work on things.

By the time we were four and a half years into the marriage things were very rocky. I was a member of parliament by then which meant the travelling had increased. As much as I would've loved to spend every second with her I just couldn't because I needed to work and feed my family. Also the fact that I was an MP who was under the age of 30 meant that I had to never drop the ball because it was and still is very rare hobane usually when you're around that age you're still in the youth league.

Moleboheng was always angry and whenever I was home or she came to me we wouldn't be intimate. It was as though I repulsed her but I respected her so I kept my distance. It was very hard knowing that my marriage was falling apart and all because of something we both wanted. She wanted me to make a name for myself and it hurt me to know that I was losing her to something that she encouraged me to do." He stops and heaves a sigh.

Betty sits there watching her father narrate his story with sadness in his eyes. She wants to feel sorry for him but her heart isn't having any of it. She just wants to know about her mother.

"Jwale where does my mother make her entrance in all of this?" Betty asks.

"Right. It was a random encounter that changed the rest of my life. She was walking passed the main entrance at our offices and I was heading out. She needed directions and thankfully I was the only one around to help her. Her voice sounded like angels singing right in my ear. She said she didn't know the area very well so I offered to walk her to her destination. I took her bag and we made our way there. We spoke like we had known each other for year. God she was so easy to talk to.

She laughed at everything I had to say and she was interested as well. I learnt that she was there looking for a job and was hoping to get one soon because she had to survive. I wanted to offer her a job but from the conversation we were having I knew she wasn't one to accept 'handouts'. We eventually arrived and I promised to call her later at night and true to my word I did that and we spoke every day.

I fell in love with her in a very short space of time and with the way things were between Moleboheng and I, I didn't regret it. I knew that a divorce was looming and I guess I was okay with it. We went on date, we spent time indoors, she even took me to church. I was always at peace in her presence.

I loved her. I still love her. I know that she was and still is the one for me but circumstances you know."

"But how did you not know that she was her sister Ntate?"

"Thandeka and Moleboheng are sister's through their father. It turns out he had a lot of children, everywhere and they happened to be sisters. They'd only met on three different occasions and Moleboheng didn't feel the need to tell me about that side of her life. We only found out when Thandeka came to our house to tell me about the pregnancy."

"So is that when Moleboheng found out you had cheated on her?" Betty enquires.

"Yes. Thandeka and I were never really intimate until that one time which is when you were conceived. I still can't believe that we were able to come together and in the end have a product of our love for each other.

Anyway a few months after our passion, Thandeka just dumped me. She told me that she couldn't be with me anymore and that was that. I tried calling but she had changed her number. I tried looking for her but she had moved out of her place. I tried for months Betty without any success. I was crushed. I was broken but I had to be a man about it.

Around the same time I was offered a post in the provincial government in the Free State, so I took it. Moleboheng and I decided to give things one final try to see how we would be now that we were living together again and ya ne. A month before you were born a heavily pregnant Thandeka came knocking on our door and I swear that was the best and worst day of my life.

When they revealed that they were sisters my world came crashing down and when we told Moleboheng that the pregnancy was actually mine everything came to a standstill. It was a mess. Both the women that I promised to love and protect were broken and I was the cause of it all. Moleboheng wanted to throw Thandeka out but she explained that she only reached out to me because she wouldn't be able to afford to raise you because she had to leave her job in order to get away from me.

She thought that she would find something else where she settled but nothing was coming up and her due date was nearing, plus she was also going through depression. She didn't want to give you up for adoption while I was still alive so she asked one of my friends in Johannesburg and he helped her get to me. Moleboheng wanted her gone but we agreed that she would only leave after giving birth which happened two weeks after she came to us.

You looked so much like me at birth my Betty but you had her features as well but now as you're growing up into this beautiful woman you look more and more like her each day. After you were born I offered to get her a job and pay for her therapy but all she wanted was for me to take care of you. She wanted you to have the best life that she couldn't afford to give you ngoanaka.

I can still hear her sobs when Moleboheng took you from her arms and walked out of that room. I wanted to turn back and choose her but I couldn't Betty. I couldn't just leave my wife life that."

"So I lived my whole life unloved and treated like garbage because you couldn't leave your wife." Betty says with tears cascading down her face.

Both she and her father are crying but none can comfort the other.

"Betty you have to understand that I never meant for things to be like this."

“Why did your wife take me in if she knew what she hated me? She should’ve thrown me out with my mother. We probably would’ve been poor but I still would’ve had a mother who loved me.” Betty says getting up.

She runs to her bedroom and throws herself on her bed. She lets out a ferocious cry that cuts through her father’s heart. In her head right now she is convincing herself that she is unlovable. Her mother left her. Her father was never there for her. Her step-mother hates her and Malibongwe just broke her heart.

She gasps for air as her chest tightens at the thought of being all by herself once more. Everyone who was supposed to be there for her is not.

THIRTY EIGHT

Ntate Moloi slides next to Betty and pulls her into his arms. He comforts her as she cries her lungs out. Her heart is shattered and in this moment she feels like she doesn't belong. She wants the world to open up and swallow her. She wants to sleep and never wake up again. The pain that she is in currently is crippling.

"Ngoanaka I know that I have failed you and I hope that one day in this life time you will find it in your heart to forgive me." He says tightening his grip around her.

She sniffs and wipes her tears before sitting up. She heaves a huge sigh before turning to look at her father.

"You had your reasons for the decisions you made and quite frankly I don't give a rat's arse about those reasons. All I want right now ntate is for you to get me in contact with my mother. That's all I want." Betty says softly.

"Your mother reached out to me years ago. She wanted to meet you and build a relationship with you but."

Betty zones out and gets excited at the possibility of meeting her mother. She wonders why she couldn't have come back for her sooner but she knows they'll be plenty of time to talk about that when they meet. She can't help but wonder what type of person she is. Is she still as beautiful as her father set her out to be? Is she still as warm and caring? Or maybe because of everything that has transpired she is as bitter as maMoloi. Her thoughts are interrupted by her father calling her.

"Huh?" She says looking at him.

"Did you hear anything I said?"

“No sorry what did you say?”

He heaves a sigh and buries his face in his hands.

“I can’t facilitate the meeting between you and Thandeka hobane Moleboheng wants nothing to do with her.”

“So what are you saying to me ntate?” Betty asks with tears threatening her eyes.

“I’m sorry ngoanaka.”

“Again you’re choosing your wife over me? You’re putting Moleboheng over my needs? Over my right to a mother? A mother who wants me?” Betty says choking on her tears a bit.

“Betty that’s not what I’m sayi-”

“You know what, get out ntate. Leave and forget that you have a daughter. Get out and never look back.”

“Ngoanaka.” He says shaking his head.

He wants to explain what he meant by that but Betty is not hearing any of it. He gets off the bed but not before kissing her head.

“I know I haven’t shown it in the past but you are the best gift I have ever been granted. I love you so much my beautiful Betty.” He says then walks out.

Betty buries her face in the pillow as once again disappointment steps into her house. All she wants is a chance to feel loved.

“Lemo have you spoken to Betty today?” Mandy asks.

Molemo shakes her head and continues eating. Mandy has been trying to get hold of Betty to no avail. She even went to go check if she was in her apartment but she wasn't. She concludes that she is with Malibongwe because she has no other friends outside of them.

“Maybe she's with her man.” Molemo says.

“I think so too.” Mandy adds in.

“Anyway so I need your advice.”

“Sure.”

“So I've never been in a relationship before and I'm quite scared because I don't know what to expect. Also he is older so he's definitely having sex and might expect that from me. I've thought about the whole sex thing and I think I'm ready to lose my virginity but I just don't know what to expect.”

“Whooooo no sex for you until we're actually sure about this guy's intentions. For now just look at it like a friendship. Be yourself. Laugh out loud. Fart in his presence. Eat as much as you want. Just be you nana and if he really is serious about you he will accept you as you are.” Mandy says.

“But what of that drives him away?”

“Then he wasn’t the one for you. A man who loves you will accept you with all you flaws and love them more than the perfect parts of you. Look at me and Tebogo, no man could’ve easily stomach being with me but he proposed because he is the one for me. So wena just do you baby and don’t try acting and behaving like someone you’re nnot.”

“I hear you.” Molemo says softly.

It’s official, she is Bongani’s girlfriend and she couldn’t be happier. She feels like thing between them might work out but she knows it might just be the excitement of it all speaking. She knows that relationships are a lot of work and she is willing to put it in. She wants to be happy with him.

“ You ain’t shit Betty. You’re just a dirty prostitute. You’re filthy. You’re a fucken hoe Betty.”

“YES! SHIT! O MASEPA A NGOANA! O MAGOSHA, YOU’RE A BLODDY PROSTITUTE JUST LIKE YOUR MOTHER!”

Those words ring in Betty’s ears over and over again. She chuckles lightly and takes a sip from the bottle. She has a bottle of gin in her hand and she is sitting in her car in the underground parking.

“YES! SHIT! O MASEPA A NGOANA! O MAGOSHA, YOU’RE A BLODDY PROSTITUTE JUST LIKE YOUR MOTHER!”

“ You ain’t shit Betty. You’re just a dirty prostitute. You’re filthy. You’re a fucken hoe Betty.”

She breaks out into a loud sob as the words hit her deep.

“Okay Betty seeing as though you are shit, a hoe and a fucken prostitute, let’s go live up to your name.” She says to herself taking another sip.

“So rock right up to

The side of my mountain

Climb until you reach my peak babe, the peak, the peak

And reach right into the bottom of my fountain

I wanna play in your deep baby, your deep baby, the deep

Then dip me under where you can feel my river flowing flow

Hold me ‘til I scream for air to breathe

And wash me over until my well runs dry

Send all your sins all over me babe, me.”

The song is playing loudly as Betty makes her way onto stage. Cheers and whistles erupt and Betty feels herself regaining the confidence she once had. She climbs on top of the pole and magic happens. She owns the room and everyone in the room is drinking from her cup. A couple of hundreds are thrown at her from appreciative men in the audience.

She finishes her set and receives a huge applause as she makes her way down from the stage. As she is walking down the passage towards her room she passes by Malibongwe who is looking at her with nothing but anger flashed across his face. He roughly grabs her arm and she slaps him right across the face as she turns around.

He is taken aback a little but regains his composure.

“Uwenzani Betty?”

“You have no right to ask me that.” She says turning around and walking away.

He grabs her again and again she turns around and slaps him across the face.

“Fuck you.” She says pushing him back.

He clenches his jaw and looks at her with a hard face on.

“Stay away from me.” She continues pushing him.

“BETTY.”

“I want nothing to do with you Malibongwe so stay the fuck away from me.” she says and walks away.

He watches as she walks into her changing room and shuts the door.

THIRTY NINE

Madame walks into Betty's room and settles on the couch. Betty looks at her through the mirror with an eyebrow raised. Madame gives her a slight smirk before slowly clapping. Betty rolls her eyes and continues fixing her makeup.

"I am so happy to have you back Betty, you know you've always been the queen of this castle. Without you things haven't been the same but I know now that you're back men are going to come flocking in here. You my Betty are a star." She says getting up.

Betty nods lightly and continues with what she is doing.

"Well I just came in here to tell you that you have a 'welcome back' client and he is waiting for you in the suite. Give him a good time." She says then walks out.

Betty finishes up then heads to the suite with her heart in her stomach. She doesn't know whether or not she will be able to go through with the act but she knows that she has no choice because this is what she signed up for. She gets to the suite and draws a deep breath before opening the door and walking in.

Anger flashes across her face when she finds Malibongwe coolly sitting comfortably on the couch. She can't believe that he has the nerve to come here and act this cool. She chuckles lightly while shaking her head.

"Betty." He says softly.

"You bought a piece huh? So how would you like it?" She says with no emotion whatsoever.

He heaves a sigh and gets up from the couch. He takes a few steps towards her but she motions for him to stop but he doesn't listen. He stands right in front of her and looks her deep in her eyes which are glistening with tears.

"Ngyaxolisa Betty wam. I am so sorry." He says faintly.

It's like he is struggling to piece together that mere sentence. Betty blinks once and tears rush down her beautiful face. He cups her face and wipes her tears with his thumbs but they continue flowing like a river.

"I didn't mean to Betty."

"But you did! You meant to utter those words and you didn't miss a beat. I know I was a prostitute, wait I know that I'm a prostitute and you calling me one didn't hurt me. What hurt me was the fact that I left everything I know and everything that I was comfortable with just for you Bongwe. I gave it all up to pursue a relationship with you and what do you do? You turn around and throw it back in my face. Fuck you spit it back in my face.

I asked you countless times if those thoughts were lingering in your mind and each time, each bloody time you would tell me no. I don't even get what I did that was so big that earned me those punches especially after you threw a fit when your mother came at me in the same manner. I'm cracking my skull trying to figure out how the man that I love and shared a bed with could make me feel so small but you know what it doesn't matter now because we're through and I don't have to worry about anything else.

So Mr Mkhize how would you like your ass served? Would you like me underneath or on top?" Betty asks stepping back.

She takes her lingerie off and stands before him in all her glory. He grunts and turns back to settle on the couch. He is at a loss for words and doesn't know how to even go about fixing things with her.

“You do understand that you’re losing thousands by not utilising my service right?”

“Betty please put your clothes back on.”

“Are we done sir?” She asks.

He shakes his head lightly before heaving a sigh. He wants to grab her and shake her back into reality but he knows that won’t do any good. If anything it will do more harm.

“I love you Betty.”

“Well I’ve walked this life thing without any love being given to me so you sir can keep yours because I don’t need nor do I want it.” She spits out.

She puts her clothes back on then walks out of the room leaving Malibongwe feeling crushed.

Molemo rushes into the lounge shouting Mandy’s name.

“Whoooo uyarasa Molemo yini?”

“I just got off the phone with T, the barman from the club.” She says breathlessly.

“Yeah?”

“He says Betty is back at the club working.”

“That’s impossible, I mean Malinbongwe wouldn’t allow that futhi she said she was done with this life.” Mandy says.

She is confused as to why Betty would go back. She knows they wouldn’t lie about her being back at the club for no reason.

“But T says it’s her sis.” Molemo says softly.

“Okay tell you what, I’ll go check if it really is her but you’ll see there’s probably a mistake or something.” She says getting up.

“But it’s late.” Molemo says.

“I will only be an hour tops nana, I promise okay.”

They share a hug and Mandy rushes to go get dressed. She wonders why Betty would go back to prostituting herself when she’s been in such a good space. She hopes that she will get all the answers to her questions when she gets there.

“Betty.” Mandy says shaking her head.

It’s as if though life has been sucked out of her and she doesn’t know what to do to get it back. Seeing Betty in that skimpy outfit and a full face beat isn’t a scene she thought she would find. She follows her into her room and as soon as they get in and shut the door she

pulls her in for a hug. Betty stands there with tears falling out of her eyes while Mandy rubs her back.

“I don’t know what’s happening B but all I know is that you don’t have to be here. This isn’t your home anymore so please just grab your stuff and let’s go. I promise I will try and fix whatever it is just come with me.” Mandy says trying to keep it together.

She knows her friend and she knows that something is definitely up and it that it has to do with Malibongwe not talking to her. She hopes that Betty will listen and actually go back home with her. Betty pulls herself out of Mandy’s embrace and wipes her tears before giving her a faint smile.

“I love you Mandy. Now go home before you cause problems between oena le Tebogo. I will see you in the morning.”She says softly.

“Betty baby please let me in. Ngtshele ukuthi kwenzenjani.”

“Mandy go. Just go.”

“B.”

“FUCK MANDY DON’T YOU LISTEN? I SAID GO!” Betty roars.

Mandy heaves a sigh and settles on the couch. She knows that it’s just the hurt talking and not her friend. Betty shrugs and grabs her gown then walks out leaving Mandy wondering what the hell is going on.

“Shit baby.” He moans as he thrusts in and out.

Betty lies there beneath him motionless. Her tears are falling down the sides of her face and she lets them. He continues huffing and puffing while she lets out a fake moan here and there. A memory flashes through her mind but she quickly shuts it out as she wishes for this man to finish. A few more thrusts and he releases his content into the condom. He pulls out cleans himself up then gets dressed leaving Betty in the same position.

FORTY

Malibongwe walks into the house and finds his sister and her man cuddling on the couch. He flops himself on the one setter and buries his face in his hands. Melo sits up and looks at him with concern written all over her face.

“What’s wrong baby?” she asks.

“I hurt her real bad. I love her Melo but I said some pretty awful things to her. I was just so angry in that moment and I said things that I can never take back.”

“Did you tell her to fuck off too?” Melo’s man asks.

“Love.” She says softly.

“Baby.” He responds with a warm smile on his face.

She looks at him pleadingly and he heaves a sigh while shaking his head. Melo places a kiss on his cheek before resting her head on his shoulder. He chuckles lightly before kissing her head.

“What happened Malibongwe?” He asks.

Bongwe heaves a sigh and looks up. He finds them looking at him with concerned faces. After the incident on the phone, he came to see his sister and apologised. However her man wasn’t as forgiving because he felt that Bongwe had overstepped his line and that his woman didn’t deserve that kind of disrespect.

“I lost it. We hadn’t spoken in a week and I went to go check on her but she wasn’t there so I waited and waited, I then saw a video of her dancing with some man and I lost it. I couldn’t help it sis. When she came back I just threw the words around and fuck I regret it so bad.”

“Utheni Bongwe?”

“It doesn’t matter. All that matters is the fact that I pushed her away and now she hates me and she’s back in the space that I met her and-” He rubs his face in frustration. “I don’t know how to fix things.” He says faintly.

“Your words can be very lethal Bongwe and that is something we all know. I thought attending therapy would help with all the anger that you possess but it seems like you actually want to be this angry forever. I’m quite surprised that you actually moved on and actually fell in love with someone because you are still holding on to Siyanda and it’s not healthy.” Melo says.

“Have you seen pictures of this girl?” Melo’s man asks her.

She shakes her head lightly.

“Mom told me she was on the news but I didn’t care to research on her.” She says.

He looks at her and nods before turning his attention to Bongwe.

“No one can help you until you actually want to get help. You attended therapy because your mother wanted you to. You did everything because your family suggested it. Now you know I refrain from talking about this situation because I’m not in a position to actually understand just how much you loved Siyanda but you have tried to make me get it and I get it. You loved her as much if not more than I love your sister but that doesn’t give you the right to try and use some girl to fill the void. If you love this girl, love her for the person she is and not because you know. Is that what attracted you to her in the first place?” He asks.

“Initially but as time went by I got intrigued by her and as I got to know her, I fell in love with her not because I want to replace Siyanda ngaye but because I genuinely want to spend my days with her, loving her, protecting her and everything.” Bongwe says

“Have you tried to reach out to her?” Melo asks.

“I have but she told me to stay away and I don’t know what to do.”

“Give her space and once she has calmed down then you can talk to her.”

Bongwe nods in acknowledgement. He knows that Betty will not calm down anytime soon but he hopes that when she does it won’t be too late to save their relationship.

Betty is at home lying in bed while cuddling with her pillow. Her tears are flowing freely down her cheeks. Her heart has been trampled upon and she feels like there is no coming back from such. All she wants to do now is either dig a hole and bury herself or continue prostituting until she feels nothing.

Her phone rings and she reaches over for it.

“Mandy.” She answers softly.

“Are you home?” Mandy asks.

“Yeah.”

"Come open."

"I want to be alone." Betty responds.

"You won't even know that I am here, now please come open baby."

"Okay." She says then hangs up.

Betty gets out of bed and drags herself across the apartment to go open the door. She opens the door for Mandy before dragging herself back to the bedroom. Mandy walks in and kicks her shoes off before climbing into bed. She pulls Betty in for a hug and rubs her back until she hears her sniffs.

"I don't know what is happening but all I know is that I'm here for you and that I love you. We're going to get through it all B, you know I'd do through hell for you and if this is it then I'm ready."

"Why is life so unfair?" Betty asks softly.

"Unfortunately that's just how it was meant to be."

"I'm just tired Mandy. I'm tired of being unloved. I'm tired of being trampled on. I'm tired of being used. I'm just tired."

"Is that why you went back to the club?"

"I went back to the club because I enjoyed it. I loved the freedom. I loved the fact that I can be myself in that space." Betty says.

“You used the word loved.”

“It’s all the same Mandy. That’s my home. That’s where I belong. That’s where I am most accepted.”

“I’m going to keep quiet for now but best believe you will quit working there. Actually where’s Mr Dance?”

“We broke up.” Betty says dismissively.

She doesn’t want to tell Mandy that they broke up on the night they went clubbing because she might just blame herself. A part of her believes that whether or not she had gone to the club something like this would’ve still transpired.

“Why?” She asks.

“Ai it’s a long story. Can I just sleep a bit, I have to be at the club at 10PM.” Betty says.

Mandy attempts to say something but decides against it. They reposition and Betty goes straight to dream land while Mandy stays up wondering how she is going to help her friend.

Ntate Moloi looks around before dialling a number on his phone. It rings for a while before someone answers.

“Hello.”

“Dumela.”

“Oh hi how are you?”

“I’m okay and you?”

“I’m alright. What do you want?”

Ntate Moloji heaves a sigh and pauses for a while. He is wrestling with himself on whether to tell her or not.

“Our daughter needs you.” He says.

FORTY ONE

Malibongwe sits in the crowd and watches as Betty shakes her ass for all the men in the room. His heart breaks at the thought of being the one who pushed her back into this life. She struts over to one of the men in the space and settles on his lap. He grabs her ass tightly and she giggles even resting her head on his shoulder. Bongwe looks on with a hard face and his jaws clenched. He has the right mind of getting up and beating that man to a pulp but he knows that will push Betty further away so he sits there and watches as he continues to feel on the woman he loves.

Molemo and Bongani are at the park having a picnic. She was nervous at first but as always Mandy assured her that she was just one phone call away. Mandy wanted to meet Bongani before they became too serious so he fetched Molemo at the apartment. Mandy isn't as sure yet about the guy but she is giving him the benefit of the doubt.

"So you say you matriculated when you were 16?" He asks Molemo.

"Yeah I started school early."

"Wow I've just never met anyone who finished school early. Hmmm."

"When did you know that the arts were for you?" She asks.

He smiles lightly before chuckling while shaking his head.

"I used to draw at school but I wasn't so into it but as time went on I put more effort into it and by the time I got to matric I was a frequent visitor at art galleries. When it was time for

me to go to varsity I knew exactly what I wanted to do. The journey has been slow but it's worth it." He says with a broad smile on his face.

Molemo looks up at him with nothing but admiration in her eyes. She can't believe that she has found herself a man with vision and passion when they're so hard to come by. A part of her believes that it's too good to be true but she doesn't want to jinx anything by having negative thoughts.

"So you're like the next Picasso huh?" She says giggling.

He chuckles lightly and pulls her in for a kiss. She has come to enjoy her kisses with Bongani. At first she was shy and self-conscious however as the days are passing by she is getting more and more comfortable with having his hands on her and his lips on hers. She scoots closer and settles on his lap while he tightens his hold around her waist pulling her closer. He deepens the kiss and she moans in his mouth causing him to groan. Molemo pulls out of the kiss and buries her face on his neck and he chuckles lightly. He loves just how shy she is

"Baby did you hear anything I said?" Tebogo says snapping Mandy out of her thoughts.

She turns to look at him and finds him looking at her with concern written all over his face. She heaves a sigh and buries her face in her hands. She is thinking about Betty, who she is pretty sure is resting before her shift starts tonight. She's thinking of ways she can help her but she is coming up short every time. She feels so helpless. Like she is a bad friend because Betty was the one that convinced her to get out of this life but she can't do the same for her.

"Baby what's wrong?" Tebogo asks pulling her into his arms.

"I feel like such a horrible friend right now." She says softly.

“Why?”

“Betty is just going through some things and I can’t help her. I don’t know how to help her and it’s frustrating me so much baby.” She says faintly.

“Is there anything I can do to help?” He asks.

She shakes her head lightly and heaves a sigh.

“I don’t think there’s anything anyone can do to help her. All I can do is be there for her and hope that will be enough.”

“Your being there for her will be enough for her. Do you want to go spend the night with her?” He asks.

“Yes baby.” Mandy whispers.

“Okay. Get dressed so I can drop you off.”

“You’re such an understanding man baby.”

“I just love you. Now let’s go be there for Betty, ebile we should get you guys a lot of junk akere.”

“I love you Tebogo.” She places a kiss on his lips before heading to the bedroom to get ready.

“Thandeka.”

“Moloi.” She greets as she settles on the chair.

After he called her she made her way to the Free State and they’re having a meeting at his office. Thandeka jumped at the chance of being a present mother in her child’s life. She knows that it’s going to be difficult but she is willing to put in the work. The first time she reached out to Moloi was when Betty was 18. She wanted to be part of Betty’s life but Moleboheng didn’t want that. She threatened to leave nstate Moloi so he chose to stand with his wife.

“You look beautiful.” He says mesmerised.

She rolls her eyes and leans back on her seat.

“Where is my daughter?”

“In Johannesburg. Betty is living the kind of life that no parent would be proud to have their child live.” Ntate Moloi says sounding defeated.

“When I left my daughter in your care I asked you for one thing and that was to take care of her. I asked you to take care of OUR daughter. The product of the love we shared kodwa you couldn’t do that. I know for certain that Moleboheng didn’t treat my child as her own and I am also certain that as the weakling you are you just let her.”

“I am not a weakling Thandeka.” Ntate Moloi roars.

“Oh please, you showed just how she has you wrapped around her skirt all those years back but it doesn’t matter now. All I want is to know where my child is.”

Ntate Moloi looks at Thandeka softly. Even after all these years of not seeing her, he is still madly in love with her. Deep down he knows that he was supposed to end up with her.

“I have never stopped loving you Thandeka. I loved you and you just disappeared on me. To this day I don’t know your reasons for deciding to just leave me without telling me that you’re carrying my child.”

“I left because I didn’t want to ruin things for you. You were growing in your career and I didn’t want you to worry about me and this child but I came back and I found out that you were married and that everything we shared was a lie. You lied to me, you made me believe that I was the only one in your life but you lied to me. I love you but you lied and you broke my heart and now it seems like you broke our daughter’s heart as well.”She says.

“You love me?” He asks sounding hopeful.

“Is that all you heard? Argh just give me Betty’s address and let me go get my daughter.”

“I was just about to leave.” Betty says as Mandy walks in.

“I know you’ve made up your mind and I will respect that but all I ask is that you spend tonight with me please. I need a friend right now B and you’re that friend.” Mandy says hoping that Betty will buy what she is selling.

“What’s wrong?” Betty asks sounding concerned.

Mandy bursts into tears alarming Betty who makes her way towards her and pulls her in for a hug. She has wanted to cry for a while and what better time than when Betty wants to go to the club.

FORTY TWO

“So Tebogo said he’ll talk to his friends but then who’s going to walk me down the aisle B? Who is going to help me on this new journey? Ngizolayelwa ngubani? A woman is supposed to be ushered into her marriage by women who have walked this journey but I have no one. I have no family B.” She says while Betty brushes her hair.

She has her head rested on Betty’s thighs. After she burst into tears Betty led them to the couch where Mandy continued to cry while Betty comforted her. After a while she finally pulled herself together and Betty managed to call the club and let them know that she would be in for the day shift. Mandy was disappointed but she was glad that she was able to keep her home while she works on a plan to get her out of that life for good.

“You have me baby and that’s all you need Mandy. We’ve had each other’s backs for so long and that will never change. Sure I don’t know much about marriage but I do know that you and Tebogo love each other dearly. I know that you are going to do your utmost best to be the best wife to him, yes you will make mistakes along the way but the love that you have for each other will sustain you while you educate each other on certain things.

The beauty of marriage is in the getting to know each other on a much deeper and more personal level and no adult or married person can tell you how to do that hobane what worked for them will definitely not work for you because these men aren’t the same. So yes hobohloko hobane ha hona an elder who can help and guide you through the process empa even if there was the main and most important thing will be that at the end of the day you will be standing there as one with your perfect match.

“I’ve got your back. We will hire these actors for the part ya mahadi. I will walk you down the aisle and still be your bridesmaid if need be.”

“Maid of honour.” Mandy corrects her.

“Maid of honour.” Betty says with a smile plastered across her face.

“I love you B and as much as you’ve got my back, I’ve got yours and whatever it is that you’re facing is mine to face as well.”

“I know babe.”

“So let me in Betty please.”

“Ke sharp Mandy. It’s just the breakup messed me up pretty bad you know. I loved that man and I honestly thought he was my home, my safe space but I guess I was wrong. I really thought I would get my Cinderella happily ever after story and all but I’ve come to understand that happy isn’t a word that can be used in the same sentence as a reject like myself.” Betty says.

“Now you stop right there!” Mandy says angrily. “You are not a reject. You are my beautiful, gorgeous, kind hearted, all that more Betty. You are my go to person. The word reject doesn’t even deserve to be in the same line as your name so you take that back!”

“Mandy you don’t understand.”

“Because you’re not telling me anything Betty. All I know is that you cannot call yourself such words because you broke up with Mr Dance. Sure he is sexy and an all round amazing human being but he isn’t God.”

Betty heaves a sigh as her thoughts drift off to the night Malibongwe crushed her soul. A part of her wants to forgive him and give him a chance to fully explain himself but another part of her believes that given the chance he would do the exact same thing again.

She misses him and all she yearns for is to be in his arms. It’s quite funny how the one who crushes or breaks your heart is the very same one you want to comfort you. You want him to hold you and tell you everything will be alright while kissing on you.

“I miss him but I know that as time goes on it will hurt less.” Betty says.

“So there’s absolutely no way that you two will fix things?”

“Right now? No. Maybe in the future however with the way that I’m feeling right now I don’t think there is a chance for us. I love him wholeheartedly yes but ah ah I can’t put myself in that position again.”

“I just want you to be happy B and if that means you without Mr Mystery then I’m down for that but if it also means you forgiving him for whatever it is that he did then you now I’m with you on that as well. All I want is for you to be happy.”

“I know and I appreciate you for that. Anyway do you want to stuff your face?”

“I thought you’d never ask.” Mandy says jumping up to her feet and making her way to the kitchen.

Betty chuckles lightly and follows suit. She appreciates Mandy for always having her back. She knows that friends like her don’t come around often and she plans on holding tightly for as long as she lives.

Molemo is in her bedroom studying when her phone snaps her out of her session. She smiles when she sees who is dialling her.

“Baby.” She says softly.

“How are you love?”

“I’m fine and you?”

“I’m good, just missing you.” He says chuckling.

Molemo bites her lip while blushing. She misses him too and wishes she could spend more time with him. Her heart feels as if though it is on the verge of exploding with the amount of love and happiness dwelling in it. She wants to do any and everything to ensure that her man remains happy at all times.

“I miss you too.” She responds shyly.

“How about you spend the weekend at my place?” He asks.

Her heart begins to beat uncontrollably. She has never shared a bed with a man before and she knows what could possibly happen should she sleepover. She isn’t ready to take that step as yet.

“I don’t know.” She responds honestly.

“Look nothing is going to happen I swear. I just want to snuggle up on the couch with you while watching a movie or something.” He says.

She trusts him and she believes that he will stick to his word and not pressurize her into something that she isn’t ready to do.

“Okay ke.”

Betty walks into her change room and finds a bouquet of roses waiting for her. She reads the cards and frowns when she sees who they're from.

'I'm sorry my Beautiful Betty. I love you. Malibongwe.'

The card reads. She tosses it aside and begins to get ready for the day. After a night of gossip and girl talk they went to bed in the wee hours of the morning. Mandy was knocked out when Betty woke up so she used that time to bath and get ready for the day. She knows that Mandy will be furious when she realises that she is not there but she had to come to work.

Madame walks in and gives her her instructions for the day. She only has one client which will be an hour before the end of her shift later on in the day. She will be dancing throughout the entire day though which is fine by her. She gets ready then makes her way to the main stage for her show.

As she gets onto the stage she locks eyes with Malibongwe who is looking at her pleadingly. She wants to get off of the stage and run into his arms but she pulls herself together and gets on with the task at hand. With whistles and cheers all around her, she gets on the pole and works her magic.

"Whooooo baby I can't wait to have you that wide open with my dick buried deep inside you." One man screams.

Malibongwe clenches his jaws at that remark and at the fact that Betty blows a kiss to that man.

Betty is bouncing up and down this man's dick while his hands have her perfect breasts cupped. He is groaning while Betty is breathing heavily. A few more bounces and he comes undone.

"I swear you're my go to girl now." He says lazily.

Betty gives him a faint smile while she gets dressed. He reaches for his wallet and gives her a handsome tip which earns him a kiss on the cheek.

"Bye lover man." She says as she walks out leaving him feeling like she owns him.

Betty makes her way into her building after a long day at work. The security at reception makes his way towards her and she stops and looks at him.

"How are you ma'am?" He asks.

"I'm okay and you?"

"Well thank you. That lady over there has been waiting for you the whole day." He says pointing at a woman Betty doesn't recognise.

She thanks him then makes her way towards the woman with her heart in her stomach. She hopes that she isn't one of her client's wives who came to accuse her of all sorts of things.

"Hi." She greets.

The woman looks up and gasps when she sees Betty. She stands up and looks at her with tears shining in her eyes.

“You’re so beautiful.” She says.

Betty lets out an awkward thank you. She has never seen this woman before and she is making her feel uneasy with her behaviour.

“Oh I’m sorry, erm, there is no easy way to say this. My name is Thandeka, I’m your mother.” She says awkwardly.

FORTY THREE

Betty frowns as she looks at this woman who just dealt her a huge blow. She looks her up and down before laughing out loud which catches Thandeka completely off guard. Thandeka stands there awkwardly waiting for her daughter to calm down. Betty eventually gathers herself then lets out a loud sigh.

The two ladies are staring at each other with so much intensity that a passenger by can tell that something deep is happening. Thandeka is nervously waiting for Betty to say something while Betty just looks at her. She doesn't know what to say to this woman who is standing before her claiming to be her mother. As much as she knows that her mother is somewhere out there, she didn't expect her to just pitch on her door step unannounced.

"I don't have a mother." Betty says before turning around and walking away.

Thandeka rushes after her and grabs her from behind but Betty yanks her hand out off Thandeka's hold.

"DON'T TOUCH ME!" She yells startling Thandeka.

"I'm sorry." Thandeka says softly.

"Good. Now please leave this building and don't look back." Betty says calling for the elevator.

"Betty please just hear me out. That's all I ask for my baby, a chance ngyakucela sthandwa sami." Thandeka says pleadingly.

Betty fights to push back her tears as she waits for the elevator which seems to be taking forever to come down. Thandeka stands there looking on with a broken heart. Her baby girl refuses to acknowledge her presence. She knew coming here that it wouldn't be easy but she didn't realise that it would hurt this much.

"Fuck man." Betty shouts then kicks the elevator doors.

She turns around and rushes towards the stairs then makes her way up leaving Thandeka standing there crushed. Thandeka walks back to the couch she was sitting on and settles while dialing nTate Moloji. The phone rings unanswered but she tries again, and again, and again until he eventually answers.

"Thandeka." He answers in a whisper.

"She's angry. She hates me Tebello, my daughter hates me." She says with tears rolling down her face.

"What happened?" He asks.

"She told me that she doesn't have a mother. She told me to basically get lost. I just want to explain to her."

"Don't cry rato laka, I'll call her okay but please don't cry." Ntate Moloji says sadly.

Thandeka nods forgetting that he can't see her.

"Moloji o etsang ka mo?" Moleboheng shouts.

"I have to go but I will call her. I love you." He says before hanging.

Thandeka buries her face and her hands and lets her tears run. She prays that Moloji can get through to Betty.

Betty steps into her place and throws her bag across the room. She makes her way to her cellar and grabs a bottle of gin and gulps down a sip straight from the bottle. She kicks off her shoes in there then makes her way to the living room. Her mind is racing with a million thoughts but the main one being, why is Thandeka only making her entrance into her life now. She takes another sip before breaking out into loud laughter.

Her phone rings but she decides to ignore it until it begins to irritate her and she makes her way to her bag and answers it.

“Ntate nka o thusa?” She answers.

“Betty ngoanaka.”

“Ntate what do you want?”

“Thandeka tells me she is there.” Ntate Moloji says.

Betty chuckles lightly while shaking her head.

“So your girlfriend called to tell you that I turned her away. He he he must be nice watseba.” Betty says laughing.

"I understand that you're angry my child and you are allowed to be but please Betty just listen to what she has to say. She travelled all the way just for you and it would crush her to have to leave having not spoken to you. Please ngoanaka ka kopo hle." Ntate Moloji says humbly.

Betty shakes her head with tears falling out her eyes. Her heart wants to hear Thandeka out but her head is very stubborn.

"Please ngoanaka and if after this you want nothing to do with her then I will support your decision." He adds on.

"Okay." She says faintly.

"Thank you and Betty?"

"Yeah."

"I-"

Ntate Moloji stutters a bit before telling her that he has to go. He hangs up abruptly leaving Betty shocked. She places her phone down on the counter then takes another gulp hoping that it might calm her down but it doesn't. She attempts to psyche herself up but the words seem to fail her. After a few more sips she heads down to go face the woman who birthed her.

Thandeka quickly gets up when she sees Betty approaching. Betty gets to her and looks at her with nothing but anger written all over her face. She'd played out the meeting between herself and her mother a million times before in her head and this scenario never played out

in her head. She'd always assumed that they would run into each other's arms and all would be right in the world but unfortunately that isn't the case.

"You only have 10 minutes." Betty says then turns around and walks away.

Thandeka grabs her bag and follows her into the elevator where they make their way up in awkward silence. The doors open up into Betty's apartment and they step in. She leads them to the couch and they settle there in silence for a few minutes until Thandeka gathers the strength to speak.

"You're so beautiful Betty wami."

"I'm not yours." Betty shoots out.

"Betty." Thandeka says softly.

"If I was yours you wouldn't have left me but to prove that I am not, you did."

"I had no choice sthandwa sam."

"BUT YOU DID AND YOU CHOSE THE EASY WAY OUT." Betty roars shocking Thandeka.

"If there was any other way my baby I would've taken it."

"YOU were a coward."

"Betty."

“You said you wanted to talk, so talk.” Betty says leaning back on the couch.

Tebello had let Thandeka in on the fact that Betty can be a fire cracker sometimes but what she is witnessing is the whole volcano however she is willing to sit here and take it if it means getting the chance to work on a relationship with Betty.

“I know you have a lot of questions and I promise that I will answer all of them. I just firstly wanted to start off by saying that I am sorry for letting you sthandwa sam and if there was another way believe me I would’ve taken it.

I know you might be thinking that I left you because your father was married but that’s not the case. I left you with your father because I wanted a better life for you, a life that I could never be able to afford you. I was unemployed, depressed and on the verge of suicide and I did not for the life of me want to leave you abandoned. When I left you with your father I knew that he would take care of you and love you wholeheartedly because you were our precious love child.

I knew that financially you would be secure and that’s what I wanted. I was living in a very unsafe environment and as much as at that time all I craved for was death, I loved you enough to want what was best for you.”

“Only it wasn’t best for me Thandeka. You threw me into the worst environment a child could ever find themselves in.” Betty says chuckling. “You know the type of person your sister is.”

“Moleboheng has always thought she was better than everyone else but she was always loving. I thought you were in good and capable hands sthandwa sam.”

“You should’ve taken me with you Thandeka. Killed me if you wanted to kill me but you should’ve taken me with.” Betty says softly.

“I am sorry. I am so sorry my baby. Please forgive me sthandwa sam. Ngyakcela.”

FORTY FOUR

Thandeka and Betty have been sitting in silence for a while with both their thoughts raging. Betty has a lot to ask and say but her heart is filled with so much anger that she feels should she open her mouth to speak the earth would shake. Thandeka on the other hand realises and understands that she needs to put in a lot of work before Betty can utter the words 'I forgive you'

"When you left me, was your sister happy? Did she look at my innocent face and see a child who knew nothing and didn't ask to even see the world? Did she promise to love and protect me with her all or was she disgusted by the product of her husband's infidelity? Did she see a mini Thandeka that she would torture just so her husband could feel the pain she felt?" Betty asks softly.

Thandeka snaps her head up so quickly that she even feels she could've twisted it. She moves closer to Betty and attempts to pull her in her arms but Betty shrugs her off.

"I'm sorry." She whispers.

Betty remains staring into space with tears falling down her face.

"What did Moleboheng do to you?" thandeka asks hoping that Betty will answer.

"She just never loved me." Betty says faintly.

"Did she mistreat you?" Thandeka asks.

"I was raised by the house help while ntate and his wife were going around campaigning and taking holidays. Your sister was just my mother ka lebitso fela empa she was never a

mother by action. As I got older she couldn't keep it together anymore and she would just spew out whatever hit her tongue first and your boyfriend ena he just stood by,"

"Betty."

"I'd always imagined how I would feel meeting my biological mother and this isn't it. I hate you so much Thandeka because looking at you now you seem to be in a good space in life. I understand it would've been harder to get there with me but maybe I would've been the push you needed to work on yourself quicker."

"Sthandwa sami." Thandeka says faintly with tears rolling down her cheeks.

Hearing the words 'I hate you' roll off of Betty's tongue just hit a nerve in her that she never thought existed. She wants the earth to open up and swallow her never spitting her out again.

"You want to know why I feel this way? Let me tell you about my upbringing oena Thandeka. While you were out there doing whatever it is to try and get yourself back on your feet, I spent my days crying. Sure I had it all, the money, I was always fed and clothed and I never laced for anything materially however emotionally I was never nurtured.

My own father has never embraced me warmly. He's never told me he loves me. He has never taken his time out to actually find out just what is happening with his Betty. While you were out there finding your smile, I was stuck in that house with a mother that didn't care for me. A mother who had my father wrapped up around her finger that t was almost impossible for me to even get a greeting out of him.

Your sister oena Thandeka brushed me off when I told her that ntate's friend was making me uncomfortable. She told me I was being dramatic and that I was seeking for attention in a horrible way. You see-"

"Betty my baby please stop." Thandeka says shaking her head.

Her heart can't take anymore of Betty's revelations.

"I was 15 when I lost my virginity and no, I didn't give it to a boyfriend but the very same man whom I had tried to tell my supposed mother about took it from me. He raped me in my own home then went to go dine with my parents like nothing happened. I had to see this man every other day and I couldn't react because when I told your sister about this again she brushed me off. Told me if I wanted nstate to lose his career then I would go and spread these vile lies.

He'd come to what was supposed to be my home and touch me inappropriately with my so called parents in the next room. I was just a baby Thandeka and I had no one to cry to. I had no one to comfort me and tell me that they'd fight tooth and nail to ensure that justice was served. I had no one but myself and I couldn't fight for me because I felt unworthy.

SO WHILE YOU WERE OUT THERE SORTING YOUR SHIT OUT, I WAS GROWING UP TO BE PROSTITUTE." Betty says chuckling.

Thandeka feels as if though an arrow has been shot through her heart. She is struggling to process everything that Betty has just revealed. Her natural reaction is to wail however she is fighting hard to keep it together for Betty's sake.

"When I found out about you the first time in high school I prayed that you would fight harder but you let her win, AGAIN. You and nstate let that woman win on so many occasions like I wasn't your child. Nstate said I am your love child but none of you have done anything to protect that precious love you claim to have shared."

"Betty I-" Thandeka attempts to speak but words fail her.

"It's okay Thandeka. Anyway." She says getting up. "Let me go call work and see if I can put in another shift." Betty says walking away leaving Thandeka crushed and stunned.

FORTY FIVE

Betty has just taken a bath and is getting ready to leave for the club when Thandeka walks into her bedroom with tears in her eyes. She makes herself comfortable and watches as Betty does her make up before putting on her shoes. She has a lot to say about what her daughter just revealed however she isn't sure how to go about it because she knows that Betty is still hurting and that she most probably blames her for the situation she found herself in.

"I'm leaving for work so I'm sure you know your way back to your hotel." Betty says getting up.

"Oh where do you work?" Thandeka asks.

"Your boyfriend didn't tell you that I'm a prostitute?" Betty shoots back.

Thandeka chuckles lightly while shaking her head. She remembers seeing the Betty scandal on the news but she brushed it off as an attempt for ruin Moloji's name. In her mind she assumed that her daughter was living a good and straight life with her parents.

"Oh okay. I assume you strip as well."

"Yes."

"Am I allowed to come and watch?" Thandeka asks shocking Betty.

She doesn't understand why her 'mother' would want to see her in that position. She nods lightly and grabs her bag. Thandeka wants to establish trust between herself and Betty and

she knows she will not get anywhere by forcing her to quit this life. Her plan is befriend Betty before she tries to play the role of a mother.

They walk out and get in the elevator in silence. Thandeka is somewhat hoping that Betty will grow a conscience and decide to stay home instead. As the lift doors open Betty spots Bongwe chatting to the security guard. She draws a deep breath and releases it before stepping out.

“Betty.” He says striding towards her.

Betty shakes her head and continues walking.

“Betty sthandwa sam nyakcela.” He says taking her hand in his.

Thandeka is watching on with questions running through her mind. She wonders if this is one of her clients or her boyfriend. She steps back and watches the interaction in amusement.

“Malibongwe please let go of my hand.”

“Not until you give me a chance to talk to you Betty.”

“Well I don’t have anything to say to you Malibongwe. SO PLEASE LET GO OF MY HAND!”

“STOP BEING FUCKEN STUBBORN BETTY AND JUST HEAR ME OUT. NOW I UNDERSTAND THAT I CROSSED THE LINE IN THE MANNER THAT I ADDRESSED YOU BUT DAMMIT WOMAN I LOVE YOU. So please just give me a chance.”

Betty is looking at him with a soft expression on her face. She can tell that he meant it when he said he loves her but her heart cannot get over all the vile words he spit out. The worst being that he compared her to someone she doesn't even know. That hurt her more than him calling her a slut and all those other words.

Malibongwe pulls Betty into his arms and holds onto her tightly. She heaves a sigh before wrapping her arms around his waist which brings a smile on his face. He has just made a lot of progress with her and he knows it.

"I'm really sorry baby." He whispers.

"I have to go to work Bongwe." She says faintly.

Malibongwe frowns and tightens his grip around her body with his heart beating uncontrollably fast. Betty attempts to untangle herself from his tight hold but he just tightens it even further. He hates the fact that she is back at the club because of him.

"Whatever you want me to do Betty, I'll do it just please don't go back to that place, please Betty wam."

"You hurt me." She says softly.

"I know and I will spend the rest of my life trying to make it up to you. I'm so sorry Betty."

"How do I trust you with my heart again when you made me feel so worthless after you created this shelter for me to dwell in? You made me feel safe only to snatch the carpet from up under my feet. I don't think I'll ever be free around you anymore." She says genuinely.

Bongwe heaves a sigh and kisses her forehead. He understands that his words did real damage. Damage that will not be fixed in a day however he is willing to put in the work, as long as she is back in his life.

“Can we go talk inside please?” He pleads.

“Okay.” She says softly.

They walk off but Betty remembers that Thandeka came down with her. She makes her way towards her.

“Do you need me to call a cab for you?” Betty asks.

“No it’s fine I’ll find my way but can I see you tomorrow?”

“I don’t know Thandeka.”

“Betty please. Just an hour of your time.”

“Fine.” Betty says walking away.

Thandeka frowns when she catches Malibongwe looking at her with intensity. She brushes it off as a caring boyfriend who is just wondering what is going on. She grabs her bag and makes her way out after calling for a cab.

Thandeka has been trying to call Moloji to no avail. She told herself that she will call until he answers even if that means him getting in trouble with his wife. He eventually answers just as Thandeka is about to hang up and call back.

“Thandeka.”

“How the hell could you allow your wife to break our daughter like this?” Thandeka asks trying to keep her composure.

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that my daughter was molested and raped in your house and your wife knew about it.” She says with her voice slightly cracking.

“What?” Moloji says softly.

“My daughter is so broken and for that I will never, ever forgive you.”

“Did you just say that Betty was raped?”

“I regret ever being with you because if I hadn’t been with you Betty wouldn’t have been conceived and she wouldn’t have had to go through the hell that she has been through.” She says angrily.

“Thandeka.” Moloji says faintly.

“I’m back now so tell your wife to stay the hell away from my daughter because if she doesn’t I will personally deal with her.” She says before hanging up.

Betty and Malibongwe are sitting on the couch with neither of them saying anything to the other. Malibongwe's mind is still on the woman that Betty was talking to.

"Who is that woman?" He finally asks.

"Which woman?"

"The one you were talking to."

"That's my biological mother." She answers.

Malibongwe nods lightly before heaving a sigh.

"Has she been in your life for long?"

"No I actually just met her tonight." She says shrugging.

"How do you feel about that?"

"I don't know. I've always thought that I would be happy to meet her but that wasn't the case. My meeting her opened up some old wounds that I would've liked to stay closed and now I have to deal with them again. Meeting her is worse than finding out that mme isn't my biological mother." Betty says.

"You don't mean that Betty."

“I do and I don’t want to talk about this. You said you wanted to talk, so talk.”

Bongwe rubs his face in frustration. He knows that it is going to be a heavy task to try and get her to give him another change.

“I messed up... Big time and I am sorry about that. I have no excuse for my actions that day but I am truly sorry. I love you Betty and I want to spend my life with you. Please just give me another chance to prove myself to you. I beg you sthandwa sam. Just one final chance.”
He says.

FORTY SIX

Molemo is waiting for Bongani to pick her up for their weekend together which was supposed to happen last week but they had to cancel those plans because Bongani had an emergency to attend to. This is the first time that Molemo is spending the entire weekend with a male companion and she is nervous. She has already worked out in her head that they will probably engage in intercourse but she is hoping that things don't go that far because as much as she knows it might happen, she isn't as ready as she thinks.

Bongani calls to let Molemo know that he is downstairs and she excitedly grabs her bag and rushes out of her room. Mandy and Tebogo are relaxing on the couch in the living room in each other's embrace.

"I'm leaving now." Molemo announces.

"CONDOM Molemo." Mandy shouts and Molemo chuckles nervously.

Mandy and Betty both have had this conversation with her however hearing Mandy yell out the word condom at her makes her nervous. Tebogo chuckles lightly making Molemo feel shy and embarrassed.

"Baby I think Molemo isn't irresponsible, akere Molemo?" Tebogo says.

"Yes." She responds softly.

"I'm just saying be safe baby please and if you feel uncomfortable in any way please call and I will be there in a flash." Mandy says.

"I promise you. Okay let me go. Bye bye."

“Sharp.”

“Bye baby.”

Molemo rushes out leaving Betty worried.

“She’ll be fine baby.” Tebogo tries to assure Mandy.

“She’s young and in love and I know how boys operate. He’s going to manipulate her and because she doesn’t know any better she is going to give in and I hope and pray that she doesn’t regret it. I hope that I never have to comfort her because of this boy.”

“Baby.”

“The world is a cruel place and you men make it harder. Molemo has been through a lot and being played by a guy isn’t something that I want her to experience.”

“We’ll go break his knees together ne love?” Tebogo says stifling a laugh.

“It’s not funny babe.”

“I know I know but really Molemo is grown and trust that she will make the right decision okay.”

“Yeah yeah.” Mandy says then snuggles closer to Tebogo.

Betty finishes getting dressed, grabs her bag and heads out. She is meeting with Malibongwe for lunch and she doesn't know what answer she is going to give to him. It's been over a week since he apologised and they have been talking every day since then. A huge part of her is leaning towards forgiving him because in her little world, apart from Mandy, he is the only other person who has always been on her side.

He has been her strength in the most difficult of times and it seems as if though he is right on time once more. They've touched on the Thandeka issue and Bongwe has tried to get Betty to see things from Thandeka's perspective but she isn't having that. She is too angry and hurt to consider forgiving Thandeka even though she has been keeping in touch with her. So much so that Thandeka is planning on spending the night at Betty's tomorrow. As stubborn as Betty is, she wants to one day have that mother – daughter relationship that she has never had.

Malibongwe heaves a sigh of relief when he sees Betty walk out of the building. A huge part of him believed that she would stand him up, so seeing her walk out of those doors looking like a dream calms his raging thoughts. He steps out of the car and opens his arms for her which she gladly steps into. They hold onto each other for a while with none of them willing to let the other go.

"You smell so amazing." Bongwe whispers.

"You feel so good." She says back causing him to smile widely.

They eventually break their embrace, get in the car and drive off. Betty's mind is racing with different scenarios of how the evening is going to play out. It's either both of them are going to walk out of that restaurant with their hearts shattered or mended. Malibongwe's phone rings snapping Betty out of her thoughts.

"Princess." He answers with a smile on his face.

“You call me princess but you don’t even spend time with me anymore. What did I do to you Wewe? Did I perhaps wrong you on some way? Make me understand.” She says softly.

Malibongwe heaves a sigh. He knows how emotional she can get at times.

“Khanyisile Langalakhe Mkhize. Firstly I love how matured you sound right now. Now I’m sorry I haven’t been spending time with you, it’s just that things have been so hectic and I haven’t been feeling too good and you know how I feel about seeing you when I’m not that great.”

“Firstly I love you a mess or not. You’re my big brother Wewe and yes I may be young and not understand a whole lot but you know you can’t put me in the same box as all those other eleven year olds.”

“I know baby okay I’m sorry ne and I promise that I will try and come see you this weekend.”

“Thank you. So why haven’t you been feeling well, is it the baby?” Khanyi ask.

“Baby? What baby?”

“Mom is calling me. I love you and I’ll see you tomorrow.” She says quickly before hanging up.

Betty turns to look at Malibongwe with her questions clearly visible on her face.

“My loud mouth baby sister. You’ll love her.” He says turning to look at her with a smile on his face.

“She doesn’t sound eleven like she said.”

“She’s gifted so at times she comes across a little wiser than most in her age group.”
Bongwe says.

“Hmm I see.”

They drive the rest of the way in silence. They arrive at the restaurant and make their way in.

“I miss you, I won’t lie about that but I can’t get over the things that you said to me Bongwe. You hurt me so much and I don’t think that I will be able to be me around you anymore because I will always be anticipating you to blow up in that manner again. What you did was uncalled for Bongwe. You knew I was a disgusting prostitute when you decided to sleep with me then claim me. So why did you have to throw that in my face during you explosive moment?”

Then there’s your mother. There is absolutely no way that she will accept me, I saw it in her eyes and I don’t want you to have to be caught in between the two of us. Kamo nna le nna I’m having mommy issues of my own. It’s just a lot is going on. As much as you are my safe place I don’t know if I want to come running into your arms right now.” Betty says calmly.

Malibongwe’s expression is hard to read which is worrying Betty. She knows just how he can blow up now and she is afraid he will do it in public.

“I understand your concerns baby but we can make it work. We’re both fucked up people and before that incident we were making it work for us and I truly believe that we still can. I promise that I will never address you in anger again. I will walk away calm my thoughts and come back once I have calmed down then we can talk about whatever it is.

With my mother, she'll come around once she realised just how special our relationship is. Betty I love you and I don't want to lose you. I will work my fucken ass off just so I can regain your trust."

"Bongwe."

"Betty." He says pleadingly.

Betty heaves a sigh before slightly shaking her head.

FORTY SEVEN

Malibongwe lies in bed with his mind on Betty and everything she said to him during their meeting. She made it very clear to him that she would not get back together with him unless they sit down and unpack their feelings. She brought up the fact that he compared her to someone else which to her meant that he was still in love with her and was trying to replace her. She also made it clear that should they get back together that she would not hesitate to leave him should the need arise.

He then also had the chance to bring up his conditions and the main one was the fact that she runs back to prostitution whenever things get tough. He let her know just how tough it is for him to sit in the crowd and watch on as every man fantasises about her. He then apologised for everything that transpired between them and promised that he would be mindful of his words in future arguments.

His phone rings disturbing his quiet moment. A smile creeps up onto his face when he sees his sister's name flashing on the screen.

"Melo."

"Wewe wabo how are you?"

"I'm fine and you?"

"I'm good. Listen would it be possible for you to come by today? I wanted to talk to you about something."

"You sound a bit off what's wrong?" He asks sitting up.

His sister is his everything and she has played a vital role in getting him into this place that he is in now. When he had his suicidal episodes she would be the one holding him and assuring him that tomorrow would be a better day.

“No there’s nothing wrong. Wena just come. You boys will braai and we’ll have a good time.”

“Okay then I’ll see you later.”

“I love you.”

“I love you too Melo.” He says before hanging up.

He heaves a sigh before sinking back into the bed. A braai with family is what he needs right now.

“Bongani wait it’s sore.” Molemo yells out.

“I’m sorry baby but it’ll get better.” Bongani says.

With one final push he has made his way into Molemo’s sacred land. She cries out as he stretches her out completely with tears falling down the sides of her face. He lowers his head and kisses her eyes before wiping her tears.

“I love you.” He whispers while gazing in her eyes.

“I love you too.” Molemo says faintly.

Last night they spent the night getting to know each other and Molemo feel deeper in love with him. His go getter spirit drew her in and she found herself seeing a future with him. They spoke about this moment and he promised that it wouldn't change anything and that if anything it would strengthen their bond even further. Molemo had her reservations but the minute he pulled her into his arms she found herself agreeing to his request.

He thrusts gently as he whispers sweet nothings in her ear but all her mind is focused on right now is the end of this session. The pain and the friction isn't what she has read about in books and articles. They have told her that the act is passionate and satisfying however all that she is feeling right now is pain. As she is lost inside her mind, Bongani groaning brings her back to reality. He flops on top of her and rests his head on her bosom while panting.

“I love you and thank you for this precious gift baby. I promise that I will cherish it for as long as I am alive.” He says.

Molemo just lays there not responding to what he has just said. A part of her feels like things are about to change now that they have gone all the way and she can only hope that it is in a good way.

Betty and Thandeka are sitting on the couch having lunch when Thandeka's phone rings. She looks at it then at Betty before answering.

“Hlalefang.” She answers.

Betty looks at her and chuckles lightly. She can't believe that he father still has a thing for her biological mother.

“Where, at Betty’s?” She asks.

Betty puts her plate on the table wondering that the conversation might be about. She waits for Thandeka to wrap up the phone call before looking at her expectedly. Thandeka heaves a smile then turns to Betty with an awkward smile on her face.

“Your father says he’s downstairs.” Thandeka says nervously.

Betty bursts into laughter while shaking her head.

“Did you call him to come here? Is that why you supposedly wanted to spend the weekend with me? So that your boyfriend can come here and you two can sneak without his wife in your face?” Betty says.

Thandeka is looking at her with her eyes popped out of her head. She wasn’t expecting any of the things that Betty has just said.

“What? No baby, of course not. I wanted to spend the weekend with you because I want to get to know you. Your father being here is purely coincidental, I swear to you my Betty. You have to believe me.”

“Just like I don’t have to forgive you, I don’t have to believe you. I can’t believe that oena le ntate are using me like this. It was so stupid of me to actually believe that you came back for me when it’s quite evident that you came back for your true love and that isn’t me.” Betty says softly before getting up and walking out of the room.

Thandeka heaves a sigh. Just as she thought that she was making progress, a stumbling block stands in her way and sets her back. She gets up and follows her to the bedroom.

Malibongwe walks into Melo's house and he finds Melo and Sfiso sharing a deep and passionate kiss. He smiles lightly before clearing his throat announcing his presence. They pull apart and turn to look at him. Melo runs into his arms and they hold onto each other for a little bit before pulling back.

"You look better than the last time that I saw you." Melo says.

Bongwe chuckles lightly as he places a kiss on her forehead.

"I know." He lets go of her and goes to greet his brother.

"Sho."

"Eita ugrand?"

"Yeah and you?"

"Yeah. You do look better like your sister said." Sfiso says laughing.

Bongwe shakes his head and makes his way to the couch.

"I'll be right back." Melo says then disappears.

"So did you have a chat with her?" Sfiso asks.

“I did and if I want her back then I’m going to have to open up to her about Siyanda. How do I tell her about this girl that had held me hostage from the grave? How do I tell her just how much I loved Siyanda without making it seem like I don’t love her at all? I don’t know how to do it.”

“It’s obviously going to be a difficult conversation but nothing ever grew in shallow waters. The tough conversations are the ones that grow the relationship. You have to be honest with her if you love her as much as you claim you do and if she loves you as much then she will understand that the love you shared with Siyanda was different from what you share with her. Just have the talk and take it from there.”

“I hear you man but I’m shit scared. What if I lose her?”

“Then it wasn’t meant to be. That’s that.”

“I love her.”

“I know you do. Just talk to her.” Sfiso says.

Just then Melo walks in carrying a baby in her arms. Bongwe looks at them with confusion written all over his face.

“Remember we told you that we applied for adoption?” Sfiso says.

“Yeah.” Bongwe responds in a shaky voice.

Melo settles next to him and removes the receiver off of the baby’s face. Malibongwe looks at her with tears threatening his eyes.

“We got her Bongwe. She’s ours.” Melo says trying to keep it together.

“Why didn’t you tell us?”

“We didn’t want to get your hopes up for nothing.” Melo responds.

“She’s my niece?” He says.

“Yes this is your princess.”

Bongwe blinks once and tears fall down his face. Sfiso takes the baby and walks out leaving the siblings to have their moment. They hold onto each other as they cry tears of joy. Malibongwe knows just how much this means to Melo.

“What’s her name?”

“Lethokuhle.” Melo says.

“You deserve this Melo.”

“At some point they didn’t want me to have her Wewe but Sfiso fought so hard for us and we get the honour of showering her with love.”

“Has mom seen her?”

“I told them and everyone is coming tomorrow to see her. You’re the first to see her.”

“I love you and I love her and I promise that I am going to be the best uncle in the whole wide world.” He says choking on his own words.

FORTY EIGHT

“Betty ngoanaka.”

“Ntate.” Betty says and makes her way to her cellar.

She grabs her favourite bottle before making her way back to the living room. Her parents are sitting next to each other watching her as she moves around. She finally settles on the couch with a glass in her hand and the bottle on top of the coffee table. After she left the room earlier Thandeka followed her and convinced her to let her father in. Betty told her to do whatever she feels like and left her gobsmacked. Ntate Moloji and Thandeka have been sitting here waiting on Betty to join them.

“Sthandwa sam can we talk now?” Thandeka asks.

“Bua Thandeka.”

Ntate Moloji heaves a sigh before rubbing his face in frustration.

“Let me start.” He says. “I haven’t been the best father in the world, in fact I haven’t been a father at all. I was too focused on my career and keeping Elizabeth happy that I didn’t leave any attention for you. I should’ve protected you Betty. I should’ve known that something was happening but I didn’t because I never paid attention. I am so sorry ngoanaka. I am sorry for being a bad father and I am sorry that you had to find out about Thandeka in the manner that you did.”

“Hmmm.” Betty says taking a sip of her wine.

Thandeka and ntate Moloji know that they're going to have to grovel before Betty can even consider forgiving them but they're willing to put in the work.

"Are you two going to get married?" Betty asks shocking them.

"What?"

"I asked if you two are going to get married, I mean you claim to love each other so much. So are you going to get married?"

"We're not going to get married." Thandeka answers.

"Is that why he's here with you and not his wife?" She spits out.

"Betty."

"Oena o re mosadi oa hao areng when you are busy with you bitches like she would call them?" Betty continues.

Thandeka is shocked at Betty's behaviour. She doesn't know how to react to everything that is happening at the moment.

"What's wrong Betty?" Ntate Moloji asks.

"What's wrong?" She snickers. "Let me tell you what's wrong ntate. Before my prostitution scandal broke out you had never ever been here to see me and when that happened you rushed here because your reputation was at stake. Now you're here because Thandeka is here. You clearly always make time for the things that matter to you and I'm not one of those things. I am angry ntate. I am so angry that I don't even know where to start dealing

with my anger. Le oena Thandeka your presence in my life is very upsetting. You just came from nowhere and you expect me to jump into your arms and call you mommy. The both of you are selfish and in as much as I really want to hate you, I can't because you are the reason that I am here."

"What do we have to do in order for you to forgive us?" Ntate asks.

"I don't know ntate but all I want right now is for the both of you to leave and give me space."

"But I thought we were spending the weekend together." Thandeka says softly.

"Yeah but that was until you decided to invite your boyfriend over. Look I'm pretty certain that ntate can organise a hotel room for you somewhere." She says gulping down her drink.

"I'm really sorry for everything Betty and if it is space you need then I will grant you your wish but don't think that I am giving up on you because I am not my baby." Thandeka says getting up then walks out of the room.

"If you want someone to hate, hate me but give your mother a chance because she deserves it."

Malibongwe has his niece in his arms and is looking at her with nothing but love. Melo walks in and sets everything on the table before gushing over her daughter.

"Khanyi said something about a baby kimi." Bongwe said.

“Your girl is pregnant?”

“I think so because we hadn’t been using protection but I’m hoping that she isn’t.”

“Malibongwe.”

“I don’t want her to be pregnant Melo, you know I don’t want a child.”

“I know baby but if she is?”

“I don’t know maybe we’ll get rid of it.” He says shrugging.

“You’re an ass.”

He heaves a sigh.

“I’m sorry I said that but I don’t know Melo. Right now I’m working with what Khanyi said and I pray that she is wrong. That’s all I’m saying.”

“Hmmm. Give me my daughter and eat your food.” She says.

Betty grabs her phone and dials Malibongwe who picks up almost immediately.

“Betty.”

“Hey, I hope this isn’t a bad time.” she says softly.

“No it’s not. What’s up?”

“I could use a friend right now, that’s if you’re not busy.”

“I’m on my way.” He says then hangs up.

Betty sighs and downs her drinks before settling back into the couch. She doesn’t know why she called him, all she knows is that she found herself yearning for him.

Betty finds herself in Malibongwe’s arms the moment her steps into her penthouse. He holds onto her for dear and ends up carrying her to the couch when he sees that she is not letting go. They find themselves sharing an unexpected kiss which has both their blood raging.

“Let’s talk first.” Bongwe says breaking the kiss.

Betty nods lightly and looks deep into his eyes which freaks him out even further. He’s not ready to divulge about his relationship with Siyanda but he knows that he has to.

“You wanted to know about the ‘her’ that I compared you to, so here goes. When I was sixteen I met a girl and the thing is that I wasn’t even looking for a girlfriend but I met her. Anyway we began dating and I knew that I wanted to spend the rest of my life with her shortly after. Fast forward to a few years later and we were grown and ready for marriage. I proposed when we were twenty and she said yes. I was so happy and excited to begin my

life with her but God had other plans. We were involved in a car accident and just like that she was gone.

Our plans for the future were scrapped off the face of the earth just like that. I spent years blaming myself for her death because I was the one driving. I thought that maybe had we left earlier or had I driven slower or faster or even taken a different route then maybe we wouldn't have been in that accident.

I loved her Betty, I truly did and losing her broke me. I spent years alone and not even searching but then you came along and the second you smiled and I looked in your eyes I knew that there was something special about you. I am sorry for comparing you to her. I am sorry for making you feel like less of the woman that you actually are.

I am sorry Betty for it all but I am not sorry for loving you.”

FORTY NINE

“You uttered something along the lines of ‘she’d be disappointed to know that you replaced her with a dirty stripper, does her opinion of who you’re with now count that much from the grave?’” Betty asks.

Malibongwe rubs his face in frustration. Betty gets off of his lap and settles next to him. She needs answers and she hopes that he will provide them.

“It doesn’t count but I guess I’d been holding on to her for so long that I felt, I don’t know Betty.”

“You can’t decide to start something then say I don’t know in the middle of it. You said you wanted to talk so we are talking.”

“Look Siyanda was the only girl I’d ever dated in my life and I guess I felt like I owed it to her to be with someone who she would approve of because like I said I felt and to some extent still feel responsible for her death.”

“So she’s the reason you were holding out on me and having nightmares?”

Malibongwe nods lightly and heaves a sigh. All he wants to do in this moment is to fix things with Betty.

“How do I know that you’re not going to compare me to her again? How can I be certain that my heart is safe with you?”

“You can’t be certain but you can take my word for it. If I ever make you feel like that way again you can walk away from me and never look back.”

“Hmmm.” That’s all Betty says.

“Can we touch on your issues now?” Bongwe asks.

Betty shakes her head as she gets up from her seat. She makes her way to the kitchen leaving Malibongwe puzzled. He gets up and follows her to the kitchen where he finds her pulling plates out of the cupboard. He stands there looking at her as she dishes up for the two of them. Once she’s finished she sets everything on a tray and makes her way back into the living room. He follows her then settles next to her and grabs his plate.

“I grew up in a household where I didn’t feel love. It was just cold and it was a house and never a home. My parents, I mean my father and stepmother were always on the road and never had any time for me and because of that they didn’t notice when my behaviour began to change. See I was molested then later on raped by nate’s friend in my own home and when I told my stepmother about it, she just brushed me off.

I have carried that pain and guilt since and I doubt that I will ever be able to shake it off. I felt disgusting Bongwe and when I got the opportunity to leave home I grabbed it. You see you look at my profession as something filthy but I see something that saved me. Prostitution saved me.”

Malibongwe heaves a sigh and puts his plate away. He slides closer to Betty and attempts to pull her into his arms but she shakes her head. His body is shaking with rage and it is taking everything in him not to burst out. The fact that Betty is so relaxed about the bomb she has just dropped is worrying him. He knows that Betty isn’t very in touch with her emotional side when she’s around him but he thought that she would at least show some sort of emotion on this issue.

“Betty look at me.” He commands.

“I’m still eating Malibongwe.”

“Betty.” He says in a much softer tone.

Betty heaves a sigh while shaking her head. She turns to look at him and her heart breaks a little when she notices the tears shining in his eyes. She sets her plate on the table then cups his face just in time to catch his tears.

“Please don’t cry.” She says trying to control her voice.

“I’m so sorry Betty. I am so sorry that you had to go through that. I’m sorry that I didn’t meet you sooner. I’m sorry that I made you feel like crap. I’m so sorry Betty. I promise that from now on all you’re going to receive is nothing but love and happiness. I’m going to do my utmost best to ensure that you always have a smile on your face.” Malibongwe says faintly.

Betty shakes her head as her own tears make their way down her cheeks.

“If I give us another chance you have to promise to be truthful all the time Malibongwe. You have to promise that you’re going to let me in and actually walk this journey openly with me.”

“If only you promise to do the same.”

“I do, but just give me time to work through a few things. What you said to me hurt me and I’d be lying through my teeth if I said I was over it. So just give me time.”

“You’re going to give me another chance?”

“Yes but like I said just give me time.” Betty says.

“I love you Betty.”

“I know and I love you too Malibongwe.”

It's been a week since Molemo broke her virginity and things between her and Bongani have been going well. Today she is spending the day with Betty and Mandy and they have decided to go grocery shopping before heading back to their apartment and having a three woman show. She still hasn't let the girls know that she gave herself to Bongani but she plans on telling them tonight.

“I'm just saying there are certain things that you need to know about your partner before you actually decide to fully commit to the relationship.” Betty says.

“But isn't a relationship all about learning?” Molemo asks.

“Yes it is however like I said you need to know certain things about a man before saying I'll love you forever and I'll marry you. Often times women make the mistake of being caught up in the now and how great things are in the moment forgetting that in the future this now moment will be gone. It's all cute and games until you realise that you missed certain red flags or that you just never really knew your person.”

“And that is why I am an advocate for living with your man before you decide to actually take the next step. You get to learn so much about a person when you live with them and it helps you make the right decision for you when the time comes.” Mandy adds.

The ladies are having this conversation as they do their shopping. As they turn into the sweet aisle they're met by an oblivious Bongani sharing a cute moment with a woman and a

baby. Bongani leans over and places a kiss on the baby's cheek before reaching for the cheese puffs and throwing them in the trolley.

Molemo stands there frozen not knowing how to react to this situation. Mandy on the other hand is fuming and is ready for a showdown whereas Betty is more calm and worried about Molemo.

"Come baby let's go." Betty says taking Molemo's hand and turning around.

Bongani looks to their direction and finds them looking at him with Molemo in tears. He attempts to open his mouth to no success. Betty pulls Molemo away and leaves Mandy to push their trolley.

"Uzonya wena." Mandy shouts before turning on her heels.

FIFTY

“I gave him my virginity just last weekend kanti he has a girlfriend and a child. Why would he hurt me like this Betty?” Molemo asks softly.

After their encounter with Bongani Betty and Molemo went straight to the car while Mandy stayed behind to pay for the groceries. The second they got home Molemo ran into her room and locked herself in. Betty and Mandy understood her need for space so they let her be as they cooked and made snacks. Neither of them said anything to the other but their anger and hurt they both understood.

When Molemo finally decided to walk out of the room the food was ready and so were the boxes of tissue. They're now sitting on the couch with Molemo seated in the middle of them and with her head rested on Betty's thighs.

“You gave him your virginity?” Mandy asks with shock evident in her words.

She knew that something had happened when Molemo came back from her weekend with Bongani but she didn't think that he had popped the cherry.

“I know you warned me.” She says faintly.

“No baby no, I mean in that moment it felt right and don't you feel bad about it.”

“I thought he loved me. He promised me the entire moon and the universe. He said that he would never hurt me. He said I was his true love and that he would marry me. WHY DID HE LIE TO ME?”

Molemo yells before letting out a gut wrenching sob. The girls pull her into their arms and comfort her. Betty feels defeated because she feels like she was supposed to take care of Molemo. As much as she knows that there was nothing that she could've done to prevent this from happening, she still feels like she could've done more. Molemo gets up and runs to her room leaving them feeling defeated.

"I feel like it's my entire fault. I knew something was off about this guy but I still let her go." Mandy says.

"We couldn't have known Mandy. Also we tried to make sure that she was prepared for the possibility of heartbreak but there is nothing else that we can do now. All we need to do is to let her go through it and just be there for her."

"She's still so young. Too young for this shit man."

"Unfortunately life doesn't dish out according to age."

"Do you think she's going to be fine?" Mandy asks.

"She has us." Betty responds.

Molemo's phone rings and she hesitantly answers it.

"Baby I'm downstairs please just give me five minutes." Bongani pleads.

"Why should I give you a chance to lie to me?"

“What you saw is not what you think baby, I can explain. Please give me a chance to.”

“You hurt me Bongani.”

“I’m sorry Lemo waka, please just five minutes.” He begs.

“Okay.” She says then hangs up.

Molemo rolls out of bed and drags herself to the bathroom to wash her face. Her eyes are puffy and swollen a clear indication of how much she has been crying. She wipes her face then makes her way out.

“I’m coming.” She says softly.

Betty and Mandy both look at her with their eyebrows raised.

“He’s here ne?” Betty says.

Molemo nods before making her way out the door. Mandy gets up but Betty stops her before she can even take two steps.

“Let her grow and learn. Look soon she’s going to be living here alone with no one to baby her. We need to let her grow.”

“She’s going to take him back Betty.”

“We’ll advice her but we cannot force her to leave him. Like I said let her grow and make her own mistakes that she will learn from.” Betty says.

Mandy heaves a sigh and shakes her head as she makes her way to the bedroom. She is angry but she knows that Betty is making a lot of sense.

“Thandeka.”

“Betty how are you?”

“I’m fine and you?”

“I’m okay. I’m here and I would like to see you, that’s if you’re home.”

Betty heaves a sigh. She hasn’t spoken to Thandeka or nate Moloji since last weekend. She has been so caught up in her own pain that she wanted nothing to do with her parents. Each time Thandeka would call she would reject the call without feeling any guilt.

“Are you alone?”

“Yes it’s just me.”

“Okay I’m coming.” Betty says.

She turns to look at Mandy who has her face buried in her phone with a wide smile on her face. She is definitely chatting to Tebogo Betty thinks to herself.

“I’ll be back just now.” She says as she makes her way out.

Thandeka is sitting on the same couch she sat on the first time she came here looking for Betty. She has on the very same nervous look on her face but this time she fears that she might lose Betty before she even gets the chance to even build a relationship with her.

“My baby.”

“Thandeka.”

“I know you feel like I planned the entire thing with your father but I swear to you that it was just coincidence. All I want Betty is a chance to get to know you and to build a relationship with you. I don’t want anything to do with Hlalefang sthandwa sami. All I want is to get to know you. Please give me that chance.” Thandeka pleads.

Betty looks at her and feels some warmth spread through her body in this moment. She believes her and she believes that they might just be able to build a very solid relationship.

“One chance Thandeka and if you mess it up I swear I will cut you off quicker than I did with your boyfriend.”

“I promise you will not regret this.” She says pulling Betty in for a hug.

Betty feels the warmth of Thandeka’s hug but is trying her best to fight it. She’s scared of letting herself feel the love that she knows Thandeka has for her.

Molemo and Bongani are sitting in his car. All Molemo wants is an explanation and nothing more.

“The situation you saw earlier was me spending time with my son and his mother. Yes I have a son, he’s seven months old and his mother and I broke up before we even found out about the pregnancy. I was wrong in not telling you about him but I just wanted you to get to know me for me Molemo. I was scared that you wouldn’t give me a chance if you knew that I had a child.”

“So you took my choice away from me.”

“I know I went about this the wrong way and I’m sorry but damn it Molemo I love you. I love you so much and I mean it when I say that I see a future with you baby. Please just forgive me. I’m sorry baby.”

FIFTY ONE

It has been two weeks since Molemo found out about Bongani having a child and her mind has been on that discovery as well as Bongani's apology. After he apologised and begged her to give him another chance, she just stepped out of the car and left him hanging. Her mind was racing with a million thoughts and she didn't trust her response at the time. Mandy made it clear that she didn't want her to get back together with Bongani whereas Betty told her that she understands that her heart is still with him and even though they don't want her with him she might choose to go back and even then they'd still support her decision.

At the moment Molemo is sitting at the library trying to study because exams are upon her. Last night when she was getting ready for bed she realised that she needed to forget about dating and focus on her studies if she wanted to make something of herself. As much as she has Betty and Mandy she knows that in the end all she has is herself and she needs to make sure that at the end of it all she is proud of herself.

As she has her nose in her books she feels someone pulling and a chair and settling next to her. She looks up and she finds Bongani looking at her pleadingly.

"You're disturbing me." She says softly.

"Molemo please, just one more chance to prove myself to you."

"You had ample time to come clean but you didn't and that kind of tells me a lot about your character. It's not even about you having a child or spending the day with him and his mother, it's about you not trusting or respecting me enough to tell me about that side of your life. It's about you somewhat taking my right of choice away. The fact that you wanted me to fall in love with you before telling me about your child is sick.

I had the right to know and decide whether I'd be comfortable enough to stick things through, through it all because we know how the baby mama drama goes. So I'm sorry but I can't give you another chance. I'm still young Bongani and I have a lot on my plate. Also how

do I then trust that you and your child's mother are through when you looked so cosy and comfortable with each other? I may be young but I've been through a lot and I know how life goes. I am not naïve Bongani.

So please leave me alone and go find someone else." Molemo says as she packs up her books.

She puts everything in her bag before getting up and leaving Bongani there with cake on his face.

"So you say that your father had children all over?" Betty asks Thandeka.

They have been spending every day together for the past two weeks and slowly but surely Betty is learning to open up to Thandeka. Thandeka knows that it won't happen in the next month and she knows that she will have to be patient and she is willing and ready to put in all the work.

"Yes. There are probably a million more of us out there but outside of Moleboheng I have a sister who I'd actually like you to meet if you would be willing. We all have different mothers but ngathi mina naye get along. We also have a couple of brothers scattered all over the country."

"Why do you only get along with just the one?" Betty asks.

"I guess it's because of her nature. She accepted me and gave me all the love that I needed."

"She sounds like a great woman."

“She is. Would you be willing to meet her?”

“Maybe we’ll see.” Betty says stuffing a popper into her mouth.

Thandeka draws a breath. She knows she might be overstepping her mark but she has to.

“Are you pregnant?” Thandeka asks.

Betty turns to look at her with shock written all over her face. She doesn’t understand why Thandeka would ask her something like that. Her heart starts beating uncontrollably as she thinks about the possibility. She knows that she wasn’t using protection with Mlaibongwe but she thought that she was protected.

“Hey baby look at me.” Thandeka says cupping her face.

Betty attempts to control her wild thoughts.

“I’m here Betty. If you are then I am here for you and I will hold your hand through it all. Just breathe.”

“I can’t be pregnant.” Betty says softly.

“Do you want to go find out?”

Betty shakes her head vigorously. The thought of confirming a pregnancy is freaking her out.

“Okay let’s go.” She says getting up.

Thandeka doesn't even ask whether or not she is sure because she knows she might just change her mind. They go get ready and make their way to the doctor's office.

The drive back home is filled with silence as mother and daughter try and digest the results of the test. The doctor confirmed that Betty is indeed pregnant. For Thandeka she feels as if though she has been given another chance at being a parent. She never got the chance to mother Betty, she never even got the chance to change her diaper and she feels that this is her second chance at that journey.

Betty's thoughts are on how off the timing of this pregnancy is. She and Malibongwe are only starting to work things out now and she doesn't want a baby to be the reason that they're forced to be together. She's also thinking about how much Malibongwe's mother hates her and how she would think that she is using this baby to trap her son.

As soon as they arrive at Betty's she makes her way to her bedroom and throws herself on the bed. Thandeka follows her and settles next to her.

"What are you thinking baby?"

"What if I'm a bad mother? What if I project my feelings onto the child? I mean I grew up in a shitty situation and I'm not the most loving and caring person in the whole, so what if I mistreat this child? Thandeka what if I hate my baby?" Betty asks faintly.

Thandeka pulls her into her arms and allows her to let it all out. She continues to rub her back as she cries her eyes out. She understands Betty's fears but she also know that whatever she says in this moment Betty will not take in, so she decides to just comfort her for now.

Malibongwe is at his sister's spending the day with his niece when his phone pings. He reads the message and chuckles lightly before tossing the phone over to his sister. Melo reads the message and heaves a sigh afterwards.

The message is from Betty and reads as follows:

"I'm sorry if this comes across as a bit impersonal but I felt that this was the best way to do it. I know that I would've chickened out doing it face to face. I went to the doctor with Thandeka earlier and I'm pregnant."

"So?"

"I'm not ready Melo."

"But."

"I thought that I was fine Melo. I thought I had healed but when Khanyi mentioned it I realised that I'm not okay and I am not ready."

"So what, you're going to ask her to get rid of it?"

"I don't know." Bongwe responds.

"You knew the consequences of having unprotected sex Malibongwe so don't you dare ask that girl to get rid of it because I swear Simphiwe."

"You don't understand Melo." He yells.

“Don’t you shout at me in front of my child! And fuck you for that statement. I’ve been here, I’ve been the one helping you fight so don’t tell me I don’t understand. Your selfishness has nothing to do with Siyanda and Liyana but everything to do with you.”

“Melo.”

“Haai voetsek.” Melokuhle says getting up and walking out of the room.

FIFTY TWO

Malibongwe gets up and makes his way to Sfiso's study where he finds him on the phone. He decides to pour a stiff drink for himself while he waits for him to wrap up his call. He downs the drink then pours another glass and settles on the couch. His mind is racing with a thousand different scenarios. Sfiso wraps up his phone call then settles next to Bongwe.

"When I left you with your niece and sister you were fine and now you're downing le whiskey yam sengathi ngamanzi. What happened?"

"Betty is pregnant."

"Huh I see and how does that make you feel?" Sfiso asks leaning back on the couch.

Malibongwe rubs his face in frustration before throwing back his drink. He feels as if though he can't handle the emotions that he is currently feeling.

"I'm scared."

"And what are you scared of?"

"I'm scared that Betty and I might get into an accident and she might lose the child, or that I might strangle her in my sleep like I did the one time, I'm scared that I'm going to cause the death of my own child again and then end up losing the woman that I love." Malibongwe says then huffs.

"So you're basically scared that history is going to repeat itself?"

"I guess" he says shrugging.

“Like I always say I didn’t witness your love with Siyanda but I know that it was deep if it left you this crippled. Malibongwe you’re almost twenty seven which means that it has been almost seven years since Siyanda and Liyana passed away. Believe me when I say that there is no time frame as to how long a person should grieve however the problem here is that you actually decided to move on. You went out there and fell for this girl and decided to make her yours.

I know that your sister always asked you whether or not you were over Siyanda’s death and your answer was always yes when it should’ve been no. Malibongwe you jumped into this relationship with Betty before you actually worked on your hurt. Yes you have been able to control it but Betty being pregnant is showing the cracks in you supposed healing.

If you were over the deaths of your fiancé and child then this wouldn’t be so crippling.” Sfiso says calmly.

Malibongwe heaves a sigh and rubs his face.

“I am still dealing with my loss yes but the fear is real Sfiso. I love Betty so that goes to show that I’m not suck on Siyanda as having been my only one. I want to build a life with her but I’m not ready for the child aspect. I’m scared that I’m going to lose her. The reason I lost Siyanda was because we lost the baby what if I lose Betty again because we lose the baby?”

Malibongwe wipes his tears before getting up and pouring another glass for himself.

“I would lose myself if anything were to happen to Betty, if I were to lose her. I’m scared man.”

“Sometimes the past holds us hostage but we need to fight to break that bond. Yes it hurt and yes it is scary but sometimes our greatest joy lies in the place we fear the most.”

“What if I don’t want to go there?”

“Life is not about staying in one place Wewe wabo. We need to grow and evolve and we cannot do that if we’re stuck in a single position.”

“I don’t know bra.”

“Tell you what, how about we go visit Liyana and Siyanda’s graves and you can let them know that you have found someone else and that you’re having a baby with her. Let them know that you’re not replacing them but that you’re simply moving on with life because I can tell that that is also another reason you’re holding back.”

Malibongwe shakes his head and makes his way to the door.

“Melo is going to shit on your head.” Sfiso says laughing.

Betty and Thandeka are lying in bed stuffing their faces with ice cream. After she sent the sms to Bongwe, Betty decided that she needed a pick me up and they settled on ice cream and a romcom.

“So the two of you are dating?” Thandeka asks.

“It’s complicated.”

“Uncomplicate it for me then my baby.”

Betty chuckles lightly. She loves how Thandeka is slowly creeping into her heart and she appreciates the fact that she has someone in her corner in this specific moment.

“We dated then we broke up and now we’re trying again.”

“So you conceived during your breakup?”

“Before. We weren’t broken up for that long. Well it was long but you get what I’m saying.”

“I see and his family? Do you know them?”

“His mother hates me. My scandal was all over the news and she saw it. The second we stepped into her house she told me to get out Thandeka so I know that she will not be thrilled about this development.” Betty says chuckling.

As they’re talking Betty’s phone flashes indicating an incoming call. It’s Malibongwe.

“Hey.”

“Hey I’m downstairs.” Bongwe says.

“Use your code.” Betty says before hanging up.

“He’s coming up? Do you want me to go?” Thandeka asks.

“No I’d actually like you to meet him.”

Thandeka feels herself getting a bit emotional. For her this is a very big breakthrough for her. She nods lightly and gets off the bed and makes her way to her room to get dressed while Betty just slips into her slippers and remains in her gown.

Malibongwe steps out of the elevator into the penthouse with his heart beating out of his chest. He doesn't know what he is going to say to Betty but what he knows for sure is that he doesn't want to hurt her.

He smiles when she sees her making her way towards him. She steps into his embrace and they share a passionate kiss before letting go and settling on the couch. Both of them feeling anxious about the conversation they're about to have.

FIFTY THREE

Malibongwe heaves a sigh as he takes Betty's hand in his and kisses her palm. His eyes move to her stomach and even though there is nothing showing as yet he can't help it.

"So we're pregnant." Malibongwe says faintly.

Betty nods lightly as she drops her head.

"I wasn't expecting this." He says truthfully.

"Neither was I." She responds.

"Can I be honest?"

"Sure." Betty says.

"I don't think I'm ready to be a father. I've lost so much that the void is still there and the wound doesn't seem to be healing. I'm trying to work on myself Betty and be a better man for you but the news of the pregnancy has just put so much fear into this heart of mine. I'm scared that I'm going to lose you along with this baby Betty."

"Why would you lose us?" Betty asks.

Malibongwe heaves a sigh and hangs his head. He knows exactly where his fears stem from and how those fears have held him prisoner for the better part of his life however he is not ready to let Betty fully in.

“Things happen Betty. Accidents happen.” He responds.

Betty takes his hand in hers and gives it a gentle squeeze. She realised that his fears come from losing Siyanda in the accident and she understands that. She wants to assure him that nothing will happen to her and their child but she doesn't know where to start. For as long as she's been with Malibongwe, he has been a closed book and as much as he has tried to open up to her he still is a closed book. She understands that he doesn't wear his heart on his sleeve.

“I know that losing your fiancé probably hurt you in ways that I could never understand and I am not taking away from your pain and fears however don't you think it's time to start being 'positive'. Look if this has been keeping you from getting into relationships for so long and you're finally in one with me now, don't you think that's something to be positive about? Don't you think you should try and heal and move on from that hurt so that you don't end up messing up and losing me?”

As much as I love you now and I have forgiven you for that one thing, it doesn't mean that I am going to forgive you for the next thing, more so if it has something to do with your late fiancé. I can't compete with a ghost Malibongwe and I hope that you don't expect me to.”

“I hear everything that you're saying and I respect it. I'm working on myself but I do ask that you be patient with me Betty. It's not going to happen overnight and it's not going to be pretty I acknowledge that. I do promise though that I will try.”

“We both have things that we need to work on both as individuals and as a couple. If we want this to work then we're going to have to learn how to communicate honestly and truthfully. Our relationship has been surviving on just love and nothing else. I realise now that love isn't the end all and be all of a relationship and as much as we're scared about this pregnancy, we need to do better for her sake.” Betty says.

“You want a girl?” He asks faintly with tears glistening his eyes.

“Maybe, I don't know. I haven't even wrapped my head around this so I'm just saying.”

Malibongwe nods lightly as he gets up and makes his way to Betty's bedroom leaving Betty puzzled. He gets into the bathroom and locks the door then allows his tears to fall a little bit better catching them. He knows that he needs to put in a lot of work if he is going to accept this pregnancy and actually allow himself to fall in love with this child. He wipes his face and makes his way back to the living room where he finds Betty sitting with Thandeka. Again he looks at her with so much intensity that it makes Thandeka feel uncomfortable.

"Malibongwe this is my biological mother Thandeka, Thandeka this is Malibongwe."

"Hello Malibongwe."

"Hello Thandeka." He greets back still looking at her with so much intensity.

Malibongwe settles on the couch still looking at Thandeka. Betty gets up and heads to the kitchen leaving the two together.

"Do you have a problem with me?" Thandeka asks.

A frown falls on Malibongwe's face.

"I don't even know you so why would I have a problem with you?"

"I might not have been in Betty's life as she was growing up but I am here now and I intend on protecting her from everything that is not good for her. I hope that you have good intentions for her and that child she is carrying. She has cried enough and this is her chance at happiness so if you don't plan on making her happy and keeping her happy, please leave her alone."

"I love Betty."

“Hmmm.”

“You look like someone I know.” Maalibongwe blurts out.

Thandeka looks at him with expectancy written all over her face. Just as Malibongwe is about to speak, Betty walks in with a tray in her hand. She places it on the table then settles next to Malibongwe.

“I miss you, can you please spend the night with me?” Malibongwe whispers to Betty.

She giggles sweetly before nodding slightly. He runs his hand over her thigh and she gets chills all throughout her body.

FIFTY FOUR

Betty is in her bedroom packing an overnight bag while Thandeka sits in the bed.

“What do you think of him?” Betty asks.

Thandeka heaves a sigh while shaking her head. Her encounter with Malibongwe was one that she doesn’t understand. She doesn’t understand his behaviour towards her and the fact that he said she reminds him of someone he knows left her feeling somehow.

“Erm he’s okay, I don’t know. We’ll see as time goes.”

“He has his flaws but above all else he is a great guy and I believe that he’ll only get better as time goes on.”

“Hopefully. Please talk to him about his family and how he plans on telling them about the pregnancy, we also have to let your father know about this new development in your life so that the right processes can be followed.”

“You mean damages and all?”

“Yes. I don’t know how things are done in the your father’s culture but thina ngesintu sethu Malibongwe’s family has to come and do right however the two of you have to talk about all of that then you will let me know how that goes, but I will talk to your father later on today and let him know.”

“Okay, kealeboha. Are you going back to your hotel or are you staying here?” Betty asks.

Thandeka is taken aback by that question. She wasn’t expecting it at all.

“I’ll go back to my hotel baby but thank you for the offer. I’ll probably go and see my sister for the remainder of the days that I am around.”

“Maybe I can meet this sister of yours next weekend.” Betty says.

“I thought-”

“From finding out that I was pregnant to this moment here a lot has been running in my mind, as much as my situation isn’t the most ideal I would like this child to receive all the love that I never got the chance to feel and if you have close family and they could offer this soul a chance at a normal and happy childhood then I would love for her to experience that. Oena le nna, we’re still getting to know each other and as hard as it is for me I am trying to open myself up to you.”

“I hear you sthandwa sam and you have no idea how grateful I am for the chance to get to know you and be present in that child’s life.”

Betty nods and continues packing her bag. Thandeka walks out and makes her way to her room to grab her bag. Once she’s done she heads to the living room where she finds Malibongwe lost in his thoughts. She tries to study him but she soon realises that he is a closed book and his body language gives nothing away.

“Malibongwe.”

He raises his head slowly and looks at her with an eyebrow raised.

“Don’t hurt my daughter please.”

He nods absentmindedly.

“I am assuming that you have not told your parents about this.”

“I’ll tell them as soon as Betty and I have spoken in detail about this. I love Betty Thandeka, that’s something you don’t have to worry about.”

“Hmmm.”

Malibongwe chuckles lightly while shaking his head. His head is all over the place. He is thinking about how his mother is going to receive the news and whether or not she will even accept Betty and their child.

“Okay we can go.” Betty announces as she walks in.

They all get up and make their way to the elevator.

“You just disappeared on us.” Mandy says as she answers the phone.

Betty chuckles lightly. She knows that Mandy is going to have her head when she sees her but she hopes that the baby news will soften her up.

“I know, I know and I’m sorry but I’ll explain everything when I see you. I’ll come see you when I come back.”

“Where are you?”

“Hai Mandy.” Betty says laughing.

“You’re getting dick aren’t you?”

“MANDY!”

“You little bitch! Well do enjoy yourself darling and I will see you when I see you.” She says while laughing before hanging up.

Betty laughs softly while shaking her head. She steals a glance at Malibongwe who has his eyes focused on the road. She can’t help but wonder what exactly is going through his mind. She knows that he didn’t let her in fully on his fears and she hopes that being in his own space will make him relax a bit and open up. They arrive at his place and make their way in. Betty hasn’t been in this space in a very long time and the few changes he has made are quite visible. The huge black and white portrait that hung on the wall has been changed and now has four beautiful children. The picture of his mother has been replaced by one of himself and his mother.

“You know where the bedroom is.” He says disappearing into the kitchen.

She makes her way to his room and throws her bag on the bed before settling on the couch. The picture on his side table catches her attention and she gets up to get closer to it. It is a picture of her in the kitchen cooking in his shirt. She doesn’t remember the day but she can tell that she had had a good night judging by the look on her face.

Malibongwe walks in and gently wraps his hands around her waist then rests his chin on her shoulder. Betty leans into his warmth and allows herself to soak all of it in.

“This is my favourite picture of you.” He whispers in her ear which sends shockwaves down her spine.

“It’s beautiful.”

“I’m lucky to have you Betty.”

“As am I.”

She turns around and drapes her hands around his neck before getting on her toes and placing a kiss on his lips. He doesn’t waste time in pulling her closer and kissing her right back. As their mouths create magic, Betty feels herself floating on cloud nine. Bongwe scoops her up in his arms without breaking the kiss and she wraps her legs around his waist. He gently sets her on her bed before pulling back and giving her his panty dropper smile. She returns it accompanied by a giggle then hides her face in her hands.

“Don’t hide yourself from me Betty.”

She moves her hands and looks at him with a shy smile on her face. He leans down and they share another kiss while he runs his hands up and down her body which is reacting effortlessly to his touch. In a flash her dress is on the floor and she is left in just her underwear. He places soft, sensual kisses from her neck down to her stomach the back up until he settles on her breasts which he gives attention to. Betty is a moaning mess and Bongwe gently sucks and grazes her nipples in between his teeth.

“Bongwe.” She moans softly pulling him closer.

He continues his assault on her breasts before moving down to her thighs and placing soft kisses all over them. He then takes her underwear off leaving her fully exposed. He gets off the bed and slowly undresses as she looks on with nothing but lust in her eyes. Her eyes travels down to his harden shaft which is leaking at the head. He chuckles lightly as he continues to stroke it.

“I want you.” Betty says softly.

Malibongwe's plan was to have Betty begging for it before he gives it to her but he himself is in dire need of her sweet loving and can't wait any longer. He climbs onto the bed and kisses her as he runs his hard one up and down her dripping seam. He gently pushes in and settles there as Betty clenches her walls around him uncontrollably.

"Betty don't." He says in a strained voice.

He begins to thrust slowly while looking into her eyes which are shining with tears. As their bodies dance their souls also communicate with each other letting each other in on how they feel. Both their fears clearly visible in their eyes. Malibongwe continues to make slow love to the woman he loves.

As always Betty's orgasm creeps up on her and she tries her best to resist it.

"Bongwe I can't... Oh shit..."

She tries to push him out but he continues with his slow controlled movements which are making Betty vulnerable. Betty cries out as she reaches her high. Malibongwe chuckles lowly at how Betty looks so vulnerable before dipping his head and capturing her lips in his.

The love birds spent the entire night making love and solidifying their connection. At some points both of them found themselves in tears as their souls connected. For Malibongwe, being so vulnerable was hard for him because he has always been about not showing his emotions however Betty just makes it so hard to stay in that character.

Bongwe's phone rings and he quickly reaches for it hoping that it hasn't woken Betty up.

“Sawubona mama.”

“Hello baby how are you?”

“I’m alright and you?”

“I’m good. I just wanted to check up on you, I haven’t seen you in a while.”

“I miss you too mama and I also have something that I want to talk to you about. Maybe I can come through next weekend because I have to be at dad’s centre the entire week and I can’t slip away.”

“Next weekend sounds perfect. How’s everyone at home?”

“They’re good. Melo adopted a baby so we’re all still gushing over her right now.”

Mam’Zonke chuckles lightly.

“I bet you spend all of your spare time with them.”

“Guilty as charged. You know how Melo deserves this.”

“And you also deserve the chance at that kind of happiness yourself Malibongwe and I hope that you will realise that one day. They would want you to be happy.”

“I know ma.”

“Okay then let me not keep you, I’ll see you next weekend.”

“Yes. I love you and take care of yourself for me.”

“I always do and I love you too.” She says then hangs up.

Bongwe puts his phone away then pulls his Betty closer and places a kiss on her forehead.

FIFTY FIVE

Molemo's thoughts have been on her mother lately and today she has decided to go and see her without letting Betty and Mandy know because she knows that they would prohibit her from going. As risky as it is, she cannot live with herself knowing very well that she has a mother out there who is probably living as a dog. Often times we say that the heart is a treacherous thing and in Molemo's case it really is. As much as her mother has never been much of a parent to her and has been the cause of her being battered, she can't stop caring.

The taxi comes to a halt and Molemo jumps off then starts her walk to what once used to be her home. From a distance she can see the overgrown grass peaking through the fence. Her heart breaks a little bit but she knows that even if she were to offer her mother help she would refuse.

She opens the gate and walks in with her heart I her stomach and knees feeling like jelly. The closer she gets to the door, the more her heart beats uncontrollably. The door is wide open and Molemo draws a deep breath before stepping in. The kitchen is a mess with dirty dishes overflowing the in the sink and beer bottles all over. As she walks into the dining room she finds her mother with a beer bottle in her hand looking deep in thought.

"Mama." She says softly.

Her mother looks up and immediately bursts into tears when her eyes land on Molemo. Molemo quickly rushes over to her mother and pulls her into her arms comforting her. They cry in each other's arms for a while before pulling back.

"I thought you were done with me."

"I am, I mean I was." Molemo heaves a sigh.

This is harder than she thought it would be. She had expected her mother to throw her out the second she set foot in the house.

“So what are you doing here?”

“I just came to check up on you.”

“Hmmm.” She takes a sip of her beer.

“How have you been?”

“You left me akere Omolemo, when your friends with their fancy car and money came here to disrespect me you chose to leave with them.”

“I left because my life was in danger. I left because I was beaten to a pulp and I almost died mama. You cannot persecute me for choosing myself over this toxic environment.”

“Hehehe.” She laughs loudly while clapping her hands. “Utlwang bo Molemo ba bua ka bo persecute. English heh. If this environment was so toxic then why are you back here? Or ke eng your friends are tired of you sponging off of them?”

Molemo chuckles lightly while shaking her head as she gets up and picks up her bag. She knew that their cute reunion was going to be short-lived.

“I’m sorry for coming back here to disturb your life I just wanted to see if I could reconcile with my mother but clearly that is not going to happen so bye mama.”

Molemo’s mother clicks her tongue and downs her beer.

“Ntja e ba reng ke ntatao was looking for you apparently he saw you at some mall and recognised you. That man stole so much from me, and now he is back to take some more from me.”

Molemo turns around.

“How is he stealing from you when you didn’t and still don’t want me?” Molemo yells.

She cannot believe her mother. All her life all she had ever wanted to do was to know her father and to know that her mother wants to deny her the opportunity to hurts her.

“Tsamaya Molemo.”

“Mama.” Molemo says faintly.

Her mother gives a look before chuckling and taking a sip of her drink. Molemo walks out with tears threatening her eyes. Her heart is heaving and her spirit crushed. She wishes that she hadn’t come here in the first place.

“So I assume that you and Mr Mystery are back back back together.” Mandy says.

Betty and Mandy are at Mandy and Molemo’s apartment enjoying some down time together. They’re in the kitchen preparing some lunch while catching up.

“Eish it’s a bit complicated but I guess so.”

“What do you mean you guess so, you either are or you aren’t?”

“We love each other and we know that we want to be together but man he has deep issues kamo his mother hates me and I also have my own mommy issues. Like I’m trying to warm up to Thandeka now and that’s a struggle.”

“Betty do you know how blessed you are to have a second chance at having a present mother? Sure she should’ve been there from the beginning and she wasn’t but she is here now and she is willing to work on gaining your trust and everything that comes with it. Allow yourself to be mothered Betty and to feel her love because I can guarantee you that she wouldn’t have come back if she didn’t want to be in your life. She made a mistake but forgive her and give her a chance, I mean if you can give Mystery a second chance then surely you can give her one as well right? I would kill to have a mother figure in my life right now, so don’t throw that chance away.” Mandy says.

Betty heaves a sigh before drowning her juice and refilling her glass. What Mandy just said hit her hard and she realises that she needs to give Thandeka a chance. She walks over to Mandy and wraps her hands around her.

“My Thandeka is your Thandeka as well. So that mother figure you need, you can get.”

Mandy chuckles lightly.

“You’re so cute.”

“I just love you Mands.”

“And I love you too and thank you. I can’t wait to meet your Thandeka.”

“Have you and Tebogo decided on a date for mahadi?”

“He’s waiting on me to give him the details and all of that.” Mandy says then huffs.

“We can ask Mr Mysterious if he can’t be part of your delegation.” Betty says.

Mandy laughs loudly while shaking her head.

“Futhi he’s Zulu angithi and dangerous looking! Yaas I’ve got myself a lead negotiator.”

“You see?” Betty says laughing.

They continue making lunch while conversing about the issue. Mandy is adamant on not including her estranged family in these negotiations and Betty respects that.

“I’m pregnant.” Betty says softly.

“What?” Mandy turns to look at her.

“Yeah I know.” Betty says chortling.

“You’re always so careful though?”

“Well we went to go get tested and decided to go all raw and shit and he left his seed in me. I’m so scared Mandy because this guy’s mother hates me and I don’t know how she is going to react to the news of my pregnancy. What if she thinks that I am trying to trap her son with this child?”

“Haai it’s not like you need Malibongwe’s money so that idea she can get out of her head. If she acts all fresh about this baby then it’s fine ngoba lo baby will be loved by me and Molemo as well as your mother so worry not.” Mandy says.

She continues stirring her pot before dropping her spoon and turning to look at Betty.

“Shit you’re pregnant!” She exclaims.

Betty laughs at how delayed that reaction was.

“Shit I’m pregnant.”

“You and Mr Sex on Legs are having a baby? Oh my fuck that child is going to be so sexy. He or she better take their dad’s complexion, that rich chocolate skin!”

Betty rolls her eyes while laughing.

“Whoooooah Malibongwe and I need to have a conversation.” Mandy continues.

Betty is still laughing when Molemo walks in looking like she is carrying the world on her shoulder. The minute she sees the girls she burst into tears and they rush over to comfort her.

“It’s okay baby. Whatever it is we’ll deal with it, the three us.” Mandy says softly.

Molemo nods her head believing what Mandy is saying. She knows that they have her back no matter what.

FIFTY SIX

Malibongwe is on his way to see mam'Zonke as promised. He decides to stop by the store to get her a few things. He grabs everything he thinks she will enjoy as well as a bouquet of roses before paying and making his way to the car. His thoughts are on the pregnancy and how he is going to break the news to his family. He knows that his brother and uncle will be happy and that his dad will accept the situation at hand but it's his mother's reaction that has him stressing. He hopes that Lwandle will be able to convince her to calm down and open her heart to things.

He arrives at mam'Zonke's and drives in. She beams broadly when she sees him and clasps him into her arms. They share an embrace before letting go. Bongwe takes out everything that he has for her and they make their way inside to the kitchen.

"You're the only person that gets me flowers." Mam'Zonke says taking a whiff of her flowers.

Malibongwe chuckles as he pulls her into his arms and places a kiss on her cheek before letting her go.

"You deserve much more than flowers, you know that right?"

"Hai suka la. Grab your drink and those snacks siyohlala ngaphandle." She says as she puts her flowers in water.

He does as instructed then heads outside and waits for her to join him.

"So how are you?" She settles next to him on the couch.

“I’m okay and you?”

“I could be better if you were happy.”

Malibongwe heaves a sigh before rubbing his face. He knows just how much she worries about him and she wishes that she didn’t worry so much but he know that’s impossible.

“Then I guess what I am about to tell you will make you happy.”

“Go on.” She says with curiosity taking over.

“Months back I met someone, she reminded me so much of Siyanda that I had to get to know her.”

Mam’Zonke frowns.

“Anyway I did my research and made sure that she wasn’t related to Siyanda in any way before making my move. The more time I spent with her, the more I fell for her. I love her mama and I think I want to spend the rest of my life improving myself just for her.”

“Oh Malibongwe.” She says softly.

“I’m trying ma, I’m trying to move on with my life.”

“And you’re in love you don’t understand how big that is for me. I am so happy baby. I truly cannot be happier because you deserve all the happiness in the world and this is it for you. I pray that you don’t sabotage your own happiness. Be happy Simphiwe. Enjoy life. Create memories. LIVE!”

“I am mama. One step at a time,”

“I am so happy and I bet Zobuhle is too.”

Malibongwe bursts into laughter at the thought of his mother and how she hates his relationship with Betty.

“Well she hates my girlfriend because of her past and I fear she is about to hate her even more.”

“And why is that?”

“Because she is pregnant.”

Mam’Zonke squeals and pulls Malibongwe into her arms. She places kisses on his cheek.

“Oh God is good! My baby that is fantastic news. The greatest ever!”

“Well I am glad that you think so mama ngoba uZo uzongibulala.” He says laughing.

“She has always wanted the best for you and I don’t doubt that she still does, she’s being protective but once she realises just how happy you are especially after everything that you have been through.”

“So you’re not mad that I got someone pregnant?”

“I could never be Simphiwe. I have been dreaming of a chance to be a grandmother and look at you blessing me. I am very happy and I can’t wait to meet the mother of my grandchild.”

“I’ll bring her to you soon yezwa.” He kisses her forehead.

Malibongwe appreciates the relationship he shares with mam’Zonke. He realises just how lucky he is to be surrounded by such strong and phenomenal women who love and care for him so deeply.

They spend the rest of the morning catching up on everything before Bongwe leaves saying he is going to break the news to his parents.

“Hey mom.” Bongwe shares a warm hug with his mom.

She gets on her toes and gives him a soft peck. They haven’t really spoken about dinner where he introduced Betty to them but they have been checking up on each other.

“You get taller each time I see you Wewe.”

“You’re being dramatic Zo.” He says laughing.

They settle in the couch.

“Is dad home?”

“He took Khanyisile to get some ice cream but he should be back soon.”

“Oh she’s spending the weekend here?”

“Yeah, Ndalo is at camp, Zizwe is bonding with Langa and Siba just wanted to rest so ya.”

“HmMMM I missed her.”

“Did you want to talk to your dad about something?”

“Yeah nawe futhi kodwa we’ll wait for him.” Bongwe says sinking into the couch.

Betty and Thandeka are on their way to see Thandeka’s sister. The mother and daughter duo spent the entire week along with Mandy and Molemo who instantly fell in love with Thandeka. The motherly warmth and love she brought into their group dynamic has the girls feeling complete in some way. Thandeka has also offered to help Mandy with everything that she will need help with, with regards to the lobola process as well as the wedding.

“Are you ready?” Thandeka asks.

Betty nods absentmindedly as they drive into the yard. They’re welcomed by a light-skinned lady who is wearing a broad smile. She and Thandeka share a hug before she turns her attention to Betty. She cannot believe the resemblance; Betty looks just like her daughter.

“Yho Thandeka clearly our father’s genes are very dominant because your daughter looks so much like my angel.” She says with a smile on her face.

“Really?”

“Her eyes and that tight smile she has on right now, that is my angel straight.” She says opening her arms wide for Betty.

Betty steps into her embrace and immediately feels at home.

“You are so beautiful my love.”

“Thank you.” Betty says shyly.

“Come in.” She says leading the way in. “You actually missed my son, he was here earlier and thanks to him we have dessert.”

“What son manje?” Thandeka asks clearly shocked.

“It’s a long story but you’ll meet him one day. Anyway I am so happy to meet you Betty. Your mother here hasn’t stopped raving about you.”

Betty chuckles sweetly as she settles on the couch. She can see just how close Thandeka and her sister which warms her heart. She sees that she is in very loving hands here.

FIFTY SEVEN

Betty is sitting there watching the interaction between Thandeka and her sister with her heart beating out of her chest. All her life she had wished that she had a sibling to walk through this life journey with but unfortunately she wasn't afforded that chance but she is grateful for the fact that she has Mandy and Molemo. Seeing Thandeka so carefree and happy is something that she was yet to witness and seeing it in this moment has her seeing her birth mother in a different light.

Her phone beeps indicating a message and she reaches for it. As soon as she sees Bongwe's name on the screen she feels warmth spread across her body. The smile that creeps up on her face is one that reminds you of a child after receiving their Christmas gift.

"I love you. Please have dinner with me." The message reads.

Betty cannot help but blush uncontrollably. Malibongwe is undeniably the man of her dreams and she cannot deny that. With everything that they have been through and with the issues that they're both facing Betty knows that he has her heart even though the world seems to be coming at them hard. Malibongwe is the first man to ever see all of her and not just see her as a releasing dish. He sees a future with her and that means a lot to her.

"She looks taken." Zonke says to Thandeka with her eyes fixed on Betty.

Thandeka chuckles lightly. She can see now just how much Betty is into this guy even though things between them seem to be rocky. All Thandeka wants is for Betty to be happy and if the father of her unborn child is the one that can offer that happiness so be it.

"I met the boy and he is so hard to read but they seem to have an understanding so I guess that's a good thing." Thandeka says shrugging.

“I understand your reservations but the look on her face says it all and I think you need to put mommy bear aside and let her be. When my Siyanda said she wanted to get married at the age of 19 I lost it even when they fell pregnant at 20 I still couldn’t allow her but as time went on and I realised just how happy she was with him I let her be and that was the happiest I’d ever seen her.”

“You miss her don’t you?”

“Every day but I take comfort in the fact that she is at perfect peace. She is at home with the Lord where she feels no more pain and that is the main reason I am okay with her death. Yes I miss her and given the chance I would steal a day with her but this is how God intended it to be.” Mam’Zonke says before heaving a deep sigh.

Thandeka looks at her sadly. She can’t imagine how she would deal with her daughter’s death. She understands how hard it is living without your child and even though in her case Betty is still alive, she knows the pain.

“Don’t be sad for me, the 20 years that I had with her were the best years of my life and I’m also glad that she had the chance to taste a love so rare before she left us. Futhi because of her I gained a son.”

“The boy that was meant to marry her?”

Mam’Zonke nods.

“Well he’s a man now but yes him. He is my baby and that’s all thanks to my deceased baby. When he was here earlier he came to let me know that his girlfriend is pregnant and I know for certain that Siyanda is rejoicing where she is. That boy carried the pain of losing her for so long that I feared that he’d never move on but here he is having a child.”

“You’re going to be a gogo times two.” Thandeka says smiling.

“HUH?”

“Betty is also pregnant.”

“Oh my goodness Thandeka that’s amazing news!” Mam’Zonke exclaims.

“It is, you know for me it’s like receiving another chance to mother Betty. I just hope that I don’t mess it up.”

“You won’t. You’re a remarkable woman Thandeka.”

Thandeka heaves a sigh while shaking her head. She doesn’t feel like one most of the time.

“Moleboheng is going to freak out.” Thandeka says chuckling.

“Elizabeth will just have to be strong. This isn’t about her anymore. She had the chance to love and be a mother and friend to this child but she didn’t, so what happens from this point on has nothing to do with her.”

While the two sisters are going on about Moleboheng and her character, Betty is lost in her phone chatting to her love. The butterflies in her stomach cannot be contained. They have been flirting for the past couple of minutes and Betty’s cheeks are stiff from all the blushing she has been doing.

“Dad just got here, we’ll chat later. I love you baby mama.”

“I love you too baby daddy.” Betty responds.

When she lifts her head up from the phone she finds her mother and aunt looking at her with amusement written all over their faces. Embarrassment washes all over her and she hangs her head.

“Love is a beautiful thing baby and I am glad that you have a chance at it.” Mam’Zonke says getting up and making her way to the kitchen.

“No baba you cheated. Next time I am going to beat you.” Khanyisile’s voice fills the entire house.

Malibongwe shakes his head at how dramatic she sounds in this moment. He knows that he is also about to receive an earful from her because he hasn’t seen her in a very long time.

“Kodwa nkosazana we played fair.” Lwandle responds.

“No baba no. I want a rematch.”

“And then you two, what’s all this noise about?” Zobuhle asks as they walk into the living room.

Lwandle stifles a laugh while Khanyi huffs as she throws herself on the couch. Her eyes move to Malibongwe and she rolls her eyes causing him to chuckle.

“Mama, baba cheated. We were playing a game at the arcade and he cheated.”

“Love.” Zo says softly.

“Honey.” He responds in a soft tone.

He is looking at his wife with eyes filled with nothing but love.

“Next weekend you and Khanyi are going to back to wherever and you are going to give her a rematch and you will not cheat this time.”

“But honey.”

“But nothing love.”

They all chuckle as Khanyi does a mini dance. She then turns to look at Wewe with a soft face.

“Even when you don’t miss me, I love you. When schools close please take me to Durban.” She says.

Malibongwe realises that he has no choice but to agree to any and everything that she wants in this moment.

“Durban it is my princess and again I apologise for not being the best big brother.”

“It’s okay.” She says with a smile on her face then gets up and walks out of the room.

Malibongwe makes a mental note to talk to Khanyi before he leaves later.

"You good?" Lwandle asks.

"Yeah you?"

"Good."

"I actually have something that I need to talk to you two about." He says then heaves a sigh.

He hopes that his mother's reaction will be a positive one although he knows that she might just lose it.

"Mom I know that you don't agree with my relationship with Betty."

"Of course I don't." Zobuhle spits out.

"This is the first relationship I have been in since Siyanda died. For years you have been pushing me to move on and when my heart finally decides to open itself up, you disapprove of the one it has chosen. Mom I love Betty, yes her past isn't the most beautiful but we all have a past and to judge her based off of what you've seen in the news is totally unfair.

I love her. She came in and accepted me with my scars and all. Even when I almost took her life she stayed with me and was patient with me. I'm sorry if she doesn't fit into what you had in mind for me but she is what I need right now."

"Malibongwe."

"Betty is pregnant mom and I would like us to go and pay damages for her."

“And how sure are you that she is carrying your child?”

“Because when we started dating she left that life and has been solely focused on us.” He lies.

“HmMMMM”

“Mom please give her a chance. You and dad hated Sfiso but look at how amazing he is with Melo and Kuhle. I’m not asking you to be friends with Betty but I am asking you as my parents to go do right by her family.” Malibongwe says.

Lwandle nods lightly while Zobuhle looks lost in her thoughts.

“You love her that much?” Lwandle asks.

“I never thought that I would move on from Siyanda baba but here I am, so yes I love her that much.”

FIFTY EIGHT

“I know that you don’t want to go back home and be associated with your family again but Mandy if we want this marriage to work we need to do things the right way. This lobola has to be accepted by your family, so baby I am asking you just try and talk to someone, anyone and I swear we will do everything in one day. The Saturday sa mahadi re tla mbesa that way you don’t ever have to go back again unless you want to.”

Mandy has been shaking her head since Tebogo started this conversation. She acknowledges that what he is saying is true however she isn’t willing to go back to her relatives and ask them for help especially after they left her out in the cold when her mother passed away.

“Then I guess we shall remain boyfriend and girlfriend until the day we die.”

“And what happens to our kids?”

“I don’t know.” She shrugs as she walks out of the room.

Tebogo chuckles lightly as he thinks about how stubborn Mandy actually is but he understands that in this case her stubbornness stems from being hurt. Although he does wish that she could see things from his point of view. All he wants is for her and their future kids to share his surname.

He gets up and follows her out into the kitchen.

“Can you stop being stubborn just this once.” He says wrapping his hands around her waist.

“I will not go back there.”

“Betty and Molemo will be there with you akere and so will Betty’s mom, you said it yourself that she is the mother you all needed so I know for certain that she will not let you go through all of this by yourself.”

“Fine I’ll talk to her.”

“Thank you and I love you.”

“Ya whatever I love you too.” Mandy mumbles.

She untangles herself from his hold then makes her way to the bedroom. She cannot believe that she has to reach out for those people for help after everything that has happened.

Betty makes her way into the doctor’s office where she finds Bongwe already waiting for her. She chuckles lightly before settling in the chair after greeting him as well as the doctor. They’re at the doctor because Malibongwe wanted to make sure that the pregnancy is going well even though it has been two weeks since he found out.

“So would it be possible for us to come in every week? “ He asks.

Betty shoots him the eye before turning to the doctor who is laughing silently.

“Not every week but once a month, unless it is absolutely necessary for us to monitor the pregnancy on a weekly basis.” The doctor says much to Betty’s relief.

“But if we want to come in every week we can?”

“Malibongwe we do not need to come in every week so relax. Now can we get on with the appointment so we can go because I do not want to be late?”

“Fine.”

The doctor is chuckling softly at the interaction between Bongwe and Betty. She finds it interesting and warming especially the fact that Malibongwe seems so invested in the pregnancy. In her profession she doesn't always see men that come in and actually enjoy the appointment so much.

Betty and Bongwe are now on their way to see his sister Melokuhle. She invited them over for lunch and Betty has been nervous since. She wasn't expecting the invite and the fact that their mother was so horrible to her still lingers in her mind. She can't help but wonder whether or not Melo will have the same attitude towards her. She has however decided that should that be the case then she and Bongwe will be through.

“Relax.” He says taking her hand in his.

“She's your sister.”

“Well I was relaxed when I met Mandy as your sister.”

“Yeah because you had fucked her before.” She responds laughing.

He cringes as those words roll off her tongue.

“I thought we agreed never to touch on that Betty.”

Betty bursts into laughter. She knows that he hates talking about that incident but she can't help but laugh about it. She understands that it was business and nothing more.

“Sorry ne.”

“Mxm keep your sorry because we're here.”

Betty gasps as they park in the drive way. The house is what dreams are made of. The fountain catches Betty's eye and she immediately falls in love with.

“This is gorgeous.”

“Wait until you see the inside. Woza.”

He takes her hand and they make their way in. Betty is holding her breath waiting for drama to ensue. She is more than ready to turn back and make her way to the car should things burst. They step in and immediately their noses are hit by the aromas coming from the kitchen.

“Nqobile!” Bongwe shouts.

Sfiso walks in laughing.

“My wife is not your wife so stop screaming her name in my house.”

“She was mine first.”

“Well she is mine now. Hello Betty.”

“Hi.” Betty responds shyly.

She is not sure how she is supposed to speak to this man in front of her. Besides the fact that she is nervous as is, she finds his presence intimidating. He commands the room without even saying a thing plus he is quite handsome.

“Baby this is Sfiso, Melo’s husband.”

“Hi Sfiso.”

Bongwe and Sfiso share a chuckle. Bongwe is amused by the fact that Betty can be shy at time while Sfiso is taken by the fact that Malibongwe looks genuinely happy.

“I thought I heard my name being called.” Melo say walking into the room.

She shares a hug with Malibongwe before giving Betty a hug as well.

“No wonder this idiot has been hogging you, umuhle.”

Betty blushes and smiles not knowing how to respond. She has relaxed a bit because she can tell that Melo and Sfiso are not about to throw her out of their house.

“You have a very beautiful home.” Betty says.

“Thank you, it’s all my wife’s doing, I just provided the funds.” Sfiso says.

“And I am grateful for that husband. Okay Betty do you mind keeping me company in the kitchen while you two idiots go check on my daughter.”

Bongwe kisses Betty’s head.

“I’ve missed my niece vele.” He says making his way out of the room with Sfiso following.

Betty then follows Nqobile into the kitchen where she settles on the high chair.

“Would you like some juice?”

“Please.”

“So how was your appointment?”

“It was interesting. Your brother was trying to get the doctor to agree to weekly appointments. Luckily she wasn’t having any of that.” Betty says chuckling.

“He’s nervous about this pregnancy but he is excited. I’ve seen him with every child in the family and he has a big and loving heart and I have no doubt that, that child you’re carrying is going to be very loved and highly spoiled.” Melo says.

“And I can’t wait to see him in action.”

“After the last time I didn’t think that he would be this happy about things.”

“After the last time?” Betty asks in confusion. “What do you mean?”

Right then Melo realises that Malibongwe hasn’t let Betty in on the fact that he was expecting a child with Siyanda. She can’t believe that he left such a crucial part of his life out of their conversations. She thinks on her feet about a story she has to spin for Betty because she knows that it is not her place to tell Betty.

“When I was pregnant Bongwe was very much invested in the pregnancy however I lost the child so that kind of crushed him.”

“Oh I’m so sorry for your loss.”

“It’s okay, it had to happen otherwise we wouldn’t have gotten the chance to adopt our princess.”

Melo makes a mental note to talk to her brother alone before they leave.

“She looks like Siyanda.” Sfiso says.

“No she doesn’t, well not anymore.”

“I hope you truly love her for her and not for the lookalike that she is.”

“Like I said before in the beginning I was intrigued by her looks and how much she looked like Siyanda but after the investigation I fell for her as her, as Betty. So I truly do love her as Betty.”

“As long as you’re sure. You do look very happy with her and that’s all we want for you, to be extremely happy.”

“I am. We’re going to the Free State next week to pay damages, I hope you can come with.”

“Yeah ubaba had already spoken to me and you know I have your back.”

“I want to ask her to move in with me, do you think she’d agree?”

“Maybe but just take things slow okay. Get your relationship to a certain level before thinking about moving in and all.” Sfiso says.

Letho starts giggling and Bongwe jumps up to go take her. He is in love with his princess and he can’t hide it.

FIFTY NINE

“So I hear that my mom wasn’t the friendliest when she met you.” Melo says.

“I understand where she was coming from though, I mean I doubt I’d want my child with a former prostitute as well. So I get it, she was being a mother... a protective mother at that.”

“I want to ask how you got into that but I know it’s a very personal question.”

“Maybe one day.” Betty says with a faint smile on her face.

“I understand. Can I ask you something?”

“Sure.”

“Why do you love my brother?”

Betty chuckles softly. She has never thought of the exact reason why she loves him and she doesn’t want to because that might ruin things.

“Why do I love him? I don’t know. If there was one specific reason as to why I love him then the relationship would be doomed. So I don’t know why I love him but I do know what I love about him. Malibongwe is not your typical boy next door. I’ve seen him as a bad boy and I’ve also seen him as a sexy business man and on both occasions I have been weak.

I love how underneath all his demons he is still somewhat a cuddly bear. He makes me feel special and appreciated, like I’m all that he sees. Every time that I’m in his presence I feel at peace and that isn’t something that I have always known. I feel the love that I have always

been yearning for. I was at my most miserable when we had broken up and as much as he had hurt me I couldn't help but still want him in my life.

Your brother makes me want to be a better person. Heck I left my previous life because of him, for him. Sure there are some qualities about him that can do with some improvement but above all he's a great guy."

Melo has a broad smile on her face as she watches how passionately Betty speaks of her brother. Without a shadow of a doubt she is certain that Betty is the one for Malibongwe and she hopes that her brother will grow up and let her in on everything because she knows that things will blow up in his face should he not.

"He's very lucky to have you in his life."

"I'm lucky to have him." Betty says with a warm smile on her face.

"Let me go get those two idiots so we can eat. Please grab some juice in the fridge and take it into the dining room. I'll be back just now." Melo says before walking out.

Betty does as instructed before settling into the chair and wait. She cannot believe that she was so comfortable in telling Melo about her love for Bongwe but she doesn't regret it, she wants to make things work with him not just for the baby but for herself as well. They walk in laughing with Bongwe holding Kuhle in his arms. That sight brings a smile to Betty's face.

"Baby met my niece, Lethokuhle."

Betty smiles when she finally gets to see the little princess. If she didn't know that she was adopted she would swear that the child was theirs. Her heart flutters when she looks at Malibongwe's face – he is in love with the angel and his face gives it away. Suddenly she cannot wait to meet her own bundle, as scared as she is she can see that the child will be in good hands.

“Simphiwe stop hogging the baby and let Betty hold her kanti unjani na?” Melokuhle says dramatically.

Sfiso chortles at Bongwe’s expression – he doesn’t want to let go of Letho. Malibongwe hesitantly hands Letho to Betty who gushes over her the second she holds her in her arms. As if she senses that all the attention is on her, Letho breaks into a giggle in her sleep which has Betty falling deeper in love with her.

“My baby just found herself another person to spoil her.” Sfiso says.

“She sure has.” Melo says giggling. “Okay sit let’s eat. Betty let me take her so you can eat.”

“No it’s okay I’ll manage.”

“Okay. Let me dish up for you then.”

She grabs a plate and dishes up a bit of everything for Betty who is still lost in Letho’s eyes whom is also enjoying the attention that she is receiving.

“Baby eat.” Bongwe says.

“Okay.” Betty responds without lifting her head up.

“See your child Melo, my child isn’t getting food because of yours.”

Everyone erupts in laughter while Bongwe frown. Betty kisses his cheek before taking a bite of the cheese and garlic bun. Everyone is relaxed around each other and that is the one thing that Bongwe appreciates the most.

Molemo is standing in line when she feels a light tap on her shoulder. She turns around and finds an older man looking at her with tears shining in his eyes.

“Omolemo?” He says in a shaky voice.

She frowns before looking around then turning her attention back to him.

“I’m so sorry to do this like this in a public space but I begged your mother for years but she just wouldn’t.”

“I think you have the wrong person.” Molemo says softly.

“Can you please pay so we can go talk in less busy place? I saw an Ocean Basket around here somewhere.”

“I don’t think I can do that.”

“Molemo please.”

“Why the hell didn’t you tell her about Liyana?” Melo says through gritted teeth.

She and Malibongwe are outside on the gazebo while Betty and Sfiso are in the house watching TV. It took everything in Melo not to burst each time she stole a glance at her brother.

“What?”

“I had to fucken lie because I realised that she didn’t know. You idiot! You said she knows everything kanti yini ngawe?”

“Liyana doesn’t affect our future.”

“Malibongwe.”

“Just let my child rest in peace Melo.”

“When Betty finds out that we both lied to her about this, she is going to be crushed but you, when she leaves you because of it do not come running to me. I’m only going to say this once, TELL BETTY EVERYTHING. If you want the relationship to work because this half lie half truth thing you’re doing does not help anyone.”

“Okay Nqobile.”

“Ya whatever!”

They make their way back in where they find their better halves glued to the screen.

“It is breaking news that leads our bulletin this hour: Minister of Home Affairs Zakes Tau was involved in a fatal accident this afternoon. The minister was declared dead at the scene. We

have our reporter Cindy Nkosi at the scene and she will be bringing us any updates as and when she receives them.”

Betty’s eyes shine with tears as his pictures flash across the screen. All that is playing in her mind at the moment is that fateful night when he took her innocence. She can feel his weight on her as her huffs and puffs before groaning loudly as her reached his destination. Her body begins to convulse and Bongwe rushes to hold her in his arms.

“Betty, baby what’s wrong.”

Betty struggles to breathe as her mind continues going down memory lane. She remember the first time her seal with his finger. For years she had suppressed all those memories in her mind, even when she told Thandeka about everything she wasn’t this triggered.

“Pick her up let’s get her to the hospital.” Sfiso shouts as he runs out of the room.

“Betty baby please be okay, please.” Malibongwe says softly.

“BONGWE GO!” Melo yells breaking him out of his spell.

He picks her up then rushes out saying a little prayer in his heart.