



# THE MBI

The Rise of a Phoenix

SEXY, HEARTFULL, SAD,  
VIVID PICTURES AND GREAT

**BY PREGNANTMAN**

## Chapter One

Each community consists of a diversity of people living their own lives yet sharing the same space. From different households to different ages to different social groups these communities are divided either by choice or by biological endowments. Though you belong to these groups and these communities, primarily you are an individual.

From birth to death, as an individual you go through a series of contests in your quest to reach your destiny. As a result you find yourself consciously or subconsciously selecting your comrades and guides along the way. After some time you might find that some of these comrades are not going towards the same direction as the one you desire. This is where you cut them off and move on with those whom you feel are still going the same direction.

As much as you have such control and choice in which you choose who gets to walk along with you, some of you tend to forget that you can never choose who will be your spectators. Spectators consist of us, your community members. We quietly witness you as you grow from one stage to another. Some of you might not even be aware of our interests in your lives, but from childhood to adulthood we are there, watching. We witness you through firsthand perceptions, through assumptions and through grapevines. Each of us knows a certain portion of your life, and if we were to be taken as a whole community we would scribe your whole biography. The sad thing is that you can never know how much each one of us knows about you. And you can never know who exactly has an interest in witnessing you as you grow. Therefore we are Anonymous Witnesses.

Thembi is one such person who grew up from a child to a young woman being observed by a panel of anonymous witnesses from the community of Edendale, in the city of Pietermaritzburg.

We observed her together with her family. She came from a respected family of community leaders. Therefore some of us expected her to be better bred than an average girl from an average family, whereas the haters wanted her to fall so that they could satisfy their resentments. This made her particularly more interesting towards our eyes.

"...Like father like daughter, the wages of sin is death. Goodbye my darling mother."

These are the words and more found on Just Magazine. It is Thembi who wrote them right before she attempted to walk what should have been her last walk on earth, the same walk that her father took four days before this day.

Mr. Ngcobo, or we should say a businessman, a Pastor, a father, a husband, Sipho Ngcobo shot himself on the head last Saturday morning and left a note saying:

"For the wages of sin is death. There are things a man cannot live with. But also remember: For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord' s. Farewell my loved ones"

Now, Thembi was standing next to the railway line, patiently, she was waiting for what was to be the last thing that ever touched her while she was still alive. Of course her eyes were like angry clouds on a stormy day, from her eyes to her chest it was a waterfall, and like thunder her heart was pounding forcefully as the train approached from her left side. Spha from the right side towards her, he seemed to be mirroring the speed of the train, running and screaming his lungs out "No, no, no, no, no Thembi listen to me, you don' t want to do it..."

Unfortunately his voice was not loud enough to penetrate against the vulgar sounds of the train' s horn. He tried again to shout louder but still seemed to have fallen short to get to Thembi' s ears.

Thirteen seconds later Spha was on the other side of the rail looking at Thembi, with his eyes popped out as if he was the one who had just died. In fact they were both looking at each other.

We do not know why Thembi decided she was not going to feed the multi-headed snake any more, why she thought she was worth living after all, and why she thought she still deserved to breathe after what she had done had made her feel so ashamed about herself. Though she still breathes today we all know that she died that day. In fact they both died that day.

\*\*\*\*\*

Maybe we should begin by telling you what happened three years ago, and tell you all the series of contests that steered her towards the railway. Now seat back and relax as the story is just beginning.

There it is, walking down the passage, from its room towards the lounge. Slim eyes, thick chocolate brown lips that crack to reveal two rows of sparkling stones, dimples on each side, it's head is made to kill as always, fair-body of an alien from planet-sexy is walking towards it parents. Its walk is the only walk that ever stood a chance against Michael Jackson's moonwalk. There it is the beauty and the pride of the Ngcobo family, Thembisile Ngcobo approaching her mother and father on her big day.

This day was the day of her matriculation ball, she was indeed looking as astonishing as the word "astonishing" could ever mean. As young as fourteen years, when she bypassed even the oldest chap paused a little and took a glimpse at her just for the pleasure of sight. Now she was eighteen going to nineteen, it was like the more she had grown the more her sight bred the desires on every man she passed by.

What day was it today? Friday the 26th of November 2007. She hugged her mother and made a sudden turn, and then asked "How do I look?" in fear of her father's reaction towards a split on the left side of her black dress. A split that revealed her left smooth and light brown alluring thigh and a V-cut on her chest that divulged the cleavage of her perfectly rounded brown, soft and tight breasts.

She remembered: when she was fourteen she was not allowed to partake in a beauty pageant at her school because of the nature of clothing. This was why she asked again, "You don't mind the splits on the dress? The reason I'm asking is because the last time I wore a dress like this you nearly killed me. Remember the beauty pageant?"

Mr Ngcobo asked his girl and his wife to seat down, and then seated himself on the right edge of the couch.

He then explained to his daughter why she could not enter for the beauty pageant four years ago. Yes, she could've won, "but it was just not on for a pastor's daughter to associate herself with things of that nature." He then told her how this ball was deferent to the pageant. This was not meant to fulfil her urge to feel sexy or

to show off her beauty, but this time it was meant to celebrate her efforts of twelve years at school. No one had the right make limits on how she could celebrate her hard earned moment, but herself. He reminded her of the achievements she had acquired up to this point: top of the grade results three years in a row, sportswoman of the year, two bursaries offered and so on.

Mr. Ngcobo was a very charming man. He chose his words precisely every time he opened his mouth. No wonder he was such a great church pastor, such a good businessman, such an exceptional husband, and such an ideal man in the community of Edendale and the Pietermaritzburg city as whole.

The time was quarter to six in the evening, Thembi was now ready, and the only thing between her and her matriculation ball was her partner and his means of transport towards their destination, Samba Hotel in Durban. A roaring sound of a vehicle approached and stopped at the gate. He was here! She came to her feet and rushed to the door, waited for a knock. There was no knocking but a push on the door. To her disappointment it was not him, rather her younger sister Nomalanga homecoming from doing sports at school. It became obvious to her that the vehicle outside was Nomalanga's school bus. Nevertheless they greeted each other with love and joy. "Wow! You look... you look, man I don't know what to say!"

Nomalanga then rushed to the kitchen shouting for her parents' attention, "Mom, did you see Thembi?! Did you see her dress!? Did you see her hair!? Did you..."

Mr.Ngcobo calmed her down and told her that indeed they had sees all of those things she was talking about.

"On my matric-ball I want that dress" said Nomalanga.

"But sweetie you are only ten years old, by the time you are in matric, fashion will be a lot different then." said her mother.

"I know but I love it" . They all laughed.

While they were laughing Thembi enlisted in the kitchen and told them that Bonga had just arrived and was standing outside. She instructed Nomalanga to invite him in, and then she swiftly went to her bedroom "to get her purse" , but we all know that the real reason she rushed to her room was to fix herself once again and make sure she was 'perfect' for Bonga's eyes.

Nomalanga wide opened the door. Without even inviting Bonga in she started asking him a lot of questions about his relationship with her sister and also complimenting him on his attire. Right on the door way, Bonga was in a dashing designed black tuxedo that matched his silver wrist watch and his black Armani shoes. On his left hand he held a set of keys for the Mercedes Benz that was destined to cart them to Durban. Then Mrs. Ngcobo came out from the kitchen, in the lounge approaching towards Bonga and calling Thembi out for a picture with her partner before they left. She also gave Bonga a little compliment on his attire.

There it was again, the beauty and the feast of Bonga's eyes. There it walked towards him. His eyes were fixed on the diamond between its thighs, his eyes were also fixed on the twins on its chest, and his eyes were also fixed on its sparkly eyes and on its sparkly smile: his eyes were fixed all over her. He was thinking, "Two years and a half of patience was worth it, man look at that, but what I cannot believe is that she was not joking. Man I'm one lucky mother..."

Whilst he was still in his fancies, Mr. Ngcobo disturbed by touching his right hand shoulder and then said "Son, make sure you bring her back safe and sound" .

They took the photo, and then left. There were smiles on everybody's faces.

Mr. and Mrs. Ngcobo went inside the house and prepared for the evening prayer that always occurred between six and seven. In the seating room Mr Ngcobo rearranged the furniture by pushing the table and chairs against the east side wall, while Mrs Ngcobo went to get her bible from the bedroom. In the other bedroom Nomalanga was taking off her school uniform and putting on an 'old' dress that was last years' Christmas dress.

There was another knock on the door. It was Mantombi, the maid. Or maybe we should phrase it as the Ngcobo family phrased it: it was aunt Mantombi. She was the fifth member of the Ngcobo household. On this day she was coming from visiting a sick friend at the Edendale Hospital.

"Ohm thanks God I made it before the prayer, but is seems like I missed Thembi. How did she look, or should I say how did they look?" were Mantombi's first words.

Nomalanga describe the beauty, the happiness, the partner and the car. Then they all went on their feet and sang "You are holy Lord oh Lord. You alone deserve all praise. There is none I shall I adore but you. You alone deserve all praise..." They then began praying.

Mr. Ngcobo was praying louder than everyone, hence he was the head of the house and a pastor. "Dear Lord, dear God, dear Master of all. In the name of the King of Kings, the doctor of doctors, teacher of teachers...God I am praying in the name of all names, I am praying in the name of your one and only son Jesus of Nazareth. God my Lord I humble myself in front you and your army of angels with a request that is guaranteed to be granted, because you are the Lord of nothing but the truth. I pray for all those who could not pray for themselves because of various reasons, I pray for those who do not know you, I pray for those who need help, I pray to get help. I pray for myself to prosper in your eyes and your works, to do the right thing even when it hurt. Lord, give me love that is infinite towards every creature. Lord I pray for my family to... Last but not least Lord I pray for my angel, our angel, our child, our girl to be safe on her way and back from Durban. Amen."

And then they all recited the following closure together "Lord of power, father of all, bless this night you have given us, and protect us through your grace, Amen"

After praying they all set down, allowing Mantombi to tell them about her ill friend. She told them how much her friend was getting better and the possibility of being discharged by the following day. They started sharing stories about ill people. How sad it was but funny at same time, the things they say, how truthful dying people tend to become. They talked about the how dying people see things, they talked about the wisdom that dying people seem to have.

## Chapter Two

An eagle slicing through the wind at the end of spring, a bullet that wiggles as it travels towards its target, a black lightning that glides along black concrete, a perfect engine made by German perfectionists glides towards Durban.

Inside the Mercedes Benz: The two love birds were cruising their way along the N3 freeway, playing Lionel Richie's Three Times a Lady on the background. They were talking about how much of a miracle it was that their relationship had survived so long. "I just can't believe it's been over two years already" said Thembi.

Then Bonga reminded Thembi of how uncomfortable she used to be when they were alone at his house. Thembi replied to this statement casually with a smile and said "Yah hey, the thing is I didn't trust you enough back then, and it was my first time visiting a guy. I didn't know if you would understand about the issue of not having sex. I didn't know if you were going to understand. Man, I remember that I could not relax even though I was wearing my jeans. I don't think I could've been able to visit you wearing a skirt, not to mention a miniskirt. But look at us now, I don't even mind being naked in front of you. I love you Bonga, you do know that right?"

Bonga replied, "Yah I know, I've always known that. But I love more than you do, do you know that?" , "no I love you more" said Thembe, "ah ah, I love you more" said Bonga, "ok then we both love each other more than the other" .

"What does suppose to mean?" asked Bonga sarcastically. "Ok, how about we just agree to disagree." said Thembi. Whilst they were on their loving mood Bonga suggested that they took the next off ramp. Their car needed petrol if they wanted to reach their destination.

They were at the garage when Bonga saw Thembi's friends, Spha and Vicky.

Spha was sipping from a brown beer dumpy of Hansa at the back of a new Jeep next to his date that also happened to be Thembi's other best friend, Vicky.

Thembi, Vicky and Spha had been friends since grade eight when Spha was still dating Vicky. While Spha and Vicky were still dating in grade eight, we don't know how and why but Thembi befriended them both and they all became friends ever since.



Vicky's boyfriend was a college student, but she chose to be accompanied by her friend, Spha. She wanted to enjoy herself without being limited by her boyfriend's presence. She had always liked her independence. As for Spha, he did have a girlfriend at school, but he had to drive with his friend, Vicky. He was to meet his school-girlfriend at the event, because of parental reasons.

Bonga then alerted Thembi about her friends. When Thembi saw her friends she jerked the door handle and sprang to her friends. Vicky screamed and promptly opened her door as well, stepped out of the vehicle and hugged her friend.

"Wow, you look like..." said Thembi who did not get a chance to finish hence she was interrupted by Vicky chanting her famously known chant, "Yes I look like a superstar, a star that is super, super as in upper. Yes I'm a superstar."

Everybody who knew Vicky at school was one way or another familiar with this chant. "A superstar, a star that is upper, yes I'm a superstar."

Without giving Thembi another moment to breathe, Vicky continued: "Yes, I know, tell me something I don't know. But you my friend wow! I don't think I've ever seen you this beautiful."

While they were they were still at it, Spha enlisted and said "Other girls will go mad jealous of you guys."

Vicky retaliated on Spha's compliment by saying "No I am the jealous one, jealous of them for having the pleasure to see us like this"

The cars were ready, so they got back in their cars and got back on the road. The cars were following each other, Jeep in front and Mercedes behind. Then Bonga decided to slow down. Thembi wondered why their car suddenly slowed down, but we didn't because we knew how much Bonga loved attention and if they were a little bit late, more people would get to see them as they walked in.

This time the love birds were playing Joe's I Wanna Know when Thembi tried to tell Bonga about the change of plans. "Baby about tonight, do you remember I promised to break..." Bonga's phone rang and Thembi was interrupted. It was Bonga's friend on the other side of the phone asking for directions to the Samba Hotel. Bonga took his time and became very precise in his directions so much that it took the whole song for him to finish. Thembi's favourite song, Dance with My

Father by Luther Vandross went into play right after he hung up. Bonga turned up the volume and they both began singing along and along and along.

By now they were close enough to repeat the song only two times before they arrived at their destination.

Vicky and Spha in the other car were arguing about Spha's state of alcohol. "You really should stop drinking now, I'm not taking my entrance picture with a zombie." were the words from Vicky's mouth. Spha responded to these words by telling Vicky that he really felt sorry for the guy who was going to marry her.

"Why, because I'm concerned about you getting drunk before we even get there?" asked Vicky.

"No, because it always about you" was Spha's answer

"Now what does that suppose to mean?"

"You want to me stop drinking not for my own sake, but because you don't want me to embarrass you."

"Oh, is that what you think, because arriving with you isn't embarrassing enough? Actually, I feel sorry for Sindi. You know how cute you were in grade eight? I don't know, but you are just getting fat and uglier every day."

Sindi was Spha's girlfriend from school, the girlfriend that couldn't drive with him because of parental reasons. Her parents did not want her to go with a boy they did not know, they were very strict. Therefore she was to be escorted by her cousin who did not even go to the same school. But of course once they were inside the ballroom Spha was going to take over, and the cousin was going to have to find something to occupy himself with. Maybe if he's lucky enough he could even get Vicky's attention.

Vicky proceeded, "I don't understand why guys that had potential in grade eight are suddenly the ugly ones in grade twelve, and those we thought were nerds and boring are now the ones with all the swag. Look at Bonga. He was such a nerd not more than two years ago, but now he is every girl's dream at school. He's hot, he's smart and he's a gentleman. He has waited all this time for Thembi. Why can't every guy be like him?"

Spha couldn't swallow these last words smoothly, so he decided to respond, "There's one thing you're not getting. When I was in grade eight I still needed to prove myself to the guys. We, guys, compete when it comes to girls, and the more swag you have the more girls you get. Resulting in guys respecting you, but as the time goes you realise that every now and then you have to get a new hot girlfriend in order to maintain that momentum. This is exhausting. After sometime you realise that you don't need the approval of the other guys in order to get your confidence. I, for example, have learnt that I can boost my self-esteem through other means, such as doing well in school, being good to my only girlfriend, having good friends and being a good role model for my brother."

Vicky always enjoyed arguing with Spha just for the sake of it. This is why she did not want to show him that she understood what he was saying. Rather she said, "Wow, you always know how to defend yourself don't you."

He decided to continue on his argument, "As for Bonga and the others, they are still new to the game. They still need to prove themselves and like a dog that has just recently been unleashed Bonga is still biting anything he can get his teeth on. How many times must I tell you that he is not as innocent as you guys think of him? Just because he is not sleeping with Thembi it does not mean he is not sleeping with other girls. I'm a guy, and I know when a guy is playing like he is. Thembi is his trophy. She's beautiful and smart, therefore other girls envy her. Because of that they wouldn't think twice about sleeping with Bonga just to spite her or at least laugh at her as she unknowingly walks around being wrapped around his finger. And if a guy like Bonga knows this, he can take advantage of it. It's a win-win situation, but not for Thembi of course. Another thing that he knows is that if he hangs around long enough, eventually Thembi will sleep with him. So it's another win for him. And today is that day right? Thembi will be giving it to him today?"

Vicky responded, "You see what I mean? You wish you were in his shoes, I've always seen the way you look at Thembi" .

Spha denied by saying that if he wanted Thembi he would've asked her out a long time ago, he loved her like his sister just like he loved Vicky like one too.

Another response came from Vicky, "Your sister? Then how come you slept with me? If I'm your sister then you might as well sleep with Thembi too, your other sister" .

Spha then said "But you and I know that we were both drunk, and that was at least two years ago. And besides you and I both know that we are just not meant to share anything of that nature. Do you remember in grade eight when we were still dating, how we used to fight over nothing? And then we broke up and became friends, the fighting stopped. And then we slept with each other in grade ten's end of year party, the fighting began again. Thanks to Thembi she helped to put it all behind us."

Vicky laughed at Spha's words and said "Yah relax I know, I was just making a point, and besides, I take you as my brother as well. About Thembi, I think she is having second thoughts about tonight. She said she doesn't trust him anymore. Ever since she told him that she will break the curse, all he's been talking about is how he is looking forward to finally getting to share themselves towards one another's pleasures. What Thembi is asking, is if he has not penetrated her does it mean they haven't done anything worth describing as each other's pleasure? She said she thinks what they have shared is more than a simple penetration could ever mean. She was not saving herself for any other reason but to prove to herself that she can control herself, that she can keep a promise to herself. She said that she has done things with him she would never do with another guy: she has allowed him to touch and look and feel. They have done everything she could ever think of, except allowing his Pavarotti to get a spotlight in her centre stage. He has penetrated her spiritually and emotionally. Even physically he has, just not with his Pavarotti. His fingers and even his tongue can tell the taste of her. Her palms and even her tongue can tell the taste of him. He has seen her screams of pains and pleasures exploding at the palms of his hands. She has seen his utterances of joys exploding at the palms of her hands. They've seen and tasted each other's temperatures. But still he thinks penetrating her womanly ears with his Pavarotti is going to be the beginning of their pleasures."

At this moment Spha was listening attentively with his lips resting on his brown bottle's mouth, and then he said "You know I've never thought of it that way. I get it though, and I must say, that was very poetic, the way you explained it. Wow!"

Vicky responded by saying, "I know, you not the only one who can be deep."

### Chapter Three

The night is warm, a smooth breeze is in the air, the sky is bright, warm environment is present and an exciting atmosphere at the arena of the Samba Hotel is the best way to describe the environment. A tall dark young man is standing with a black video camera, filming the arrival of the partakers at the door of the ballroom.

Through the lenses of the video camera a black Volkswagen approaches towards the entrance of the Healers Hall at the base floor of the Samba Hotel, and promptly drops a couple partnering with grey and purple. The male is wearing a grey suit, a light purple shirt and a dark purple tie, and the lady has beautified herself with a shiny long dark purple dress, a pair of dark purple shoes and a grey chain of beads around her neck. After dropping the purple couple the Volkswagen proceeds, to allow other cars to drop off other partakers under the spotlight. The purple couple then paused a little for the camera and held hands before stepping on the red carpet that led to the door of the hall. They then began to stroll towards the door until they were swallowed by the door.

Right behind the purple couple appeared Mr. and Mrs. Perfect. Thembi and Bonga were christened as the perfect couple by their school mates a year prior this year. Mr. and Mrs. Perfect were already on their feet because they had to park their car themselves hence they did not have a driver. Nonetheless they performed the ritual, stepped on the carpet, held hands, paused and strolled down the carpet to be swallowed by the beautifully decorated ballroom.

The perfect couple than looked around the hall and spotted their seat numbers on a round table where there were six other partakers already seating. They walked towards the table; Mr. Perfect pulled a chair for Mrs. Perfect, Mrs. Perfect took a seat and Mr. Perfect took the last seat on the table next to Vicky.

Vicky came to the ball with her friend Spha of course, but now she was sitting next to Sindi' s cousin, Senzo. Senzo did not go to this school but came to the ball with his cousin as her partner (parental reasons). Since Sindi was now with Spha who was her real boyfriend, it was only logical that Vicky and Senzo enjoyed each other' s company.

On this round table there was the “perfect couple” , to the left of it were Vicky and Senzo, next to Senzo were Spha and Sindi, and next to them was Bonga’ s friend, Themba and his girlfriend Precious (The Purple couple).

This table was not the only table that was dazzling with beauty, but all tables were. Beauty came through all mediums. It came through dresses, tuxedos, shoes, hairstyles, interior design of the place itself, a combination of strong colours and soft colours, music and everything else matched the theme of the day, “Glitz and glamour” .

The proceedings began. It was time to feed the brains: jokes were shared by the programme director, poems were recited as part of entertainment, minute speeches were given, and all other formalities were carried out.

Then it was time to quench the hunger. Food was served in different courses and settings.

And then it was time to quench the thirst. An announcement was made: “Ladies and gentlemen, we have now concluded this segment of today’ s affair. We will now leave this hall and make our way to begin our after-party three blocks down the lane. There is a private bar that is booked just for us...”

The hall cleared in a minute. Bathrooms full of half-naked bodies, cosmetics in every mirror, bags in and out of bathrooms, changing from formal garments to sexy, party outfits.

Walking, talking, taking pictures, holding hands, smoking, kissing, and screaming were in the range of all the practices that you were guaranteed to stumble upon if you walked on Silver lane, which is between the Healers Hall and the Montague Private Bar, at this moment.

\*\*\*

There she strolled between parties’ of male and female, dressed in the vein of a seductive angel. Walking like she had levers connecting the alternating movements of her hips with each step she took. Click, click was the sound produced by her pencil shoes. She approached with her eyes glued to her most desire, her eyes glued to his dream coming true, eyes that stroke durable lightning to every man’ s spine, or at least every boy at the after party. Click, click was the sound produced by her pencil

shoes. As she drew closer he gasped a breath and caught sight of her appetizing smooth lips. Her lips widened and then cracked to reveal a row of sparkling stones. The dimples on her cheeks made every young man wish it was them. Unfortunately the smile in her heart was only meant for one young man tonight, Bonga. As he took a glance at her again a waterfall was created beneath his dashing designed tuxedo, an ocean of salty water popped from the springs of his skin. Click, click was the sound produced by her pencil shoes. He looked at her again, and he made use of his best expression of satisfaction, he smiled.

Spha had always admired his friend Thembi, but he had never seen her in a silver, shiny miniskirt that complimented her peachy skin tone. This miniskirt was tight enough to underline her pear shaped behind. A cream-coloured sleeveless vest that was also tight enough to make sure that everyone was induced to take a glimpse at her full of life breasts, her figure and her flat tummy. Everyone was staring with either admire, lust or with envy.

This time even the blind could see the way Spha was looking at her. It was more than attraction towards a friend, but he looked at in a manner of respect together with sexual desires at the same. It was a combination that was bound to explode someday.

Realising that people might see the way he was looking at her, Spha shook off his smile and took off his coat and tie walked towards her. He then placed the tie inside one of the coat's packets and then handed this coat to her so that she keeps it in her bag hence Bonga's car was going to be around the whole night. He then walked away from Thembi towards his girlfriend, Sindi.

Miss Vicky came out wearing an outfit that resembled her friend's outfit. They had deliberately bought them for this occasion. The only differences were the colours and the fact that Vicky's one was tighter than Thembi's. Vicky then asked, "Why are you carrying Spha's coat, and why has he not changed?"

Thembi responded "I guess he was not joking when he said he was not going to change because for guys it makes no sense. They get out of formal suits and put on semiformal outfits. Why don't they just take off their ties and coats?"



Bonga, he too was one of the guys who did not share Spha's view. He had changed and now wearing another dashing designed semi-tuxedo. He looked great, that we must say. All the girls just automatically engaged on his scene. He liked that.

Inside the bar there was everything you could ever think of finding in an after-party. Every thirst was fed, either with beer, whisky, music, vodka, lust, brandy, ciders, spirit coolers, cigarette or cigars. It was all up to you, you could feed on one brand, a few or on everything.

Since Thembi did not drink she was sipping a glass of apple juice next to Vicky and Sindi who were drowning themselves on ciders. Every now and then, the guys would just pop-by to check on their ladies and then go back to do whatever they were doing. This time Bonga was the one popping by, he asked Thembi to try a sip from the strong stuff and handed her a glass of vodka. She refused but he would not take a "No" for an answer. Realising that he won't leave she decided to give in, but only if she was going to drink wine or ciders instead. With satisfaction that she was indeed drinking he left and got swallowed within the crowd.

At the end of the counter Spha was sitting with a group of friends. Senzo was there as well. Yes, Spha did manage to hook Senzo up with a couple of girls. Spha then got up and walked fast towards the door, took out his cell phone and checked who's calling. It was his drunken mother. His mother drank a lot on Fridays and Saturdays. She blamed her drinking on the hardships of being a single parent of two boys, Bonga and his younger brother. She loved her boys though, and she would do anything for them. Another example of her love is this call.

He ran towards the back of the building, it was quiet enough now, and then he answered the phone. There was nothing she wanted to say except ask her son if he was enjoying himself. And then she told him how proud she was of him.

As Bonga was still trying to find a polite way to say "Mom thanks for the call but I really must go now", he stumbled upon a surprise, Bonga and the girl from the purple couple.

His tongue in her mouth, her lips on his lips, his hand in her bra, her hand in his trousers, his other hand at the back of her thigh under her dress, her other hand on his neck. Bonga's best friend's girl, Precious, was all over Bonga, and Bonga was all

over his best friend's girlfriend. Spha turned around as quickly as possible. Bonga and his best friend's girlfriend were so deep into each other that they didn't even hear Spha's heavy feet steps as he sprang away.

Inside the bar the girls were still dancing at the corner with one another when Spha interrupted them and asked Vicky on the side. He told her what he'd seen. He then asked her to tell Thembi or they go outside themselves to catch him red handed. Vicky said "How about I tell her tomorrow because she seems very happy? I do not want to ruin her day."

"But make sure they don't do it today, don't allow her to sleep with him today" .

Vicky assured Spha that they she will make sure of that.

Then Vicky went back and called Thembi on the side. She asked "Are you still going to do it today?" Thembi replies "No I don't think I should, not when I'm tipsy, I want to feel and remember everything. I want to remember every pain and every sweat, every pleasure and every sound."

They then agreed to leave together when everything was over. So Vicky was sure Thembi would not sleep with Bonga this day.

Everyone was dancing and singing and drinking when Bonga walked in and kissed his perfect partner. Vicky on the other side was disgusted by even looking at him. Thembi and Bonga talked for a bit. Thembi was explaining why she was not going with him that night.

"He seems to be understanding, after all he is also a virgin, he want to remember this too" , Thembi told Vicky.

An hour later: Thembi and Bonga had decided to chill in the car so that they could cuddle. Vicky didn't mind this, because she knew that if her friend had promised not to do something she was not going to do it. And besides that, Vicky also wanted to get some alone time with Senzo, she really liked his coolness.

Inside the car: Thembi's young body was not doing what her mind had told it to do. She had never felt such attractiveness towards Bonga's stickman. She just wanted to kiss him, touch him and feel his stickman against her woman. Inside her woman it felt like there was a space or a hole that needed to be filled by Bonga's stickman. She

did not know how this sudden urge to break her virginity came from, how this sudden urge to have sex came about. Maybe it was Mr and Mrs Alcohol doing their job in her body.

## Chapter Four

It nine o' clock in the morning, the sun is shining, a beautiful Saturday. It's a big room, big bed, male and female. She is dead but breathing, awake but sleeping. A minute passes; she looks at the door, at the floor and at the ceiling. She turns towards him: he is far in his dreams. She sits up, trying to make sense of the situation, a terrible headache, low energy, pain everywhere. "Why would people carry on drinking if they will experience this pain every morning?" She sees a pack of condoms, grabs them fast. Oh good, the pack is still full, they did not do it. Her vest is still on, oh look her miniskirt is on the floor next to her hand bag. She gets off the bed, walks towards her hand bag. She stops, her centre stage is screaming. Why does it hurt? She touches, looks down, dry blood, very painful. He awakes, he says "Wow! What a night, baby you can ride" . She turns, want to cry but try to hide. "Without condoms, why do I not remember, when did we leave the bar, where are my friends?"

He explained that they all got drunk, she changed her mind and wanted to do it. Furiously she argued "No, no ways, why would I change my mind after we have agreed to wait until today?"

He answered "You were able change your mind about doing it, what would stop you from changing your mind about not doing it? And besides, we were all dead drunk"

He then explained to her that Vicky, Senzo, Sindi and Spha just vanished and never came back, so he and her decided to leave the bar.

He promised her that it was beautiful. It was only their second round and she was already on top him. They "only" did three rounds. He told her with a smile, but every word he uttered pierced a piece of her heart. She felt guilty about having anger against him. After all they were both drunk.

He handed her a pack of morning-after pills. She took them together with her toiletry bag to the bathroom. When he offered to accompany her she refused. She was in the bathroom. As the waters ran from the mouth of the tap to the basin, her salty waters ran in much the same speed from her eyes down her face to her chest. While the waters were competing she opened her toiletry bag and found her cell phone. She

wondered how it ended up in there. Nonetheless she switched it on and called Vicky.

"Where are you, are you fine?" asked Vicky.

"I don't know. Where are you? I need to talk to you, now." said Thembi.

"Ok let's meet outside the Healer Hall in an hour's time"

She was not crying now and so was the tap which had stopped when she turned it off to allow herself to hear Vicky on the other side of the phone.

She took off her vest and stood still in front of the mirror. Stared at her woman, and slowly her tears dripped like the trail of dry blood on her woman between her thighs. She stretched her left hand and clutched a bath sponge. Slowly she rubbed the sponge against her inner thighs and wiped off the tears of dry blood from her crying woman.

She looked again, saw nothing but garbage. She cried once more, then decided not cry anymore. She took the morning-after pills, read the packaging, took out two and drank them with water.

"Why would Bonga do this to me? I wanted to make it special when I break my virginity. Yes I love him but not like this. But he was drunk too, I should not blame him. But why don't I remember anything? But at least it was with Bonga. But why don't I remember. Agg man, I should stop worrying and figure out a way out of this. We have to do it again today. This time we will make it special and do it my way. Yah, that's what we should do."

She then took a long bath and pampered herself.

She got out of the bathroom. She then apologised to Bonga for making him feel like he designed the whole thing. He smiled and accepted the apology. She then advised him to wake up and get cleaned up, because she was going to go out for an hour or so, and then she would be back. "When I come back I want to make sure I remember this one, I want this one to be really special. So don't be afraid to go all out with the candles, roses and all."

He smiled again and nodded.

"Oh, and what's this?" she asked as she pointed at small bottle that contained some oily looking liquid. This bottle was lying right next to his trousers, implying that it might have fallen out of his trouser pocket.

He jumped off the bed and snatched it, saying "Oh, that my hand lotion" . Her beautiful face seemed confused by his reaction but she did not want to give this reaction any attention. She had bigger things in her mind.

It was now eleven o' clock in the morning, Thembi was walking down Silver Lane, and Vicky was already waiting at the door of the Healer hall.

"I have already called Spha, and he is coming in a few minutes. Now sit down and tell me what happened." said Vicky

"No, you tell me what happened. All I remember is that I was sitting in the car with Bonga, and now I wake up next him in bed."

"We got out of the bar, you and Bonga got in the car for like twenty minutes and then Bonga got out of the car. He came back with two glasses which I assumed were for the both of you."

"Oh I think I remember that part. He offered to get me another drink. But after that I remember nothing." said Thembi.

"Me and Senzo then took a walk towards the back of the building and..." she paused a little, then continued "...You then got out of the car and told me that you were feeling very hot"

Thembi wanted to clarify "Hot?"

Vicky continued, "Yes hot, hot as in sexually excited, as in horny. You then told me that the reason you got out of the car was because you didn't want to do something you might regret."

"That I do not recall at all" said Thembi.

Vicky continued, "After that we agreed to leave. You therefore went to the car to fetch your bag, and I went inside to get Spha and Senzo so that they would walk us to our room. But when we came back you and Bonga were nowhere to be found. We searched all the rooms that were booked by the school but failed to find you"

With self reticent Thembi then said, "Bonga booked his own suit that's why you couldn't find us. At least he was not lying when he said I also wanted to do it, but I still would've liked to..."

Vicky interrupted, "Oh look, there comes your friend" , pointing at Spha.

They welcomed him with hugs and smiles like they always did. He then asked where Bonga was. Thembi replied by saying "I hate that one" .

Spha looked at Vicky and said, "Oh, she knows about the kiss already?"

Thembi swallowed her smile and grabbed them both on their shoulders and asked "What kiss, is there something I do not know? Guys tell me, who kissed who, where, when? Guys tell me."

Vicky had been trying to think of a way to tell Thembi. Now was the perfect time to get over and done with it. "Actually it was not just a kiss but they did more. When I went for a walk with Senzo, we walked towards the back of the building, where they were kissing and we found a used condom" said Vicky.

"A condom?!" asked Spha.

"Damn it guys, just tell me already" shouted Thembi.

"My friend please don't cry but, but Bonga and, what her name, Precious may have an affair and they had sex yesterday. Spha saw them kissing and then when I went where they were kissing there was a used condom next to this bracelet, Bonga's bracelet. This bracelet"

She took the bracelet and handed it to Thembi.

Thembi just stood there as if the whole world had just vanished in front her eyes. It was like she could not move nor breathe. Then after a moment of silence she raised her right hand and slapped Vicky on the face. "Why didn't you tell me yesterday?"

She then turned around and walked. After roughly two metres she turned back and walked again, slapped Spha on the face as well. She then left them with their hands on their cheeks.

She was back at the door of the hotel room, the room where she lost her womanhood without any recall. She walked in, and Bonga was still in the bathroom. She was breathing heavily. She wiped away her tears, looked to her left, looked to her right, walked towards the table, pulled out a chair, looked at the chair, looked around the room, spotted her miniskirt on the floor, walked towards it and slowly picked it up.

She examined it with her leaking eyes. She wiped them with it, and then looked at her toiletry bag, walked towards it. She took out a pair of scissors: cut and ripped and tore and splat and shredded and slashed her miniskirt. She stopped.

Heavy breath, wet lips, wet red eyes and sweaty skin were all physical gestures of what' s was happening inside her perfectly carved body. She walked. Reached the rubbish bin, tossed the shredded cloth that used to be valuable, a piece of cloth that used to be a symbol of beauty, a piece of cloth that was once a perfect product of creativity and hard work but was now a piece of shredded rubbish. Her miniskirt was now in the rubbish bin.

She packed her belongings as fast as she could. Bonga then walked out of the bathroom with a towel around his waist.

Calmly she asked him "When was the last you took a bath?"

"Just seconds ago. Why?" answered Bonga

"No, I mean before that."

"Yesterday" he answers again.

Her eyes bled again, and she wiped away the transparent blood on her face with an open hand. Spha dropped the towel that was covering his just-bathed-body on the floor, walked towards her and offered a hug. She warned him to stop right where he was.

"What time yesterday?" she asked again.

"Baby what' s wrong, why are..."

"Just shut up and answer my question!" shouting as if she was ten buildings away from him.



“Round about four o’ clock, before we left Pietermaritzburg.” he answered. His was now really confused, within his perfect brain he was trying to make sense of her questions.

She then began to cry again and asked “You sleep with a slut, and then right after that you come and break my virginity. You didn’ t even wash yourself before touching me. How could you do such a thing? Answer me damn it. Why would you be so evil? What did I ever do to you? Why would you hurt me like this?”

He looked at her with shock and asked “Who told you?”

She grabbed him by the hand and walked towards the rubbish bin.

She pointed at the shredded miniskirt in the bin and said “You see what you did to me? You made me ruin my skirt, I’ d be damned if I allowed you to...In fact I want you to take it.”

She picked it up. Before she could hand it to him, she sighted something in the bin. She detected it to be his hand lotion. She picked it up as well. He tried to snatch it away from her but fell short. She read it: Sex Drop. Even the coldest woman will be as hot as the sun. Just a drop in her glass and she will be chasing after you.

She walked away, grabbed her bags, threw the so called “hand lotion” to him, looked at him straight in his eyes, opened the door, and looked at him again. “You cheat on me, you sleep with your best friend’ s girlfriend, you drug me, you rape me, and then you lie to me. All in one day.”

She turned back and closed the door behind her, leaving him alone with his “hand lotion” on his hands.

\*\*\*

Saturday afternoon, four twenty was the time, everyone was home. Nomalanga was chatting with Vicky and Spha, Mr and Mrs Ngcobo were with Mantombi in the kitchen. Spha and Vicky had come as soon as they got back from Durban, to check on Thembi. She was not there so they had to explain why was she not with them or why did they not know if she was with Bonga. Though they did not explain the whole story, they told the family that there was a conflict between Thembi and Bonga.

There was someone on the outer side of the lounge door.

They all heard the clattering sounds the door when she Thembi walked in. They all ran to the lounge. Like any other concerned mother, Mrs Ngcobo was the first one to ask "Sweetie what happened, tell us, are you fine, do you want to talk about it somewhere private?"

Thembi looked at them as if they were all crazy and presented her killer smile. "I'm fine. Why wouldn't I be?"

"But they said you and that boy of yours had a fight." said Mrs Ngcobo.

She explained to them that it was nothing she could not handle, they needed not to worry. She assured them that she had sorted it out. She smiled again and walked to her room. She took a quick shower, and then joined her friends who by that time were watching a movie with Nomalanga.

Spha then excused himself and left. He needed to go home and take care of his brother hence his mother was in the company of Mr and Mrs Alcohol. Thembi and Vicky went to Thembi's room, and Nomalanga was left behind watching her movie.

In the bed room, the friends are resting on top of the bed, talking about the ball. There was no tension anymore because Thembi had explained to Vicky that she broke up with Bonga, and had also apologised for slapping her. Vicky even commented on the fact that it was better that Thembi saw the real Bonga before she allowed him to break her virginity. Thembi just smiled and nodded. The thought was still too painful to talk about. So she did not tell Vicky about the 'hand lotion' and the fact that she was not more a virgin.

They also talked about their plans for the coming year. Vicky was going to Johannesburg to study interior design at Urban School of Art. Thembi was going to Durban to study psychology at the University of Kwa Zulu Natal (UKZN). She had decided to follow in her mother's footsteps. Her mother was a councillor in one of the local clinics.

Seven o'clock, Vicky was gone. Singing, praying, a verse from the Holy Bible, singing and praying again, and they all set down. It was a family ritual for the Ngcobo family seat down and talk after an evening prayer. This was the only guaranteed family time. They talked about anything and everything. Supper was usually served around this time as well.

Today' s topic was based on Mr Ngcobo' s new friend, Michael. He was a business associate of Mr Ngcobo. They were in a car dealership business. This new associate was a good businessman but did not seem to care about anything but fun. Last week he visited the family two days in row accompanied by two different girls. It was a pity Thembi never got a chance to see him. She was away for two days at Vicky' s house studying for their final examinations. She sure would' ve seen what the others were talking about: Michael was a very charming man. He was clever, smooth and transparent. He was once married, and his former wife had designed a plan to kill him because of the riches she was destined to receive from his life insurance and his businesses. Though she failed to kill him physically and was jailed, she had succeeded to kill his soul. He had become a money-driven robot. All he cared about were business deals.

## Chapter five

She doesn't drink nor does she smoke, but we have decided to call her a Diva. She's clever; she's been like this forever.

Players come and go, left, front and through back doors. And yes if it flows she goes. Sometimes she goes with the flows, and sometimes she goes against the flows. The fact is she goes. That why we call her a Diva

Divas take and take, but her, she's a giver. Divas break and break, but her, she's a fixer, though we still call her a Diva. She's one tough ninja. She flies with her looks, she slices with her smile. When she touches she releases fire, fire from her soul. Let's not forget to mention, she's a Madonna, a daughter of the God, our Lord, the one and only, the saver, the giver. Oh yes she's a Diva who is a Madonna.

When her smile broadens, we shy, and smile and die of our own guilt. Her smile shows how she's passionate. Passion, pure passion with declaration, every word she utters she declares, declaring her existence. We know she's not perfect, but she is the closest being we know. After all she's a Diva who's a Madonna.

Divas cross night dancing in pubs and bars and clubs. She's too is a Diva, cross night praying in churches with crosses and pastors, and mothers and brothers and sisters. She drinks, she drinks holy water. She breathes; she breathes holy breath. And when she's fasting she doesn't eat even bread. If we could carry on describing what Thembi has become we would run out of our own breath.

It was a warm February evening, evening of her first day in her third year at the University of KwaZulu Natal. She was browsing through her psychology textbook, playing soft music on the background, and drinking coffee. The heat of the evening was evidenced by the lack of clothing on her skin. A blue unbuttoned shirt and black underpants are all she was wearing. Making us desire to be the beetle that is flying around her light bulb.

She had not lost her beauty. Both her inner beauty and her outer beauty seemed to have blossomed even more since we last mentioned her. She had gained a few inches in both height and width, and her skin was now smoother since she was passed the pimple age. This maturity made her more desirable by every man's skin. Unfortunately no man had the right to her heart anymore. No man had the right to

even glimpse her fully fledged body. Only the beetles flying around her light bulb got the opportunity to indulge their eyes in the beauty of her skin.

There were a lot of strong suitors who tried to court her heart, but her dead trust towards men was just too dead to be resurrected. There was only one man she really trusted, her father Mr Ngcobo. Though she believed no man when it came to love, at least she had not lost her faith in the existence of true love. Her parents' marriage was the only thing that reassured her of the existence of love.

She stopped scanning through her book, closed the book and went straight to bed.

Wide bed in a wide room, beautiful girl in a beautiful room laying on the bed, on her back, shirt wide open, hands wide open, and legs wide open. Eyes vaguely open, glued to the ceiling and uncertain thoughts were running on her mind. What does that man want from her, does not he see that he is at least two times her age, who is he, does not he has anything else to do, why does not he say anything, does not he knows that staring is rude? These questions were annoyingly running in her head. Unfortunately this mysterious man was the only one who could answer them. She just had to be patient and maybe one day he would tell her his problem.

This mysterious man she was thinking about was one of her regular customers at Bone Steak Restaurant & Bar where she worked as a waitress. This four star restaurant was at the Samba Hotel, the very same hotel of her dreams or should we say of her nightmares. She worked there part time on weekends and holidays. She took this job so that she could earn extra cash to allow her renting of a bigger living space. She did not like the setting of two students in one tiny room. Since her bursary was not willing to let her rent a room by herself, she decided to work for her personal space. She was renting a small bachelor flat that was situated close to both her school and her job. She loved it here, the view was beautiful, security was tight and not many students stayed in this building. She did not like living in a student' s dominated building because of it noise level.

Same warm weather, same beautiful room, same beautiful bed, same beautiful girl, but a new beautiful morning. She had been awake for an over an hour now. She had just come out of the bathroom: a huge pink towel was shielding the sight of her skin from her underarms to her toes, toes which were gorgeously beautified with a red nail polish.

She dropped the towel on the floor, set on the dressing table, seized a bottle of body lotion, squeezed it in to her left palm, placed the bottle on the table, and then slowly stroked her hands together. After a couple of strokes she rubbed the lotion off to her neck, down her chest, between her twins, on her twins in circular motions, on the nipples, around the twins in an ascending motion,...and then squeezed the bottle for more lotion. She applied it again on her skin: she was now on her back, then her figure, her belly slowly and gently. She squeezed the bottle for the last time: she was now standing up, bent a little and the lotion was to the skin of her legs from ankles, slowly going in both legs from both hands, through the knees' , between her thighs, towards and around her orderly shaved woman, towards and on her pear shaped back side.

Her cell phone rang. She answered. It was her father informing her that he was going to be in town for the day, and was hoping to see her when the day was about to retire.

“Ok Mashiyamahle, I’ ll wait for your call then. But dad, you seem to be this side a lot these days, just two days ago you were this side...”

He also explained to her that he was working towards a good business deal that might get him working with the gurus of the industry. They then said their greetings and phones were dropped.

She was now ready to leave for her class that was commencing at half past eight. She closed the door and then the elevator, the gate, and she was off the premises. An avalanche of humans, cars, bicycles, trucks and street poles did not seem to prevent Thembi from hastening her way to her campus.

While hastening her to the campus her head was excavating memories about the last time she, Spha and Vicky were together. Though they were still friends, they were not seeing or talking to each other as much as she had hoped to. It had been a while since they were all together. She remembers that the last time they were together was last November when Spha took them out for lunch. At least they still kept contact through phone calls and social networks though.

The last and the worst thing was that her father, Mr Ngcobo, had been showing signs of disapproval on her friendship with Vicky. Her father was now concerned with how

Vicky was going to negatively influence her if Thembi kept visiting Vicky every time Thembi was home.

The fact that Spha quitted school after his first year and got himself a good marketing job made it even harder for them to see each other often enough. She was proud of Spha though. His job required him to travel around the South Africa and even out of the country every now and then. It was a great job for someone as young as Spha.

It seemed sudden when Thembi realised that she was already at school. Here she was bound wakeup from her dreams because her former roommate was staring at her as if she had seen Santa walking down her house' s chimney. The name was Nosi. They became friends when they still lived together. Even though they were not the best of friends, Nosi is the closest friend Thembi had at the University. Nosi might have been a bit there and there when it came to taking life serious but at least her sense of "I don' t care" reminded Thembi of her best friend Vicky. The two girls greeted, hugged and laughed at nothing, walked, and then they were swallowed by the door of the lecture room.

\*\*\*

White plates on white tables, steaks and drumsticks on white plates, forks and knives on steaks, cold and hot beverages on glasses and mugs, waiters and waitresses in blacks, hands full of menus, trays and bills, diners in twos and threes and fours. Mike was the only diner who was sitting alone at this busy hour of Bone Steak Restaurant & Bar, he was sitting at the far left corner of the bar where he has been seen more frequently lately. The busyness of the hour did not seem to help Thembi; the busier it seemed meant she had to walk in the sight of this strange man who looked as if he had nothing better to do with his evenings.

A tall glass of beer and a newspaper was all he had resting on top of his table. He raised his right hand and pleaded "Waiter!" in a very soft but muscular voice. No waiters seemed to have noticed him but Thembi. She turned with a smile assuring him that his plea had been heard and as soon as she cuts away from the group of

boys she was still entertaining she would be with him. Less than a minutes later Thembi was in front of him "Afternoon Sir, how can I be your help this evening?"

"Thembisile is the name right?" , he asked as he looked at her name badge on her chest.

"Indeed Sir. Ngcobo is the surname. Now what is it you would like to have?"

"ohm... a roasted steak, two Greek buns of toast all the other stuff that comes with it would be nice." He said as he shaked off his eyes from her eyes and went straight to his newspaper.

"... Anything to drink?"

"...oh yes, a refill please. Castle of course."

She turned around and hastened her way between the tables towards the kitchen.

Thembi' s was outside under an umbrella walking from work towards the corner of Silver lane and Tuber Street, when two beams of light flashed her from behind.

Before her, she noticed the beauty of colour produced by the two beams of light hitting against the raindrops in the mist rain. The light got brighter and brighter as the vehicle approached. A grey Audi A5, "Miss Ngcobo is that you?"

"And who might you be to know my name?" in a surprised and scary manner she tried to walk as fast as she could.

"Thembisile relax, it me your favourite customer"

She turned around. Saw a beard shaped like the one of a male goat. "Oh it you, you can move along now."

"You know it very dark out here and more dangerous since it raining. A girl like you is not safe walking these streets alone at this time of the night. Pop-in I' ll drop you home."

"Thanks but no thanks. I' m just a few blocks away, maybe next time."

"Ok then, I guess I will just drive behind you until you get home"



Thembi just kept quiet and kept walking. Thinking he was joking she was wrong; he was not showing any signs of speeding up. Rather than that he took out a loose tobacco and a gas lighter, lit and began to puff.

“Ok ok, if I get in if you promise to go faster than you going right now?”

He just smiled and opened the door, she was in. Immediately he unlighted his tobacco and stashed it away. “Before you say anything I must say...you have a very beautiful smile.”

She blushed and said “Thank you. And before you say anything I must say...you have a very beautiful car.” They both smiled and then he said “Well, nothing is a material thing compared to natural beauty. Cars come and go but your smile was and will always be there. For us men, all we have are material things.”

“A man’ s beauty is his cattle.” she said referring to a Zulu proverb that can be loosely interpreted as; a man’ s beauty is not how he looks like, not all the things he came to this world with, but rather it is what he built for himself, his wealth (cattle) and his name is what we call the true beauty of a man.

“Oh where are my manners? The name is Mike Sibanyoni.”

“It a pleasure to finally know your name Sir”

“What do you mean to finally know?”

“You have known my name quite some time now and I did not know yours, it was a bit unfair.” She said as she smiled. “...oh that my building on your right. You can drop me at the gate. Thank you very much. I’ ll see to it that next time you visit the restaurant I get to serve you for your kindness.”

He stopped the car and then looked at her. “Wait a minute... tell me something about yourself.”

“What do you want to know?” she looked at him up and down.

He smiled and scratched his head. “Anything I do not know, tell me anything.”

She just stared at him with a puzzled look and said nothing.

He then said “Ok then I’ ll ask you a question.”

"I think it better that way." She said as she smiled.

"What is your ID number?"

Surprised and startled she asked "Sorry, what is what?"

"Your Identity Number, your national Identity number, what is your ID number."

She smiled even more "Wow! Sorry, a girl never tells her years."

"Ok then. What your mother' s name?"

She shook her left and right as she smiled more and more until she laughed. "You are...you something else. Wow! What' s up with your questions?"

He laughed as well and said "Nothing. I' m just interested in you. And you if you are interested in a subject you are usually fascinated by anything that concerns that subject."

"Ok then. Gracious is my mom' s name. Thank you again for the ride." She got off and disappeared from his eyes to the darkness beyond the gate.

## Chapter Six

We call it good manners, we say you are a gentleman, you were raised well, you have class, we even see a real man in you. This is exactly what Thembi saw on Mike when he got out from his side and ran towards her side just to open her door for her.

It had been five weeks since Mike formally introduced himself to Thembi. Despite the fact that Mike was sixteen years older than Thembi they seemed to be enjoying each other's company. Thembi had even allowed him to see her bachelor flat. Don't get this wrong Mike was gentleman and Thembi was good in controlling herself, they were not dating and neither had had they slept, nor had they kissed or said anything of that nature, but all we could all see that they both craved to stretch their friendship a little bit longer. We all knew that it was just a matter of time before one of them broke the curse of pretending not to be interested in another's saliva, in another's sweat.

It was a Friday's warm evening when Mike was dropping Thembi at her flat. They had been to a function that was hosted by one of Mike's associates Mr Mbanjwa who lived at an area called Westville around Durban. Mr Mbanjwa's impression was surely to retain in Thembi's mind. He had two ladies committed just to his arms. Very young and beautiful ladies, at least two times and a half his age! Thembi had observed. There were other players who had beautiful ladies committed either to their left or right arm, but none had two ladies. There were all types of business genres that Thembi could think of in this function. Which is what made Thembi wonder how on earth so many businessmen from so many different industries became friends, and all their wives or partners were very young too?

Thembi was still stuck in these thoughts when she accidentally walked on the grass which was wet, because the sprinklers were on, and she fell on her back while the sprinklers showered her chest and her face. Mike was still locking his car when he had her screams of the fall "Ah ah ahhhh!!!"

He turned around as fast as he could and saw her stretched out on the grass. She was not that far, just about three meters. Therefore he did not have to run to get to her.

"What happened? Oh wow it slithering here!!!" He himself almost slipped to the ground as well, but used his hands to balance on the ground. They both laughed.

They were both up when Mike could not resist but intently looked at her breasts which were accentuated by the stickiness of the now wet dress she was wearing. Thembi first tried to ignore but couldn't because she enjoyed being perceived with such desire. After all this was the first man in two years and months that had been given in a chance to in her good books except her father and her friend Spha. And both her father and her friend were not seeing her in that way because of the nature of their relationship with her. She just smiled and walked towards him and whispered. "Goodnyt Mike."

He held her hand and said goodnight as he bent down and picked her purse. "You such a gentleman thank you." were the words she muttered as she accepted the purse.

With a glare into her eyes he murmured, "No I'm no gentleman, I'm just a guy who is doing all he can to impress you, because he really want to kiss you so much right now."

No words were uttered after that. He leaned closer, she met him halfway. Their lips became one, nose to nose, his hands all over her back, her hands on his neck, his man against her woman, her hands on... The sprinklers were abruptly on their side again, the whole ritual was interrupted. She pulled back, he allowed her loose. She said "No this is wrong, we shouldn't be doing this. Goodbye Mike." She ran to the elevator and left him there standing with his hands to himself.

Third floor, she got off, walked to her door which was just a few metres from the elevator. She was turning the key on the door when she heard footsteps and a huge panting getting louder and louder. She opened the door and he was behind her.

"I'm sorry but we need to talk. We need to act like adults here, we can't just..." he then stopped to gulp some air.

There were all over each other again, this time it was more intense. Rubbing against the wall, pushing the door with their collided bodies, on the couch was him on top, on the coffee table was her on top, his shirt on the floor, her dress pushed up so much that it became a shirt, showing her thighs, her underwear. They were off to the bedroom.

Even the beetle that usually flied around the light bulb in her bedroom did not get a chance to see anything that day because they did not even get a chance to switch on the lights. So who are we to tell you what happened in the bedroom? All we know is that there were sounds of pleasure between the collided bodies of Adam and Eve in the garden.

\*\*\*

It was a breezy Saturday morning. Not only was the weather breezy outside but even inside Thembi' s flat, and also inside her heart. The apartment felt super lonely when Thembi woke up and saw that her guest was nowhere to be found. She had been staying there for more than a year but never felt this lonely ever since she moved in. Even on the first day she was alone in this flat was not even close to the loneliness she felt when she found no sign of her guest.

She was about to make breakfast when she sighted a note on the fridge saying "Had to wake up and hurry for an important meeting. Breakfast is on me just be ready by 10am."

She checked the time and realised it was ten minutes past ten already. While she was puzzled she heard a knock on the door. Since she was not dressed but only had her pink towel wrapped around her, she asked who it was and ran to the bedroom to put on something appropriate. The answer on the door was: "Breakfast for Thembisile Ngcobo from the Samba Hotel House Catering Services."

"Give me a minute I' ll be there just now."

She snatched her long, yellow summer dress from the laundry basket and threw it on. She was at the door in no time. A young handsome man was on the other side of the door with a small trolley. "Goodmorning Mss Ngcobo, my name is Jacob Zondi, I will be serving your breakfast today. May I come in?" Thembi looked around and noticed that her shoes, her bra, and everything all over. She tried to push him but he was already in the door way so he just stopped there and went back, but the milk was already spoiled. He had already seen the mess she was trying to hide. Thembi closed the door and quickly tidied up the place in seconds.

Thembi was surprised by the amount of food Jacob had in his trolley, from the customary bacon and eggs to expensive wine. "Is this all for breakfast?" was all she

said and then she apologised for keeping him outside. Jacobs' s response was very casual and had an accent of procedure, "It fine Miss, and it my job is to serve other people, not to be served."

"You know my job is to serve other people as well. What time are you expected back at the hotel?" were the words from Thembi' s mouth.

"Yah I know. And I' m expected back in an hour' s time."

Thembi was puzzled and in turn she asked "You know?"

He just smiled and proceeded with his serving. She concluded that maybe he knew because he had seen her at the restaurant where she worked. She then invited him to join her if he did not mind.

Jacob was gone and Thembi was cleaning her flat when she received a call from Spha. This month he was in Kenya studying the history of the languages of Kenya. They talked for more than ten minutes, talking about what he had seen and how much he missed home. He also mentioned to Thembi that his cell number was internationally supported therefore Thembi could call if she was not lying about missing him too. But they both knew that was not going to happen unless on his birthday because call rates on Thembi' s side were not as cheap as on Spha' s side.

Two o' clock was the time when Thembi finished her two hours of studying and got ready to go start her Three o' clock shift at work.

She was serving her customers as good as she could but everyone could see that her head was not in the same room as her body. Wherever Mike was her mind was there. Yes she was expecting him to show up like all the Saturdays before that day, but he was not showing until it was nine o' clock, which was her time to knock off and go home.

As she walked out the door he was standing on the other side with a smile and a small box as gestures of I am sorry for leaving without a word this morning. She tried to hold her smile but could not. They hugged and he squeezed her behind as they were hugging. They drove to her flat. When they arrived they had some KFC that was brought by Mike.

Mike was still eating while Thembi was standing on the mirror and admiring her beautiful earrings which together with a necklace and a wristwatch came from the “I am sorry for leaving without a word this morning” box that came with Mike. Mike finished his chicken and went straight for her luscious lips.

The heat was back again, but this time they went to the bedroom before their clothes were taken off. They took them off one by one so that the beetles in her bedroom indulged as much as possible on their magic. Lucky for them the lights were on this time. He was good, very good in his moves and his timings. It was clear that she was not experienced, but her passion outclassed the fact that it was only her second time she felt a man on her woman. Yesterday was her first time, but of course he did not notice because she did not break, hence she was broken two years ago on her sleep.

The morning was a warm one. He was not in the bed when she woke up but he was in the other room doing something on his laptop. She woke up and greeted him with a smile. She then asked if he had had breakfast yet. The answer was no. She therefore offered to make him something. But he told her that he was just waiting for her to wake up and he was going. Besides, she was supposed to go church. Therefore making him breakfast was just going to make her late.

Thembi knew that Mike was a busy businessman therefore he being in a hurry was not going to change her mood. After all her dad was a businessman too, she was not new at this. This is why she did not like but understood when Mike told her that he was not going to be around town for the week.

## Chapter Seven

Cutlery hitting against each other, kettle boiling water, pots puffing mouth-watering aroma, and two women bumping on each other. Three men stretched on the couches, another woman next to one of the men, talking, laughing and seeking for approvals.

The Ngcobo' s were entertaining their guests on this lovely Sunday. Mantombi was in the kitchen helping Mrs Ngcobo with lunch preparations. Nomalanga was playing with her friends outside. Mr Ngcobo was in the lounge talking to the guests, who were a Preacher that was going around the country spreading the love of God, the Preacher' s wife, and the Preacher' s interpreter. They were talking about the incident that took place at church that day. A young girl had to go in front of the whole congregation and apologise for falling out of the right path by getting herself pregnant. She had fallen pregnant a year ago and her child was now three months old. She therefore stopped studying in the middle of her second year when her parents found out about her pregnancy. What made them talk about this girl was because when she went to apologise on stage she did not apologise to the congregation for embarrassing it, nor did she apologise for falling pregnant but she only apologised for bringing a child to this world before she had the means to support it. It was quite obvious that she was not sorry for falling pregnant; she only went on stage because she was told to do so.

They were still talking about this awful girl when Mrs Ngcobo and Mantombi walked in with trays on their hands. Food was served, grace to said, and the digging began. The conversation proceeded from where they had stopped when trays were brought in. The Preacher was by now showing his skills in "personality studying" that he had gained throughout his experiences with people around the country. He was claiming that he saw from her first words when she greeted that she was not a well cultured girl. Maybe even the school she went to during her forming age was not an equipped school. Maybe if she went to a Christian school her attitude would have been different. He was even sure that this girl has had a ton of uncivilised friends all her life. That was when Mrs Ngcobo commented by saying:

"Well, maybe in the last two years yes. Before that she was our girl' s best friend for their entire high school career. They went to Saint Anne' s Christian School together.



Vicky and Thembi were very good together, they were separated when Thembi went to Durban and Vicky went Johannesburg. I still do not Vicky has changed that much, she just made a simple mistake.”

Mr Ngcobo tried to hide but was embarrassed by the fact that her sweet angel was still being associated with Vicky after he had made sure that their friendship was over. Mr Ngcobo than said “But she should have known better, having sex before marriage is totally out line for anyone who knows God. That is why I told Thembi to stay away from this immoral girl after hearing about her pregnancy. I hear she also use to date a boy ten years her senior.”

Mr Ngcobo was saying this not knowing that Thembi was playing naked wrestling just last night with a man sixteen years older than her, Mike. The preacher and his associates applauded Mr Ngcobo’ s responsible actions towards protecting his daughter from bad influences.

Yes Vicky fell pregnant last year March. We know this because it was now March again and her child was three months old. Her child’ s father was from New Castle in KwaZulu Natal. They had met in Johannesburg where they were studying together. She was still friends with Thembi, but not so much anymore, especially after she became pregnant. Vicky did not blame Thembi, she knew how much pressure the community, the church and her father pressed on Thembi’ s perfect image. At least Spha was still there for both of them. Even though he was not there physically they knew that he was always their boy to turn to if there was a need for comfort.

The day ended well for the Ngcobo’ s. The preacher was gone, Mantombi was in her room listening to the radio, Nomalanga was in her room sleeping and Mr and Mrs Ngcobo were in their room. Mr Ngcobo had gone to sleep already when Mrs Ngcobo got off the bed and went to their bath room. She stood in front of the mirror, unbuttoned her pyjamas’ top, and she just stood there staring at her left breast. She had been having problems lately, her left breast seemed to have a small lump underneath it and it was also a bit painful when she touched it. Even when her husband tried to have the bedroom service with her she refused saying she was not feeling well. He had to go to sleep complaining about his man not being taken care of. Maybe if she told him he was going to understand. Maybe she had to wait and

see if there really was something to worry about before she told him. He was a busy man. he needed not worry about unnecessary problems.

She decided to wait at least a week and see if does not fade off. If it did not fade off then she was going to see a professional about it and then see from there. While she was in the bathroom Mr Ngcobo' s phone rang. She immediately buttoned her top as fast as she could, she flushed the toilet, and then she walked out of the bathroom. He was talking to someone whom he was doing business with. She knew this from the tone of his voice and the conversation' s context as a whole. She tucked herself in and gave her man a kiss on the forehead. After he was done talking on the phone he told her what was the call about. He was summoned to be Durban for an emergency meeting. Someone had decided to pull out of a deal on the last minute. This opened an opportunity for him to take that deal for himself. He was to be there tomorrow at nine if he wanted to sign the deal. He had been trying to get a deal like this for the last seven months. She saw the happiness on his face and in his voice. She therefore decided to be happy for him and forget the fact that she did not like these men he was working with. These men were not Christians, most of them were not even married, and they also took his attention away from home, church and all the things that use to be important to him. She was sure though that he was doing all of this for them, his family. It just that sometimes it was bad for a Pastor to leave his town so often. Where were his followers going to get him if he was always out of town?

Nonetheless in the Morning she did not forget to mention him in her morning prayer. They had breakfast and they all left the house to Mantombi and her radio.

\*\*\*

Monday afternoon, four minutes past four. Mr Ngcobo was sitting on the small couch in Thembi' s flat. Thembi was making coffee for her father. They were talking about nothing specific. Mr Ngcobo had just signed a good business deal. His business was going to collaborate with another business, which was on an even bigger status than his business. Thembi was going to right her March tests in the following two weeks. The church was doing great, he was about to launch a new branch here in Durban. That was round about all they were talking about. And then Thembi' s phone vibrated.

She picked it up. It was Mike on the other end. She looked at her father and saw that he was waiting on her. She then said "Hello, may I please call you later? I' m still bonding with my old-man."

After she placed the phone on the table she looked at her dad and smiled. He decided to comment "Bonding with your old man huh?" and then they proceeded with their light conversation. Drank coffee, joked a little and the visit was over.

Before he left the flat Mr Ngcobo did not forget to do some parental responsibilities.

"Angel, do you wear that short outside this flat?" he asked with his face showing exactly that he expected her to say no. Even if she did wear it outside her she had to say "No" . He was satisfied. Then he left.

Thembi was alone finally. She closed the door, walked towards the table, and grabbed her cell phone. She browsed for Mikes numbers and then pressed to call. She listened... "The number you have dialled is not available at present. Please try again later." were the words of a white she heard instead of Mike' s voice.

After she tried again and again and again she decided to stop and go to sleep. After she could not go to sleep without trying at least once more and once more was the time she realised that she was obsessed with him. That was the exact time she also realised that Mike and her were not in a relationship, at least not officially. They were just friends with benefits, she thought. The thought of that sickened her. She felt that she really needed to see him so that they made it official.

The next morning she tried again, his cell phone was still off. She tried again before she left for school. His phone was still off.

After school she came home and decided to cook before she did anything else. Her cell phone rang. She rushed to it. Yes it was him. In a big smile she answered "Hello."

"Hey beautiful how are you?"

"I' m good, and you?"

"I' m great what are doing?"

"Just making something to eat. When are you coming back?"

"Mmm. I'm not sure I'll call you when I come back. Actually the reason I called was to tell you that my phone is going to be off for the next coming days. I'll be in meetings back to back. Just take care of yourself and make sure you keep that body of yours out of the market."

"Sure. I can do that. But I do not think it going to be easy not talk to you."

"Yah I know but I have to do this. You know what? On Friday, take one of your friends to that spa by West Street. I'll call and book for you."

"No thinks it fine I'll be ok. And I'm working on Friday."

"Ok, if you say so. And for that job of yours, a girl like you shouldn't be working for what they pay you."

"Don't worry, after I graduate I'll get to earn what I deserve."

"You know, there are places you can get a lot for half the time you work at that restaurant?"

"Where would that be?"

"A lot of places. Forget about that though, we'll talk about it on another day. I really need to go now."

"Ok then goodnight."

Her food was about to be ready when her former roommate Nosi called her cell phone and told her that she waiting outside her gate. Thembi did not waste time but went to her bedroom window. Through the window her arm was stretched out, holding a remote control on her hand. She pressed it to open the gate for her friend. After a minute or two Nosi was sitting where Thembi's father had been seating earlier, talking and laughing. Nosi's sense of humour was one that is rare. Sometimes she would laugh at her own jokes while no one seemed to get them. She was fine by that though. She was a very intelligent girl who just lacked proper guidance from elders. At least that how we saw her.

She was raised by her sisters who were not strangers to the Friday night life. Her sisters were well known around her neighbourhood for their giving hearts. If you were a guy and had enough to spare for a few beers to last for the night, you were guaranteed to wake up next to one of her sisters.

Getting a bursary was a real uphill to her life.

Thembi and Nosi had one thing in common though. They both needed to appear as perfect as possible in the eyes of their home people, and they both had to make it in life for the sake of their families. Thembi had the pressure of being perceived as the oldest child of the perfect Ngcobo family. The fact that her father did not have a son did not make it any easier on her. She had to carry her father's name with precision. Nosi was perceived as the "hope" of her family. Neighbours praised her for making it through high school despite her family's background. Going to University was not even close to her neighbours' greatest expectations. She was also perceived as a girl who took responsibilities about her life. She had to make it in life if she wanted to make life better for her family. Durban was the only place they both could be free. They could do and act as they wished. They both loved school and they both enjoyed being independent.

Thembi was done cooking and Nosi was on the stove tasting Thembi's stew. We only say she was "tasting" because that what she said she was doing, but what she was really doing was eating straight from the pot. Thembi did not mind, in fact she loved it. She loved the way her friend did not seem to like following the accepted way of doing things. Besides that, who doesn't like it when people enjoy their cooking?

Thembi narrated everything that happened between her and Mike in the last three days. From the Friday's party, the bedroom romance, the breakfast, the I-am-sorry box, the romance again and offer for a spa treatment. When the ladies were still at school Nosi asked Thembi about Friday night (how did it go, how was the party?). Because they were not alone but with other girls, Thembi invited Nosi over for super so that she could tell her. "ohh" , "ooh" , "oh my Gosh!" , "wow!" and "girl you one lucky thing!!!" were all the words Nosi said over and over again.

The older the day became the closer the girls became. By the time they realised what time it was it was too late for Nosi to walk back to the student's complex. Thembi then decided to invite her to sleep over.

## Chapter Eight

She looks, she looks again, and then she puts pen on paper. Again she looks. She is looking as if she has lost a diamond, silver or gold. Surely she's looking for treasure. Her hunt does not look like pleasure. It like she's been looking forever. Again it pen on paper.

It was Saturday again and Thembi was doing her two hours of studying before going to work. Two vibrations on her cell phone alerted her that a message had been received. She read it. It went like this: Don't go to work today. I'll pay you for your shift. Go to the Samba hotel and take a room key that is under my name, I'll meet you there at six o'clock today.

Thembi did not know if she should be excited or angry. The fact that she was going to see him and the fact that he booked in a hotel just for her made her happy. But for him to say he was going to pay her for not going to work did not go down well on her. If he wanted to be with her she was ok with and that was a reason enough for her do all she could to make it possible, but for him to pay for her shift was not something she saw as a good sign of a good relationship.

Nonetheless she decided not to go to work and she called in sick. She decided she was going to decline his money if he tried to pay her. She then sent him a message back confirming that she was indeed not going to work.

The time was half past five and Thembi was standing on the reception counter checking in. She was given a key to room number 233 which was on the second floor. She walked and got in an elevator, pressed floor number two, waited for the elevator to take her up. The elevator door slowly glided open. She was out and then she walked towards room 233. While she was walking she noticed the familiarity of the walls along the passage. Room 223, she was on the door. She took the key card and slotted it in the slot. The door was unlocked. She pushed the door slowly with her hand on the door knob while her arm, elbow and shoulder leaned against it. After her first step in, she felt a sudden dizziness, and an intense dark cloud overshadowed the light in her eyes. She used the door frame to support the steadiness of her sudden drunk body. Within that dusk on her eyes she saw him with his "hand lotion" on his hands, she saw him with his bath towel on the floor around his feet next to her shredded miniskirt.

She shook the dizziness off of her body and then stepped back as fast as she could, closed the door, and then it was dawn again in her eyes. She was back to reality. She dripped two drops of thick tears.

Realising that people were looking at her she decided not to discontinue her tears. She wiped off the two drops of tears and gathered enough energy to push the door again. She pushed it more slowly this time. She peeped in and there was no Bonga. The suit was astonishing, beautiful and harmonic with a sweet scent of lavender. This suit, she remembered, was the same suit of her nightmares. After two and a half years it still looks exactly the same, she thought. She stopped right in the middle for a moment, looked around. She then decided to go downstairs and request to be switched to another suit. She closed the door behind her and walked.

With each step she takes, a progression of depressing images began loitering without any order or reason in her head. Ever since the day she found out that she had lost her virginity to a boy who cheated on her, slept with another girl, drugged her, raped her, and lied to her in one day, she had not really resurrected the memory of that day until today. After she left the hotel that day, the day of her nightmares, leaving Bonga with his "hand lotion" on his hands, she went to grab something to eat at a pub just outside the hotel. She never got a chance to eat though, her cries were food enough. When she set and ordered her steak and bread, she broke into tears right at the hands of the waitress who was suppose to serve her. The waitress was kind enough to abandon her shift and took her in. Thembi cried cats and dogs on the shoulder of a waitress she did not even know. The waitress did not even care if Thembi did not want to talk about her problems, the waitress was just kind enough to lend a shoulder to poor child who surely looked sad and confused at same time. Thembi cried so much that day that after crying she decided to compress these memories and never cry again. She had decided to never allow anyone to have enough of her heart to make her cry. She had decided to allow no guy to ever gain her trust so much that she will cry if he breaks it.

As she was about to get in an elevator that was going take her down to the reception where she was going to transfer to another suit, she remembered her promise that she had promised herself. Never cry again. She stopped, thinking, if I allow this to make cry I would be a fool. She felt the need to go back to the room and face this

place of her nightmares, and she felt the need to defeat this memory. That was the moment she turned around walked straight to this room of her nightmares.

This time she forcefully opened the door and closed it behind her. Walked around the room with not even leak on her eyes, she walked around as if she was a land surveyor. She then began see an opportunity she nearly missed. If she transferred to another room she was going to miss a chance to change the memory of this room to a positive memory. By having a great time with Mike in this very same room, the negative memories were going to be outlasted by the new ones. After all her virginity was broken in this very same room and remembering this one may just be the best thing to do. She then saw the time and remembered that Mike was on his way.

She went to the bathroom. Her aim was to wipe her tears and check if her face was still in the right state for Mike' s eyes. When she looked at the mirror she saw her eyes and realised that it had been more than two years since the last time they were like this. She remembered that she had a promise to keep. Not to cry anymore because of any man. She therefore sorted herself out, trying as hard as she could not to allow the sight of the shower to remind her of anymore negative memories. She then stepped out of the bathroom.

She decided to call in room service and ask for something to drink. She did that and she took off her shoes. She then switched on the TV and then threw herself on top of the bed.

It was not long before a knock on the door was heard. She muted the TV. "Room service." were the words behind the door. She responded, "come in it open." The door swivelled and to her surprise it was Jacob Zondi (The same waiter who served her breakfast last week at her flat.).

"Oh, it you again! Am I lucky or not?"

"Afternoon Miss my name is Jacob, I will be serving today."

They both laughed and Jacob placed a tray that contained Thembi' s juice on top of the table. She thanked him and asked him if he was well. Indeed he was doing great. Thembi could just see it in his eyes that he enjoyed serving people. He did not have to ask her if she was well because he saw right through her that she was not. He therefore asked "You don' t seem like the other day I saw you. Is something



bothering?" She did not answer him, but instead she handed him a twenty rand note thanking him once again. He turned around and pushed his trolley without saying another word. Right before he went out of the door Thmbi remembered something and called out his name. He turned back and waited to hear what she had to say.

"The last time, when I told you that I also had a job of serving people, you said you knew. How did you know?"

He just smiled and looked down on his feet and then replied, "Aren' t you one of Mr Mike' s friends?"

"Yes, I Am." , she replied.

"That was how I concluded you do the same job as the other friends of him. But I must say, you different to any of them, and the fact that you always alone makes me think you must really be good in what you do. I' ve never seen him book a whole room just for one person."

He then left the room, leaving her with more questions than before. She was more confused with what he had just said. She began wondering about how many people must know Mike, and she was also confused about him and "his friends" .

She was sipping off the glass when another knock came from the door. "Beautiful are there?" She jumped and ran to the bathroom again. He entered the room and saw her shoes and her handbag, and then was sure that was there. She checked herself once more and she was out of the bathroom. They greeted with a hug, a kiss and a squeeze on her sexy behind.

While they were hugging Mike' s cell phone rang and they loosened each other. He took the call. After the call he asked her if she was up for a party. She was not up for it but she really wanted to get out of the room. Now that there was a man in it, it was getting too hard for her. They agreed that they were to leave at half past seven.

He then went to the bathroom so that he could freshen up. He asked her to join him. When she saw the bathtub and remembered how she wiped blood of her woman she changed her mind and ran out of the bathroom. He was left confused, but managed to shake it off and continued with his bath. The thought of having to do it in the same bathtub nearly got her a heart attack.

While she was waiting for him to finish so that they could drive to her flat for her to freshen up and change for the party, her cell phone rang. It was her friend Nosi. Nosi was at Thembi's work, and was told that Thembi called in sick. Therefore she decided to call and check on her friend. After Thembi explained that she was well Nosi was relieved and happy for her. After Thembi mentioned that they were getting ready for a party Nosi could not hide that she envied her. They hung up and Thembi went back to her glass and took a sip again.

Mike was out of the bathroom. A white towel was wrapped around his waist as he stepped out. Thembi could not stand the sight of seeing him resurrecting the memory of the day she last talked to Bonga. So she just took her phone called Nosi for no particular reason. When Nosi answered she did not know what to say. After two or three seconds she asked where Nosi was. She was still at restaurant having drinks with guys she hardly even knew. Mike heard the conversation from Thembi's side, and he decided to invite Thembi's friend as well. "If she's not busy ask her to join us."

Thembi was surprised but happy to hear these words from Mike. She did as she was told. Nosi on the other side was jovial as well. Nosi immediately left the guys without even giving the one who was buying for her a chance to even try his luck. All he got were her phone numbers. "Call me maybe next time, but not now I really need to go somewhere." was all he got. They both knew that there was not going any next time. If he could not get her on the first day he was never going to get her at all. That was how the Friday night game was played. If you played your cards well you were to get your prey but if you missed once you needed to try another one because that how hunting works.

They were leaving Thembi's flat after Thembi was done changing for the party when Thembi called Nosi informing her that they were on the way to fetch her.

They are now at the gate of the students' complex; at the gate of the complex waiting for Nosi appear. Thembi made comment to Mike about the girls of the night that were getting in and out of trucks, busses and cars, right next to them. "Old men who have wives and children indulge on young girls vejayjays. These men sleep with girls younger than their own children. They are not even paying them enough for ruining their innocence."

Mike looked at her and smiled, and then said "So if they were getting paid enough it would be better?"

"These girls, some of them are in my class. They are always sleepy in class which affect their education, and by they are always too drained to do anything afterwards so they go straight to drink and then to bed. How much do you think failing your studies is worth? Not to mention the price of their vejayjays."

"So you are still saying with the price it would be ok to do it?"

"You wouldn't be doing the right thing, but there's a price for everything in this world. Isn't that what you businessmen always say? So if you're already throwing yourself away at least get what you deserve for it. Not a lousy fifty rand."

"Yah you right but remember we don't see the same things with the same value. I also think it better to get that lousy fifty rand than to be with someone who pretend to love you, someone who is going to break your heart at the end of the day. It also better to pay fifty and leave rather than to pretend you love someone just to get on their panties. It's harder than to just pay and leave after you are done."

"Oh there comes Nosi" she said as she pointed towards the left of the building.

Thembi got out of the car and hugged her friend and then they laughed at nothing while complimenting each other's outfits. Thembi then signalled Mike to open the window so that he could greet Nosi. He did just that. It was the second time they meet so it did not have to be a formal greeting. Nosi is an easy going person too, so it made it easy for Mike to greet. The girls got in at the back seats of the car, so that they could talk about nothing that seemed like something. The car turned around and drove until it was buried by the distance and the darkness of the night.

## Chapter Nine

They call it a gentlemen' s club, but those who know better know that a real gentlemen' s is suppose to have gentlemen as its core. For this party has no reason as its skeleton, except the celebrations of power from the fuels given by financial statuses of these guests. Thou we call them guests they are really members of this club. If you have enough financial power and enough compassion for love gathered from young gold-diggers, you qualify to be a member of this powerful group.

Mike is also a member of this powerful group of man. He might not be as old and as self absorbed as ninety percents of these men but he has enough power and compassion to be regarded as one of them. This is why his car is about to adjoin a bouquet of cars that are already parked outside this Victorian mansion.

Through the lenses of the security camera, a black Mercedes appears at the gate. It stops, a window slides down from the driver' s door, and a hand is seen stretching to reach a button that will allow them to buzz in. Seconds later the gate slides open and the car slowly moves in. Thembi and Nosi at the back seats of the car are scanning the courtyard of this house with their excited eyes like a dog scenting leftovers on a Monday morning after an African wedding. Thembi' s head is astonished by the degree of beauty coming from just one man' s house. She remembers how beautiful Mr Mbanjwa' s house was, but this house must cost two times Mr Mbanjwa' s house, or even three times. Mr Mbanjwa, the old pal who had two young girls dedicated for each of his arms, from the last party she went to with Mike. She thought that party was high class, but just by the look of the outside of this house, the previous party must have been a fundraising party for this party. She now knows from the information given by Mike on their way here that the host of this party is an old mogul who is married to his successes and has only one other hobby. He is the best in his league when it comes to connection, he can do a makeover of your business' s status in weeks if you pushed his responsive buttons. He is sometimes referred to as the Godfather of financial wisdom. And by the look of the outside of his house she doesn' t have even an ounce of doubt that what Mike was telling them is nothing but true. Nosi on the other hand is just glad Mike was kind enough to allow her to tag along.

Mike parked the car at the far end of the building. Though it would have required his driving skills he would have parked closer to the door next to the Hummer3, but he deliberately went to the far end so that he could allow the ladies to have a longer time admiring the outside of this house. He got out of the car and opened the door for the ladies to get out of the car as well. Like Mr Mbanjwa, he stretched both his arms and invited the ladies to dedicate themselves to each. Without any consideration the ladies did as invited. With a good gesture of humour in his voice he made a statement, "We should go to bed like this by the end of this party." And both the ladies laughed it out with a small ladylike blast.

In no time they were inside, in the lobby of the house. Quiet, clean and calm were the words to describe the environment in this lobby. The girls began to be confused about the party, but before they could wonder any more, a nice man in uniform asked them to follow him. A closed door was approaching as they walked towards it; the nice man in uniform opened the door. Behind the door were steps that were beautified by a red carpet. As the steps went up they swivelled like a blossoming rose. The more steps they took, the more sounds came from the next approaching door. The nice man in uniform opened the second door, and this time he stepped aside. "Enjoy the party" were the words out of his mouth.

Mike allowed the girls to enter before him and then he followed. Through Thembi's beautiful eyes that resembled diamonds, a refraction of movie like pictures became a reality she had never believed to exist. With these pictures, there were captions that were projected from her brain. Thoroughly old man humping on the juvenile backs of young girls' adolescent bodies. Mr Mbanjwa was nothing compared to this, he only had two girls dedicated to his arms. Here, girls are dedicated to more than just arms. It is like a strip club, only worse. There are more or less a dozen of men in this so called party, but more than twenty-five girls are present. More than half of these girls are wearing clothes you would only wear in the privacy of your bedroom, on a valentine's day with only the audience of the love of your life. The more she scanned the room, the more unreal realities refracted through her eyes. An appearing to be the only man who had no girl around him was playing poker on a round table. This appearance ceased to exist when Thembi realised that there was actually a young lady under the table, feeding her greedy jaws from his manhood. You could just see that his juices were something she was really seeking to squeeze until no

drop was left. She was muffling his manhood with every inch of her warm her mouth. The friction of her lips, tongue and teeth against his manhood was the difference between doing her job and not doing it. Not that the others did not see what she was doing under the table, they just did not see anything alarming about it. It was just like a simple hug from a friend. Only Thembi and Nosi seemed to be shaken by the environment as whole in this party.

Though Nosi was shaken, she was not too shaken. She showed that she was indeed a party animal back in her world. She was just shaken by the age of these men, the class of the party, the nerves these girls had, and the bigger number of girls than men. She was just shaken by how exaggerated everything was compared to her past experiences. Then, she came back to reality, and then she shook her friend back to reality as well. She told Thembi to accompany her to the ladies room. Without any hesitation Thembi agreed at once. Thembi saw the bathroom as the best thing right now, she was glad Nosi had thought of it. She really needed to digest all of this unreal reality.

They excused themselves from Mike. He told them that he was just going to greet his colleagues and they will find him around when they come back. And then he pointed to his left, pointing the direction of the bathroom.

Nosi led the way while holding on, on her friend' s hand. While walking towards the bathroom Thembi was thanking her for coming with to this party. She could just imagine how disconnected she would have been if Nosi was not here with her. Nosi just blushed away that gratitude. In the bathroom there were two other girls fixing up each other' s make up. Thembi could just see that these girls had just finished taking a shower. They were talking about how long it had been since they last had a threesome together. They were praising each other on how the other made the other feel. You would think there was no man who was the third party in their threesome if you concentrated on how they praised each other' s skills and sweats. They were even kissing every now and then. It was like they did not see Thembi and Nosi come in. Nosi was letting go of all the waters she had been drinking and Thembi was looking at herself in the mirror. After Nosi was done discharging the waters from her bladder she got herself dressed properly and washed her hands. You could see the edge to leave the bathroom from both Thembi and Nosi. They had came in here to get back to reality so that they could talk about what to do, but another movie was

played by these two girls, this did not make their wish come true. So, they were going to talk in the passage right outside of the bathroom. Before they could escape, one of the kissing girls turned to them and asked them their names, and where did they come from. The kissing girls claimed to know all the girls in this party, but Thembi and Nosi. Thembi and Nosi needed to identify themselves and tell the kissing girls how they got here, who was their ticket (A man who helped them come here), and also if their strategy to look "so innocent" worked for them. Nosi was about to tell them that they were not prostitutes, but Thembi ousted her words by telling the kissing girls that they were with Mike and they specialised in travelling and giving a special one on one experiences. The kissing girls did not hear any word after hearing that they were here with Mike. Out of excitement from hearing that Mike was there the kissing girls began talking about their different experiences with him. They talked about how great of tipper he was and how good looking he was. They even said that they would not mind humping him for free, he was good in bed and he had the looks as well. He was certainly a preference compared to all the "oldies" that were in this party. These words did not go well through Thembi's ears. She felt so embarrassed in front of her friend, she was super disappointed in Mike, and she was extremely hurt by who she thought was going to be the treasure of her heart.

She really needed to get out of this place, but the kissing could not see how their words made her face dusk. It either they could not see because they were a bit drunk or maybe it was because she was so good in hiding and suppressing her tears. She had such beautiful tears. She had the kind of tears that you would see an Indian merchant selling an imitation of them in his "buy one get one free" shop. Tears you would buy for their ability to be switched off. She had the kind of tears that a real man who never cries would claim to have bought from a shop owned by an Italian original designer. Because of these tears she had, even Nosi her friend became confused by the smile in her face. She was confused why Thembi did not show any resentment caused by the whole situation.

The kissing girls carried on with their friendliness towards Thembi and Nosi. They asked them if they had ever given their services to female clients. Thembi responded with a gigantic "yes". One of the kissing girls than commented on how innocent they looked and she asked if she could kiss them, but Thembi and Nosi refused

saying maybe later but not now. The kissing girls then asked them to at least kiss each other. The answer was still a big fat "no" again.

After the big fat "no" Thembi and Nosi managed to escape the kindness of the kissing girls. They were just out of the bathroom when Nosi broke the tension and asked Thembi about how she was feeling about the whole situation. Thembi told her friend that she was not feeling anything except being caught off guard. She was not the kind of a girl who over reacts. Besides, Mike and she were not really... She was interrupted by Mr Mbanjwa. Not to her surprise he was here as well. He greeted the ladies with a huge smile and a huge hug. While hugging them he patted and softly squeezed their pear shaped behinds. To their irritations they fake smiled and stepped aside, allowing them to enter the bathroom. Before he entered he invited them to accompany him, and promised to take a good care of them. A big fat "no" was their answer again.

After he had disappeared inside the bathroom, the girls proceeded with their talk. Only this time they were talking about what to do. Thembi suggested that they act as if they were enjoying the place while they waited for a taxi she was about to call. The only thing they needed was to talk to someone so that they could know exactly where they were, so that the taxi driver could know where to find them. As they walked back to the lounge area where they had left Mike, Nosi asked Thembi why she had said they were hookers to the kissing girls in the bathroom. Thembi's response made it clear to Nosi's head when she told her that they did not need to invite attention if they wanted to leave this place peacefully.

Mike. There he was sitting at the round table next to the guy who had a young girl on his zippers. The girls waved at him and he waved back. He then showed them that he was holding a deck of cards in his hands, and they understood what he meant. He couldn't be with them for now they needed to entertain themselves for now. He was going to be with them soon. Nosi then took a glass of wine from the table next to them and gulped it like she was drinking water. Thembi looked at her with an esteem gaze, and then she stretched her hand, grabbed a glass as well, and did exactly what Nosi had just done. The only difference was that Thembi's face became more infuriated as she gulped down the alcohol. It was more infuriated because when she took the glass she did not notice that she had grabbed a glass half full of vodka, instead of wine. When Nosi saw this, she laughed at her friend's mistake.



They both laughed at it. Then Nosi wanted to settle the score that Thembi had created with her mistake, she gulped down a glass half full of vodka as well. After that little contest the girls took their sips and laughed again.

After three or four minutes, Thembi got up and headed for the door. The red carpeted steps were the only place quiet enough to make a phone call, and she also needed to see the nice man in uniform. She needed to know exactly where they were, for the taxi to fetch them. As she walked down the steps she began thinking about her relationship with Mike, she began losing her steps from the dizziness of her head. The dizziness that came from the tears she was about to drop, and if she did not allow herself at least one drop of tears, her whole body was surely going to take the place of the tears and drop to roll down the red carpeted steps. She needed to let go of the fumes inside her agitated skull. Fumes of hurt from the revelations of the real Mike, fumes of hurt from the words she was penetrated by when the kissing girls talked of their experiences with Mike, fumes of embarrassment in the presence of her friend, and fumes of jealousy when thinking about Mike and the other girls. At least before the kissing girls told her about their pleasures with him, she still had hope. There was still a chance he did not engage in this feeding scheme. There was still a chance he only came to this party for networking's sake. As the dizziness continued, she remembered the words of the guy who served her room service in the hotel. She remembered that he said he knew what her job was, because she was one of Mike's friends. She now knew and understood just what he meant.

With the dizziness not yielding she finally gave in with a drop from her left eye. The right eye was about to give in as well when she reached the door to the lobby. She immediately told her beautiful tears to cease their journey and go back where they belonged, inside her beautiful skin, where they will loiter forever if possible. She could not talk to the nice man in uniform with her tears in sight. He needed to think she wanted directions so that she could tell them to her friends who were coming over to join the party. He was not going to buy her story if she was in tears.

## Chapter Ten

A blossoming rose has petals twirling as it grows, the stem of a rose twirls as it grows to emit branches where love is celebrated. The red carpeted steps mimicked the beauty of this rose, except that the branch emitted was the party room where lust was celebrated.

She was back on the red carpeted steps with her cell phone on her ear, waiting for the taxi driver to answer his phone. She now knew exactly where she was. The door from the top side of the steps swivelled, and then Mike appeared behind it. She dropped the phone before it was answered. She walked towards him, and then he allowed her in. They did not say anything to each other. She just walked passed him and went straight her chair, next to Nosi.

He followed her and sat next to them. Nothing was said again. She just took a glass from Nosi and gulped it down again. He stood up and asked if they wanted anything to eat. Thembi did not answer, and Nosi told him that they were good for now, maybe later.

With this tension seeming to be increasing he asked Thembi if she was ok. She did not answer. He was just asking, not because he could not clearly see that she was not ok. This time her tears might have hid but all her other uncontrollable emotional expressions betrayed her. The storm was seen on every inch of her beautiful skin.

While thinking of another thing to say in order to try and decrease this tension, Mike was interrupted by one of the ladies of the night. One of the ladies of the night went straight to Mike's lap and slowly placed her sensual backside on his thighs. She set on him and then hugged his neck with her right arm, bringing his left profile into contact with her right breast. She asked him how was he doing, and then gave him a kiss on the forehead after he told her that he was doing well. She then took up and went back to where she was sitting with her friends. What did they expect? Thembi and Nosi were not going to settle in that easily as the "NEW GIRLS". They needed to be showed that these territories were taken, and they needed to know who the real players in this territory were.

This action of space and position declaration did not seem to help Mike who was trying to clear the clouds between him and Thembi. Mike stood up and asked Thembi

to go with him to a quieter place, where they could talk and clear these clouds which were between them. Without hesitation Thembi agreed, she gave Nosi her cell phone and then stood up and followed him. She had a lot of questions that needed to be answered. She needed a magical power that was going to make this situation become a simple misunderstanding.

As they were walking towards the passage that led to a quieter place, Mike was thinking of a way he was going to explain this whole situation to this innocent child. He did not think the party was going to be this wild, he thought maybe it was going to be a bit conserved like the previous week or the week before that. He was going to eventually bring her into the picture, yes, but not like this. He was going to give her sprinkles until she was fully on board. It was a little project of his to slowly turn her into one of these girls of the night. It was going to be a project he was going to enjoy. Even all his friends here were waiting for him to accomplish his job and they were even in a line to reap the fruit from this super appetising body of work. From the first party, when he came with Thembi, these men have not stopped talking about how much they craved a piece of Thembi's mouth-watering body. It was too soon for her to find out like this, this blast was not meant to happen. Now, how was he going to win her trust again? She surely was going to dump him and probably not speak to him again.

They headed straight to the first door in the passage. "Oh" were their words when they stumbled upon two girls closing lips with the skin of an old white man. Second door, there was one girl this time. She was kneeled with her hands on the floor and panting like a dog that was about to see a bone flying its way. Her nakedness made a picture to remember. The man behind her was dancing his way in and out of her like a bad impersonation of Michael Jackson.

Third door, this time the room was empty. They stepped in, he closed the door behind them and then he took a deep breath. He took a seat on top of the bed. And then he looked at her, a moment of silence. "Baby, aren't you going to say anything?"

She did not say anything back to him. Another moment of silence was experienced. He could just see from the screams of her peachy skin tone that had tanned red that she was really not in the mood for his "babys" and "sweetys" . He stood up and

went towards her. He wanted to test the degree of her anger by seeing how close she was going to allow him near her. To his surprise she did not move when he showed signs of reaching towards her, and she did not even tell him to stop. The closer he came towards her, the slower he moved. She looked back straight in his eyes, she reached for his hands, and he reached back. While he was still surprised, amazed and confused with that gesture she pulled him even closer and closer and closer until their bodies collided. An intense body collision triggered both their gender soldiers. There was a magnetic field between and around them. The gravitation between their lips also called for nothing but a collision as well.

While Nosi was drinking wine on the other side of the house, Thembi was drinking Mike's saliva. While Vicky her friend from home, was breastfeeding her baby, she was breastfeeding Mike. While her mother was singing in church, she was singing the song of "oohs" and "ohs". While her father was praying, she was cursing Mike's every inch with her womanly touch. It was a degree she had never reached; she was on top of every move they made. She made him become her slave. He followed every command she gave with the touch of her body. They were scrambling on the floor like a pair of rugby players on the last minute of a finale. Yes his shaft was inside her, but her whole black soul was inside him. She commanded his every grunt and mumble and rumble and grumble. She enjoyed the control she had over him. She looked intensely into his eyes as she bench pressed him against the wooden floor. She looked intensely into his eyes as she jerked up and down with screams of pleasure. It was not Mike that she was jerking, nor was it a lover, but she was jerking a man. For the first time in her life she had total control over a man. She had a man slaving over her pleasures. It was the power no man on earth could ever possess. She filled her womanly insides with the anger she felt in her heart. She transformed her tears into the fluids between her thighs, in her woman. All her inside fluids were boiling as she jerked him to the highest heights. She surprised herself; she never thought she was capable of such compassion. Inside her woman she was getting hotter and hotter as she was about to explode on him. When she finally exploded on his shaft he could not help but explode as well, thus her soul was inside him.

They were back to reality, her anger towards Mike was removed, but her anger towards every man became even higher. She then told him that he owed her a thousand rand. With confusion and puzzlement he asked why, she gave him the

deadliest look you could ever see on the face of earth. And then she told him that one thousand rand was the price of her woman. He paid the other girls, why would he have a problem with paying her. She also told him to relax and not worry about explaining anything. It not like they were dating. After all, they never talked about love in the first place. They were just having intercourses. She told him to consider the first two intercourses as a free test drive and from now onwards if wanted a ride on her woman there was a price he was going to pay.

She then stood up, got dressed and fixed her hair. After fixing her hair she looked at him, he was still shocked on the floor. Then she went to his trousers, checked his pockets, took out his wallet, from the wallet she took a thousand rand worth of notes and then threw the wallet to his chest. Then she said, "It was a pleasure doing business with you. Call me next time you in town. I' ll be humbled to be your service."

She was out, and he was left with his wallet on his hands.

\*\*\*

When Thembi got out of the bedroom she twirled her way between the girls and men in the passage. She walked like a soldier under a drill. No smiles or pats interrupted her march towards the party room. Even Nosi who was also standing on the passage looking for her, did not seem to decrease her speed as she marched her way out of the place. They were now at the red carpeted steps, at the lobby, at the gate and they were out completely.

When Thembi' s cell phone was left with Nosi, the taxi-man called back after seeing a missed call on his cell phone. They were now waiting for him. They were both not feeling like themselves. Thembi was still intoxicated by what she just done to Mike, she was intoxicated by the great feeling she felt by taking control the way she did, she was also intoxicated by the fact that she did prostitution, which was a bad thing in her books, but she liked it. Her intoxication was coursed by the lovely feeling of guilt she felt. She felt bad for the method she used to survive her situation, but she loved the feeling. Nosi on the other side was intoxicated by the amount of alcohol she gulped down her throat in less than an hour. She had never drunk so much alcohol in such little time. Thembi then told her friend how her talk on a "quieter

place” with Mike ended. She was still shocked by her own actions. She even told her about the money she demanded.

Nosi wanted to calm down her friend, and decrease any feeling of guilt. So, she revealed to Thembi that a lot of other girls had done something of this nature as well. She told Thembi that she, herself, once jerked on the lusty shafts of truck driver. She did it with those truck drivers who came by the students’ complex she lived in. She was under the influence of dagga and alcohol when she did it. She did it once and she was just too proud to do it the next night. She humped two truck drivers that night. She remembered that the night she jerked these two truck drivers all she earned was a lousy hundred rand; fifty rand each. This was why she jokingly told Thembi that she envied her for getting so much on just one round. And doing it in a room that is fully furnished was way better than doing it in the back of a truck.

Thembi was of course shocked by Nosi’ s confession, but Nosi’ s plan did work. Thembi indeed felt less ashamed after hearing that Nosi had done such a thing too. In fact Thembi felt sorry for her friend because she knew that when Nosi did it, it was really because she needed the money. Thembi knew that Nosi also had a lot of mischievous friends. Nosi’ s other friends were just out of their heads. Bad influence was great in and around the campus, friends that would convince you to jump off on speeding train.

While they were still sharing their experiences as merchants of the ultimate treasure, the taxi appeared to have come sooner than they had expected.

They got in the taxi and gave the driver Thembi’ s address. They were destined to her flat. Within the midst of the dark they were carted to Thembi’ s flat.

## Chapter Eleven

It is the same Saturday night, just a different environment, different people, and a different party. Some words may be the same but contain a different meaning. Words such as 'sex' may have different meanings because of the contexts and environments. Love making is known to be passionate but sometimes it's just a matter of servicing your partner.

Mr and Mrs Ngcobo had just finished doing their own man-to-woman dance, their dance was of course way less noisy and intense. There are a lot of factors that made their dance less exciting. They are more experienced with each other, which made it more of a routine than exploitation. Their stamina has become less with age. Their heads are full of other affairs to think about. And the fact that Mrs Ngcobo's lump problem is still hers alone to carry does not help the dance in bringing sweats.

It had been a while since they did it, and even when they did it, it was nothing more than more than a man on top of a woman. Now, Mrs Ngcobo seemed to be nodding and dozing, while Mr Ngcobo was reading his bible next to her. Through his reading glasses his eyes glared to the pages of the bible, but his mind was glaring somewhere else. His Christian brain was scavenging for answers that did not seem to appear. His main questions were based on why his wife was acting so peculiar. She had been manacling her body towards herself lately. "Not today" , "we' ll do it first thing in the morning" , "I' m tired" were all the new slogans she had acclaimed lately. Was it time for menopause? Was she too stressed at work? And then there was a thought he did not like to think, "Was she cheating?"

His Christian brain ran a hundred miles with no sign of victory, no sign of a finish-line and no sense of direction. At this time Mrs Ngcobo was really in her land that is closest dearth, she was deep in her sleep. He closed the pages of the bible, took off his reading glasses and switched off his side lamp with a goal of going to sleep as well. Five minutes went by, ten minutes, and then his agitated brain finally decided to give in to the land nearest to dearth.

\*\*\*\*\*

Thembi's flat. A new day, a new sunny day on a Sunday, the blanket feels heavier than any other day, she had to try and kick it. She looked on her left, saw that Nosi

was still in the land closest to death. The land of magic, the land you can only visit unconsciously. The land of true creation; where you take honest decisions, where you relay honest laughter, and where you talk honest words. In this land you do not care about who is judging you. Your dream becomes your life alone, a life that only you alone can live. This land is only known by you alone. Where no one can disagree about what happened when you visited it. Where others believe the Gods, the higher spirits and the ancestors created this land just for you. It is where they find a platform to talk to you. It is where they find your true cooperation. A land where you can never know how it's going to look the next time you visit. Where you can never know who you are going to meet the next time you visit. This land only appears if your eyes are closed. A land where nothing is impossible is a land called dreamland.

She woke up as slowly and quite as she could. She did not want to wake Nosi up. She had a great deal of respect for a sleeping soul. She learnt to respect a sleeping soul from her father. Even when she was as young as ten years he would tiptoe when he entered her room in the morning. She went to her open-plan kitchen, opened her small fridge and grabbed a two-litre bottle, and then threw it straight to her sour mouth. She gulped down at least half a litre without stopping for a gasp of air. Though she was not officially drunk when they left the party, but drinking a glass half full of vodka and two full glasses of wine did push her to allow Nosi in to talking her into carrying on with the party when they arrived at the flat. Before the taxi driver dropped them off they asked to pop by a mini bar that Nosi was a regular at. They bought just enough to last for at least until midnight.

Now, the skull of her beautiful head was avenging itself on her. Like the bible, do unto others as you would like to be done to you. The night before, she was filling her skull with toxic poison. She was drowning her sorrows in alcohol. Now it was the skull's turn to return the favour and give her toxic pains. No headache, to Thembi, seemed more painful than the headache of a morning after. They were wrong calling it a "hangover". This pain should be called a "Passover". All your pains and worries seem to fade away in the moment of festivity, but the truth is, they do not fade. They are just passed over to the next morning. Any punch received while drunk will also be passed over to only begin hurting in the morning. Any shame you caused yourself will be passed over to only affect you in the morning. Oh, maybe they called it a hangover because when you wake up and feel that your whole body is hurting and



aching, your brain is refusing to function, yet all your worries and pains popup like a computer' s search engine, you feel like hanging yourself over the balcony.

After trying to drown her hangover in the pond of waters and seeing no distinction she decided to have a cup of coffee. While the expedition of the kettle towards boiling the water seemed to take longer than Noah' s dove, she heard the stretching sounds of her awaking friend. Nosi was on feet stretching herself, with an intention to fully awake her alcoholically wounded body. The kettle was just about to whistle when Nosi walked out of the bedroom scratching or scrabbling or scrubbing her head. Her skull was avenging itself on her as well. Thembi did not need a request but saw it and prepared a second cup for Nosi a well.

The girls were sitting on top of the kitchen counter, sipping their coffee and talking about nothing more than "Wow we were drunk!" about the night before. The night before was their first time they really confided towards each other. Yes, they knew a lot of personal affairs about each other, but they had never exploded their inner selves to each other until last night. Last night they talked about their lives prior tertiary. They talked about the pressures they received from being expected to be Saints, both from their families and neighbours back home. Thembi was expected to be a Saint because she came from a family of Saints. She needed not to drag down her family' s name. Nosi was expected to be a Saint because she came from a family of "demons" . Coming from a poor structure and surviving it with astonishing domination of your life make people view you as some sort of a Saint. She needed not to drag down the hope of her house. Yesterday they got a platform to reveal all of these pressures towards each other. There was a revolution of feelings, and a cycle of liquids. They would pour alcoholic liquids in to their bodies and spill out pour out liquid of tears through their eyes. Thembi would pour her tears on Nosi' s sholders, chest and breasts. Minutes later Nosi would do the same on Thembi' s shoulders, chest and breasts.

They consumed a three-course meal of alcohol, stories about themselves and tears. It came to a point where they talked of their past hurts with men. Nosi talked of her experiences, including a precise extract of how she came about to selling her youthful woman to the deep-rooted stems of the two truck drivers. It included dagga of course, alcohol, peer pressure, experimenting (Nosi' s nature of constantly seeking to explore, always made her end up in situations more advanced then she

could handle) and financial need (she had to raise three hundred rand in two days if she wanted pay for her supplementary exam)

Thembi also sold her share of her stories about man. Though she had way less in quantity compared to Nosi. She talked of how hurt she really was about Mike's saga. This time she allowed her beautiful tears to escape their castle and roll down her cheeks. She even tried to talk about Bonga. She tried to tell Nosi about her experience on her Matriculation-ball but her words were surpassed by her tears. Nosi was the only person she ever came even close to talking to about the whole story of Bonga. Nosi's childhood had taught her not to dig too much in to someone's pocket of pains. She knew that it was better to just give them a shoulder to cry on and allow them to tell everything once they are ready. She learnt this from sisters who were very good in telling you about their problems if you dared confront them about their loose behaviour. This is why she did not push Thembi in to spitting exactly what happened between her Bonga. All she knew was that Bonga had done something that made Thembi change her view on man. Now Mike had done something to add on that view. Nosi was fine with knowing only the outline of Thembi's past when it came to Bonga, and it was enough to cry with her. They cried cats and dogs for the whole entire session.

We do not want to lead you to an off beam path, this why we will alert you to be wrong if you concluded that they all they talked about were pains and hurting emotions. Yes they cried the whole session, but some of their tears were tears of affection. They also cried and hugged each other, confessing their undying love for one another, as friends of course. There were smiles on their faces while there were tears on the faces. They were giving each other words of courage and inspiration. As were said earlier, there were cycles of tears and emotions. One minute was problems, the next minute love, hope and laughter until they went to sleep.

They are still on sitting on the kitchen counter talking about yesterday. Thembi jumps off the counter and tells her friend that she wants to get ready for church. Though her heard is still avenging itself, the pain is less now. Her blood was starting to flow. Nosi responded by telling her friend that she was going to leave. She was going to her place. Thembi then invited Nosi for lunch at Spur. They were going to eat in the expense of Mike's one thousand rand. Nosi agreed that they would meet at one o' clock.

Nosi is gone and Thembi had just finished getting ready for church. She collected all yesterday's empty bottles of alcohol and inserted them inside a plastic bag. She then took her purse and her bible with her left hand, while carrying a plastic bag full alcohol empties on her right hand. She left the room, closed the door, and there she was waiting for the elevator. Seconds later, she was on the ground floor and went straight to toss the plastic bag in the rubbish bin.

An angel-like, white dressed girl was seen through the windows of the neighbours. Walking towards the gate and disappearing to the realm of the streets. Off she went to church.

At church she was one of the ushers. Her job was to greet and smile at people when they walked in. Her job was to show people their seats, and carry bibles for the pastors and mothers of the church. When everyone was sitting at church she and the other ushers would stay on their feet until it was time for the sermon. Her job was to look after other people and render her services to them. Her job at church was quite the same as the job she did at work. Waiting on people, smiling to people at all times, showing people their seats, fetching stuff for people and having to be the first one in and the last one out.

Even the reasons she was given these two jobs were similar. Yes she needed to be up for the challenges and do the job, but the main reason she was hired to be a waitress at her work was because she was beautiful and sexy. Club, pub, diner and restaurant managers hire attractive girls for their abilities to lure customers in to buying them. Male customers end up buying more than they were going to buy just because the waitress is beautiful. It's a man's world out there. The same reason goes for being chosen as an usher at church. Yes you have to show qualities of being divine, but the real reason they choose an usher is based on their appearance. You have to be attractive for new comers to see that this church is in the league. You have to be a person with enough on his or her wardrobe to be able to dress according to the colours of the day every time. You need to always look stunning. Being beautiful was something she possessed even in her sleep. Maybe this is why she was quite good at both her jobs.

## Chapter Twelve

Soft music in the background, two floors above the ground, round pots, round plates and round cups are her only company. She cooks more from the heart. Hunger plays fewer roles in her cooking journey. She enjoys it. Her head feels more calm and cool when the heat of the stove pierces through the bases of the round pots. She feels more sober when the intoxicating aroma of roasting chicken strikes her nose.

It had been five days since Saturday. Since the day of Mike's revelation of his true self. The time is seven thirty-two in the evening. Thembi is in the kitchen. She had just finished talking to her father about going home for the weekend. Her phone rang again, and when she picked it up, a name she was hoping would never again pop up on her cell phone's screen went against her wishes and popped up.

Mike was outside her flat, begging her to let him come in and talk to her. A big fat "NO" became an answer he was expecting. He sent a text message. This time the big fat "NO" was even louder by the quietness of Thembi not responding to it. He called again but Thembi's phone was suddenly off. She was back to cooking in her kitchen. She decided not to let him ruin her beautiful evening. She was dancing to her Luther Vandross's favourite song, while cooking her stir-fry chicken and vegetables. She did not hate him. She understood that he was living his life. Besides, he never lied to her. He never lied to her like Bonga did. He never told her that he loved her, he never cheated on her, he never drugged her and he never treated her any less than a queen. She just hated the fact the he was a man. Lusting and thinking life is about spilling your juices all over and not caring about who gets hurt in the process. She was now sure that no man is different from another, except her father of course. Only men like her father were real men. Only a man who grew up as a child of a pastor and grew to become pastor himself was suited enough to fit to her father's category.

She was still blending the ingredients when a riotous knock came from the door. She muted her CD-player and asked who it was. The voice behind the door came to her with no surprise. It was Mike of course.

She removed her frying pan from the stove and then walked towards the door. She slowly swung open the door. She then stood in the door-way with a security gate between herself and Mike. "What do you want?" was the question she asked

calmly. He really did not know what he wanted. He only knew that he needed to make sure he does not lose her. Her beauty was something any man would sleepwalk towards. She asked him again. This time he asked if she was doing well. Why wouldn't she do well? Why would she need a man to look out for her? Why would she need him especially? He had no certain answers for these questions. All he was seeing were her appetising lips, her fully fledged bosoms, the lining of her figure through the polyester shirt she was wearing and the hill on her black jeans between her thighs. He mumbled a few words, telling her how sorry he was. She told him to relax and just forget about it because she was never going to trust him again. He asked for a chance to start over. After waking up from the fantasies of her body, his tongue began to flow. He is a business man indeed, a charming man and a very wise man. All he needed was to calm her down and then his pimp-skills cocked in. When he began telling her that she was acting like a child she began to meltdown and allowed him to talk. He knew very well how young girls wanted to be treated like adults. Telling her that she was acting like a child surely was going to suppress her down. When he carried on talking about a second chance she asked him if he was going to be totally honest this time around. A big fat "YES" was his answer. Thembi being able to tell her emotions to go back, she opened the security gate and invited him in. She wanted him to tell her everything about his businesses, the parties and the girls. Everything from how he got in and how do they found those girls.

They were seating, facing each other with their elbows resting on the table when he began telling her everything. He was in the business of car dealership. He lived alone. He had an ex-wife with an eleven year old son. He dedicated his whole life in his career, especially after breaking his marriage five years ago. He travelled a lot, because of the nature of his job. He was very rich. What about the parties?

He was in a club that specialised in providing entertainment for men who had the means to pay for it. Their job was to plan small parties. In these parties businessmen who came to KZN on business trips would indulge on girls. Drinks, accommodations and secured privacy were included in their costs. Even politicians indulged in these games of having college girls jerk on thjeir shafts. They also provided one on one experiences for these men. They would book a hotel and send one or two girls to entertain the man. And the girls, how do you get them?

This question was very hard for him to answer, but from his experiences working as a recruiter, he knew that once a person knows half he/she would better know everything. If they only knew half they would be curious. Their pursuit for the whole story will be a problem for him. If you tell them everything, at least you still have an idea of what and how much they know. They ran a brothel. This brothel recruits mostly college students. They work like agents, with a call they jump and do their job. He was one of the recruiters.

It became clear to Thembi that she was one of his targets for recruitment. Nonetheless she wanted to hear it straight from the horse' s mouth. It was really not easy for him to admit this, but from his experiences he knew that money was everything. Therefore he began by telling her that there was a lot of money to be earned in this business. Even the girls themselves got paid very well. They got paid five hundred rand for every man they jerked. After going round and round he finally arrived, "Yes, I was trying to recruit you, but..." She interrupted him, with her emotions still safely tucked in inside her skin. How do these men pay you? He could not answer that question, it was only for management to know, not the casualties. This made Thembi' s idea, that men think they are the lords of women, escalate even more.

Out of resentment she stood up and told him to leave. He stood up and then tried to further explain himself. "Listen to me, when I first saw you..."

She interrupted him again. On second thought she asked, "Ever had a situation where one of your targets refused?"

With his face buried under the shyness of her staring eyes, his eyes responded with an open "Yes" . For her follow-up question she asked him if he had ever had one of these targets accepting yet refusing. His face was now buried under confusion. Her follow up question was confusing his businessman' s mind. How could one accept yet refuse?

When she walked slowly towards him with her eyes glued to his eyes, the same way she glued them when she was about to jerk him on Saturday, he knew that he was about to get his confusion clarified. With her eyes still glued to his eyes she reached for his hands, "What if I accepted but refused to be owned by a man?" she asked. This made his confused mind query even more.

She began stroking the palms of his hands. She hated what she was doing but his response towards her actions surpassed the hate. She hated him, but the control she experienced over him surpassed the hate. She hated every man, but the fulfilment of sketching her womanly powers over his manly weaknesses, made her love everything she was doing. Not only his man became stiff but his whole body stiffened. She had a gift for taking control over him just by touching his skin. She had a gift for taking control over every man. Her beauty alone captured the attention of every man. The structure of her body made it worse. You can just imagine what touching him would do.

She pushed him to the small couch. To his eyes and mind, she became a rolling dice from a Vegas casino, where you constantly wonder which number is going to be on the apex side. He was getting more surprises than he had bargained for. She kept on making him guess what next she was going to do. She did all this through the power of being a woman. He was a powerful businessman, he had everything he could ever want, but her womanly powers were something he could never overcome. She was now sitting on top of his thighs facing him. Her left hand was inside his trouser stroking his man. He was squiggling out of pleasure from her womanly hand. While he was in the midst of squiggling she leaned closer to his face and whispered in his eye, "You do remember my price right?"

Nodding his head was the best his wiggling body could do.

She rode him even more. Her jeans and panties were now nowhere near her. She did not know why and how but she was enjoying him. She was not enjoying what they were doing or what she was doing, but she was enjoying what she was doing to him. The same rush from Saturday had conquered her again. She was enjoying the irony of a woman controlling a man who thought he was controlling her. For her woman to spit she did not need his man to hit her G-spot, but she spat out of seeing his defeated face. The more she jerked him the more his face showed signs of defeat.

They were done. She got up and went to the bedroom. She came back with a robe on. He was tucking his shirt in when she asked for her payment. He really could not believe it but he paid her what she claimed he owed her. That when his confusions were clarified. She was accepting to sell her cookie but she was not going have a pimp.

\*\*\*\*\*

If lightning could go from one apartment to another we would say she rode on it, if blink of an eye possessed any majestic powers we would say she used it, and if we did not know any better we would say she was some sort of a superhero who could fly. The time it took her to leave her apartment and knock at Nosi' s door has yet to be broken.

Nosi was having supper with her roommate when Thembi' s knock interrupted them from the other side of the door. Thembi did not wait to be asked who it was when she announced that it was her, talking directly to Nosi as if she was sure that Nosi was listening. That when Nosi caught on and realised that something was utterly wrong because it was not like Thembi to pop in unannounced.

When opening the door, Nosi saw through Thembi' s beautiful smile that it was just a smile of clown. She could fool everyone with her beautiful smile but Nosi. Nosi herself was a pro at drawing a smile of a clown on her own face as well. Growing up to constantly act friendly to the unrestrained men who fed on her sisters made her master the art of fake smiling as well. Nonetheless she invited Thembi in, and they went to sit on top of the bed.

Seeing that Thembi was not going to reveal the exact reason for her visit in front of her roommate, Nosi decided to start another topic. They talked about the upcoming tests, then they talked about the new lecturer who seemed like he did not know what he was doing. While in the middle of the lecturer talk, Nosi' s roommate received a call. It was her boyfriend, calling to pick her up. She stood up and greeted her goodnights, and left them alone.

The goodbyes of Nosi' s roommate really placed a strain on Thembi who was about to forget about Mike. Her ability to easily suppress her worries was very great if she was not reminded about them again. But Nosi was not the kind who will not remind and ask you if she was worried about you. Thembi first tried to blush it off and told her that nothing was wrong, but Nosi did not even have to spit it into words that she didn' t believe her. Her face alone made it clear to Thembi that Nosi needed a little bit more in order to believe her.



Thembi decided to just give a brief but once her tap was open she could not stop until she had told everything. A tale of everything that happened when Mike was at her apartment became a tale that brought them more together. This time around they were not drunk or angry, they were just intoxicated by the comfort they felt towards one another. The tale of Mike's visit triggered other stories. Thembi was now the only person around the school who fully understood Nosi's home life, she was the only in the whole world who Nosi has ever revealed how she hated her sisters for exposing her to all those men. This revelation went on until Nosi revealed to Thembi about one man who used to sleep with her sister. One morning this man came to the house alone, he was looking for Nosi's sister because she had dodged him. When Nosi opened the door and revealed that her sister was not at home, it became clear to this man that the sister had been taken by another man. That when he decided to transfer his frustrations to Nosi and offered to comfort her during the early hours of the night. When Nosi refused he decided to use financial power, but she still refused. She can still remember how he looked she refused and threatened to report him to the police if he ever try something like that again. Though it did not seem like a big story since no one was harmed but Nosi had never told anyone this story before. Thembi was the first person to hear this story.

Thembi's ability to listen made Nosi even more comfortable on Thembi's shoulder. Nosi even revealed how worried she was about her two sisters. Her older sister had a child that was two years old, and the middle sister had just had a child. The child was just two months old. She was worried because all they lived on were the government children grants and her older sister's minimum wage salary. This income was barely enough to cover the necessities, and the fact that they sometimes drank almost half of this money and then rely on ripping-off drunken men did not help the situation. But hey, they were used to living on the edge of today not caring about tomorrow. It was Thembi's turn to comfort and assure Nosi about how things always work out.

## Chapter Thirteen

A great sunshine through the window disturbed by the curtains, sunshine shine' s dimly to the beautiful skins of two black young women. Golden-brown is the colour of their skins, and their blackness in their African genes requires no suntan to enhance their beauties. One is awake, but she will not move because she doesn' t want to wake the one who is not yet awake. She stares at the ceiling just for the other' s sake.

The time is around seven-thirty in the morning, and Thembi is now awake. Nosi seems to be still sound in her dreams. Yesterday' s comforts forced Thembi to end up borrowing one of Nosi' s pyjamas and sleep next to each other. The smallness of Nosi' s single bed did not matter any much because the closeness of their heart already required them to hug each other every now and then. The fact that Nosi' s head was resting on Thembi' s right arm and the fact that Thembi was the one on the side next to the wall, made it impossible for Thembi to get out of the bed without waking Nosi up. And we all know how much Thembi was taught to respect a sleeping soul. Like a corpse she' s therefore facing the ceiling and thinking about the trip she was to take. She had promised her father that she was going home for the special service that their church was hosting. Her original plan was that she was going to work a day shift at Bone Steak Restaurant & Bar and take a taxi to Pietermaritzburg at about five in the evening, but now that Mike had made her a Thousand rand richer, she was thinking about not going to work and leave for Pietermaritzburg a little bit early.

A knock came from the other side of Nosi' s apartment. Before Thembi could ask who it was, a key was heard turning through the key whole from the outside. It became clear to Thembi that it was Nosi' s roommate. The opening of the door was loud enough to wake Nosi up.

The roommate was surely tired. The first thing she did was smile and greeted the girls. A couple of minutes later she was on her panties and a bra, and then she disappeared under the blankets of her bed. By this time Nosi and Thembi were up and making their faces and heads acceptable for the outside world. It is a norm all men would never master, the norm of checking and perfecting your face and head before walking out to other people.

On their way out, Thembi mentioned to Nosi that she was leaving for home and would be back tomorrow night. She was complaining of the boredom she was going to experience once she arrived home. Not being able to hang with her friends back home made it very boring to be home. Senzo was not there to be found and Vicky' s falling pregnancy made it very hard for their friendship. Remember her father' s abolishment?

Nosi' s carefree nature made very easy to suggest that she too, Nosi, would like to go Pietermaritzburg with Thembi. Thembi was a bit surprised, but liked the idea very much.

\*\*\*\*\*

The Ngcobo' s are dining their supper dishes. The family was very happy to welcome Thembi' s friend in their home. Nosi' s kind and carefree nature made her likable even more to Nomalanga' s eyes, Thembi' s sister. The family was in a jovial mood. The preparations for the next day' s service were all in order. Their church branch was going to host other branches for a celebration, a celebration that only Christians who went to their church could understand. The family was all smiles and laughs. Mr Ngcobo also began telling Nosi of Thembi' s babyhood stories, funny events that happened when Thembi was still four, five, six and seven. He also occasionally gave his daughters (including Nosi) small life lectures. The mood was warm and fun, the picture was a great one. If you took a picture of that evening you would be doing great justice if you titled it "A Happy Family" .

An hour later, Nomalanga was the only left in the lounge. She was doing what she did best if you wanted her to bother no one, she was watching her movies. Mantombi was already in the land closest to death, she was far asleep in her bedroom. Thembi and Nosi were talking while Nosi was going through Thembi' s old cloths, old school books, albums and everything she could reach that was about Thembi' s past. They were laughing every now and then at Thembi' s old belongings.

In the Master bedroom, the King and Queen of the house were about to go their recent unpleasant routine. Mr Ngcobo would try and signal that his manhood needs to feed and Mrs Ngcobo would come with an excuse not to play the adults game. This would end in a negative energy around the bedroom. This time Mrs Ngcobo

decided to be first one to begin the unpleasant routine. The only difference this time was that the excuse was the truth. She had finally gone to the doctor, and was diagnosed with breast cancer. Mr Ngcobo was shocked and sad at the same time. He was also sorry for placing such pressure on her while she was going such a painful experience. But he also blamed her a little bit for keeping it to herself for so long. It had been a while since Mrs Ngcobo slept with her head on her husband's chest, and this night resurrected that experience. It was comforting to finally share her pains with husband and get hear him say "God doesn't give you more than you can take" .

Early in the morning, Mr Ngcobo was already reading his Sunday newspaper when a call came on his cell phone. It was one of his business associates from Durban. They were signalling him about a company that was selling its shares. This company had a lot of promising potential to up its share price in the very near future. Mrs Ngcobo was in the kitchen, but she could see through her husband's eyes that he was talking business on a Sunday. They had a deal that he would not do any business on the God's day. Sunday is the seventh day, and the seventh day should only be for praising the Lord and resting. When Mr Ngcobo saw the disapproval from his wife's eyes he told his accomplice that he will talk to him the next day and dropped the phone. Though he tried to hide it, Mrs Ngcobo could see that he was a bit frustrated by her disapprovals. In his mind he was getting frustrated at the fact that he might lose out on such a great opportunity because of such a minor rule. Even Jesus himself did perform healing on the Sabbath Day. The wife did not understand the way business worked. Tomorrow might be too late to buy those shares.

Thembi and Nosi were already gone; they were at the church house with other young Christians. It was the youth's job to do the final preparations, preparations such as sound testing, decorating, program finalisation, cutlery, counting and so on. Some of the trusted church boys "Brothers" were already making Nosi feel as welcome as possible. Those brothers are very kind and friendly, especially to the opposite sex. The reasons why the trusted "Brothers" are more friendly to women we can not reveal, it is taboo to even think the program director of such a respected church would crave the physical beauty of a his fellow church mate. Let not only mention the "Brothers" , even the sisters seemed friendlier towards the opposite sex. Why? We cannot even allow ourselves to think there is a link between the messages that would

constantly be exchanged during the sermon. Who they were exchanging with, we do not know. All we know is that a message would be received on one of the lady's phone and we would see her turning to a particular "Brother" and smile.

The time was now nine o'clock, it was time to begin and the visiting branches were already worshipping with the local branch. That was the exact time when Thembi's phone vibrated. When she checked, it was Mike. She cancelled the call and as fast as she could, and she switched it off. A moment later Nosi was seen walking out as quietly and fast as she could. When she came back she told Thembi that Mike had just called and wanted to know if they were together. At first they were surprised on when he got Nosi's number, but then remembered when Thembi used Mike's phone to call Nosi the other day when they were going to the "Party" .

What did you say? Was the question asked by Thembi. "I told him that you are going to be very busy for the whole day today, he better call in the evening or tomorrow."

The function at church ended at about three in the afternoon. The visitors congratulated Mr Ngcobo and his branch on a job well done. The day was blessed and the visitors were gone. The Ngcobo's were on their way home in Mr Ngcobo's family car, but Thembi and Nosi were not in the car. From the young age, Thembi preferred to walk from church to home. It was not that far, a twenty minutes walk was all it took if you were strolling.

Thembi and Nosi had left before their family. Thembi wanted to pop by Vicky's house and introduce Nosi to her. They both, Nosi and Vicky, knew each other by names. But they had never seen each other face to face. The other reason Thembi wanted to see Vicky was because she had not seen her in a while. Now that Vicky had a child, she hardly went out of the house. The child was still a bit too young to be left with her grandmother, or maybe it was because she had grown fond to her child so much that she had found the real reason to behave herself and take care of the first thing she ever really loved.

When the girls were introduced towards one another by Thembi they immediately clicked as if they've been friends for centuries. Maybe it was because they were a little bit alike. And maybe it was because they both loved the same friend. Or maybe it was because they both knew the different Thembi, Vicky knew the Thembi who

calculated her every move, while Nosi knew the Thembi who did spontaneous things like sleeping with a man just because she was angry at him. Maybe their different perceptions of Thembi complimented each other.

At the moment of laughter between the girls, a call once again came in on Thembi's phone. She did not know what to say to him. He called later like he had promised Nosi that he would. Thembi gave the phone to Nosi and asked her to handle it. While Vicky was still puzzled about a call that suddenly made Thembi lose her control and asked someone to handle it, Nosi was busy with agreeing and disagreeing with the man at the other end of the line.

At the end of the call Nosi told Thembi that Mike was offering to fetch them later. They were going to leave by a taxi but if Mike was going to fetch them they could have the benefit of leaving a little bit later, and they could also save somewhere around fifty rand each. Thembi thought about it and said no way was she going to allow him to claim any help to them. Vicky was still lost in the mist of confusion. Who was the guy?

Then Thembi told Vicky that it was Mike. Vicky knew the name 'Mike', Thembi had told her about this man she was having fun with a couple of weeks ago. So when she had the name she got excited and asked Thembi to allow him so that she could see him. Little did Vicky know that Mike was now a "client" of Thembi. Nosi also supported Vicky on her request against Thembi. Nosi's reason to want to see Mike was because she wanted to give him a piece of her mind about playing with Thembi the way he did.

Thembi eventually gave in to her friends and instructed Nosi to call Mike back and tell him that it was ok he could come at about seven in the evening and fetch them at Vicky's place.

Now all that the girls needed was to go to Thembi's home and take their bags and greet their goodbyes as if they were leaving by taxis, and then come back to Vicky's home. Where they were going to spend more time with Vicky and wait for Mike.

When they arrived home they found that Mr Ngcobo was not there to be found. He had dropped off the family and drove back to talk to one of the pastors who was not present at church. This was the excuse he used to leave home, but Mrs Ngcobo knew

very well that this was opposite of the truth. She knew that he must have gone to the same business associate that called in the morning. Mrs Ngcobo was really getting worried. She was worried about the sudden financial interest that was growing day by day in her husband' s greedy side. He had always been business wise, but now he was not even paying enough attention to his family, not mention his church. In the last four months alone he had created five new positions that will help him with church affairs. If she did not know any better she would say he was retiring his church duties. How can one retire the duties of the Lord?

The girls said their goodbyes to Mantombi, Mrs Ngcobo and Nomalanga. Mrs Ngcobo offered to drive them town so that they could arrive early for a long distance taxi, but the girls refused the offer and said she should not worry herself. Mrs Ngcobo had always trusted Thembi with all heart like any mother does to her first born. This is why she did not even wonder why they refused the ride.

The time was now about five at the noon. The girls left and Nomalanga went back to her movies, leaving Mantombi and Mrs Ngcobo to talk their women affairs.

Mantombi was not just a family helper, but she was also Mrs Ngcobo' s best friend. She has been working for the family for more than fourteen years, and they knew each other even before then. Before Mrs Ngcobo got married she used to work at a clinic that is situated at Mantombi' s home town. Because Mrs Ngcobo was not from the town she needed a place to rent, and Mantobi took her in and rented her an outbuilding in her home. Since then they' ve been friends. Even when she came to the Ngcobo' s it was like she was just there to help look after the kids for a while like a friend, but we guess they grew on each other. This was why Mrs Ngcobo and Mantobi were never seen like a boss and an employee, but like a sisters.

Mantombi already knew that Mrs Ngcobo had been experiencing some pains on her right breast. They were now talking about what the doctor diagnosed Mrs Ngcobo with. The good news was that it was still at the beginning stages, so it was still possible to reverse it and cure it.

## Chapter Fourteen

A Mother and Child, the child weeps and she wipes. The child thirsts, and she feeds with her innocent breasts. Once they belong to the child, they are no more an allure against men. They are now innocent. She can reveal them as if she was revealing an elbow, an arm or a leg. They are no more breasts in the naked eyes of the men. But once the child thirsts no more, they come out hibernation become breasts again. They are hidden again. The Mother is feeding her Child.

Vicky was her bedroom after Mike had picked up Nosi and Thembi. As she was breastfeeding her child she was trying to cultivate her memory into remembering where did she remembered the face of Mike from. While her child was collecting the proteins and vitamins from her breasts, she was trying to collect the bits and bits of information in order distinguish why Mikes face seemed so familiar. She tried to remember all the high class places she used to go to while still in Johannesburg but fell short to associate Mike with any of the men she saw. She tried again to think of other places she might have seen him in but fell short. With the failure to remember where she might have seen him before she concentrated at congratulating her friend within her mind for scoring such a successful hunk. With the congratulating in her mind she wondered how old he was exactly. He must at least be fifteen years Thembi' s senior. But what did the age have to do with fooling around. And besides that, young boys are too much trouble while they have nothing to offer.

While still feeding her child she thought about her other friend. It was amazing how long their friendship with Spha had survived. He had also rapidly changed from the player Spha to a young mam who was working really hard moulding his future. She even once got in a fight with the father of her child because of the same Spha. That was while she was still pregnant, that was while he, the father, was still around pretending he cared for the upcoming child. If he was really serious then why did he cheat on her? Not with one girl but two, that she knows of. "Young men are really messed up."

Spha on the other side seemed to be going places. She remembers the day she got in the fight with the father of her child because of him. Spha had been in Johannesburg for a few days, and she was still in her early days of pregnancy. In fact it was still so early that she was still thinking about all her options. Spha was advising



her to keep it. She was crying on his shoulder in her room. That was the exact moment her then jealous boyfriend was told by his friends that she was seen with a man in her room for an extended time. Her then jealous boyfriend did not want to believe that they were just friends. He even went an extent of breaking her phone and forbidding her to ever have any contact with him again.

She now wonders where the then jealous boyfriend is. If she had listened to him and dropped her friend, who would she have right now? He, the then jealous boyfriend is gone and is enjoying his life with other girls. Or should we say other preys. He is enjoying himself as if he doesn't even have a child. If his mother was not such a lovely woman, Vicky wonders how on earth she would manage to raise this child.

She remembers one thing that Spha said the last time she saw him. They were going past a building that accommodated a chain of banks. He smiled and told her that he always smiled when he bypassed any bank. He smiled because he knew just how much he had in his bank accounts. The only thing stopping him from accessing it was because the bank officials did not know yet. But give it a couple of years and they were going to know. This positive attitude is what took a lot of girls' hearts. What made Spha even more interesting to Vicky's eyes was the fact that he did not only think positively but he seemed to be also working towards what he was preaching.

Not only Vicky admired Spha so much, but Thembi too, even the church people, and the neighbours and his teachers. He was becoming a boy all the mothers wished they could produce. It was an irony though, because he was not coming from the typically preferred family. His mother did not have a real job. She was a kitchen girl for white families in the Northern suburbs. His brother was an on and off drug mule. His father was somewhere in another province. His father was rich though. The real income they lived by was the maternity support his father deposited every month. He did not hate his father, but they did not really get along that well. He saw him maybe once a year. The father's shady businesses took all his time, and his fraud reputation did not allow him to be seen with an out of marriage child.

Don't get it all wrong! Spha was not a saint himself, but he was just seen as someone with hope within his community and his family and friends. We wouldn't be wrong if we said he was now also blessed with the same burden Thembi and Nosi had on their shoulders. The burden of being seen as the hope, the star or the hero

among your people, the burden of the expectations of those who have made it their tasks to give you small worships and expectations. The burden of being complimented by every adult you engage in a discourse with.

\*\*\*\*\*

The same freeway that Thembi and Bonga cruised on when they were happily going to their matriculation ball is the freeway Mike's car was cruising on. Two girls in the back and the storm seemed to building up. No drops yet, but the clouds were covering up. The shadiness made it hard to think there was ever something called sunshine. Even the moon could brighten clearer. The direction of the clouds seemed confusing, the direction of the wind seemed confusing, but it was surely about to storm. From which side we had no idea.

The girls were not talking, and Mike was not talking. Ever since they left Vicky's place no one had said a real word. There was the quietness of an approaching storm. The car was cloudier than the mist at the top of the mountain. The winds seemed to be stirring from all directions. Nosi wanted to voice her disappointment at Mike but had no right to go there. Mike wanted to try his luck and talk the girls into joining. He now needed both of them to join. His associates were pressuring him. The demand for the service was building up and they were short on girls. Thembi wanted to tell Mike that she wanted this to be the last time they saw each other. The storm was surely on its edge. It was a matter of which side was willing to begin.

The anxiety was getting too much for Mike. He was not going to allow his businessman mind to be intimidated by two twenty-something-year-olds. That was the moment he began with a little throat cough. He slowed down the car and then positioned the middle review mirror for the ability to see both the faces of the girls perfectly. These gestures made it possible for the girls' beautiful brains to see that he was about to say something. With their attention towards him, he began.

"I assume Thembi has told you about my job, I also assume you have already placed two and two together concerning the last party I took you to?" He said these words pointing them to Nosi with his eyes in the review mirror.

He did not need her to answer with words, and then he continued: "I work as a recruiter, and I will not go around the bush anymore. I was hoping I could convince

the two of you to join the club. You will be taken care for very much. You will be paid well... and you will work very flexible hours.”

The girls did not give him any response. It was because they were offended or it was because they really did not know what to say, we do not know. A moment went by, another moment went by and another went again, but there was still no response.

Seeing that the girls were acting like girls, he decided to do what he assumed men were meant to do. When a girl seems indecisive, the man is supposed to take the decision for her and convince her to see it his way. He began describing how much they were going to gain and assured them that they were going to have choice on which customer to provide their services to. He even told them that there was a small gathering at that very moment. He invited them to if they wanted to just come along and see for themselves how happy the other girls were. That was the exact moment Nosi decided to break out of her shock. She was still shocked that he was now trying to recruit even her as well.

The words of Nosi came in like fire against the storm. “What exactly do you think you are? To come here and break my friend’ s heart, and then persuade her to sell her body.....and now you try and persuade her friend to join along? Don’ t you think we can sell our own bodies without your help if we wanted to?”

It was now Mike’ s turn to be speechless. Nosi answer made it clear to him that they were not going to tag along to the “small gathering” . Thembi on the left side of Nosi was just quiet. Her silence was like the one of a dog that is about to attack, or one of a beast that is busy charging for an attack. Mike saw it from her face that if he pushed any longer he was going to push her into becoming the confusing Thembi again. He did not want to push her to the state where she becomes a dice that has more than six sides.

They were now about two minutes away from Thembi’ s apartment. The quietness was still building up the storm of Mike’ s desperateness. He knew from his experiences that money was the base of all decisions. Because of this knowledge he decided to lure his victims with an offer to buy them supper before dropping them off. He suggested a luxurious dine that was situated two kilometres away from Thembi’ s place. The offer was denied with nothing more than a “No Thanks” from

Thembi. Those were the only words Thembi uttered to Mike ever since they left the Vicky' s place.

He stopped right next to Thembi' s apartment and the girls got out of the vehicle with their small luggage and headed for the gate. As the distance between the girls and the car lengthened, Mike decided to show his seriousness by telling them that he was going to call them the next day for their decision. Thembi was beginning to be impressed by the persistence of Mike. No wonder he was so successful in both his types of businesses. The only problem was that she just did not know what to say to him anymore. In fact she did not know how to talk to any man anymore. All she knew was that men wanted sex. She did not hate him or love him, but she did not know what she would talk with him. This was why she had decided to part ways with him.

Nosi on the other side was feeling sorry her friend. Nosi was convinced that Thembi' s silence signalled that she was still in love with him.

Though both the girls were angry at Mike for offering them such a job, the seed of financial freedom was trying to grow in their innocent hearts. The idea of getting paid so much was tempting. The way up the stairs to Thembi' s flat was one that was noisy within the girls' own heads. Each had her thinking.

“Only if the job was not the type that meant losing so much of your dignity” was going through Nosi' s head.

Thembi' s head was more trouble by the fact that men ran these clubs. Girls were the ones suffering, but men were the ones gaining more. She was surely not even going to consider making a man rich with her body.

They arrived at the door and Thembi turned the key in the key hole and they were inside. They were now safe in their space. A place where they could digest what Mike had been saying. After taking off their shoes and Thembi putting on something more comfortable, they began talking about it.

They talked about as if it was a joke. They talked about how hard it would be to face those men during the day. Imagine jerking him at night and then having to bump into him the next day. Some of those men were even mini-public figures.

After a few laughs they decided it was Nosi' s time to go to her place and prepare for the next school day.

Between the streets, under the streetlights Thembi was walking Nosi to her place. She was to leave her halfway. They were now talking about the next day's lecture. It was when they were waiting for the traffic light to turn green when a minivan hooted at them. The girls turned towards it. There were two men inside the minivan. The minivan then flicked the lights.

The girls proceeded to cross the traffic lights, which seemed fortunate for the men in the minivan because the girls were approaching towards the minivan's side. When the girls close enough the men rolled down their windows.

To the men's misfortune the girls were not who they thought they were. The minivan flicked its lights again, and this time Nosi decided to respond. "Sorry guys were too expensive. We cost around a thousand per round."

The men laughed and realised that they had really mistaken two lovely ladies for the girls of the night. Seeing that Thembi and Nosi did not seem too offended by the confusion, one of the men jokingly shouted out towards the girls, "Sorry ladies it was our mistake, but for you I would pay more than a thousand dollars. Just wait until I get the tenders and I will come back looking for you."

The girls laughed it off and Nosi smacked her behind just for the pleasure of making the men wish it was them.

The men craved and proceeded with their hunt for the girls of the night.

Thembi and Nosi were now about to part ways when they began talking about Mike again. "Don't let him get in to you" were Nosi's words.

Thembi answered to her carrying friend by assuring her that she was not going to allow him to do that. Then, Nosi asked what was Thembi going to do if he returned and she was alone. Thembi had no answer for that question.

Nosi decided to make a joke out of it. "You going to do him and make a thousand bucks again?"

When Thembi shyly laughed it off, Nosi proceeded by saying: "It might not be a bad idea. At least you will be getting some and also getting paid for it. He's good too you've said, and he's not some jerk you don't know. I wouldn't mind doing one person I know and if he's going to be good it would be a bonus."

Thembi hushed her friend who was beginning to babble. It was clear to Thembi that her friend was back. Once Nosi begins babbling you know that she is in her real mood. They hugged not once but twice and then parted ways.

The next day Thembi switched off her cell phone, avoiding Mike' s call. In the evening when she switched it on there were no voice mails from him. The next day had the same result of no calls from Mike even though her cell phone was now switched on. Another day went by again and the same silence was experienced. She was beginning to have hope, she began to think maybe he heard the message and was leaving them alone. Or maybe he found other girls.

## Chapter Fifteen

A sandwich: Two walls of bread colliding against each other, a peaceful slice of soft cheese in between to keep them from smashing against each other. Two sets of teeth colliding against each other, a peaceful piece of a sandwich chewed to keep them from smashing against each other. A sandwich is made and then eaten. The opposing forces of bread make it possible to be called a sandwich. The opposing forces of teeth make it possible to chew the sandwich. Life too is about chewing a sandwich. The opposing forces of choice make it a life that is lived. Money or value, plan or chance, birth or death, and love or hate, are all the walls of bread, and you are the slice of cheese keeping them from colliding against each other. And if you don't pick the side to follow, you will be chewed like a sandwich.

Five days had passed and Mike hadn't called or appeared. The day was Friday, and Thembi was getting ready to go work. She had returned from the University at about four in the afternoon, stripped her clothes off and took a two hour nap. Her shift at work was to commence at seven that evening. She was biting a quick snack before heading for work. She was having a sandwich. That was the exact moment her phone rang. It was the call she was beginning to thank her ancestors for not receiving, it was Mike.

He was already at the gate. She was going to lie to him and say she was not around Durban, but she could not. She could not because Nosi was also at the gate, with Mike. He had decided to be clever by calling Nosi first. Nosi being Nosi she fell for him when he said he wanted to apologise to both of them in person. Though she did not really believe him entirely that he wanted to apologise, she thought it might be for the best that they make it clear to him that they were not interested once and for all. That was what they, Nosi and Thembi, had agreed on when they re-talked during the week.

Now Thembi had no choice but to allow them in. She buzzed them in. In two to four blinks they were knocking on the door. She opened the door and greeted both of them with a mutual soft smile. She used her mutual smile when she wanted to appear in control. She used it when she wanted to be seen as an adult. This situation was exactly a situation she needed to act like an adult. And yes, the smile worked, she

did indeed appear to be an in control adult. She knew how to work her beautiful smile. Even at church, she used the same smile, at home, at school and at work.

They were now all seated on the table with the girls' eyes glued on Mike who was explaining to them how much he needed them but he was sorry to pressure them so much. He was not sorry for asking them to join but was only sorry to pressure them so much. Trying to recruit them should have been seen like a compliment, he said. His club did not choose any breathing soul with a vertical smile between their thighs, but they chose based on real beauty. Though the girls were a bit taken off by the nature of the job, they were slowly being taken in by Mike's charms. They were slowly getting in the sandwich. He had surely come prepared for this session. His charming businessman brain was really doing a great job. Thembi was admiring him even more for the persistence. Nosi was admiring the way he was being clean cut and passionate about the topic this time around.

He talked up to twelve minutes without stopping for their responses. All he needed were their facial gestures of disapproval or approval every now and then. He was on the roll. The girls were getting more and more in the moment. He was even using seductive imageries to make them see that they will be getting paid for something they will enjoy. He was really getting inside their heads. He was mind-jerking them. The more he talked the more the idea did not seem to be that bad. With all the security, the way you could hide your true identity by using stage names and wearing different types of makeup, the ability to choose to only entertain out of town guests. This choice of entertaining out of town guests was going to enable them to entertain guests they were not going to ever see again.

The more he talked, the more they saw it through his eyes. Once his businessman brain was sure that he had penetrated their brains enough, he decided to commence section two of his plan. He invited them to accompany him to a very small gathering he was going to. This was going to be their chance to see other types of parties his club hosted. He explained to them that the one they went to the last time was too ghetto for them. They deserved to serve in the level "A" league of their parties. When Thembi tried to protest, using her shift at work as the obstacle, he took care of that by telling them that by showing up at the gathering with him they were entitled to a night's pay. Some of the clients did not even need to have the real jerking. All



they paid for was the freedom of having beautiful young girls dancing and touching them. This made it even more tempting for the girls.

After this interesting development Nosi asked Thembi for a moment in the bedroom. They excused themselves and off they went to the bedroom. He was left alone with his businessman brain satisfied that he was about to reach the victory line.

In the bedroom Nosi revealed to Thembi how much she was taken by going just for this night. At least tonight they were only going there to observe, and they were going to be paid five hundred rand just for that. It was their only chance to get their curious brains to fully explore this life. Nosi was blabbering, trying to convince Thembi when Thembi interrupted and gave in without any effort to resist her friend. Nosi was a little bit surprised by this but accepted the victory.

They came back to Mike with smiles. Thembi asked Mike if they were supposed to wear anything special for this gathering. The answer was no surprise; they were to wear anything that was sexy enough.

The girls went back to the bedroom. Thembi called in at work and reported to be feeling sick. She then changed her black jeans and work t-shirt. She got herself in one of her most sexy dresses. A beautiful black thigh hugger that was just shorter than a soccer short. This dress did not only hug her thighs but her pear shaped behind was given spotlight as well. The cleavage on her breasts needed no binoculars as well. This black dress looked like it was made on her body. Or maybe her body was made on the dress. It was her second skin. If there was one thing we knew about Thembi, it was that when she decided to do something she did it with it all her soul. She was never in the sandwich once her brain was made up. This was why she did not hold back in dressing the part. At least now she knew what she to stumble upon in these parties.

Once she was done they walked out, and Mike lost his businessman brain again. He stared as if he had never even seen her naked. His mind wondered as if he was trying to gauss what was beyond the skin of the dress. Nonetheless they walked out of the building, in the car, and they were off to Nosi' s place.

\*\*\*\*\*

Through the gate a black car passed through, a very beautiful house, not a mansion but a house in Mhlanga, a double story indeed. The back door of the car opened and two beautiful girls walked out. One is wearing a beautiful and sexy black, thigh-hugger dress, and the second one is wearing a beautiful navy long dress that hugs her whole body like a man does in his honeymoon night.

The one with a shorter dress that we call a thigh-hugger was Nosi. Thembi's was longer and more of an evening gown than the one of Nosi. It was sexy though, with the tightness on every curve and as smooth as a wet frog jumping out of an angry man's swimming pool. Nosi too was indeed looking like she was worth a million dollars. The sight of these two ladies was priceless.

Now that they knew what they were to stumble upon, now that they knew what to expect to see beyond these beautiful walls, how were they going to behave themselves? How were they going to ignore the eyes of the nice men in uniforms? Certainly the nice men in uniforms were going to see them as one of the ladies of the nights. The last party was different because they, Nosi and Thembi, did not know that they were perceived this way in the eyes of these men in uniform. This was their first time knowing that are going to be seen as prostitutes in the eyes of an audience. There was one difference about this party though; there were only two men in uniforms. The first one was the one at the gate and the second one was at the door. Beyond the door there was no one except the partakers and the catering staff. The catering staff seemed to be mingling with the nature of the party.

There were only two visible catering staff, and they too were looking like they were ladies of the night. Aprons are meant to shield your beautiful garments from the spills of food and spices, but these aprons were meant to shield other types of food and spices. For these aprons were just short enough to cover the womanly areas, and they were also just there on top to cover the breasts, and under them was a thong on the womanly areas and nothing else but natural skin. The backs of these catering ladies were completely unshielded. We guess the food and spices this time were the womanly areas and the breasts. The spills were the drools of men drooling over desires.

These two catering workers were the first people to be seen by Thembi and Nosi as they walked in and made their way to the entertainment room upstairs. The catering

girls were also going up the stairs with trays of side plates containing prawns and something a black South Africans isn't made up to pronounce, or to even remember its name. It looked like frogs when it arrived at the kitchen, but now that it was cooked, fried or heated you could not tell if it was the same thing. Its aroma was intriguing though.

The time it took Thembi, Nosi and Mike to get off the car and walk in and then climb the steps to get to the entertainment room seemed to take far less time than the girls wished it would take. In fact the whole trip from Thembi's place to Nosi's places, and then from Nosi's place to this destination seemed to take far less time than the girls would have wished. Not only Thembi but both the girls were beginning to wonder how on earth they agreed to come to this place. They were not disgusted or judgemental but they were nervous, afraid and curious at the same time. We have heard of what the scientists call adrenalin, and maybe it is what was happening to them, but all we know is that curiosity did kill a cat.

The three last steps made Thembi remember a scene of a heart transplant she saw in the movie the other day. The way her heart was pounding it was like the whole world could hear. Before they stepped on the last step to see the whole entertainment room Mike asked them if they were doing fine and Thembi's mutual smile convinced him she was in control.

They were in the entertainment room. It was big, very big, and beautiful, very beautiful. It was clean too, cleaner than the last party. Even the people seemed cleaner in their heads. They were sober, or at most they were tipsy. There were only five men and ten girls. The catering girls are included in this count of girls. Mike was to be the sixth man, and his accompanying girls were to make the count of girls get to twelve. Each man had two girls dedicated to him. There was the pair of apron girls or should the catering girls dedicated to a white male whom we assume was living his fantasy of being naughty master with his black maids back home. Then there was another white man who was living his fantasy of being naughty with the South African Airways' flight attendants. We say this because his ladies were wearing sexy pieces that resembled the uniform of the South African Airways. Another man, black man this time like the rest of the other men, had his two girls wearing as a pair of a sexy police woman and a sexy convicted woman. The other two men had their girls

partially dressed as the old nurse-fantasies that most men seem to fantasise about in every movie.

When Mike entered with his pair of beautiful girls the heads turned and he was greeted with warm smiles. The eyes of the men were not smiling for Mike though; they had big stickers written Thembi and Nosi' s names. Though they were not in any fantasy costume their dresses made them a reality that is indeed sexy.

Thembi surprised herself by the fact that she seemed to like this setting. Actually she liked the idea of freedom that was portrayed by this setting. Girls free and half naked, the men free and just enjoying with their eyes and touching every now and then, fantasies freed from the brains and out to be lived, and the freedom of the ladies interpreting the fantasies in their own ways. She saw that the girls were not told what to do but they spontaneously teased the men every now and then. It did not look the children of Israel cursing on Moses and "his God" . The last party certainly looked like a party that could be shown as a scene where the children of Israel had lost hope on Moses and "his God" during the long journey to the land of honey and milk. Yes they were already sinning by doing this game of lust, but at least this party did not look like a sin. The noise level of the radio was very low, the place was organised and clean, no one was sucking anyone' s anything under the table as if no one could see and the view of the whole thing was elegant and sexy with a tint of a naughty fairytale. Everyone was involved in one general conversation about the greatness of the music, the food or the night every now and then. Then each group had it own private conversation together with small sexy role playing. Though there were moments where a quick peek occurred, every man paid attention to his ladies. This made Thembi a little bit more comfortable because it meant she and Nosi were automatically going to be Mike' s ladies. She did not mind him looking or touching her, he had already done more than that to her. The only problem that was left unsaid but lingered in Mike' s, Thembi' s and Nosi' s mind was how uncomfortable was it going to be if Mike touched Nosi, or if Nosi did a little lap dance on Mike. Surely they could tone down their touching but the other men and ladies were going to wonder if Thembi and Nosi just sat there and observed as if they were watching a movie. Without saying, it became clear to the girls that none of the partakers and their girls knew that they were only here to observe. Thembi and Nosi knew very well that they had to play the part. They had to go with flow because they were no more

in the sandwich now. The decision of coming to this place meant they had chosen a side.

## Chapter Sixteen

Heaven is possessed with worship of eternity, and hell is celebrated though a wicked fire of eternity. Pastors worship so that they will go to heaven where they will worship even more. Gangsters are always sweating because they don't want to lose caution and get shot down and then go hell where they will sweat even more. Heaven and hell under one roof is a fantasy. It is a fusion of the extremes. Men and women, young and old, successful and studying, naughty and innocence, lust and hate.

Mike and his girls had been sitting in their corner for five minutes now, and the pressure was getting hotter. If you in Rome you must do what Romans do, and if you are in heaven you must do what Christians do. The same is true with being in hell. For this place was hell and heaven under one roof, the girls and Mike needed to start doing what was being done. The place was heaven because it was a place where the men were worshiping the girls. Like Christians the men had worked their whole lives to be successful so that they could worship these girls. It was hell because the men had worked hard to be successful so that they could come here and sweat from the desires projected by the bodies of these girls.

Nosi said something, "It's a pity you did not tell us that there will be a stage we could have brought our costumes too." This was meant to be a joke and it was indeed amusing to both Mike and Thembi. They all laughed partially with their eyes rolling all over because of the tension that was building. They all knew what Mike was implying. He wanted them to be free so that he could touch and dance and play with these sexy girls. He asked if they wanted something stronger to drink, but they denied and said they were fine with the wine they were having.

Nosi was already a little bit tipsy. Before Mike came and took to Thembi's flat earlier on she was drinking with her other friends at a small bar by her place. The wine was starting to bring back the tipsiness that had vanished. She was now heating up again. Thembi too was heating up, but not from the wine. It was from the pressure of not knowing what to do. They were not going to just turn into strippers out of the blue. They did not know how to even try and do the lap dances that the other girls were doing. She also was certainly not mad enough to just serenade with her body in front of all those eyes. And how was she going to do that with Nosi at her side. Nosi was not going to be comfortable doing that to a man that was once, or nearly Thembi's

boyfriend. At least if there was another guy who could take Nosi. Don't get this wrong. Thembi was not at all jealous. She did not care if they shared Mike. She was concerned that Nosi would never agree to do it. And that she had never done a something of this nature before. And that she was shy. And that she thought if ever she did something like this she needed to do it perfectly. And that she.....She had a lot of excuses in her head because had got herself in a situation she had not expertise in. It was certainly not like her to get in a situation she could not control.

On second thought she invited Mike's proposal and took a shot at the tequila that was an arm length across the wine bar. Nosi being Nosi saw this as a challenge and did the same. Mike too joined in and took two short. The man who looked like he was the host stood up and took three shots. His girls did the same. This came across as a challenge to Mike's girls, and Nosi stood up and poured in a cup instead of the tots, and then gulped it all down. Thembi did the same as well, and then poured some for Mike as well. He too gulped it down like it was. The man of the house decided to change the weapon and poured vodka instead. Thembi and Nosi laughed and showed from that instance that they were accepting defeat, but Mike did not. Mike stood up and drank the vodka as well. In an instant all the men were on their feet competing for the best vodka drinker.

A couple of minutes later the man with a police woman and convict for his fantasy took the victory, but his victory certainly not an innocent one. He was the last one to enter the completion after the other men had done two or three, even four rounds. And he came in with a big glass full of vodka.

The girls were watching with amusements and the air was starting to clear since no one seemed to be intimate anymore. After the victory of the men with law and crime as his fantasy, another small competition broke in. Now the men and the girls were competing on who could stack the tallest tower of glasses on top of another. No one saw how this competition started but we assume it was when one of the catering girls stacked two glasses. This time around there was no groups. It was every man or woman for themselves.

Thembi and Nosi did not even try this time around, even though Thembi could have won. At work she was one of the few people who were asked to stack the same type of glasses for decoration purposes. Thembi and Nosi were watching and laughing.

We all know how easy it is to gulp down sip after sip if you are laughing and unconscious that the time between your sips is rapidly decreasing. Both Thembi and Nosi were gulping down their wine like it was the last supper.

They were getting more and more intoxicated. Their bladders were also getting fuller. This was why Nosi asked Mike to show them the bathroom. They all stood up and Mike led the way, leaving the rest still trying to compete with at least four broken glasses in the rubbish bin already.

When they turned after the door that led them to a passage Mike stopped and pointed to the direction of the bathroom. He then grabbed Thembi's behind and squeezed it firm enough to show that he was not taking chances, but soft enough not to hurt her. To his surprise she turned back, smiled and said "Don't touch what you can't afford."

They both smiled and then he said "I have touched way more expensive ones."

Nosi too decided to enrol in and said "I too would like to be touched." And then she grabbed her own behind and squeezed it and then said "Here we go."

They all laughed and Mike said "Oh, you said you wanted costumes? There's a room full of them right next to the bathroom."

And then he left going back to the entertainment room.

The ladies got in the bathroom and did whatever ladies do when they go with each other to the bathroom. When they got out Thembi was saying "I'm sure and I'm serious"

In the bathroom Thembi had told Nosi to feel free to play naughty with Mike if she wanted to. Nosi had asked if Thembi was sure about it and was serious. Thembi had assured it. Nosi had thanked Thembi the least but had said it did have to get that far. The night was starting to go well.

They were now about to enter the entertainment room when they saw something they did not like. They saw the competitions had stopped and the girls were doing their jobs on their men again. This time it was even a little bit more intimate. Maybe it was because everyone was a little bit more intoxicated now. Mike was alone waiting for his two girls to come back and sit next to him while the other girls were dancing and



humping on these men. He was planning how he was going to crack the ice on both of them and get them to be comfortable and relaxed. To Thembi and Nosi's eyes he looked sad and shamed for bringing new comers.

They went back as fast as they could before anyone saw them. Their half drunken brains started jumping mountains about what to do. They were asking each other questions that no one was going to answer. Should they ask to leave, should they go back and just sit down as if they couldn't see what the others were doing, should they try even though they knew that they might look foolish, should they just be a little bit naughty but not as much as the other girls, or maybe sleep on his chest from both his arms? The last option seemed to be the best.

By now they were by the bathroom. Nosi's drunken brain remembered about the room full of costumes and she dragged Thembi in to explore.

Inside there were not only costumes but adult toys as well. They were surprised but not too much. Nosi grabbed one of the toys. It looked like a man's man. She turned it on and it vibrated. They laughed and she commented on its size. It was quite big, way bigger than an average man. They were amused and cried of the bigness the pain it could cause.

Nosi placed on her front end. Making it look like it was attached to her. Then in a thuggish accent she said "Baby, wanna taste my Rambo? He's bigger and strong. He can even vibrate."

They were getting more amused. She stepped closer to Thembi with the intention of pointing it directly to Thembi's woman. It was still vibrating and the closer she got Thembi, the more their mouths stopped laughing. The vibrating stick eventually touched Thembi's woman.

It was now between their women. It was vibrating. Now that the other end was touching Thembi, the end on Nosi's side was also experiencing some vibrations as well. The current ran from the vibrations of this stick through their dresses to the skins of their women, and then to their brains and back to the inner cells of their women.

Two seconds later the rush of the blood was interrupted when they both simultaneously came back to reality and broke the collision. Nosi switched it off and threw it where she had picked it. They shook off that awkward moment with a smile.

They decided to have a look at the costumes. They laughed some at the nature of other costumes. Thembi picked up a beautiful Cinderella mask and placed it on her face. It was a mask that is designed to cover only your eyes. Nosi picked one as well and placed it on her face. Thembi's words were "Wow" . She saw how great it went with Nosi's long dress.

Nosi played a role a gain. She acted as Juliet and said to Thembi "Let the hands do what the lips do."

They laughed again.

Thembi then looked at her friend and confessed "I'm feeling a little bit naughty."

Nosi seemed surprised and laughed.

Then they decided to get back before Mike came to look. As they were living the room, Nosi grabbed Thembi's behind like Mike did, and said "Yah he was right, I have also touched more expensive ones."

Thembi turned back and asked whose would that expensive one belong to. Nosi did not waste time on this question and answered without hesitation. She pointed at her own behind. Thembi grabbed it and said "Nope" .

In that moment of rear grabbing Mike appeared. He was to check on why they were taking so long. He was also there to commence phase three of his plan. Phase three was to make a final move in making the girls comfortable with this idea. He was carrying a two glasses of wine with him. He had brought it for the Thembi and Nosi. They thanked him and sipped on the glasses. He smiled and said "Oh, I see you've seen the toys and costumes. Which ones would you like to experiment with?"

This question was aimed at both of them. Nosi jokingly said "All of them if we were somewhere private."

He saw this as a cue. He suggested that they got bedroom that was right next to the toy room so that they can have privacy. Thembi was the first one to agree. She liked the idea of not having to be intimidated by the other girls in the entertainment room. They got in the bedroom and the girls jumped on top of the bed. He followed them and got in the middle like a sandwich.

Like they had planned they were now dedicated to his arms. His businessman brain was turned on again. The intoxication of alcohol and the intoxication of being in the mood had stimulated the power of his businessman brain. He began praising both the sexiness of the ladies. His praises suggested that they deserved attention of a thousand men because no man on this earth could satisfy all the body. No man had enough power to utilise all this beauty. He was once again mind-jerking them with beautiful words that fitted the moment. He went on telling them that such beauties were master pieces of art. It was only right that such master pieces were to be explored by as many art fanatics as possible. Their alcoholically and momentary driven brains were melting at the tongue of his words. They were now running their palms on his chest like a nurse does on the chest of an ill man. He turned to Thembi and kissed her on the cheek. Then he turned towards Nosi and kissed her on the lips. The girls' brains were even more intoxicated by this gesture of affection. It was one of a disappointed teenage girl who expected the teenage boy to do more but was also taken by the uniqueness of his action because all teenage boys are expected to push to the very limits of a teenage girl. The girls like all other girls were taken by the fact that he kept on talking and acted as if he did not see that they were now vulnerable enough to be taken advantage of.

From experience he knew that he had to make them want to do this. He knew that if he made them want do it he was planting a seed that was going to make them believe they were not convinced by him. He knew that he needed to make them fully think it was their duty to spread their love to a man. Little did he know that they had no love for any man, little did he know that they saw no duty to any man. The only duties they saw were to themselves. They saw duties to satisfy their own hungers, their own desires to take control over a man. Thembi' s brain of a witch that enjoys making men suffer by using her magical woman powers. Nosi' s brain was of a woman who had no meaning attached to sex. She did not know that but her subconscious mind had no real definition of sex except the biological scientific definition of hormonal pleasures. Her great personality of being a good person at heart had made her think she understood what sex was meant, whereas her childhood had taught her nothing about the real meaning that should be attached to sex.

Nonetheless Mike was looking at a victory because his bigger plan was to make them join the club. All he really cared about was that they join the club not if they saw it as a duty to serve the men or saw it as a complement. He was seeing victory because the ladies' lips were closer and closer to his neck. They had already even unbuttoned two the buttons on his shirt.

"Eish!" were the words by Nosi when she realised that her glass of wine was no more a glass of wine but just a glass. Thembi's too was one last sip away from being empty. Mike saw the signal from Thembi's eyes that she wanted him to get up and go get more alcohol for all of them. He was sure going to tolerate because the powers of Thembi were getting more and more over him. By now we all know that once these powers cock in no man would not abide what she asked him to do. Whether the man is the one paying or not, it did not matter once her powers had cocked in. He stood up and left the room.

On his departure the girls began laughing in surprise of what they were doing. They were on the same page. Without words they were on the same page. They were about to experiment every girls little fantasy, they were about to do something they might regret the very next day, and they were about to willingly fall in to Mike's trap. They were about to have a threesome.

## Chapter Seventeen

Seven thirty in the morning, the sun is between the clouds, two girls in the room, two girls in another room, and the other rooms, with men and some without men. This particular room is without a man, dresses being dressed, cosmetics from bags to faces, shoes from floor to feet, and minor headaches from last night' s drinks to this morning' s soberness.

The man of the house came in and handed two small white envelopes to the girls. With a smile he said "Welcome to the club."

From the looks on his face the girls could see that he craved to get them under his belly like Mike did last night. He was certainly sure that he was indeed going to get them. This was signalled by the tone of his voice and the looks on his face when he said his goodbyes by saying "Hope we see each other soon."

Last night when we said there was a man that looked like he was the "host" , we were right. He is indeed the owner of this house. He is a member of the club of course. He and Mike were the only two who were the members of the club, and the other men were just customers. All the girls were of course the employees of the club. Thembi and Nosi were merely employees though. They were more like freelancers, or interns. They were still not full employees hence they were paid by envelopes. In fact, maybe it would be better to say they were being stipend. The other girls did not even need to be greeted goodbye. When they woke up they freshened up and left without consulting anyone. Their payments were going to be deposited to their bank accounts. When Nosi and Thembi opened their envelopes they encountered five hundred rand on each envelope.

Mike was nowhere to be found. He had woken up a little bit earlier and left without a word. He knew that his accomplice, the man of the house, was going to explain to these girls that he needed to be somewhere for an early business breakfast. The man of the house had indeed told Thembi and Nosi exactly that. Thembi hated this thing of waking up to find that someone you were sleeping with is gone. Mike had this tendency of leaving while she was still asleep. She saw it as being rude. But hey, business is business; once he was done with them their business was done. He did not have to stay for a morning cuddle, their business ended when they finished whatever they were doing last night. Not only Mike did that, even the other men left

their girls' without a goodbye. This did not seem to bother the other girls though. They understood that business was business. Even those men who had not left did not even talk to their girls. The men were doing whatever they were doing and the girls were getting ready to leave. It was like they did not even know each other. They all understood that business ended last night. It was like a shrink with his clients. Once the hour is up, the shrink transforms from a friendly ear that is here to listen, to a businessman who wants you out of his office before the next client comes in.

All the ladies were now leaving the apartment. The men were men again, one man was calling his wife and telling her how great the business meeting went last night, while another was making a real business call, and others were getting ready to leave as well.

Thembi and Nosi are now in a communal taxi that is destined to drop them in central town like all the other commuters in it. On their way to the taxi they had walked with two other girls of the night. They talked about nothing much except who they were, and Thembi lied and said they were out of town girls. She did not like idea of petty talks with these girls as if she wanted to be their friend. She also did not like the idea of exposing who she really was. The other girls believed her when she said she and Nosi were from out of town because even their style was different to the usual style of the ladies of the night around the Durban area. They were elegant yet mysterious, with a sprinkle of sassy.

Sitting in this taxi, next to Nosi on a seat that is right behind the driver, in her mind she was replaying the scenes of what happened last night. The progression of these scenes rolled with subtitles of her thoughts about them. She thought about the rush she was feeling after Mike had left to go and get more drinks for them. She remembered how she and Nosi acted as if they were not aware of what was about to happen. She remembered how much the urge of wanting that control pushed her in to suggesting to Nosi that they went to fetch the masks from the toy room. She liked the masks because they made her feel as if whoever was looking at her did not see who she really was. She also liked it because it went well with the outfit she was wearing. The dress she was wearing along with the mask made her feel like she was living her own fantasy, a fantasy of Cinderella in a formal ball with suitors hitting on her not because of who her family was but because of what she personally had to offer. She remembered that after they got the masks and wore them, then they

looked at the vibrating stick and smiled. A second later they were kissing each other. Another second later they had stopped kissing each other, and Nosi suggested they resumed their kissing in front of Mike. She remembers that she was at a moment where her brain did not want anything else but to go forward with this fantasy. If she stopped she felt like she was going to explode. The heat of hell had mixed with the worship of heaven. She wanted the heat on her body to be worshiped by whoever was close enough to do so.

She remembers that after Nosi's suggestion they went back to the bedroom and Mike was not back yet. Since the heat was pushing her not to stop she grabbed Nosi by hand and they walked towards the entertainment room to look for Mike. He was standing next to the wine bar placing wine, glasses and his vodka on the tray. The other girls were resting on their men's chests and kissing and stroking and touching and rubbing. There she stopped and let loose of Nosi's hand. She was at the doorway of the entertainment room, and so was Nosi.

The sight of them made everyone stop whatever they were doing just to pay attention at these two Cinderellas. She remembers that even the girls were staring. When they realised that they were on the spotlight they had to do nothing but go forward. The push of her womanly brain and the push of being in the spotlight made her eager even more to go forward. Nosi too was at the moment of going forward. The passion of Thembi had unrestrained Nosi's sex beasts as well. They were both on fire.

They walked in and headed straight to their target, Mike. The eyes of the audience were still glued on every step they took. Every move they made became a sexy gesticulation, the motion of their hips as they walked, the motion their eyes as they scanned the room, the motion of their whole body as they walked made all the men forget their own fantasies and wish they were Mike.

Everything was perfect. The timing was right. Thembi and Nosi were like the forbidden fruits. It had been more than an hour since they had come to the party. During all that time they had behaved themselves, making the other men wonder why were they in this gathering, making the other men form small conclusions about them. Maybe they were the best in private, maybe they had tricks up their sleeves,

and maybe they were getting in the mood. All this suspense made the final revelations of the Cindarellas seem to be something bigger than it really was.

She remembers that when Mike turned around and saw them coming towards him, his eyes showed her something she liked. They showed signs of confusion and signs of being defeated by their womanly looks. She remembered how more defeated he became when Nosi grabbed both his hands and placed them on their sexy behinds. His manly blood was raised by the electricity that flowed from their behinds to his hands, and then they started kissing each other. This time not only Thembi had become a dice with more than six sides but Nosi too was a coin with more than two sides. Not only Mike was getting more than he had bargained for, but everyone in the room was getting more than they thought they had bargained for. When Mike finally lifted his hands off their sexy behinds, Thembi pushed him towards the couch, where he fell like stupid suicidal man would fall after receiving a punch from Mohamed Ali.

The dices and coins flipped even more when he was on the couch. Thembi got on top of him with her sexy behind on his stickman. She acted as if she did not even notice that he had erected. His face was on her back aligned to her spine. Nosi stood in front of them with her legs open wide enough to semi-seat on Thembi and presume their kissing. They were doing their kissing on top of him as if they did not even see him. Their movements on top of him defeated his businessman brain even more. The other men were defeated by the lust of wishing to join. The other girls were looking with either envy or admire. The mixture of admire and envy is what made the girls that were dressed as a police woman and her convict adjoin on the dice and coin game. They started kissing as well.

Five blinks later the air in the room was fuming with a reality sexual fantasies. Mike had started to lick Thembi's back which was exposed because of the nature of an open-back dress she was wearing. Her consistent rubbing of her sexy behind against his stickman was making his manly blood boil even more.

As the taxi is about to arrive at her get off point she remembers what happened when they eventually went to the bedroom. She remembers how all the three of them were feeding on each other's sweats, how the taste of his stickman between their lips tasted, how the salt of Nosi's woman on her tongue tasted. She



remembers how Mike' s tongue felt on her woman while Nosi' s woman was on his stickman. It was way more than what everyone had bargained for.

What made her play these scenes in her head was the surprising fact that she did not regret or feel bad about what happened. In fact it was a pleasing memory, one that she wished she could revive. She did not care about church, she did not care about values, she did not care about the money, and she did not care about the people in this memory. All she cared about was how great the experience had been, how powerful the experience had felt.

Nosi said "After robot" , and the taxi stopped after at the traffic light.

The reality of getting off the taxi woke Thembi up from the dreams of last night. They got off the taxi and hugged.

"See you later my friend." Was all Nosi said and they parted ways with Thembi going towards her apartment and Nosi going to the other side, to her place as well.

An hour and a shower later... Thembi was now at her apartment, listening to radio and doing what she did best if she wanted to clear her head. She was cooking.

She still did not like the idea of being owned by any man. She did still did not like the idea of working for Mike and his friends. As much as she loved the control and a little bit more financial freedom, she was not going to join the club. She was not going to make those men even a cent richer. She did not understand why did she need to be employed by them while all the clients paid for was her. It was her body that was being sold, nothing else.

When Mike called she was going to tell him once and for all that she was not interested. On second thought she decided to call him at that moment. She called.

"You have reached..." She hung up.

His phone off, it was on voicemail. Because of this she decided to send him a text message. She knew that the moment he switched his phone he was going to receive that final bad news.

"I' m sorry but I have made my mind and I will not change it. So please do not even bother to try because this is my final decision. I will not join this club of yours. I

don' t know about Nosi but I think she too will not join. Thank you for the offer.”  
The message was sent with the hope that it was clear enough.

After sending the text message she decided to invite Nosi for lunch. She scrolled for Nosi' s number, and pressed 'Yes' .

She needed to tell her that she had made her decision and it' s was final. They also needed to really talk about this and about what happened last night. It was about time they both told Mike that they were not interested because she was sure that he was going to come by once he read the text message.

## Chapter Eighteen

Ubuntu is an African philosophical attitude. Ubuntu stands for togetherness, being in someone's shoes, the wealth of the other is enjoyed by another, and the pain of the other is felt by another. Ubuntu comes in different packages but from one company. The Xhosas say "Into yomntu ndeyam" , another person's position is mine. The Zulus say "Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu" , a person is only a person because of other persons. The spirit of ubuntu is seen in thugs convicted together, the spirit of ubuntu is seen in alcoholics drinking and falling together, the spirit of ubuntu is seen in poor neighbours starving together, and the spirit of ubuntu is also seen in hooligans sharing one cigarette between five persons. In isZulu we even say "Akudlulwa ngendlela indlu yakhiwa." , of which can be loosely interpreted as "You don't just bypass when you see someone building a house. You must to give a hand." This means; when I'm celebrating and drinking and partying, you are expected to join me. The same goes when I'm in trouble you are expected to give a hand.

Thembi and Nosi are sitting in Thembi's apartment. Nosi had just finished telling Thembi the tale of her older sister's mishaps. She, Nosi's sister, was convicted yesterday. She was found in position of a quarter kilogram of cocaine. It was not hers of course, but the police found it in her handbag. The norms of the Friday night life rule that if you are busted you should not drag down everyone with you. Those you did not drag down with will always speak high of you, and if they have the means they will help you get out or at least enjoy your time behind the walls of prison. This is the type of the spirit of togetherness we find from those who are true to the Friday night life. Besides being loyal to those you did not drag down, being afraid of them also plays a huge role in your preferences to suffer alone for the sins of your friends. This type of forced loyalty was proven when Nosi's sister couldn't tell the police that the drugs she was carrying belonged to a man she was sharing her bed with. The good news though, was that she was only sentenced to six months in prison and then some sort of community service, because she managed to convince the court that someone must have inserted the drugs in her handbag. She had denied to even knowing about them. The only thing that made her story a little bit believable was because she too was a little high from dagga and alcohol when she was busted in the club. She was therefore believed when she said that she had passed out and woke up

when everyone was running away from the police. Therefore someone must have inserted the plastic of cocaine in her bag. This made the judge only convict her for being found with dagga on her system.

Nosi and Thembi were now talking about how hard it must be for Nosi's middle sister who was left alone at home with two kids while she was not even working. Nosi also told Thembi that the reason she missed the news yesterday was because they had switched their cell phones when they arrived at the gathering of Mike's club. Thus she only got the news of her older sister's conviction the moment she switched on her cell phone when she arrived at her apartment. Then her voice mail recorder delivered the news which was from her middle sister. She therefore went straight to recharge airtime and called her middle sister back. When talking to her middle sister she realised that the only way to make sure the children will not die of hunger before the next child grant was to deposit the whole five hundred rand that she got from Mike and his friends. She had the money for less than two hours on her hands and then she had to let it go. After depositing the money she went to take a bath, did a few chores and went straight to Thembi's place.

After hearing this, Thembi decided that they needed to go out for lunch and a couple of drinks. Indeed they left the building and marched straight to the nearest bar. Nosi knew this bar a little bit better than Thembi, thus she had been visiting it ever since she came to the university.

When they arrived they did not waste time but ordered a plate of Buffalo wings and two glasses of wine. They were not planning to get drunk, that we know. On the far right side of the bar there was a group of four well dressed guys who looked like they were already businessmen. They could fool anyone, but Thembi and Nosi knew just how much these spoilt-rich students dressed enough to make a girl forget about their immaturities. They used their dress code to make up for their immaturities. When you really listened to their words you realised that they were just a bunch of fools who thought tertiary was a place to have fun and nothing else.

These well dressed young men tried their luck by sending one of their trusted "players" to ask if they could join Thembi and Nosi. His charming clothes did not work this time. Thembi made it clear to him that he must go back and tell his friends to forget about any chances of that happening.

They were just in the middle of their meals when Thembi remembered to tell Nosi that she had sent Mike a text message telling him about their decision of not joining the club. It came as no surprise to Nosi's ears of course. Then they began to talk about the events of the night before. There were exclamations of how surprised they were of what they did. There was also a bit of shyness when it came to talking about their kissing and touching of each other. The fact that they also tasted each other's sweats made the shyness even more apprehensive. What was good though about this shyness was that they both knew that there were no romantic feelings towards one another, and they both knew that their friendship was not at any risk. They had fun with each other, but it was not going to be possible to do what they did if there was no man who was going to help them explode. They were shy just because they had never pictured doing what they did with one another, but as the conversation continued they started to loosen up after realising that neither was regretting herself.

Nosi then told Thembi that she needed a part-time job. She was hoping to talk to Thembi's boss. She needed to help her sister out who was left with two kids and only one lousy R250 child grant. The middle sister could not leave the children alone at home and go find a job herself. It was therefore on Nosi's conscious to find a part time job and help out. Thembi understood and encouraged.

Right at that moment Mike was on the other end of Thembi's phone. Thembi grabbed her cell phone off the table and showed Nosi that Mike was the one calling. They both did not know what to do, so it rang until it stopped. Nosi then said "Wow! He is one persistent guy."

Thembi added on Nosi's remarks and said "No wonder he is so rich." Their admiration towards his persistency was not new, it just that it was the first time they admitted it out loud. He then called again. This time he was calling on Nosi's phone. They also ignored it.

They looked at each other again and Thembi jokingly said "You don't need to talk to my boss, here's a job that pays way more than my job."

They both laughed it off even though they could both see that there was a little bit of logic to it. What did they have to lose? They had already done it once and no one was hurt. If only they had no values. But some values contradict. Those were Nosi's thoughts. Nosi's values of helping out her family needed her to work enough

money at the smallest possible amount of time. She needed to have time to study because she could not afford to drop on her studies. Her bursary required a certain average of marks, and she was already struggling to keep her average above the minimum required average. Now that she had to be a waitress she was going to suffer even more. She knew that she was not as smart as Thembi was. Thembi worked these hours of being a waitress and still managed to get As and Bs without even sweating.

So, if the values of not selling her body were to go against the values of helping her family, the values of keeping her bursary and the values of a better future, what was she going to do? After a long breath, Nosi used these justifications of “values” to accompany her suggestion of rethinking about this decision about rejecting Mike’s offer, towards Thembi. The “values” were not the only accompanying persuasion, but she also reminded Thembi of how all men were the same, in fact all relationships were just the same as this offer. The only difference between this offer and all other types of relationships is that this offer was not camouflaged with fake love and fake happiness. Men only want pleasure, and women use their womanly-hoods to give men this pleasure so that they, women, will get whatever they want in return. She even referred to how her sisters were not ‘officially selling’ their bodies but everyone knew that it was a trade of alcohol, money and sexual favours. Even around the campus they could see that those guys who did not have money to lavish were hardly seen with the company of girls on their arms.

When Nosi revealed how tempted she was, Thembi decided to admit her temptations as well. She admitted that Nosi was right about all relationships being the same as this offer, but the thought of working for those men with her body did not go down well. Thembi mentioned that she was sure of the fact that Mike and his friends were the ones reaping more from these deals than the girls. She was not going to slave for them with her body. Nosi could just see that there was no way Thembi could ever change her mind. She saw that Thembi was never going to succumb into using her body for the benefit of Mike and his friends.

After Thembi’s declaration of refusal to work for Mike and his friends, they decided to change the topic and talk about school. They had assignments which were due very soon.

\*\*\*\*\*

It is the same Saturday. Feeling alone is the deadliest you can feel while you are alive. Eating alone makes the taste doom even if it's your favourite food. The walls get bigger and colder, the floor gets colder and harder, and the bed gets harder and bigger. You may read a book and play your music but loneliness will still linger around the back of your head.

This loneliness was felt by Mrs Ngcobo. Mantombi was gone home for this weekend, Nomalanga was sleeping over at her friend's house, and Mr Ngcobo was on his way back from work. Mrs Ngcobo knew that Mr Ngcobo was on his way back home, but she knew that the loneliness was still not going to vanish.

Indeed Mr Ngcobo arrived. On his left hand he was holding his briefcase and on his right hand he was holding a bouquet of beautiful flowers for his beautiful wife. From the garage he headed towards the front door, dropped the suitcase and swung the door handle. The door was locked; therefore he knocked on the door. Picked up his briefcase and waited patiently for forthcoming footsteps to open the door.

When the door opened a beautiful face of his beautiful wife appeared. The beautiful face of the beautiful wife saw the bouquet of the beautiful flowers on his hand. She smiled. He then asked if this was the household of the handsome Mr Ngcobo, because he was delivering flowers for the beautiful wife of Mr Ngcobo. After those charming words and the beautiful flowers she could do nothing else but smile even more.

She saw that he was doing everything he could to make her feel good, but the journey of being a woman in her middle age who has cancer in her breast is a journey even a husband or pastor cannot walk with you on. She could see he was trying to show her that he is there to hold her hand if she needed, but his efforts reminded her even more of the parasite that was slowly eroding her from the inside of her breast. His efforts reminded her because ever since she told him he had been more loving than necessary. This made her feel like a charity case. Nonetheless she was grateful of his efforts.

She was also grateful of the fact that he had stopped putting pressure on her about going to book an appointment for a surgery with her Doctor. She had told him to

stop pressuring her, she was going to do it, but she needed to get used to that idea and also read more about. In short, she was a little bit scared.

Supper was already on the table therefore Mr Ngcobo went to the bedroom, dropped his suitcase, dropped his trousers and coat, and then threw on a pair of shorts so that he became more comfortable. Mrs Ngcobo on the kitchen side was placing the flowers on the best place possible and boiling the kettle for Mr Ngcobo' s tea that was going to accompany supper.

A moment later they were both sitting on the couches and Mr Ngcobo was blessing the food before they could eat. The blessing of the food becomes a very brief routine hence it is something we usually do three times a day. The passion and depth of praying for food becomes a symbol, not reality. If you could compare the passion and depth of praying at church on a Sunday and the passion and depth of praying to bless the food you would find that it is like we are speaking to different Gods. Maybe, like a married couple, sometimes it is the small things that counts, maybe God do not care about the depth and passion, all he cares about is the meaning of it.

After they finished this brief prayer they began digging on their plates. Even with her loneliness Mrs Ngcobo was still good in the kitchen. Everyone who had ever tasted her food would never chew the last bite without complimenting the chef.

While digging on their plates they were talking about how long it had been since they ate alone, just the two of them in this house. They were also going down memory lane about the first time they moved in this house. That was a long time ago. Thembi was still six years old. Though he was a child of a pastor but Mr Ngcobo was not a full Christian during those years. They even remember their exact first night in the house. It was right after they came back from their honeymoon, and Mr Ngcobo had had one too many beers that night. Mrs Ngcobo remembers how much she enjoyed being with him when he was a little bit tipsy. She used to like it because he was not like all the other men who became monsters but he became a real sweetheart when he was drunk. He would become obsessed over her and treated her like a just-found queen. Of course she would pretend as if he irritated her but she enjoyed every attention he pointed towards her. They are now laughing about those olden sweet memories.



It was during that light moment when Mrs Ngcobo remembered to tell her husband that she had decided to call her doctor on Monday. Mr Ngcobo loved that development because it meant his wife was going to come back. Since tomorrow was Sunday he suggested that they both made it their primary issue in their prayers. It also became a little bit of a relief on Mrs Ngcobo's shoulders because she saw that her husband did not really like the fact that she was taking so long to go through with this surgery. She could see every time he looked at her that he was worried about this thing that was constantly eroding her.

It amazing how small sweet memories and a decision to make an appointment with the doctor can place a husband and wife at ease, and enjoy their scarce quality time. We can only be told by those who have been married for quite some time about these small things that make a huge different. The house was now beginning to warm up. Smiles were beginning to become real smiles.

By now the stains of gravy were no more liquid but solid stains on the plates, and the little bit of tea that was left in Mr Ngcobo's cup was as cold as the tap water outside. These were sure signs that they had finished their food a long time ago. Mrs Ngcobo stood up and picked up the dishes. Mr Ngcobo also stood up and picked up his cell phone. They were off to different rooms; the wife to the kitchen and the husband to the bedroom.

She was washing the dishes in the kitchen and he was taking a quick shower in the bathroom that was situated in their bedroom.

After the washing of dishes and the showering it was time to get ready to go to the land that is the only guaranteed place to give you peace. They both got in their sleepwear and jumped to bed. They both seemed a little bit tired but that did not stop them from having a little bit of light talks. This was something that had become scarce ever since Mrs Ngcobo's cancer took the spotlight, but today seemed different; they talked and laughed in bed. This time Mrs Ngcobo was teasing her husband about his friend, the friend that was helping him with his business deals in Durban. She was laughing at the fact that the last time he came to the house he stumbled upon a small prayer. Mr and Mrs Ngcobo both remembered how he looked. They knew him as a confident man who could run even the whole country, but when he stumbled upon God's work he was clueless. So clueless that he looked

like he was shaking. When Mr Ngcobo invited him to come in, he did not even know which side to seat on.

Mrs Ngcobo was teasing her husband by blaming him for not telling his friend that there was a prayer in the house. Maybe he would have been more prepared when he arrived. And also for the fact that Mr Ngcobo himself was suppose to have slowly Christianised this friend of his. She was teasing him of being afraid to change just one person after changing so many lives in his church.

As the small laughs continued they switched off the lights, and they slowly retired for the day.

## Chapter Nineteen

A gift was received but never opened, a salary check was given but never cashed, a song was recorded but never played and a book was written but never published. All are the pursuits that were never found, flowers that never bloomed... "A round of drinks for the ladies" The boys planted and the girls grew. Smiles and laughs...

"You're most beautiful girl I've ever seen" The boys watered and the girls grew even more. Hugs and kisses... "Now let's go home" The boys attempted to reap but the girls hadn't ripened yet. Frustrations and losses... After such efforts of spending and charms, the girls refused to get on the boys' horses.

The time was three minutes to six, on the same night. Thembi and Nosi were now a little bit more intoxicated than they had planned. We remember that when they came in earlier they had planned to have just lunch and only two or three glasses of wine. We also remember that, there was a group of well dressed boys who attempted to try their luck with these beautiful ladies but fell short when Thembi told them to forget.

It is true that time is stretch of periods, a blend of moments and phases that can shape indistinctness in how we view people. It is also true that each glass of wine lowers an individual's inhibitions. This was proven when Thembi and Nosi decided to let the boys join them after an hour or two, and couple of glasses of wine. It was because each glass of wine they gulped down made them thirst even more for another glass. Maybe this is why we see family men drink half their salaries in one night. When Thembi and Nosi realised that it was near impossible for them to only drink two glasses of wine and leave the bar peacefully, they decided to save their money and allow the boys to buy for them. It was then when Nosi smiled gracefully to one of the well dressed boys. He was wearing a white golf-shirt and a pair of green modern jeans. The boy in green jeans saw this smile as an opportunity to prove to his friends that he was the one who should have been entrusted with the task of wining these two beautiful girls, not the other boy that was told by Thembi to forget. With this in mind, this boy talked to Nosi on the side, and then a moment later all the boys were sitting on one table with these beautiful girls. He became some sort of a pioneer. The boys bought drinks and flirted with the ladies, and the ladies were more than happy to be flirtatious back.

Realising that the time had ran at the speed of light, Nosi and Thembi decided to leave the bar and go to Thembi' s apartment. The boys did not like this action. They were proposing that Thembi and Nosi accompany them to a party that was taking place at one of their friends' place, but Thembi and Nosi were refusing to go with them. Thinking he might perform another miracle, the boy in green jeans decided to walk Nosi out while another boy walked Thembi out. On the way out of the bar he tried to persuade Nosi into succumbing to their invitation and go to the party with them. Nosi was friendly and flirtatious but did not succumb. Thembi on the side was also did not succumbing to the invitation. They were out of the gate and the boys were still trying to sell their invitation. Under the streetlights on the pavement the girls were beginning to walk faster and faster. The boys did not seem to catch on, they did not seem understand that Thembi and Nosi were walking faster not because they were in such a hurry, but it was polite way of saying "Guys, you can go back now."

When they reached the traffic light the boys finally realised that they were never going to win, therefore they decided to say their goodbyes and part ways. As the boys walked away, Thembi began to think about how much these college students' parties resembled the parties that were hosted by Mike and his friends. These parties are very similar in nature. Just like Mike' s parties, in college parties the boys organise and buy everything. The girls then party for "free" . By the end of the party you will see people disappearing in pairs. In private bedrooms, at the back seat of the boys' cars, in bathrooms, at the backyard of the house and under the trees are the destinations of these disappearances. What happens in these destinations is seen by Thembi as the moment of redeeming what the boys had paid for when they bought all those drinks for the girls. The only difference between these two kinds of parties is that in college parties the boys charm the girls and then lie saying they somehow love the girls, whereas in Mike' s parties a bigger amount of cash supplants those lies and charms.

The girls were about to enter the gate at Thembi' s apartment when Thembi' s phone once again vibrated. Again Mike was on the other side of that call. Hence Thembi' s inhibitions to answer her phone had been weakened by the amount of wine she had drunk she decided to answer it. "When are you going to get the

message? We are not interested” were the first words she uttered when she answered the phone.

Mike calmly responded by saying “That was a rude way of saying hello Mike how are you...”

“I’ ve tried being civil with you but you...” He interrupted her before she could finish the sentence.

“All I want is to see you guys once more, all I want is that the both of you tell me in person. I’ m outside your flat. Is Nosi with you?”

Her head jolted together with her eyes, to the left to the right. Relieved, she did not see his car. “Now you’ re lying to me. I’ m outside my place and you not here.”

Nosi was of course eavesdropping to Thembi’ s side of the conversation. She saw that Thembi was talking to Mike, and she also heard that he was supposed to be there. She too jolted both her eyes and her head, looking for any sight of Mike’ s car. It was not there.

Mike’ s voice became high and pitchy when he heard that Thembi was outside her apartment, and he said “Ok don’ t move.”

She tried saying “No, don’ t come.” but he had already hung up on her.

Before Thembi could tell Nosi that Mike was somewhere around, his car appeared from the street that intersected with the street of her apartment. This intersection is just about hundred metres away from where Thembi and Nosi were.

Thembi, she thought of grabbing Nosi and run up stairs as fast they could, she thought of hiding behind the palm tree by the rubbish bins, she thought of just walking away in an orderly manner, she thought of telling him to leave before he even got out of the car; she was brainstorming on what should they do, unfortunately Mike’ s car was not waiting for her to make her mind up therefore it was on the driveway next to them before could reach her decision.

Like a black panther upon its preys, Mike’ s black car slowly drove through the gate, under the shadows of the trees towards them. Like a prey engaging on a fight mode of its natural flight or fight options, Thembi knew that she could no more flight therefore she had to engage on the latter, she was about to fight. Engine off, door

released open, and a shiny black shoe was the first to appear before his whole body got out of the car. He greeted, "Hello ladies."

Through their half drunken minds they saw through his businessman face that he was there for no less reason than business. He was prepared to do almost anything in order to make them see the beauty of this opportunity he was offering. His businessman mind also noticed that they were not alone; he noticed that they were accompanied by Mr and Mrs Alcohol in their blood. He took this discovery as an advantage to his chances of getting them on board once and for all.

He did not want to waste any time, therefore he went straight to the agenda. He asked if they did not mind getting in the car so that they could have a little bit of privacy. Thembi opposed that proposal and suggested that he leaves right away because they had nothing to talk about. She did not want to get in the car because she knew that the first step of succumbing to defeat is to enter your opponent's territory. She also did not want to get in the car because she knew that entertaining him would give him more hopes of winning them. She did not want him more optimistic than he already was, she wanted him to give up and let go.

Realising that the girls were not willing to go somewhere more private he decided to eat from the pot. He wasted no more time. He told them that one of the men from last night's party wanted to book them for the night. This man wanted the two of them as one item, and he was willing to pay whatever they wanted. He also told them that Mr Mbanjwa also wanted to book them for the night. Thembi remembered Mr Mbanjwa and his tendency of always having two girls dedicated to each of his arms. She was not surprised by the fact that he wanted them as an item as well. Mike also told them about the others who were talking about booking them in the upcoming weeks. He did not only tell them that they had so many fans but he also told them that they were special. They had something that other girls did not have.

Nosi decided to ask him a simple question. "Can't you find other girls?"

He knew that this question was not as simple as it sounded. He knew that there were a lot of follow-up questions if he did not answer it carefully. He answered, "I can, and in fact we all can. The only hard or should I say problem is that we've been trying to come up with something new and different for quite some time now. This may be an underground business, but we have a lot of competition. Our competition is

not only the other people who do what we do but our clients want us to provide them with something they cannot get for themselves. They can get girls to have with sex them anywhere. They can get any girl at any club at a cheaper price than we charge them. There are a lot of girls who sell themselves for only a night' s drinks and an occasional gift, a new cell phone, a pair of shoes or just a fancy lunch... Our job is to provide two of the most important things that these clients cannot get anywhere. Those two things are: total assurance that no one will ever know about any of this, and we then help these men leave their fantasies as rewards of their hard earned money... As I' ve said, we' ve been trying to find something fresh and different, and you guys fall exactly under that category."

Nosi' s question was fully answered. It' s amazing how much being recognised as being unique and special in something makes the heart warmer. It does not matter if what you are said to be special in is legal or illegal, moral or immoral, and good or bad. As long as you are recognised as the best you will take a little piece of pride in it. The words "fresh and different" became a little bit close to music on Nosi' s ear. Thembi on the other side saw right through him that he was being a man. She saw right through his words that he was purposefully saying things that he knew were going to soften their hearts so that he would get his way.

While he was on that note he turned around and reached for the door handle of his car. He opened that door and reached for something inside the backseat of the car. He pulled back, and it was a silver plastic bag. He closed the door of the car. Turned back towards the girls and handed the plastic bag towards Nosi. She proved to be no diamond, maybe she was gold because she melted a little bit when she saw what was in the silver plastic bag. The plastic bag contained two beautiful dresses. Both the dresses were black in colour. Though they were made by different brand designers, the designs on both of them had evidence of care, creativity and hard work.

As Nosi showed signs of melting down a little bit, Thembi' s heart became more solid than it was before. She did not like the idea of being given gifts in order to give in. If there was one thing she could have said she liked about this offer was that everything was as transparent as possible. Now that Mike was using a salesman' s pitch and bribery to get them, she really hated it. And we all know that once she feels personally offended she always makes sure that the offender gets the message. This was the reason she asked him why he thought they were going to take these dresses.

Nosi felt a little bit awkward when Thembi asked this question because she had already showed some signs of liking the dresses.

Mike replied to Thembi' s question by telling them that they were not from him. The dresses were a gift from that man who saw them last night and was willing to pay extra because he wanted to make sure he got them before the others got them. The dresses were a gift for them to wear tonight if they were going to accept the offer. Each dress was way more than the five hundred rand that they each were still going to get paid if they rendered their services to this man.

His eyes were now beginning to show signs of desperation. Maybe it was because he wanted to make sure that this man was as happy as possible. There was a huge deal that Mike wanted to get his hands on, and if this man was happy, his chances were guaranteed. Thembi, she saw that desperation in his eyes. She loved the fact that she was beginning to have control over a man once again. He even went to a point of asking them to only do this one job only, and if they still did not want to be bothered after this he promised not to bother them ever again.

Mike' s eyes were not the only eyes that spoke to Thembi, but Nosi' s eyes also showed some signs of desperation. Thembi knew and saw that Nosi was in quite a need for financial boost. She also saw that Nosi was not only in need for financial boost, but she loved the dresses. She knew that Nosi was not going to beg her to succumb into Mike' s offer because their relationship was mostly based on trusting and respecting each other' s decision. Therefore Nosi' s eyes were the only way she was going to beg Thembi into doing it.

Maybe the fact that a man was desperate made Thembi a little bit fond to the idea and the fact that her friend was desperate made her fonder to the idea, and now that Mike was promising never to bother them again if they did just this job for him made her even more taken by the idea. Maybe these are the reasons why she asked Mike to excuse them for a minute.

Without hesitation he went straight to lean on his car, took out a pack of cigarette and a gas lighter. A moment later smoke was going in through his mouth and out through his nose.



Thembi grabbed Nosi by hand and they walked towards the pine tree next to the rubbish bins. They got under the tree and began talking. Mike silently observed their shadows behind the tree and the rubbish bins. He was sure that they were going to succumb. He watched these shadows until his cigarette was burnt beyond the halfway point. It was then when his cell phone rang. As he was about to answer it he saw that the girls were finished talking and they were coming back towards him.

## Chapter Twenty

Entering a one-way-street is like a drop of water onto a flowing river. Flowing with the flow seems to be your only option, therefore individuality vanishes. Unlike an ocean, the waves may smash against rocks and walls but they' ll never go back. A one-way-street proves be easy to get in but hard to get out. A one-way street encourages speed because no one opposes the other, therefore no judgement.

An hour and a half later, same two girls, same evening, but a different bar: Nosi' s brain was still finding it hard to get used to the life of leisure that this job bestowed. Tables made of glass and leather, chairs made of steel, glass and leather, even the floor seemed to be made of glass and leather. Everything in this bar screamed beauty and money. Nosi and Thembi, when they decided to wait for their client in the bar instead of the bedroom Nosi had thought she needed at least two more glasses of wine before she was intoxicated enough to provide her services, but the beauty of this bar alone seemed to be intoxicating enough. Now she was wondering how the bedroom looked like. This hotel was a true five star hotel.

When she took a sip on the cocktail that had been recommended by Mike she could not believe that something possessing alcohol could taste and look so good. With all these unbelievable realities, the only thing that was mostly unbelievable was the look on Thembi' s face and posture. Thembi looked like she was not alarmed by all this beauty, and she also did not seem to be thinking twice about what they were about to do. Nosi herself was still wondering whether going through with this was really something she wanted to do, whereas Thembi seemed to be relaxed and enjoying her cocktail.

Nosi was not the only one astonished by Thembi' s comfort but Mike too was a little bit puzzled. From his experiences he knew that the first time always proved to be awkward for all the girls, but Thembi did not show any awkwardness. Mike took this as their first time were going to officially sell their bodies because the last time it was in a party, they were really drunk, and they were doing it with him.

Nosi was not only astonished by Thembi' s comfort, but she was also astonished by Thembi' s words and actions back at the gate of Thembi' s apartment when they decided to accept Mike' s offer. She remembered how serious and clear-cut Thembi was when they got back towards Mike after talking behind the pine tree, next to the

rubbish bins. She remembered how unafraid and transparent Thembi was when she told Mike their decision. The words were as clear as the glass of vodka that was in Mike' s hand.

“We have decided that we will do whatever he wants and he will pay us one thousand rand each. We will be paid in cash before going in the bedroom with him and we will be with him until he is tired but we will not sleep. Once we finish we will come back here. We will find our own transport back, as long as the place is around. Oh, and we will not accept these dresses. If he wants us to wear them we will only wear them in the bedroom with him during his time with us. This will be treated as a business deal. Therefore we don' t want any gifts.”

Nosi, she remembered how Mike reacted to these words when Thembi delivered them. He was happy with the fact that they had decided to take the offer but confused and surprised at the same time by the fact that they were rejecting the dresses and they were charging him two times more, with all these terms and conditions. As a businessman though, he looked like he liked the fact that they were straight and wanted nothing but a business transaction.

While Nosi was still thinking about how Thembi had handled Mike when they got back from the pine tree, Mike was already on his feet by the lift in the lobby, shaking the client' s hand. He had arrived; the man of the hour was now present. The fact that Nosi did not notice Mike standing up and leaving the table after receiving a message on his cell phone can make an observer deduce that she was really nervous about what they were about to do.

Thembi was the only who responded with an “Ok” when Mike told them that the client had arrived and they were due upstairs in five minutes. When Nosi finally woke up from her nervous conditions she asked Thembi the whereabouts of Mike. Thembi smiled with amusement to the fact that Nosi did not even notice when Mike left the table. Compassion also played its part on Thembi' s heart because she opened her arms and hugged her friend. With her lips close to Nosi' s left ear, she whispered a question, “Are sure you still want to do this my friend?”

Mr and Mrs Alcohol were no longer helping them defeat their nerves hence they had a one and a half hour break between the two bars. Maybe now we can understand why when people drink they don' t want to stop until they fall. The reason may be

because if you stop for at least an hour and then resume drinking after that hour, your body seems to resist Mr and Mrs Alcohol even more, resulting in a wasteful consumption. Nosi and Thembi' s brains were now thinking as clear as the glass of vodka that was left by Mike on top of their table. But they had to keep their commitments because Thembi never backed away from a commitment and Nosi really needed the money. Maybe these were the reasons Nosi tried to hide her nervousness and smiled back at Thembi with these assuring words; "Yes my friend, I' m sure I still want to do this. It' s not like we have not done this before, maybe not as formal as today, but yesterday" ... She was interrupted by Thembi. "Ok then, we better gets going now, Mike said we must follow him promptly."

Without wasting a second Thembi was on her feet smiling her way towards the lobby.

\*\*\*\*\*

Like a picture, a smile says a million words: she may smile because she is happy, she may smile because she is gathering courage, she may smile because she feels beautiful, she may smile because she is pretending to like you, or she may smile because she is saying "Hi" in the middle of the road, but we are sure that this smile was an inside-out exhibit of her cloaked monster.

Everybody who knew Thembi would tell you that when she smiled everything just brightened, they would tell you that even her eyes smiled together with her lips. But this time it was the kind of smile that you would see on the face of a lone lion that is about to terrorise its rivals territory. As she walked towards the lobby, to the elevator door, she was slowly beginning to mutate towards her second personality, a dice with more than six sides. Nosi was right on her heels like a crate behind the head of the train.

As they got closer to the door of the elevator Nosi' s chest was beginning to pound so hard and loud that she even began to suspect that other people could hear it. Thembi pushed the 'open' button on the door of the elevator. Nosi' s stomach was now temperature, her intestines narrowed down as her nerves took the front seat. As the door of the elevator slid open it was like her stomach had opened at the same time with the door because her inner stomach felt even chillier. They walked in the elevator, and Thembi pushed button number seven this time. Nosi, as her stomach froze, her underarms heated together with the pounding of her heart.

Thembi too kept getting hotter and hotter as they got closer to the room that was destined to host their affair. Unlike Nosi though, Thembi's temperature increase was not from the results of her nervousness, but like an eagle darting down towards its prey her eagerness took the front seat. Now both their hearts were pounding faster and faster, one heart from nervousness and the other heart from eagerness.

The door of the elevator slid open; they got out, turned left and began to walk. As they walked, Thembi's eyes scanned the place for the room number of their destination: narrow passage, beautiful dark brown carpet, walls that were beautified with sculptures and paintings of indigenous people. The beauty and the narrowness of the passage can be compared to a catwalk of a fashion show in Paris. The narrow dark brown carpet is the platform for the models, Thembi and Nosi. The sculptures and paintings on the walls are the audience. As they walked along this catwalk Nosi was walking like an uncomfortable half naked model. The eyes on the faces of the paintings and sculptures felt like they could see exactly what she was about to do.

Suite number 708 was the suite that was destined to host them. As they past suite 707, the wall of suite 708 appeared to be smaller than all the other walls to Nosi's eyes. With each step closer to door-708 the walls began to speak to her. She heard them whispering, "If the walls could talk" over and over again. Each step closer to the door, her pounding heart pounded even more, and her frozen stomach narrowed her intestines even more.

They were now at suite 708's door. The walls hadn't stopped, they kept whispering "If the walls could talk" , her pounding heart felt like it was now competing with the sound that was produced by Thembi's knuckles against the door. Thembi knocked on the door again, and again. No one answered. Therefore she decided to open the door without any invitation. As the door opened, Nosi's frozen stomach began to crack.

The room was empty, and there was no person insight. Nosi's cracking stomach stopped and began to melt down as they realised that there was no one in the room. The fact that their client was not in the room made it possible for Nosi's nervous brain to convince itself that they hadn't technically passed the point of no return because she still could just turn back and run for her life. As she convinced herself that there was still a chance of turning back she decided to stop in the middle of the

door and wait for Thembi who was already in the middle of the room raising the sound of her voice as she asked "Anyone home?"

She was checking if maybe their client was in the bathroom. To Nosi's liking there was no respond, even from the bathroom. When she saw there was really no one in the suite Nosi finally decided to fully enter the room and close the door behind her.

Thembi was still standing in the middle of the room when Nosi grabbed her right hand. As they went palm to palm Thembi's right hand felt warm to Nosi's cold palm sweaty. As they held each other's hands, a telepathic message was received by Thembi brain. She realised that Nosi was thinking more than twice about proceeding with this deal. Thembi's eagerness to defeat a the likes of men with her womanhood suddenly had limpness when she saw that her friend's panicky brain was screaming for help and wanted to get the out of this place as soon as possible. Before Thembi could suggest that they retreat and leave right away, Nosi pulled her hard towards the bathroom. We may not know why, but we know that when a person is nervous they tend to need the bathroom. Their waters of mankind tend to need a spill. Nosi too rushed to bathroom, she needed to spill her wasters of mankind. It became fully obvious now to Thembi's brain that her friend was really panicking.

Knowing how the drinks' bar looked like, and how the "catwalk passage" looked like, it would not be a surprise if we told you that the suite as a whole looked equally as luxurious. If by any chance you woke up in the middle this bathroom on a Sunday morning with a screaming hangover, you wouldn't be able to distinguish between the floor, the ceilings and walls. This confusion would be caused by the fact that almost everything was made of marble. Like all other bathrooms, there was a hand basin. Of course this hand basin was made of marble as well. Like all other luxurious bathrooms, this hand basin was fixed on top of a long counter and a mirror. When the ladies entered the bathroom Nosi did not waste time but made a use of the lavatory right away. Her waters of the mankind poured like a heavy rain on a summer evening. The heavy rain of Nosi's waters of mankind made it clearer to Thembi that Nosi was really not up for the job any more. But before Nosi finished her thing in the lavatory, Thembi noticed two plastics on top of the bathroom counter, next to the wash basin, under the mirror.

One of the plastics was the one that contained the two dresses that they had refused to accept earlier on that evening. The second plastic was the one that sparked curiosity to Thembi's mind. This second plastic was smaller than the one containing the dresses. It was grey in colour, and it looked like it contained two small boxes. Each of these boxes was about the size of an A4 diary. In accordance, Nosi too saw the two plastics when Thembi moved towards them. Thembi, she grabbed the smaller plastic and took an inspection of what was inside it. Indeed there were boxes inside. She took them out, opened one of them. The boxes contained two beautiful Cinderella masks. These masks were different only in colour, one gold and the other one silver.

Nosi was still on the lavatory, watching Thembi inspect the masks. It became obvious to both the girls their client wanted them to wear these masks and the dresses for the night. And then Nosi finished excreting her waters of mankind. And then she stood up, up she pulled her red sexy underwear back on, and down she pulled her short dress back on. She washed her hands and dried them with the towel that was hanging right next to the wash basin. Using her right hand she grabbed one of the boxes from Thembi's hands.

Like a former veteran soldier finding his former weapon at an unexpected place, they couldn't help but want to touch and examine these masks just for the bliss of thinking about the last time they wore such masks. Without much time, Thembi's mask was her beautiful face. When Nosi saw this she couldn't help but put on her mask as well.

Again like a proud veteran soldier, they couldn't help but smile. Once a veteran soldier puts on the hat he used to wear in the battle, he cannot help it but smile. While they were still amusing themselves with the pleasure of trying on the masks, they heard that something. It was the sound of a door opening, and then it was the sound of a heavy man's footsteps. It became obvious to Nosi's brain that she had passed the point of no return.

\*\*\*\*\*

The last two lobsters in the tank know that they will not live to see the next day, the last two lobsters in the tank heard the waitress placing an order of two dishes that contain lobsters, the last two lobsters in the tank hear the footsteps of the chef

coming towards them, the last two lobsters in the tank know that they are about to be eaten. The pleasures of the customers are depended on the pains of the lobsters' delicious deaths. Yet one of the lobsters in the tank loves the idea of conquering the helpless taste buds of a helpless man with its delicious body, whereas the other lobster just want to get over and done with this.

These two lobsters are Thembi and Nosi. Nosi now knew that since their client had arrived she had no choice anymore but to swallow her apprehension and just get over and done with what they were about to do. Though Thembi knew that she was about to be a delicious dish of a sexually wicked beast, her mutant personality had fully kicked in as well and there was nothing she now craved more than taking control of a man who thought he had control over everything. And the only that was thing standing between her and the assumption of that control was the door between the bathroom and the rest of the suite. The fact that Nosi thought highly of Thembi because "Thembi is a perfect girl who does nothing without thinking" made it easy for Thembi' s mutated confidence to rub off on Nosi' s panicky brain.

They did not take the masks off as they took off their clothes and replaced them with the dresses in the plastic. At the other side of the door they could hear that the client was ready for them by the music that was suddenly playing. They also heard a knock on the door: they stopped what they were doing and listened attentively, it was room service. They went back towards finishing their dressing up. Nosi was still trying to place her lip-gloss back in the bag when Thembi grabbed her hand and walked towards the door. She pulled the door towards them. Nosi pulled back her hand, Thembi stopped in the middle of the door smiled towards Nosi' s eyes, eyes that elusively hid their uncertainty behind the beautiful golden mask that Nosi was wearing. Their client was also standing on the door that was between the big beautiful bedroom and the big beautiful lounge of the suite. He coughed just a little bit so that he could clear his throat and then he said "Just as I thought, beautiful."

Through Nosi' s eyes a picture of a big hairy man reported to her brain. She couldn' t identify him though. He was also wearing a mask on his mannish face. This mask was modelled like the face of a wild dog. This whole picture was scary because his body was huge, he had a moustache that you would normally find on the face of a Muslim elder of the church, and his smile reminded Nosi of an episode that once aired on Animal Planet: A hyena that was about feed from a stranded carcass. But the



fact that this man' s face was masked made her ease up a little bit. She eased up because not seeing each other' s faces might have made it more impersonal. The fact that nor the client or her knew exactly who was behind the mask might have made her feel more secure as well. Whereas Thembi' s eyes reported a different picture to her mutated brain: She saw a huge man who is always in control, but now this man was about to be defeated by two bodies of two simple girls.

We need not to mention a detailed narration of what happened from that point until the morning, but we can just mention a few key points of how the evening went about. Drinks were there, and people got drunk. Two girls were there, and the man got satisfied. Since the two girls already had Mr and Mrs Alcohol in their systems it did not take much to get them officially drunk after just an hour. Since the two girls were both young and extremely attractive it did not take much time before the client was exhausted and satisfied for the night. Therefore it took the girls less than two hours to make a thousand-rand each. The next thing they were riding was a taxi that took them to Thembi' s apartment. The next morning they woke up and each took her separate way. It was Sunday, therefore church.

## Chapter Twenty-one

January' s sun kept the blooming flower alive. February' s Sun slowly gave in and the flower tried to hang on a little bit longer. March' s erratic weather became too tricky for the flower. April' s cold front fully defeated the flower. Now the flower is just a legend that once lived, and the resurrection of this legend is hoped to take place on the upcoming spring time.

Thembi' s innocence too was like a flower. She had always been a blooming flower until Bonga became like the March' s erratic weather in South Africa. But like the flower that she was, March' s tricky weather felt short to fully defeat her and she never showed signs of withering though she had died from the inside. Then Mike came to her life like April' s cold front. She was already weak from the results of Bonga' s tricky deeds, and like a flower that she was, her innocence seemed to have been defeated by the April' s aggressive approach. Her beautiful innocence died and now we were just hoping Spring came sooner before the flower was too dead to be resurrected.

It has been six and a half months since we last mentioned her. What date was it today? The 13th of October. She has not changed that much. She still went to church on Sundays, she was still beautiful, she was still studying, she still lived at her apartment, and she still loved her father. She still had a job as a waitress, but the only difference was that she was not serving at the Bone Steak Restaurant & Bar any more, but she was serving in hotel rooms now. She was also not serving drinks anymore but she was now serving her body.

Yes, she finally succumbed to Mike' s plan on getting her in the business of selling her body to the likes of frontal erected men. But he did not completely win because she got in this business on her terms and Mike was merely consulting for her. She and Nosi had decided that they were not going to work for Mike and his friends, but they were going to do this independently. Mike was now like a middle man between them and the customers and they preferred not be paid by him. He would get customers for them and then everything else was between them and the client.

They worked with cash in order to avoid any records of payments done by their clients, hence the clients wanted total security when its came the obscurity of these affairs. They also did not do parties like the other girls but they only provided one on

one services or two on one services. Two-on-one was of course more expensive because it meant the client had the pleasure of the both of them. Their business had become instant hits within two months. They had at least three clients that wanted their two-on-one services every month. They also had at least two one-on-one clients every month. They only worked on Friday nights or Saturday nights, but as time went by the number of clients seemed to be accumulating. Sometimes they would have one client per night and sometimes they serviced two clients per night. It was easy to service two clients per night because they only provided services that only went for a period of two hours per session. If the client wanted the whole night he paid double the amount. Most of their clients were fine with the two hour sessions.

Unfortunately what they did not know was that Mike did not back down on trying to make them work for him. The fact that Thembi was the one getting more one-on-one appointments than Nosi did not help them against Mike. He used this against them and turned them against each other. Or at least he turned Nosi against Thembi. He had managed to stimulate Nosi' s jealousy to the fact that Thembi was getting more one-on-one clients than her. While doing that he also managed to make Nosi believe that he really cared about her. He did that by arranging clients for Nosi on the side, and Thembi had no knowledge about this. He had also managed to make her take a little bit of supplements for her moods during her sessions. These supplements usually came in the form of cocaine. It is therefore obvious that Nosi became more and more acquitted towards Mike as the time went by. It is also worth mentioning that Mike was getting free access to Nosi' s services any time he wanted to. Nosi' s school work also took a back seat. Do not get it wrong though, she was still managing to get enough marks not to fail.

In accord to the date that was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, you will need to note that all of the abovementioned Mike' s and Nosi' s secrete affairs took place within the middle a six month period, the period between April and the October. To be specific it started during the month of June.

Thembi was no fool, therefore she did notice Nosi' s behavioural changes but she blamed them on stress. "Maybe Nosi was too stressed with having to study, think about her convicted sister, and have to work every weekend as well." these were the possibilities of Nosi' s behaviour in Thembi' s brain. These were also the reasons why Thembi had asked Nosi if she did not think taking fewer clients was a good idea.

This suggestion was suggested by Thembi exactly a week ago, which was last Friday the 7th of September. Though we know that Thembi was suggesting this because she was concerned about Nosi's behavioural changes and school work, Nosi did not take this suggestions as pleasantly. Nosi thought Thembi was suggesting this because she wanted to take all the clients for herself. What Nosi did not know was that Thembi was planning to take fewer clients as well so that she can prepare for the upcoming October/November university examinations.

Before we go any further with this chronicle there is one last thing that needs to be mentioned about how these two beautiful girls conducted their services to the shafts of their clients. They had something different. They never revealed their faces to their clients. They had adopted the same masks that their first client in the hotel brought, as their brand. Like every coin, they had two sides. They wore these masks as their second faces. Thembi was known as "The Black Mask" because her mask was black and Nosi was known as "The Golden-girl" because her mask was gold. Their clients were required to wear masks as well. The use of these masks was to guarantee that neither the client nor the service provider knew the identity of the other. Their clients were more than happy with this arrangement because most of them were married and respected men to the eyes of those who did not know what happened in these hotel rooms. Some of them were even well known people therefore their identities needed optimum protection.

As mentioned earlier, Thembi had decided to decrease her clientele because she wanted to focus more on her school work. You have also been told that today was exactly a week after the last Friday; therefore you would be right if you assumed that Thembi was going to be working on this evening. If you remember what the date today you will realise that it is Friday the 13th. People say Friday the 13th is a day full of mishaps. Is it true? Maybe it is true. Who knows?

She had two clients for this evening. The first one was going to a two-on-one gig. That is, the both of them, Thembi and Nosi were going to provide their services to one client at the same like they did to Mike the first time they wore the Cinderella masks. After that gig they were going to go their separate ways and Thembi was going to provide her services to another client alone. Nosi too was going to provide her services to another client solely.

Hence they had school to attend, their working hours started on the folding hours of the day. During the day they were like any other beautiful girls. They had school, they had boys following and trying their luck on them, and they had shopping and eating to do. Come six in the evening they changed from these average girls and like flipped coins to show their other sides.

Today was no different than other Fridays. Thembi was walking back from the University towards her apartment. The time was about three thirty in the afternoon. She was walking on the pavement against oncoming traffic on her left hand side. There were two things alternating on her mind. The first thing that was on her mind as she passed the traffic light, crossed the road and on to the next pavement, was the fact that she needed to switch off her second cellular phone after tonight so that her clients will not be able to get hold of her. She was planning on only working Fridays as from now on, and also having one client per night so that she will get time for her studies. After all, she was going to complete her degree after these upcoming examinations if all went well. Therefore her plan was to switch off her business cellular phone and tell Mike that she was only going to provide her services to her two regular clients only. She knew that this was not going to be music in to Mike's ears. She knew that Mike would prefer that she instead dropped the regular clients and provided for new ones because new ones were the ones that needed to be hooked in by her original talent. She also knew that Mike had a lot to lose if his new clients were not satisfied because new clients were the ones that had more new business opportunities for Mike and his friends. She knew that it was not going to be easy to get Mike off her back unless she promised him that as soon as she finished her examinations she was planning on taking more clients than ever before because she was going to have more time on her hands. What was going to make Mike "understand" was the fact that Mike knew that Thembi was always a woman of her word, and Mike also know that she enjoyed doing what she doing in the bedroom.

The second thought that was alternating on her mind was the fact that she was really worried about Nosi's condition lately. Lately Nosi was always unavailable for their Thursday girls' night out. Nosi now always looked exhausted during school hours. Nosi was now losing touch on her school work. Nosi was now always moody towards her. And Nosi's beautiful healthy body was beginning to lose it healthiness. Thembi being the Thembi that we knew, she was not going to stick her nose on another

person's businesses. Though she was worried about her friend she was one of those individuals who believe that we all have the ability to see when we are heading for trouble. She was such an optimist.

She was now inside her apartment, and she knew that she had two and a half hours before her next shift began. As said earlier, her first shift was going to be a two-no-one shift. Therefore she called Nosi to ask if they were going to go together at 6pm or they were going to meet in the hotel. Unfortunately Nosi's cellular phone was off, therefore she went on voicemail. "Chommie, where are you? Are we going together or we'll meet there. Get back to me asap please."

After falling short on getting hold of Nosi she decided to call her mother. She called her mother and to her amazement her mother was already home. This gave her a chance to talk to her mother, then talk to her beautiful young sister Nomalanga, and then talk to her loving "aunt" Mantombi their maid.

Like any man who left home and went to dig gold in the mines, talking to her family at home always lifted her spirit a little. Like any excited young sister, Nomalanga always had something new to tell Thembi. This time Nomalanga had told Thembi that she was going to be in a play that was going to be held at her school. She was going to be one of the leading characters. Thembi was very excited about this because she knew how much her little sister loved being on stage.

Though calling home had lifted her spirit a little bit more, she also had another worry added to her brain. When she asked about her father she heard how her mother's voice suddenly went sour. Thembi knew her mother very well. She knew how her mother's voice sounded when her mother was worried or sad. When Thembi asked if her father was home her mother responded by telling her that he was at work and would be back at about late at night. The answer was not what made Thembi worry because her father had always been a workaholic and coming home late was not something new, but the sound of her mother's voice revealed signs of distress to Thembi's brain. She knew that her mother's distress was stimulated by her father somehow because her mother's voice was fine until she asked about her father.

This might've been the reason why she decided to call her father on that instant, or maybe it was because she missed her father. We don't know. All we know is that her father was still the only man she ever trusted and really respected. Her father was still

the only man in this world worth her whole heart. It is worth mentioning though, that lately there seems to be another man in Thembi' s heart. Though she had less respect and trust for this man than she had for her father, he made her smile. He also made her feel less as a woman who is taking control over a man with her womanly powers. This man was one her clients. He was kind towards her and had this authority over her without even trying. When she was with him she felt less in control than she usually felt when she jerked the shafts her other clients. He was the only client she could talk to. Though they never revealed their identities towards each other, they surely had fun when they were together. Sometimes she did not even have to have his stickman inside her woman to make him smile. He smiled just by the sight of her mask. Ever since she started offering her services to him three months ago he has been her regular client every Friday night. It is needless to say that this very same man was her second client for the night.

Let us get back to calling her father. She called him and he answered on the third ring. She asked how he was doing. He was doing fine. He asked how she was doing. She told him that she was fine though she was stressed out about her upcoming examinations. He told her to hold on for the last time hence this was her finale year. Being a pastor that he was, he gave her a little bit of a motivational speech. Hold on. It' s will always get even darker when it is about to dawn. There' s always light at the end of the tunnel. The last hour of a long journey is always the longest. All these were interwoven within his mini-motivational speech.

By the time he stopped talking she had forgotten about her mother' s distress. Like every good little girl, a father' s caring voice always made her feel good for a moment. He also told her that he was around Durban and was going to finish his business errands around 6pm. He then offered to visit her if she had an hour to spare with her old man. He was going to pop-by for about an hour and then at about seven he was going to leave. It was going to take him less than an hour to drive from Durban to Pietermaritzburg. The two cities are not that far apart. Therefore he was going to be able to make it home before eight, he said.

Though Thembi loved her father' s company, she was not going to be able to see him because she had a client to please at 6pm. She did not have to explain to her father what it is that she had to do when she turned down his offer. He was a very understanding father. He understood that when a child goes to University he needed

not to crowd her. He also understood that kids had parties and friends to see on Fridays. They therefore they said their goodbyes and the phones dropped.



## Chapter Twenty-two

It six o' clock in the evening, and the sun is drowning. It' s a beautiful room in a beautiful hotel, though she is about to sell, it is not a brothel. Like a model, her job is to wear a smile on her face even if it is not during her happy phase. Obsessed is the man she will need to please. Please with lips, her lips as she pleases with her kiss. Please with looks, her looks as she pleases his eyes. Please with her breasts, her breasts as she allows him to touch. Touch her thighs as it will get him to his highs. Finally he enters. He scorches from the heat of her boiling youthful centre-stage. He is an old man therefore his body cannot erect that long on such a steamy weather. A few seconds later, his old man gives in. It coughs and spits, and then its erected body hunches down. Like a clown before the curtains go down, she is still smiling.

Classifying people as being black or white seems to question some ethnic respect and correctness. Yes most people who are classified as being black are not really black in colour, and the same is true with those who are classified as being white. With that being said, there are people who are really black. Some are black from the inside and some are black from the outside. This man who was with Thembi in this hotel room is one of those people who you would not be questioned if you classified him as being black. His skin colour was literally black. He was darker than any of the Shaka Zulu' s sketches that were published by white oppressors during colonial errors. Not only was he black on the surface, but the way he treated other people was close to what you would expect from a warden that works in hell. His inside blackness can be blamed on his wealth. Or maybe his wealth can be credited to his blackness. In our days it is so much like an eclipse to stumble upon a wealthy man who does not have a dark and cold heart. It is like the more wealth you get, the darker and colder your heart becomes. Knowing that this man had one of those cold and dark hearts you will not be wrong if you assumed that he is the wealthiest man you have been introduced to since the beginning of this story.

As we all know that Thembi was very opinionated when it came to how wealthy people should not think that they can control and treat other people as they please, it is not a surprise to find out that this particular client was her least favourite. She had always found a way t tolerate him because he always requested the company of both the girls, Thembi and Nosi. Today had been different because Nosi never returned Thembi' s call earlier, and then when Thembi came to the hotel alone Nosi

was never there. Therefore Thembi ended up with this black man alone. If only she knew that Nosi was not going to show.

Now she is in this hotel room alone with him and he is really not impressed about the fact that he requested two girls but got one girl instead. To Thembi, it was like being locked in a tiny tank with the biggest shark in the ocean. The worst thing about this particular shark was that he did not bite to feed, but his bites were fast, shallow and torturing. He did not feed from the bites, but he fed from the pains of his prey. She had known from the beginning of this session that it was going to be the longest two hours of her life.

At the beginning of the session she had explained to him that her partner, Golden-Girl, was not feeling well therefore she was not going to join them. She explained that he only had to pay her fees hence he was only going to get her for his pleasure.

When the session began Thembi did her usual routine. She kissed with her lips, she touched with hands, he touched with his hands, and he coughed and spitted inside her youthful womanhood. Unfortunately she never got a chance to spit herself as well because her youthful woman seemed to be too hot for the old man's body to stay erected long enough for her to cough and sweat as well. Nevertheless she was satisfied with her work thus far. She knew that if she kept his stickman happy and tired he had less time to take a bite at her for the fun of it.

After she had made him cough and spit he pushed her off from the top of him. She got off the bed, picked up her bag and walked towards the bathroom. As she walked towards the bathroom he took a glimpse at her naked body. She walked with confidence and life. Her naked body did not show any signs of being defeated by his manhood. She walked as if she was still a proud virgin walking with a rod on her hands. She walked like a proud Zulu virgin walking towards her king. Though he did not know, we knew that it was not pride that made her naked body walk with such confidence, but it was her mutated brain that enjoyed defeating the body of a wealthy man.

As he took this glimpse at her naked confident body walk towards the bathroom he did not like what he saw. He did not like the fact that she looked like she was in control. Two seconds later her naked body disappeared to the bathroom.

In the bathroom, the first thing she did was go to the mirror and check if her black sexy mask was still fitted properly over her face. It was ok. She then looked in her bag. This bag of hers had different types of adult toys and mini costumes such as different lingerie and spanks, and another black mask that was little different to the one she was wearing. Every time she left her client on the side and went to the bathroom she changed in to a different outfit or lingerie. This was to make her clients feel as if she was a different girl when she came back from the bathroom with a different outfit on, a different scent and a different mask on her face.

As she was about to exit the bathroom she had a hopeful thought in her mind. She was hoping to find him dead on his sleep when she comes out of the bathroom. From her experience it was a norm for the client to pay for the whole two hour session but only utilise the first hour or less. It was a norm for her to come back from the bathroom only to find out that her client has fallen asleep. Her clients were very busy men, therefore falling asleep while waiting for their stickmen to resurrect from the death was very easy. She knew that if she found him asleep all she had to do was wake him up and ask if she could leave before the whole two hours were over. And she also knew from experience that asking him was merely a formality.

Unfortunately her wish did not come true when she walked out of the bathroom. He was not asleep. He was wide awake and ready. He was not only ready but his friend too was ready. Yes, his literal friend. When Thembi walked out of the bathroom she saw that he was no longer alone in the bedroom. There was another man standing next to him with his stickman ready for her. This other man was not as dark in complexion, but surely was at heart.

She saw without saying that this second man was expecting to feed on her womanhood as well. Without wasting any second she rebutted and told them that she did not work like that. She only worked with one client at a time. Her rebuts proved fruitless because the black man and his friend just hushed away her words with smiles and then the black man told her that if she did not mind two girls against one man then she surely did not mind two men against one girl. I was only fair for her to get the pleasure of two men just like how some of her clients got the pleasure of two girls. After these words and the smiles on these two men's faces she saw that she had no choice because these men were obviously not going to let go. Without wasting any further time she took out her spare mask from her bag and handed it to

the second man. What happened next proved to be the longest hour of Thembi's career as a girl of the night. We cannot meticulously tell what happened during this long hour because this novel would then have to be categorised under a more vulgar genre. And as "black" South Africans we are prohibited by our cultural norms to publicly speak and describe things that fall under an X-rated genre. Though you will not be told exactly what happened, you are encouraged to believe whatever happened were things Thembi did not agree to do willingly. She had to perform tricks that are unimaginable by an average brain. Every opening on her body was penetrated, every gland on her body was forced to produce something, and every muscle on her body was stretched and twisted.

\*\*\*\*\*

It is the same day, same girl, same hotel but a different man in a different room. He is not her groom but he sweeps her of her feet like a broom. Like a groom on his wedding day, he smiles when he sees her enter the room. Like a Zulu groom who has paid lobola, he has paid in order to see her walk in this room. Like a groom wants to see his bride uncloaks her veil and reveals her beautiful face, he too wished she would unmask herself and reveal her beautiful face.

It was time for her second client. She had survived the terrorizing bites of the two black sharks. We say she had survived because that is exactly what she had told herself. She had told herself that they did not get through to her. She had told herself that what they did to her was only going to make her even stronger. After all, they say "What does not kill you only makes you stronger."

Did this kill her, or did this really make her stronger? We do not know. But we do know that it made her tired. So tired she was planning to tell her next client that she was not going to be able to provide her services to him tonight. If it was any of her other clients she would have just sent a text message, but this client was this client. Like it was mentioned earlier, this client was her regular and she was very fond of him. He was understanding and very sweet to her. She did not know his real name but she knew that she liked him very much. She knew him as The Naughty Monk. Though their relationship was technically a business relationship, he was one of the few people in this world who could make her truly smile.

It is worth mentioning that the feeling was mutual. She too, could make him smile any day of the night.

She was at the door of room 27. She looked around and saw that no one was around to see her transform to The Black Mask. She took off her sunglasses and replaced them with her mask. She then took off the wig that was on her head and loosened her hair. Her wig and the sunglasses were her outside-the-hotel-room-mask. She needed them to hide her when she was outside out the hotel room but still in the hotel. It made sense to make sure that her true identity was not associated with the hotels at any level.

After placing the black mask on her beautiful tired face she knocked on the door. She always made sure that she knocked on the door in order to make sure that the client knew she was about get in the room, so that if his mask was off he would to put it on. After a few seconds she grasped the handle of the door. She winded the door handle to the left hand side. Then she pushed the door.

He was standing at the far end of the room with his mask on. Unlike her most clients he was still fully dressed when she entered. He then stared at her as she walked in and closed the door behind her. Like that famous groom, he smiled. He then greeted her as if he was not paying her to sleep with. He asked how she was doing and he also asked about her day.

She told him that she was not that great but she was fine. As for her day, she told him that it was just another day. Then she went straight to it and told him that something very important had just come up therefore she had to leave immediately. He asked what was it, but she refused to tell him and apologised once more. She then turned back and grabbed the door handle.

Before she opened the door he asked a question she wished he did not ask.

“What’ s wrong? You don’ t look ok.”

She knew that she was not going to be able to lie to him. She did not know how, but she knew that he could see all her emotions just by looking at her eyes. She also knew that she just could not lie to him even if her life depended on it. They seemed to have what helpless romantics call emotional connection.

She tried to insist that she was fine, but there were more chances to seem buying a ladies' underwear than to see him buy the fact that she was fine. He then told her that she did not have to do anything, but he wanted her to stay. Even if she did not want to talk about what was making look so terrible it was fine by him. He just did not want her to go drive on such a bad state. He also told her that he could leave if she wanted him to, but advised her that sometimes the load feels lighter after talking about it.

While he was still going on about the importance of talking he heard an unpleasant sound. He heard the sound of Thembi's breath. She was gasping heavily. It only meant one thing to his mind. She was crying.

He went towards her and carefully placed his right hand on her back right between her shoulder blades. He then smoothly rubbed her back in an up and down motion. It was nothing much but it proved to be exactly what she needed because in that exact moment she did something she has never done. She fell on to his chest cried carelessly. Her beautiful tears had given up. They were running from her eyes, under her mask to his chest like a waterfall on a stormy afternoon.

He knew that someone in her state needed nothing more than a hug. He knew that he needed not push her with questions or anything more than just sitting still and patiently wait until she is all cried out. At this moment you may not know how he knew this but as the story goes on you will. That is a promise.

Like someone who knew what he was doing he allowed her to cry freely on his chest. They were sitting down now. She cried for about five minutes without saying a word. Then she raised her head from his chest and through her tears and heavy breaths she apologised for crying on him.

He hushed her apology by squeezing her a little bit to show her that he was there for her. Though she saw what his squeezing meant she pushed him away and fell on the bed with her face against the linen on top the bed. Leaving him with her beautiful behind as something he could feed his eyes with.

He decided to stand up and walk towards the bathroom. He got in the bathroom. A few seconds later a flushing sound in the bathroom entered Thembi's ears. He then

got out of the bathroom. She was still crying, but not as hard and heavy as she was when before he went to the bathroom.

Another few seconds later he touched her and asked her to turn around. She did as told. He was holding a bottle of water on his right hand. He twist-opened the cap of the bottle and then handed it to her. As she drank she began to cool down a little bit more.

Like he had predicted she was beginning to be cried out. She then began to talk. She began by telling him that her friend, Golden-Girl was acting up and it was troubling her. Though she never mentioned any real names she told him almost everything about her friendship with Nosi, the Golden-Girl. She then told him about what just happened with the black man who tried to penetrate her soul with his friend. He did not say a word but kept nodding and listening attentively.

She told him more. Again, she did not mention any name or place in particular, but she told him that she does not know remember breaking her virginity because she was drugged and raped by someone she loved and trusted quite a long time. He kept listening. She went on and told him about how she got in this business of selling her womanhood. How she never trusted any man after the incident where she was drugged and raped until a man called Mike came to the picture(of course she never told him Mike' s name, she just talked about him as a man). He had managed to gain a little bit of her trust before she saw the real him.

Finally he spoke. He said nothing much except the fact that she needed to forget about everything from the past and focus on her future. He mentioned her beauty, her brains and her attitude as what made him believe that she was going very far in life. He then told what he had always been thinking of telling to do. The only reason he had never mentioned it before was because he was afraid that if he tells her and she decide to do it he might never see her again.

He had always wanted to tell her that she should quit this business. He knew that he had a huge chance at convincing her about quitting this business because she had a soft spot for him. The only problem had been the fact that he was scared if she quitted this business he might never see her again hence he knew nothing about her real identity. Even after knowing so much about her past with abusing men he still did not know her real identity.

Nonetheless he placed his fears on the side and did the right thing. He told her why he thought she should quit. He mentioned her chances at losing out on true love if she kept doing this, and he also mentioned danger among other obvious reasons to why he thought she should quit.

There was one thing he had failed to mention. This thing was the real reason why he thought she should quit. Thembi was no fool, therefore she too saw it but she knew that it was best to pretend as if she could not see. She knew that it was best to pretend as if she could not see how much he seemed to have fallen in love with her.

She also knew that if she acknowledged the fact that he had fallen in love with her she was going to be forced to check if she felt the same. The biggest problem with that was the fact that she suspected she might feel exactly the same.



## Chapter Twenty-two

If love sees kindness in its blindness, if love is about being on the same page without thinking about the gap of age, and if love is complicated, disorientated but yet contented: then this must be true love. They say following true love requires a leap of faith. If faith is trusting one another without knowing each other, if faith is trusting the future without knowing what the future holds, and if faith is following your heart without thinking if she' s old enough or if he' s too old: then this must be taking a leap of faith.

It had been three days since we last mentioned Thembi. It was a warm Monday afternoon and Thembi was sitting on top of her bed. The time was ten minutes to four. She had two things in her mind. The first one was the leap of faith she was trying convince herself into taking. She remembers that on Friday night when she cried on the chest of her favourite client she felt safe and protected. The safety and protection she felt was not the usual physical safety that you feel when you count a stack of hundred dollar bills inside a secured bank location, but she felt the kind of safety that can only be described as emotional safety. This kind of safety is rare. There are a few people if not one person in the world that can make you feel this safety, apart from your parents of course. This kind of safety makes you feel like the other person is somehow part of your bloodstream. She liked this feeling. Why wouldn' t she like the feeling of knowing that she can tell someone her deepest fears and her worst mistakes without standing a chance of being judged or being taken advantage of?

This was not the only feeling she liked. She also liked the fact that this client never did anything without asking if she was fine with it. She liked the fact this client had been straight with her from the beginning and told her that he loved his wife. The only reason he was buying the services of Thembi' s body was because he was having troubles at home, and he did not want to get a mistress but rather buy because he could quit anytime once things were back to normal at home. She liked the fact that he seemed like someone in his forties yet he showed more maturity than all the other older clients she provided her services to. She liked the fact that whenever she provided her services to him she never felt like she was working, but she felt him as much as he felt her. He was like her father to her, except she could tell

him all her dirty secrets and sleep with him as well. In short, she seemed like she had fallen in love with this client.

What made her reflect so much on her emotions for this client was the fact on Friday after he had managed to calm her down and tell her why he thought she should quit her job, he told her that he was willing to help her with any financial needs if she had any troubles after quitting. This was the very moment she asked him a question she wishes she had not ask. She asked him why he was being so nice to her without expecting anything in return like every other men. His answer came as a non-surprising shock to her ears. He told her that he did not know what was happening to him but he suspected to have deeper than friendship feelings for her.

When he told her this she stood up immediately and went straight for the door. She wanted to leave as soon as she could because she knew that he was a married man and probably had kids as well. She did not want to break his household any further than it already was. The problem became bigger when he told her to stop for a moment before leaving. He told her that he knew it seemed like an impossible situation because of their age gap and the fact that he was already married, but all he asked her was to take this leap of faith with him. Whatever was going to happen next was something they were going to let faith worry about. To Thembi's mind this was the first time she ever heard a man speak such sincere and heart warming words towards her. Don't get it wrong, Bonga had spoken heart warming words towards her before. For example, telling her that she was beautiful. He was a charmer after all. And Mike had spoken truthful words towards her before. Words like telling her exactly what they did at the gentlemen's club. But none had spoken words that were a combination of the two, sincere and heart-warming, except this favourite client of hers.

We all know that Thembi never did anything without thinking at least twice. She too, herself, knew that as well. Therefore taking a leap of faith might be exactly what she needed because things were just as bad even though she considered herself as someone who always thought hard before taking a step. This was the reason why she was sitting on top of this bed and trying to decide if she was going to take this leap of faith or not.

If she took it she was going to meet him at the hotel on the same evening of this afternoon at six o' clock. He had told her that if she wanted to take this leap with him she needed to show up at the hotel at six today. If she did not take it, it meant she was never going to see ever again. After he had revealed his feelings for her, it was going to be impossible for her to provide her services to him ever again. It was either all or nothing.

As mentioned earlier, she had two things on her mind. The second thing on her mind was not as much of a decision as it was a worry. She was worried about the silence of her friend. Nosi did not show up on Friday for their two-no-one shift with the black man. Nosi did return Thembi' s calls. Nosi also did not show up at school today.

This was making Thembi worry a lot now. This was the reason she was planning to go to Nosi' s apartment to check if something was wrong.

\*\*\*\*\*

Before we carry on and find out if Thembi decided to take the leap of faith and if she found her silent friend, let us go back to the Ngcobo household first to see how the other members of the family were doing.

It is the same day, same time. Mrs Ngcobo had just arrived homecoming from work. She was in the kitchen confiding to her best friend, Mantombi. If you remember at the beginning you were told that Mantombi was more than a maid to the Ngcobo household. She was the also Mrs Ngcobo' s best friend. They were friends before she became the Ngcobo household' s family helper.

They were both sitting on the kitchen table. Mantobi' s arms were folded with her elbows resting on the table. On the far left corner of the kitchen there was a pot on top of the stove, and supper was cooking. Mrs Ngcobo was standing next to the kitchen sink singing her fears and worries to Mantombi' s listening ear.

She was worried about her body' s state lately. Ever since she took care of her breast cancer problem by going through a small surgery, her body slowly lost interest in any sexual affairs for a while. And then after some time the interest came back, but not as much as before. She has been waiting for it to fully come back for quite some time now. She feared that if this problem persisted it was going to put a strain on her marriage.

Mantombi had nothing much to say except listen and then advice her that it was better to see a professional.

A roaring sound of a vehicle entered both their ears. It was Nomalanga' s school bus bringing her home. A second later Nomalanga was at the kitchen door. She pushed the door and invited herself in. She greeted both of them with her usual huge smile and then went straight to her bedroom.

Another vehicle' s sound entered both their ears again. This time the vehicle did not stop and go but rather stopped and switched off the engine. A slamming sound of the door then followed. A second later Mr Ngcobo was on the kitchen door from the outside. He entered and found the two women sitting in the kitchen. Like a charmer that he was, he complimented the chef on the mesmerising aroma of whatever was cooking on the stove.

Both the ladies received this praise with grins. Mrs Ngcobo even threw in tease towards Mantombi by claiming that she was the one who taught Mantombi how to cook this good. Without waiting for the invite Mr Ngcobo decided to enlist on the women. He dropped his briefcase and grabbed a chair. He then began telling them about the huge deal he had been working on since January.

The hard work was finally paying out. He had just finished signing a deal that was about to make him one of the most influential men in the African car industry. He was now part of the team that dealt directly with the three biggest car manufacturers in the western part of the world.

As we all knew that Durban is one of the biggest harbours in Africa, it came as no surprise that all the biggest players in importing cars to the Southern part of Africa were very familiar with Durban harbour. Though it was still a small but he was now sharing the stage with the stars of the industry.

Everyone was happy about this except Mrs Ngcobo. Of course she was happy for the fact that they were going to be really rich and for the fact that her husband was happy, but she was not happy about the fact this meant her husband was going to be busier than he already was. This meant church was going to take the back seat a little bit more in his life, this meant he was going to have less time for his family, and this meant he was going come home late and tired. She was also worried about the

fact his happiness was beginning to be more and more dependent on money and power. To her mind, these were symptoms of a sickness that should not be associated with a true man of God.

Nonetheless she supported her husband. After all, she did take an oath to support him in sickness and in health, in poor and in wealth.

## Chapter Twenty-three

When a man seeks a lady's heart he acts and feels more like a real man. He becomes a gentleman. He sweeps her off her feet with gifts, with compliments and with persistence. But when a man is stood up he feels less of a man. He wishes he never tried. Men do not like to try unless they are sure that they stand a good chance at winning. Men do not reveal their true feelings unless they expecting something in return. It is not because men are bad creatures, but it is because they are men.

The same seemed to be true with Mr favourite-client. He seemed to be regretting ever revealing his true feelings towards Thembi. The time was now seven o' clock and Thembi had not showed up. Yes, they say "A lady is never late; it's just that everybody came before her time." , but an hour had passed.

It is not often you a find forty-something year old questioning himself if he did the right thing. But in this very room there was such a man. The same room he had penetrated Thembi's youthful woman with his old man, time and time again over the last few months. Between her thighs she had also managed to penetrate him back. She had managed to penetrate his heart. It is the same room he had allowed her to wet his chest with her tears three days ago. The same room he had revealed his true feelings three days ago. Now we find him questioning himself if telling her how he felt was the right thing to do.

The fact that Thembi was not showing up made him question himself if telling her was worth losing her for good. "Taking a leap of faith." Really?

What was he thinking? Did he really think she would succumb to his fairytale ideas? Taking a leap of faith and hope for a happy ending? Maybe like a movie ending where they will walk towards a windy desert, away from the world towards a secret oasis where they will live alone happily ever after? Take a leap of faith with him even though they have never seen each other's faces? Take a leap of faith with him even though they do not know each other's true identities? Will she understand that the heart sees more than what eyes can see? These are the questions we think were taking turns through his loving brain as he lost heat.

If hope was like a beating heart then he would have died, because his optimism was slowly coming to an end. Those who know better would say he was losing heart. As

he lost hope he stood up and picked his car keys from the armchair that was in the left corner of the room, took off his mask, placed it in his briefcase, and then he walked straight towards the door.

Out he went. He was in the hallway. He then closed the door behind him and then walked straight towards the elevator which he had to pass three sets of opposing doors before reaching it.

Before revealing further niceties on what happened after he got in the elevator, let us momentarily shift our focus towards the whereabouts of our beautiful Thembi.

Gauss what? She was downstairs on the ground level, about to take an elevator heading to the same room. If the walls of this room could talk they would tell you about the cries of helpless powerful men receiving pleasures from a conquering youthful woman, they would tell you about the cries of a strong woman scraping pleasure from conquering old powerful men with her youthful body, and they would tell you about the latter cries of a powerful, married businessman wondering if revealing his true feelings was the best thing to do.

Dingdong was the sound coming from one of the elevators signalling that it had arrived and was about to open. This is it, she thought. Slowly the door sided to the side. She looked up and saw that the elevator was packed with people. One by one they got out of the elevator. A few seconds later it was empty. She was the first one to get in. Then the other hotel guests followed in. She punched number six. Then the others punched in their destinations. Up went the elevator. Floor number three. Floor number five. Then it was her floor. Floor number six.

Pounding like a boxing glove against a gym sack was her heart against her chest. If you' ve never been in a situation where you were about to tell someone you really like or love for the first time that you want to be with them, then you' ve never felt these kind of nerves. She was indeed ten times more nervous than a nerdy boy that is about to give an oral in his English class. But at least she was not worried anymore.

Remember that earlier she had two things alternating in her mind: one, she was thinking about taking a leap of faith, and two, she was worried about her silent friend. Now, she was not worried anymore hence when she went to check on Nosi

she was given a note by Nosi's other friend. It was in an envelope. This note had a telephone number and the following words:

"My friend, I'm sorry for leaving without saying goodbye, and sorry for being such a difficult friend lately. I promise I'll see you soon. But if you want to talk you can call me on this number because I will not be able to call anyone where I am going."

It is not a surprise that Thembi ran to the nearest public phone as soon as she read the note. She talked for almost twenty minutes with her friend on the phone. To summarise what her friend told her: Nosi had been gone since last week Wednesday. She left right after finishing her arrangements with her lecturers. She is going to be gone for the next two weeks. She took all her books with her. She will only miss one week of school and then the second week will not be affected by her absence because it will be a study-week already, then she will be back for her examinations. She is at a certain rehabilitation centre. In the last two months she was getting more and more hooked on drugs. She wants to clean herself up. Hence she is finishing her degree this year she wants to move to Cape Town where she will join a summer fashion school for three months. Then after those three months she is planning to pursue her lifelong dream. Over the months working as a lady of the night she was saving as much as she could, and she thinks she has enough money in the bank to pay for this summer school and then start her own clothing brand. She has about forty-five thousand rand in the bank. The business subjects she took over the course of her degree were now going to come handy.

Now back to the elevator. Worried she was not but nervous she definitely was. Slowly the door sided to her left. She was the only one getting out on this floor. She got out. Looked around and saw that there was no one around. She opened her handbag as fast as she could and then pulled out her second face. Beautiful Thembi was now no more, but she was now "The Black Mask" .

After putting her mask on she proceeded as quickly as she could hence she was very late. She was in the passage. Passed first two sets of opposing doors, passed last set of opposing doors, and then she was at her designated door.

Again she touched her mask to make sure that it was still properly on. Or maybe it was just the nerves moving her hands all over her body? Making sure that everything was in its place. Dress, check, shoes, check, workbag, check, bra, check, and deep



slow breath, check. Hence she was holding her workbag on her right hand she used her left hand to knock.

Knock, knock, and waited. Knock, knock again. No response from the other side.

She decided to pull the handle and push the door. Fortunately it was not locked. In she went. Once she was inside she closed the door behind her. Once the door was closed she asked loudly, "Anybody home?"

There was no response. We do not know whether she was relieved or disappointed by the fact that Mr-Favourite-Client was gone already, but suddenly her pounding heart began to cool down. Slowly she walked towards the table and placed her workbag. Just in case you' ve forgotten, she had a bag that always had all her work things like masks, condoms and clothes.

Right now she was wearing her work clothes. She never wore any of her normal clothes when she was working. The same was true about today. She was wearing a beautiful sexy dress that she only wears on the job.

As she placed her workbag on the table she opened it and pulled out a pair of jeans and a simple beautiful T-shirt. This simple T-shirt was white in colour, and there were drawings of two doves flying above a Christianity cross.

She then went to her heard and took off her wig and threw it on the table next to the bag. Underneath the wig there was an old pantyhose holding her real her together. Then she went to the bathroom. Her aim was to change from the dress and to her jeans and T-shirt. She was not going to back to her apartment dressed and looking like Thembi the Black Mask.

Seconds later she was in the bathroom. Off was the mask. Off was the dress. Off were the high heels. Beautiful black lingerie was all that was left. All the old man she had jerked had failed to loosen her body. It was still as tight as a Zulu virgin with a rod.

As she was about to put her jeans on she heard the sound of the door closing on the other room. Maybe it was a maid, she thought. But as she was pulling these jeans up passed her knees he said something.

"Black mask is that you? Wow I thought I was stood up. I was already gone you know, I had given up waiting for you. I was already in my car when I realised that I left my phone on the bed."

Then it was silent.

The nerves came back. The boxing heart boxed the hell out her chest. She was now as still as frozen drop of ice. The waist of her jeans was still at the base of her buttocks around her golden brown thighs. Her hands were still clenched on the waist of these jeans. Her body was still hunched hence she was still in the middle of pulling up the jeans.

She swallowed air and then in order to hide her nerves she jokingly responded.

"How unfortunate, I really thought I had managed to get rid of you."

He responded. "I guess what' s meant to be is meant to be."

Then after, he looked down and saw her wig on the floor he said "Wow! I did not know you wore a wig all this time. I thought the mask was the only thing that was not the real you. I can see you are really serious about hiding you identity."

"I was." she interrupted him.

"Oh I see. You are quitting. Good for you."

"I' m not quitting because of you but I' m quitting because of my friend, Golden Mask. You remember her? She made me see another side of her today. I always thought she was just... Actually I don' t know what I thought of her, but I never thought she was this. I always thought she was all games and fun. I knew she was a smart girl. She came from a very bad family after all, but made it to University. But I never thought she would surprise me this much. I' m proud of her, but now I need to be proud of myself."

He was still on the other side listening to her as she went on. She was now putting her T-shirt on as she talked.

"I' m sorry but I cannot take this leap of faith with you. Don' t get me wrong, I like you a lot. In fact I think I love you. Yes I do. But there is too much at stake. You have a wife, and I' m sure you also have kids. The fact that you are older than me is not a problem, but the fact that I will be directly breaking your marriage is just too much

for me. Even God would never forgive me for that. I' m sure you are surprised about my mention of God because of I do...or should I say I did this kind of a job. But let me tell you: I was raised in a very God fearing family."

She went quiet. He was still listening. Yes he was shocked by her mention of God. And he could not argue against it. He himself was a real God fearing individual as well. By now she was done putting her T-shirt on, but she decided to carry on without getting out of the bathroom.

"I' m actually glad of the fact that I' m in here and you are out there. It' s easier for me to spit my thoughts freely if you are not looking at me. As I was saying: I love you so much. I love you for what you have shown me. You' ve showed me that not all men are dogs. I love you for the fact that you treated with the respect I deserve despite the fact that you were paying me. I love you for the fact that you gave me control over myself. Of course when I was on top of you I felt in control, but I was only in control over you, your body. Then when we were done, that control ended. But you, you gave me the type of control I' ve always longed for after I was raped by my high school boyfriend. You gave me control over myself, my body and my mind. Your attention to detail when you touched me back made a huge difference. Then what made you my hero was what you did when we were done. The moments when we would just stay in each other' s arms for extended amounts of time gave me hope. Those quiet moments made me feel special and safe. Please do me a favour: go back to your wife and hold her like you did with me. Go make love to her the way you did with me."

He decided to interrupt her. "You say you were raped? I' m sorry to hear that, but why..."

She interrupted him back.

"Yes I was. I am not saying this to defend myself, but doing this job was the only way that made me feel like I can take control of my body and on top of its all take control over a man. The sad thing is that I was still a virgin when my boyfriend drugged me. You can just margin how bad it must be for a Zulu girl who had kept her virginity until finishing school and then wake up on the last day of school only to find out that she is no more a virgin. It was the night of my matriculation ball. I do not know how it felt to lose my virginity. I do not have any memories of my flesh

tearing apart. I do not have any memories of my blood staining my innocence. My brain is not stained by any memory of losing my virginity, instead it was stained by the hatred I had for men. It' s not just that: On the same night he drugged and raped me, he also cheated on me by fucking another girl behind the hall where the ball was. At least he used a condom on her, but me, no. It' s by God' s grace I didn' t get pregnant and he was not HIV positive."

Mr Favourite-client was now seated on top of the table, next to her bag, listening to her as she proceeded.

"So when I found this other guy here in Durban, and he invited me to do this job I was reassured that all men are dogs. He befriended me. Then I trusted him. He then made me fall in love with him. He then slept with me. He was the first person to sleep with me ever since I was drugged. Therefore it would be fair to say he broke my virginity again. Then when he showed me his true colours I was devastated. But I did not want to tell anyone about of this, because it meant I was admitting the fact that I had lost control over myself. You are officially the first person I' m telling all of this to. One of my friends, Golden Mask, knows only the part about the fact that the second guy slept with me and then showed me his true colours. But no one knows about the fact that my virginity was broken twice by men who did not give a shit about me. These are the reasons I love you so much. Except for my father, you are the only men in the world to have shown me that not all men are dogs. But because of that I will not be selfish and allow you to ruin your life for me. When I walk out of here I will leave this mask here, and I hope you also leave yours. You go back to your family and live your real life. This is not you. You do not belong to this world. You are much better than this, better than all these men. Money, power, pleasure, it' s not you. You are love, strength and joy. From now on I am going back to being me. No more mask. I am going to work hard and be good with God. I am going to make a real better life for myself, a life of happiness and transparency. "

Then she stopped talking.

He did not move from the table he was sitting on.

She then decided to talk again.

"So is there anything you want to say before I come out of here? Because when I come out of here I' m going to be me. No mask, no wig and definitely no anger. It' s up to you whether you want to see the real me or not. If you don' t you can leave right now, but if you do just hang on a few seconds. It is also up to you whether you want me to see you or not. If you don' t you can put on your mask and see me as I walk out of here now."

As she was about to walk out he shouted.

"No! Wait, I want to see you and I want you to see me. You don' t know how much you have opened my eyes. I really want them to see you, the real you. And I want you to see me, the real me. Thank you, kid. You have reminded me that love can be found in a hopeless place. You have reminded me that Jesus came from Nazareth"

He took off his mask and dropped it on the floor and then said "Come out now, I' m ready to see you for the first and last time."

She responded "Me too. I' m ready to see you for the first and last time."

He stood up and waited for her to come out, and she began walking with her true smile drawn on her face.

As she walked: click, click was the sound produced by her pencil shoes. Dark-blue jeans wrapped around a pair of legs that were adopted from Planet-Sexy. Click, click was the sound produced by her pencil shoes. Black nail polish painted on yellow toes, toes of a yellow-bone. Click, click was the sound produced by her pencil shoes. Figure so small it' s like a hook between the upper and the lower part of the body. Maybe it' s an hour glass. Click, click was the sound produced by her pencil shoes. Fully fledged chest, or is it breasts beneath that T-shirt so tight you' d swear it vest? Two doves flying above a cross, God bless its looks like it' s time for happiness. Click, click was the sound produced by her pencil shoes.

He was standing and waiting like excited fans on the last second before their rock star makes his spectacular entrance. Five; four; three; two; one: he heard the door open as she made her way. She was out.

The first things that met were their eyes as she appeared in front of him. It was a shock, electricity. They both couldn' t move. While opening the door she had

planned that the first thing she was going to say was "Hello, my name is Thembisile Ngcobo" , but she could not because he said it first: "Thembisile Ngcobo!"

Instead she said, "Dad!"

## Chapter Twenty-three

She was on a mission to once again become a paragon. Newly found faith seemed to be her only paraffin. Then suddenly she reached a dead end on a road that was meant for paradise. On this dead end the gate of hell was paraded. Now her faith was paralysed. They say truth will set you free but this seemed like a paradox. Two best men in her life, lover and parent, have become one man. What will she do? What one does on such abrupt tribulations is a true test of character. Whether you choose to give up and take the easy way out or you choose to remember that the world is even darker when it's about dawn, it is entirely up to your character. Life is parallel to a paradox.

It has been three weeks since we last mentioned Thembi. Three weeks since she revealed her true self to Mr Favourite-client who turned out to be Mr Ngcobo, her father. Today we find her walking through the gate of her apartment homecoming from university. She was writing her last paper today. Right now she is torn between packing her bags and off she goes to Cape Town where she will hide herself away from the world, or pack her bags and bravely go home to face her father's eyes.

Between these options there was one thing she was sure about though. She was sure that she was going to leave this place, Durban, as soon as possible. She was just tired of it. She was so tired that she did not even bother to wait for the elevator but instead walked all the way to the third floor, her apartment.

Being the Thembi we know she has managed not to cry in front of anyone. In fact she has managed not to cry at all. Don't get it wrong, she did shed a couple of tears when she found out that she had been selling her body to her father, but we choose to dismiss those tears because they were tears of shock.

Why do we call them tears of shock? Because she never cried after that day, it is therefore obvious that she only cried just because she was still in shock.

To go back to that day very quickly, the day of revelations, here is what happened after they saw each other's faces: He called her name in shock "Thembisile Ngcobo!" and she responded in shock "Dad!" Then three seconds went by without anyone saying a word. Thereafter Mr Favourite-Client, or should we say her father, said "No... No, no, no." as he walked backwards towards the door. Then he

was out of the room, leaving her with the wig and the masks on the floor. She then ran to the bathroom. She, herself, too did not know why she ran to the bathroom. Maybe psychologically it made her feel like she was alone, as bathrooms are not meant to be shared. She was in the bathroom for at least thirty minutes before she walked out and wiped off her tears. She then decided to tell her beautiful tears not to cry anymore. After picking up all her belongings and tossing the wig and the masks in the rubbish bin she walked out of the room, out of the hotel and never looked back.

Ever since then she had been drowning herself in her books. She has not had time, or should we say given herself the time, to think about the fact that she had been selling her body to her father all this long. Now that examinations are finished she has another chance to think about her situation.

It will not come as a surprise if you are wondering how her father is dealing with this. And if you have not caught on already you might also be wondering how did her father, such a respected pastor, get into the world of prostitution, and how was he coincidentally introduced to her out of all the ladies of the night. But for now let us keep our focus on Thembi and you will learn about him soon. That is a promise.

She has not talked to anyone about this. Who would she talk to? Nosi? How? How on earth would she tell Nosi that she has been sleeping with her father for the last four months? Her much respected father, pastor, businessman and her mother's devoted husband. Even Nosi seems not be close enough to share with her such an undergoing.

Oh maybe she could talk to Vicky, her friend from back home. But, Vicky doesn't even know that she used to sell her beautiful body.

Before we go any further, let's check the time. The time was twenty minutes past twelve. She was inside her apartment now, packing. She did not have that much to pack; hence her mother had come-by four days ago and took all the big stuff with her in the car. All she had to pack were just two bags.

When her mother came to fetch her things two days ago she could not resist but asked about her father like any loving child would ask. Her mother told her that her father was doing well. She even told her that he was actually doing way better than



he had been doing in months. He was back to being more devoted in church, preaching very powerful messages. He was helping people and raising salaries for his employees. He was not acting like a greedy businessman anymore. He had always been a very considerate man, but these days he was showering his wife with love as much as he could.

“But he has not...” These were the last four words Mrs Ngcobo said before she stopped herself. She had remembered that she was speaking to Thembi, their daughter. Therefore she could not tell Thembi that despite all his love and change he has not slept with her in the last three weeks or so. Talking to her daughter about their sexual life was way over the line.

Back to Thembi, in the kitchen, on top of the table lied her cellular phone, her purse and a bus ticket to Cape Town. Remember we said she was torn between going home and going to Cape Town? Well, we may have forgotten to tell you that she was getting more and more acquainted to the idea of Cape Town. Even if she was not going forever, but she was going to be in Cape Town hiding herself from the world at least until the following year. She needed time to find strength before she sees her father’ s eyes. For now, she was just too exhausted.

While she was still packing, her cell-phone rang. Who could it be? She wondered. Was it Nosi? But Nosi went back to the rehab. Nosi wanted to make sure that the drugs were totally out of her system before heading to Cape Town. And she had talked with Nosi just yesterday. They were to meet in Cape Town in a week’ s time. She was also sure it was not her father. He had never called since the night they revealed their faces. Maybe it was her mother.

She walked to the kitchen, picked up the phone and it was someone she was hoping he would not call or even try to check on her. It was Mike. He knew they had finished writing examinations, or they were just about to finish. Since he could not get hold of Nosi, he was going to call Thembi. He had clients on a very long waiting list just for them.

She knew that if she did not pick up the phone he was going to come over and speak to her face to face. Therefore she decided to answer the call. He asked if she had finished her examinations, and she lied to him. She said she was finishing the next day. Therefore she was going to resume her business the very next day. To make him

happy and shut him up, she even told him that she was going to feed three clients tomorrow afternoon.

Her plan worked hence he believed her not knowing that she was planning to elope to Cape Town and change her phone number so that he will never find her again.

After the call she went back to her packing. After she was done packing she went straight to the shower. She still had three hours before the bus to Cape Town arrived. In the shower she took her time. After the shower she got dressed. She was planning to leave the apartment at least two hours before so that she could get something to eat first and some snacks for the long journey ahead of her. This Cape Town idea seemed flawless: she was going to get a small apartment with Nosi, call her parents and tell them not to worry, find a job as a waitress, and then look for a proper job next year.

Though she seemed to have taken the Cape Town side she still wished she had the strength to go home, and get over and done with facing her father's eyes. As she picked the ticket from the table she had a minute thought of just tearing the ticket and go home. She knew that this decision was going to affect her whole life. These roads were diverting towards totally different destinations. If she went to Cape Town she had a good chance of never going back home again, or only going home during funerals and other very special occasions. Whereas if she went home today there was a good chance that her whole family was going to break apart.

After thinking again and again while holding the ticket on her right hand she finally decided on the Cape Town path. It was final. Why? Because she told herself that she was not that selfish, she was not going to break the whole family apart. Rather she was going to break herself away from the family.

\*\*\*\*\*

The water might be broken, the membrane might be shattered and the baby might be ready to break away from the womb, but if the mother is not ready to push, there is no way to cut the embolic cord.

Thembi, she closed all the windows in her apartment and then she went to the main switches and turned off everything. She was ready to leave. She was ready for Cape Town.

Right at that moment her cellular phone rang once again. Who was it this time? It was her lovely mother, Mrs Ngcobo.

"Hi mom, how are you?" was the first thing she said as she answered.

"I'm ok my child, you coming today right?"

She did not know what to say. Should she just tell her mother now that she is not coming home? No, she was not going to tell her now, maybe after a few days when she's settled in Cape Town.

"I would like to come today but I can't. My friend, Nosi, she has not paid me back my money, therefore I'm broke don't have any bus fare. Once she pays me I'll come as soon as possible. Actually, I might even come today if she pays me before five o'clock. I'm already packed and ready to go. I'm actually here in the apartment getting ready just in case she gives it to me now when she comes back from writing."

She did not know how these lies came in her head as she said them but she seemed quite satisfied after spilling them out. She saw it as a great excuse to say her friend is the one holding her from leaving because she has no bus fare. This was going to buy her time at least until she reaches Cape Town the next day.

What she did not know was that it was not going to be as easy as she wanted it to be because her mother said something she was really not expecting to hear.

"I've always told you I'm a supermom. My superpowers told me that you might need my help. This is why I'm here to fetch you. Open the gate, I'm down stairs. Oh, don't bother, here's someone behind me who also coming in. He will open for me. See you in a sec." And then she hung up.

Thembi, she thought of taking the stairs from the other side of the building and run, but it was just not in her character to physically run away from her mother.

A minute went by, then a knock on the door. As soon as she opened the door she hugged her mother as if she had not seen her in years. As always, the sight of seeing her mother made her feel a bit of love once again. Her mother wondered because it was not long ago when she came to fetch most of Thembi's things. But the mother decided to dismiss this sixth sense she was feeling from her child. She thought

maybe Thembi was just too exhausted from all the stress of writing her final examinations.

While Thembi was still hugging her tight she also noticed that everything was packed in the apartment and the bags were right next to the door.

“Wow! You were really missing home. You were not kidding; all the bags are really packed.”

Thembi had to go with the flow and nod her head.

Her mother then asked for something to drink, but Thembi told her that there was nothing to drink except water. Mrs Ngcobo, being the good mother that she was, went straight to the cupboards and the fridge to check how on earth was Thembi planning to survive in this deserted apartment without food if Nosi did not give pay her back today, tomorrow or the day after.

Not to Mrs Ngcobo’s surprise there was nothing, but Thembi had a good defence for herself though. She said was going to be sleeping and eating at Nosi’s apartment until Nosi pays her back. With a smile Mrs Ngcobo nodded her head, saying “That’s fair. If she’s the one keeping you away from us she might as well feed you.”

Without wasting another second longer Mrs Ngcobo then looked at Thembi in detail and then said “You don’t look good at all, why?”

Thembi responded shyly and said “Nothing, just that the exams were a little too much that’s all.”

“You look like haven’t eaten in years. Oh my God! Its good you coming back home, I was not going to feel any better knowing that I’m leaving you to starve yourself like this. Actually let’s go get something to eat now and then we go home.”

Just like that she grabbed one of Thembi’s bags and led the way to the car. Thembi picked the other bag and then locked the door and followed. Her mother was now waiting for her at the door of the elevator.

“Mom, we should to take the stairs because I need to leave the keys with the caretaker.”

The caretaker's apartment was on the floor under their floor. So they took the stairs and Thembi knocked on the caretaker's door. The caretaker was an old man who was not that much into socialising, therefore he took the keys with a smile and wished her goodbye. This time around they took the elevator.

In the car, Mrs Ngcobo asked Thembi where she wanted to eat. She, herself, Mrs Ngcobo, wanted anything that had chicken. Thembi was really not that hungry. Yes she hadn't eaten since the morning but she had a lot of things in her head besides food. She also did not want to bump in to anyone, especially Mike. So she told her mother that they should get going and maybe get takeaways along the way, maybe in one of the Ultra Stops next to the garages.

Mrs Ngcobo decided not to argue. For the next fifteen minutes there was gospel music in the car, and Mrs Ngcobo was singing along while Thembi was browsing on her mother's phone. Her mother's phone always had something new, new songs or new images, thanks to her younger sister Nomalanga.

After those fifteen minutes they reached the first garage that had a food outlet on the side. In they went. After about forty-five minutes later they came out.

It was like they had entered a magical terminal. When they went in Thembi was dull and dry, but when she came out she was all beaming with smiles. What changed her mood? We might not know for sure but maybe it was because while they were eating her mother told her that her father was not going to be home for the next three or four days. He had told her mother to apologise for him to her for not being home to welcome her back.

They were in the car again and they cruised all the way home. This time the music was off and they were just talking about anything that popped up in their female heads.

They were finally home. Guess who opened the door for them?

## Chapter Twenty-four

The love one feels when one enters home cannot be compared to a thousand Valentine wishes. The warmth one feels when one enters home cannot be cooled down by even a thousand fridges. The hug one gets from a loving sister cannot be compared to a thousand kisses. The sense of belonging can numb a thousand bruises, your blood flows more than a thousand rivers. They say blood is thicker than water; you cannot cut it with even a thousand scissors. One word, home, its can defeat a thousand whispers.

You are right if you assume it was Nomalanga who opened the door for the beautiful Thembi and her mother. Lovely Nomalanga then performed her ritual by screaming with excitement of seeing her sister and then hugged her as tight as if they have not seen each other in years. It was Nomalanga's hug that reminded Thembi of the beauty of coming home, the beauty of undeniable free love. As the sisters hugged Mrs Ngcobo, the mother, called upon them from the car and reminded them that there were bags to be taken in. Without wasting any second the two girls went to the car and each picked one of Thembi's bags. In they went through the lounge door, in the lounge, through to the passage and straight to Thembi's room.

After dropping her bag on top of the bed Thembi then went the dining room where Mantombi was reading a newspaper while eating her very late lunch. With smiles they both greeted each other and Mantombi asked about the exams. Thembi responded by telling her that they were not that hard. Nomalanga then enlisted on them and set right next to Thembi who was now also seating on the table and reading the second section of the newspaper, the business section. Maybe it is not entirely true to say she was reading, and maybe saying she was 'scanning' the newspaper is right word to use.

Nomalanga then began telling Thembi about the upcoming disco at school. She called it a disco because her teachers called it a disco though in this disco they served lemonades and played family friendly music. It was a disco that was organised and supervised by the teachers at the school. Nomalanga was always excited about this disco which occurred by the end of every school term.

Mrs Ngcobo too decided to enlist in the dining room. Now the family was complete in the dining room, except for Mr Ngcobo of course. As they sat in the dining room

everyone was seating on their usual chairs on the table. This setup on the table made it easy for Thembi to remember that her father was not on the table. His usual chair was empty. Even though she was relieved by the fact that she did not have to see her father' s eyes for the next three days, she was not comfortable by the fact that he had to leave his house on her account. She knew for sure that he' s gone only because she was coming home, she knew that there was no real business commitment, and she knew that he felt as much ashamed as she felt about this whole situation.

Everyone on the table was laughing and sharing, but Thembi was slowly beginning to fade away from them. The empty chair was a constant reminder of what might happen on her family. She knew for sure that none between her and her father were going to be able to leave with each other under one roof with this shameful secret. The fact that she had always been the closest to her father rather than Nomalanga, who was closer to her mother, made it even harder to imagine what was in store when her father comes back in three days' time.

As she continued to fade further away from the group on the table she tried to imagine what could happen in three day' s time. Maybe her dad will be a Christian enough to call both Thembi and the mother for the hardest confession. This was going to kill her mother for sure. It was going to be like her mother has been shot by three bullets straight to the heart. One bullet would be the fact that her lovely daughter was a prostitute, the second bullet would be the fact that her husband was sleeping with prostitutes, and the third and final bullet would be the fact that daughter had been prostituting her body to her father. From there the family would surely never be the same. Maybe her parents will separate. Even if they don' t separate they were never going to love and trust each other again.

Maybe her father will choose not to tell his wife and choose to just talk to Thembi alone. "How will that work out?" she thinks. They will pretend as if this thing has never happened. And then how will they live under one roof knowing what they know about each other? Her mother and the others will surely see the difference in the way they will treat each other now.

Another option would be to just not talk about this thing at all and again pretend as it has never happened. But still she thinks, "How will we live together under one roof? How will I live with my mom?"

By now she was totally gone from the table. Even the blind could see that yes her body was present but her mind was on the other side of town. Mantombi saw this corpse of her body and decided to wake it up. "Thembi! What wrong? You look like we are boring you."

Thembi's mind came back and realised that everyone on the table was now staring at her. She shook herself away from the thoughts and told them that she was fine. She was just exhausted and needed to go lie down. That's when she stood up and excused herself from the others. Off she went to her bedroom.

In the bedroom she dropped down her yellow summer-dress and then went to the wardrobe to take out and put on an old pair of blue shorts and an old red T-shirt. Then she slipped under the duvet cover on her bed.

\*\*\*\*\*

Love is attention, love is concern, love is motherhood, love is wifeness, love is worry, love is trust, love is knowing, love is unknowing, love is seeing the best from the worst. Love can be tested, love can be victorious, and love wins from losing one's self.

It has been two days since Thembi came back home. All she's been doing is sleeps, sleeps and sleeps again. The more hours she sleeps the closer she feels her father's footsteps approaching the house. She knows he can pop in anytime now. This scares her big time. The reason she sleeps is because her brain is dead when she is asleep. It is better to be dead asleep than to think about what is going to happen when her father comes home.

Before we carry on let's check the time: the time was nine-thirty in the morning. The sun was shining. It was a beautiful Friday. She was still sleeping, but not really sleeping. She's just turning and kicking while trying to shake the stressful thoughts off her head. Dad will be here soon. Dad is on his way back. Dad might be here any moment.



While she was still tossing and turning she heard someone knocking on the front door. Who was it? She asked herself. "Maybe it's him" she sorrowfully thought. She then heard Mantombi footsteps from her the kitchen walking towards the front door in the lounge. Mantombi then opened the door and greeted whoever it was with a very loud and cheerful voice, "Halleluia! You are back. We missed you."

Whoever it was on the door was a male, a grown male. Thembi knew this because she could hear that the mumbles of whoever was on the door were of a low base. Mantombi again said the following words still in a loud voice, "Oh yes, Thembi, she's back. She's in her room. I think she's still asleep. You must really miss her. You've just got back and the first thing on your mind is her. Go on, I'm sure she'll be glad to see you."

As Thembi overheard these words from Mantombi she did not know what to think. It might be her dad. Actually, it is her dad. No its not. But might it be? Now she could hear the footsteps of this male person approaching her room in the passage. Her heart was now pounding like a trapped shark trying to break the glass tank at the aquarium. A waterfall was beginning to pop from her sweat glands. And then there was a knock on the door of her bedroom. She couldn't help but shout "Come in." instantly. Why? We don't know, but maybe it's because her right side wanted to stay in bed forever and never see her father again while her left side wanted this thing to be over as soon as possible. You could bet if you wanted to that she too does not know why she shouted "Come in" . Her whole face was now faced down against the bed. Hence she was afraid to see her father's eyes.

The door handle rotated downwards as the door slowly opened. It was not her father, but it was her friend from High School, Spha. Yes it was her male friend from High School. Spha was also back from writing his final examinations.

"Thembi my friend how are you? It's been a while." These were the first words Spha said as he saw his upside-down friend.

Thembi heard these words and recognised that the voice belonged to her friend not her father. Slowly she turned towards him with a smile. Though Spha had not seen Thembi in a long time he saw right through her smile that she was not well. "How are you my friend? You look depressed, what's wrong?" he asked.

"I' m fine" she answered.

Though he was not convinced that she was really fine, he decided to let it pass.

"Otherwise what' s new, what you' ve been up to? When was the last time you saw Vicky?"

Thembi knew she could not tell him the truth about what she had been up to for the last couple of months, so in order to avoid lying to avoid lying to him she decided to ignore the first question and rather answer the second one. "It' s been a while since I saw her. You know how Vicky is these days. She' s always busy. You know she now has a child to take care while she' s working and studying part time."

"Yah I know, but I think today she should take a break. I' ve got these three tickets for tonight' s open-stage sessions at the university. We should, the three of us, go tonight. How about I come and fetch you at about five late today? I' m going to call Vicky as well. Speaking about calling, why is your cellular phone off? I' ve been trying to call you since last night."

Thembi thought about this for a second and decided not to answer his question but rather said "Ok I' ll go with you and Vicky to that session of yours." To her beautiful mind she saw this as something that was going to help her avoid seeing her father if should he come back later that day. She also decided that she was going to wake up, take a bath, have breakfast, get dressed and go to town. In town she was going to find something to kill a little bit of time, and when she' s bored she was going to Vicky' s work. Vicky was now working for a small publishing firm as an assistant. The office was also relaxed when it came to visitors. Maybe then when Vicky knocks off they were going to go straight from there to the University. Spha was of course going to fetch them, driving his car, the car he just inherited from his dead father.

To clarify on the dead father' s inherited car. Remember that you were told at the beginning that Spha lived with his drinking mother and his younger brother. His younger brother was actually a half brother from the same mother but different fathers. You were not told what happened to his father. To summarise about his father: his father abandoned him when his mother was still pregnant, did not know him until he was fourteen, after knowing him he tried to go live with him but did not last for more than six months because they did not seem to eye to eye on anything,

then came back to live with his mother and his half brother. After that they never had any contact until his father died a couple of months ago. His father was in the car with his wife and two children when he lost control of the car and drove off the cliff. They all died, and Spha was the only one left to inherit his father's other car and all his other assets. Hence had a couple of assets on his name it is safe to say that Spha is now closer than most young men to be labelled with the word 'rich'. He was practically living in a dream.

Let us get back to Thembi. Spha was now gone and Thembi was now waiting at the bus stop, waiting for a taxi, when she saw her father's car approaching from her right hand side. "He just missed her" she thought. If only he was a couple of minutes earlier he would have got home before she left the house.

As the car came closer she turned around and hid her head behind the light post on the bus stop. She hid until she was sure that her father's car had past. Then she turned back and watched it as it takes the left turn on Jabu Street towards her house.

Within seconds after her father's car had passed, a taxi came. In she went. In the taxi she set on the seat right behind the driver. She then took out her cellular phone from her handbag. It was off. It had been off since she left Durban. She had switched it off right the moment she got in the car with her mother.

She switched it on. It did not take much time and then messages were pouring in. She had a couple of voicemails. From Spha, from Vicky who heard she was back and wanted to check on her, from Nosi who wanted to know if she did go to Cape Town, and of course from Mike who had customers lined up for them. She listened to them all. Then she took out a pen and wrote down Vicky's number, and then wrote down Nosi's number. After writing down the numbers she switched off the phone again.

## Chapter Twenty-five

A poet on stage is reciting to the audience. His mouth through the microphone is talking to her ears through the speakers, "Birth, I remember my first breath, which was my first step towards my death..." , again he continues "Life, an unstoppable drive of efforts to survive, until death comes to strike" , she listens as he continues once more "Death, a surprise like a thief at night yet we all know that life is a dream we are bound to wake up from, wake to a world called death."

Spha was seating between Thembi and Vicky. They were all listening to the poet that was on stage. It had been thirty minutes since they arrived at this open-stage. It was going well so far. Everyone seemed to be enjoying themselves. As the poet finished his poem everyone clapped their hands, but Thembi did not. She was still digesting the poet' s last words "...it does not matter because we are still yet to wake up, wake up to a world called death." She thought about them for a while and then smiled.

After that poet another poet came in with his wise words, and then a couple of artist sang, a couple of rappers, motivational speakers and so no.

The evening was a success. By the time everything was finished it was round about ten in the evening. They, Spha, Thembi and Vicky, then went for a round of drinks at the nearest restaurant. Afterwards Spha drove the girls back home.

On the way going back home Thembi thought about asking Spha to drop her off at Protea Hotel which was along the way home. She could just spend the night at the hotel and then deal with her father the following morning. But then she changed her mind and decided to go and deal with it once and for all. And if she' s lucky, her father might already be asleep, she thought.

They were home. They had already dropped Vicky at her house. Before she opened the door Spha said something, "Thembi."

She stopped everything she was doing and listened attentively, because she could hear from the sound of his voice that whatever he wanted to say was serious.

He continued, "Even though we haven' t been spending much time together lately, but I think I know you enough to realise when something is not right. You hardly smiled the whole day today. I mean smile, really smile, not a semi-smile. When you

smile with your real smile even your eyes seem to smile along, but today your smile was that of a sad clown. It was painted on your face but did not come from within. Your eyes are sad. What is wrong my friend. Tell me, maybe I can help."

She wanted to say nothing was wrong but did not because she knew that he was just going to see right through her fake smile again. So she said "You are right I'm not ok, but you cannot help. Trust me when I say that."

He responded "Even if I can't help, I can be there for you just to listen."

She rejected his offer and said "No, I don't need that. What I need to do is go in there and get over and done with this with my father and see what tomorrow brings for me."

Puzzled he asked "With your father? Did you do something to get you into trouble?"

She saw that if she did not get out of the car he might ask more questions, so she just kept quiet and opened the door of the car as fast as she could and got out.

Before entering her house she listened carefully to hear if her father was still awake. She did not hear his voice in the lounge. All she could hear was Nomalanga's movie playing. She was not sure but the chances were that Mr Ngcobo was already sleeping because usually he talked loud if he was in the lounge and Nomalanga would not be able to watch one of her movies until he went to sleep. But sometimes he would watch the movie with Nomalanga if it was a good one.

In order to avoid any surprises Thembi decided to go in through the kitchen door around the back of the house. She grabbed the door handle and swung it while pushing the door, it was already locked. She then knocked three times. Within seconds she heard footsteps approaching the door. Then she heard the key being inserted in the keyhole, turning as the door unlocks. The door was then opened from the inside. It was Nomalanga.

With a smile but in a hurry to go back to her movie Nomalanga greeted and went back to the lounge.

Thembi then walked in and looked around. Everyone was already in their bedroom except Nomalanga. She was relieved. In she went to her own bedroom as well. In the

bedroom, she wanted to go to the main bathroom and take a bath hence her bedroom did not have its own bathroom, but she was afraid her father might come out of his bedroom for something and then bump into her. She therefore decided to forget about taking a bath and go straight to bed. Luckily she was tired hence she had first went to the mall before going to Vicky' s work earlier, therefore she fell asleep within a few minutes of getting in bed.

\*\*\*\*\*

It eight o' clock in the morning, the sun is shining, a beautiful Saturday. It' s a big room, big bed, one female. She is dead but breathing, awake but sleeping. A minute passes; she looks at the door, at the floor and at the ceiling. She turns towards the screams. She sits up, trying to make sense of the situation, low energy, agitated.

"Who is that screaming this early in the morning?" She realises it' s her mother. She gets off the bed, walks towards the door. She stops, her mother is really screaming. "Oh no, that cannot happen." She thinks again "Oh no, Lord please tell me that dad did not tell my mom without giving me the heads up."

As she reached the door she stopped and leaned against it as she slowly lost her balance. "Oh Lord! She knows and she' s crying. What am I going to do?"

While leaning against the door someone knocked on the very same door. That someone was Mantombi. "Thembi, Thembi wake up I must tell you something."

Thembi did not even put up a fight but just moved away from the door as Mantombi pushed it. Thembi was not crying but her heart was forcefully pounding.

Mantombi then said "Please sit down my child I need to tell you something."

As Thembi sat on the bed Mantobi continued "Your father has left us."

Thembi did not know whether to be relieved or cry.

Mantombi continued "He left early this morning and went to the office at work. The police say he then shot himself when he arrived at the office. We are still not sure whether he really did shoot himself or it was someone who made it look like that. Remember, your father was involved in a lot of business deals these days."

Thembi just stood up and walked towards her crying mother in the lounge. At this moment Nomalanga was in her room crying as well. The neighbours were already in

the lounge doing what African women do when they hear someone crying. They all come as fast as they can to your house and walk about in the house while saying "Mm mm mm, nc nc nc. Awubandla (Aw shame)" until you have calmed down. When she reached the lounge she could not look at crying mother, so she turned back and went to her room.

\*\*\*\*\*

It has been three days since we last mentioned Thembi. Her father is dead, her mother and the others still do not believe he killed himself, but Thembi knows he did. The others believe someone killed him and forged a letter. This letter goes like this:

"For the wages of sin is death. There are things a man cannot live with. But also remember: For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. Don't cry for me. Farewell my loved ones"

To jog your memory, at the beginning of this prose you were told about a man called Michael Mthethwa, a colleague of Mr Ngcobo, who was a businessman and was nearly murdered by his wife for an insurance claim, and Thembi never got a chance to meet this colleague because she was away for an all night study for the upcoming examinations at Vicky's house. Well, the day before this day she got a chance to finally meet him. In case you have not put two and two together you might want to know that Michael Mthethwa was also Mike. Yes, Micheal Mthethwa, who was Mr Ngcobo's business associate turned out to be Mike, the very same man that introduced Thembi into prostitution.

This seemed to be the last thing that Thembi needed to push her to the end. She realised that her life was not a dream but a nightmare that she was bound to wake up from, wake up to a world called death.

What day was it today? Tuesday morning. Spha had just come back from dropping her mother at work in town. So he had decided to drop by Thembi's house and check on her just like he did the day before. When he arrived at her house he got out of the car and went around the back door of the house. He did not want to get in through the front door hence Thembi's mother was in the lounge in mourning with

all other relatives and friends getting in and out from all over to pay their last respects.

As he approached the kitchen door he saw Mantombi. He asked her if Thembi was home. "I think she' s in her room, go on."

In he went. In the bedroom door he knocked but there was no answer. Again he knocked and still there was no answer. Finally he decided to push the door. There was no one in the room. But before he left the room he noticed a note on top of the bedside table. His curiosity became stronger than his manners. He could not look away, he saw that this letter was addressed to Thembi' s mother. He could see that it was written by Thembi' s handwriting. He could also see that it was stained with tears all over. Without thinking twice he pulled out his hand and grabbed the letter. This letter began with the following words:

"Dear Mom. I know that dad did not want you to know this, in his own way he was trying to save you from disappointment and pain, but I cannot let you live with hatred and wonder, thinking someone else might have killed him. Dad did kill himself and I know why. You will probably hate me as well for what I' m about to tell you but at least you will know the truth. Let me start at the beginning. On the day of our matriculation ball, three years ago, Bonga..."

He read the whole letter. In this letter Thembi was telling her mother about everything she had gone through from the incident with Bonga to all that happened until she realised that she had been selling her body to her father, and of course the reason her father had killed himself. At the end of the letter there were the following: "...Like father like daughter, the wages of sin is death. Goodbye my darling mother."

Without wasting a second further Spha stood up and chucked the letter in his pocket, and then ran to the kitchen. "Thembi is not in her room! Where is she?" as he asked Mantombi in a high pitched tone. His voice sounded like he had saliva the size of a tennis ball stuck in his throat. Mantombi did not have an answer for him.

"She was here a moment ago." was her response. She wasn' t even looking at him, she was busy stirring something on the stove, and therefore she did not even notice his sweating face as he asked. Then he rushed out of the house. He rushed to the tool house, to the garage, to the outside cottage where visitors slept, but still



couldn't find her. He then went out the gate. She was nowhere to be found. He saw an old lady coming from the local shop with bread and eggs on her hands. He ran towards her. He asked her if she'd seen Thembi. The old lady had indeed seen her. She told him that Thembi went up the road towards the railway.

Now, Thembi was standing next to the railway line, patiently, she was waiting for what was to be the last thing that ever touched her while she was still alive. Of course her eyes were like angry clouds on a stormy day, from her eyes to her chest it was a waterfall, and like thunder her heart was pounding forcefully as the train approached from her left side. Spha from the right side towards her, he seemed to be mirroring the speed of the train, running and screaming his lungs out "No, no, no, no, no Thembi listen to me, you don't want to do it..."

Unfortunately his voice was not loud enough to penetrate against the vulgar sounds of the train's horn. He tried again to shout louder but still seemed to have fallen short to get to Thembi's ears.

Thirteen seconds later Spha was on the other side of the rail looking at Thembi, with his eyes popped out as if he was the one who had just died. In fact they were both looking at each other.

We do not know why Thembi decided she was not going to feed the multi-headed snake any more, why she thought she was worth living after all, and why she thought she still deserved to breathe after what she had done had made her feel so ashamed about herself. But we do know that one of the reasons was because it was the first time in her whole life she ever saw a man running face to face against a train on her behalf without really asking for anything in return or doing it because it was his duty. Unexpectedly Spha had proven to be a real friend even though he was a man, a man that needed her rather than wanted her. As they walked back towards home they both realised that life might be a dream or a nightmare that one is bound to wake up from, wake up to an unknown world that is called death, but one does not have to go through it alone. Though she still breathes today we all know that she died that day. In fact they both died that day. Like a phoenix they had to die in order to rise from the ashes.

**The End**