

*“For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes in Him will not be
put to shame.’ ”*

- Romans 10:11

“Today is a beautiful day,” she thought to herself.

She was sitting outside on the campus benches. The sun was out but, the heat of its rays were filtered by the clouds and gentle cool breezes. Class had just ended, and finally, she could be with her friends. She was feeling quite eager to meet them as they had plans for the evening.

Her friends told her that tonight they were going out. Going out was not really her thing. She did not feel comfortable in loud spaces. She was what her boyfriend called a plain Jane. And she totally agreed with him. On that cool Friday afternoon, she was wearing a simple pair of slim-fit jeans and a beige shirt with the words “Stay Living” written in bold Jumble font. Her figure was fairly ample to provide her womanly frame. She had her hair tied back in a simple bun, and her brown skin absorbed the sun’s rays and reflected the golden hues hidden in them.

Indeed, she was a plain Jane as she looked at her nails. There were no acrylic nails attached or anything of the sort. They were simply cut to be presentable and to avoid her nails collecting dirt.

This was her life for as long as she could remember. As she sat on the campus bench analysing her nails and fingers, her friends arrived.

“Hey Nthabi,” Thabang said. Thabang was her close friend. Thabang was also with Portia, Thembi and Omphile. The gang of four had went to the cafeteria to purchase snacks and drinks to enjoy among themselves.

Thabang was the only male in the group. However, the ladies did not mind him. He was a chilled, relaxed guy. His complexion was as light as the desert sands. He was a tall, extremely charming young man who would hypnotise you with the stare of his hazel-coloured eyes. Even though his lady friends told him

that he was a charming man who would easily win the hearts of many women, his confidence, more accurately, the lack of it, would get in the way. But this did not prevent him from being a good friend.

Portia and Omphile were the total opposites of Nthabi. Both ladies wore weaves that reached just below their hips. Their nails glistened with acrylic coatings that were reapplied and repolished almost weekly. They were the type of ladies who wore expensive perfume that lingered after they exited a venue, or introduced them to a new group of people without noticing them at first.

On that day, Portia was wearing a Michael Kors floral dress with a handbag from the same fashion house. Omphile was also wearing a Michael Kors floral dress, but her handbag was embroidered with the two most recognisable fashion designer initials: LV. They were the glam girls on campus, and they knew it.

Nthabi's last friend was Thembi. Thembi was not a glam girl or a slay queen, as the men in her class called Portia and Omphile. She was not a plain Jane like Nthabi either. Thembi was a fitness bunny. On that Friday, she was wearing a thick black pair of tights with a corresponding thick black Adidas sports bra. Her Zulu body was toned immaculately by her strict discipline towards her working out and diet. Even though she was not a promiscuous lady, she enjoyed the attention that she received from men who passed her.

Apparently, she once told her friends that after gym one day, she had forgotten her wallet at the commune. And on that day, she was at Spar buying her groceries. At the teller's desk, after the cashier had run all her items, she only noticed then that she had forgotten her wallet. She said that the man behind her was so smitten by her that when he saw her distress, he paid for her

groceries. In return, he only wanted a coffee date.

As different in personalities as Nthabi's friends were, they complemented each other perfectly like cheese and ham slammed between two slices of bread. As her friends sat beside her on the bench, Thabang decided to open the discussion.

"Guys, are you ready for tonight?" He asked.

"Tonight?" Nthabi asked.

"Yes, Chomi, tonight," Portia said as she opened a box of French fries. She took out a tiny plastic fork and carefully broke each French fry she ate in half before eating it.

"Uhm, what's happening again?" Nthabi asked her friends, trying to be ignorant of the night's plans.

"No, she remembers. She's acting dumb," Omphile commented. She too took a tiny plastic fork and began to eat the fries like Portia, carefully breaking each French fry in half before eating them.

"Yes, she remembers," Thabang said with his box of fries. He knew that Portia and Omphile only added salt and Six Gun to their fries. They once told him that trying to eat food with sauces without the proper eating utensils is unladylike and might spill on their clothing. So his fries were loaded with mayo and mustard. And he did not divide each French Fry into two before eating it. He multiplied them.

"Oh yes, I remember," Nthabi responded. She knew her friends would not let her win the argument.

"So ja," Thabang said after devouring two French fries at a go," a few friends of mine asked to tag along. Cool guys. Thembi, do

you remember when we went to the action sports centre in town?”

“Yeah,” Thembi responded. Thembi was not the loquacious type. She possessed an Angelia Jolie-like aura. She was the kind of woman who would have land mines around her house. On her wrist, she had an abstract tattoo that she said was the marriage of the sun and the moon. She was the action hero of her movie.

“Remember Jack, Dylan, Siphon and Teboho? Yeah, those are the dudes that want to tag along. Really cool guys,” Thabang said, already halfway through his fries.

“Noh, that’s okay with me. But tell them we’re not hoodrats. Not that we need their money, but I mean, look at us,” Omphile said, pointing at herself and Portia in their matching Michael Kors floral dresses.

“No, they’re not deadweights,” Thabang chuckled, “they’re solid.”

Nthabi listened as their friends continued to plan the evening. With each French fry she ate from her box that had tomato sauce along with the salt and Six Gun, she could not help but feel anxious. She felt anxious about the whole outing. She felt anxious that she would be with new people she did not know.

Even though she trusted Thabang and knew Thabang would never introduce her to parasitic predators, her anxiety could not allow her to be calm.

Thembi saw that Nthabi was withdrawn from the conversation.

She gently sat next to her and said, “Don’t worry, I will be with you.”

The words went straight to Nthabi's heart. She felt the anxiety leave her nerves. She looked at Thembi and gave her a warm hug. She felt ready for the night to come.

It was around 8 pm that evening. Nthabi and her friends had agreed that they would meet outside of campus. As she was preparing to leave, Nthabi took her phone to call her boyfriend.

"Hey Babe," Nthabi said.

"Babygal," Mpho responded.

"I don't know how to tell you, but I'm going out with Thabang and them tonight," Nthabi said. She thought mentioning Thabang's name would calm her boyfriend, Mpho. Mpho and Thabang were friends from high school as it was Thabang who introduced Mpho to her in their first year of university.

Mpho laughed first and said, "Babygal, you told me last week.

Make sure you give your phone to Thabang, or else I'll be that guy who'll call every 10 minutes. Have fun and remember I love you."

Mpho dropped the call.

Nthabi felt warm inside. She started feeling excited about the night. Her boyfriend had placed full trust in her, and she would not break it. A final look in the mirror, and she saw a touch of pink on her cheeks. Mpho's words were still rushing through her veins.

Moments later, Portia called her, telling her that they were outside. Portia and Thembi had cars of their own. They decided to use Portia's car instead. Nthabi dashed out of her apartment and went to the car.

"YAS QUEEN!" yelled Omphile as Nthabi entered the car. Nthabi for the night wore a simple yet elegant evening dress that her mom bought her. It was an emerald green Milady's dress that hugged her body perfectly. The dress revealed her elegant body, which she hid during the day with slightly oversized jeans and shirts. She wore simple make-up that was not over the top but enough to accentuate her full lips and perfectly trimmed eyebrows. That evening, she was not the plain Jane that Mpho knew and loved. She was Cleopatra, a goddess whom kings and noblemen died for.

Omphile and Portia also wore evening dresses. Omphile wore a golden dress that hugged her under her elegant bust, and Portia wore a black number that had similar dimensions. Portia and Omphile dressed like twins. 90% of the time, they wore the same outfits, the same nail designs and the same hairstyles. It could be the fact that they lived together and developed a strong bond, as they have similar interests. Whatever it was, they were two peas in a pod that were soaking in water that streamed clean from the deep springs of Finland.

Thembi was not in the pod. She wore chunky black tactical boots and a pair of black, baggy, male-designed G-Star Raw cargo pants. The pockets of the cargo pants were deep and hid items without anyone knowing what was in them. She replaced her earlier Adidas Sports Bra with a Nike-branded one.

Nthabi marvelled at how, even though Thembi was sitting down, her abs were still faintly visible to the naked eye. Nthabi sat at the back with Thembi. With Portia in the driver seat, Omphile

already holding a bottle of Ice Tropez and Thembi looking calm yet focused, the night was ready to begin.

About 20 minutes later, Portia parked her 2014 Mercedes-Benz A200 outside of campus. They were surprised that Thabang and his friends had not arrived. Thabang was an extremely punctual person, so his late arrival was not expected.

“I’m sure they are on their way,” Thembi said. She had opened a bottle of Ice Tropez as well.

There was something that always enticed Nthabi about Thembi. She looked like she was ready for war, but she never lost her womanly charm. She knew Thembi was bisexual. In another lifetime, Nthabi knew she would have been her girlfriend.

Omphile was halfway through her second bottle of the pink sparkling drink. Portia knew not to start drinking yet because she was the designated driver for the ladies that night. Nthabi was feeling anxious as this was not something she was used to. It was the first time she was wearing an evening dress with 6-inch heels. If she went out, she went with Mpho, and usually, they would be at her place or Mpho’s place before the stroke of midnight. It was her first time being out with friends at those hours of the night.

Thembi saw the nerves made Nthabi uncomfortable. She placed her drink down and went over to her. Thembi simply hugged Nthabi. In her ear, Thembi softly said, “I am with you.”

Her words calmed her. As she was melting in Thembi’s embrace, she heard Omphile yell Thabang’s name.

“Thabang!” yelled Omphile.

“Phile!” yelled Thabang.

Thabang stepped out of a black 2013 Audi RS3. He was dressed in all black from head to toe. He seemed more confident than usual. That’s when Nthabi saw the bottle of Corona in his hand.

“Sorry we’re late,” Thabang said as he hugged Omphile,” Teboho had an issue at work, so we thought we could wait for him. But noh, the issue could not be resolved, and so he said we should leave him. He’ll join next time.”

Thabang hugged Omphile and then hugged Portia. As he was doing so, the driver of the RS3 stepped out of the car. Nthabi could tell that he looked slightly older than them. She could tell that he was not a student.

“This is my good friend, Dylan,” Thabang introduced him. Portia was instantly smitten. She instantly turned her charms on and made it clear who she wanted to spend the rest of the evening with.

Dylan looked like a lawyer or an accountant. He looked like someone whose job performance is directly tied to how he visually represents himself. The suit he wore fit him perfectly. Nthabi heard Portia whisper to Omphile that the suit was bespoke. He wore dark tan oxfords and a dark blue dress shirt that he unbuttoned at the collar.

Dylan could see that Poria was smitten, and so he began introducing himself first to her. As he extended his hand out to Portia to greet her, his perfectly chiselled teeth gave him a smile fit for Vogue magazine. He trimmed his beard finely, and his jawline was crisp. Nthabi indeed found Dylan attractive, but not her. He was perfect for Portia.

As Thabang was explaining Teboho's work issue to Nthabi, a 2016 Hyundai Atos parked behind the RS3. Thabang threw his hands in the air and yelled a loud:

“YO!”

As the Atos parked behind the RS3, the front passenger seat opened first. The man who stepped out was exactly like Dylan but mixed with a bit of Thabang. Instead of oxford dress shoes, this guy had on White Cement Air Jordan 3s. Instead of a dress shirt, he had on a fine slim-fit white summer jersey. He still had the features that resembled Dylan, but he was more casual.

“Hi guys, I'm Sipho,” the guy introduced himself. Portia introduced herself but wasting no time, quickly went back to Dylan. Omphile had just finished the second bottle of Tropez when she saw Sipho. Nthabi believed that Omphile's mind was already on a boat to Miami when she greeted Sipho by saying: “Hey, tall, dark and handsome.”

Nthabi noticed that the driver of the Atos was still in the car. The car lamp shone dimly on his face. That guy did not look like Dylan or Sipho. He had a bit of roughness to him. The beanie he wore hid his hair, but he neatly rolled it slightly above his ears.

He looked focused on his phone or something on his lap. She kept looking to see the features of the driver when the driver looked and met her gaze. He did not pick his head up. He simply looked up using his eyes. The intensity that he had looking down was still intact as he met Nthabi's eyes. Nthabi instantly looked away.

“Let's go, guys. Jack is not about that meet and greet life,” Thabang said. At this point, it seemed like everyone had their relevant person for the night. It was still a friend's night out, but the social die had been cast. It was made clear when Portia asked

campus security to park her car on the campus grounds so she could go with Dylan in the RS3. Omphile took her third bottle of Ice Tropez and hopped in the back of the RS3 with Sipho. And so, Thabang, Thembi and Nthabi joined Jack in the Atos.

“Awe, Brada!” Thabang, with his Corona greeted Jack.

“My Brada!” Jack responded. He did not respond with the same energy, but there was some intensity that compensated for it.

“Guys, this is Jack. He does not talk. Thembi, see something similar?” Thabang jokingly introduced Jack to Thembi and Nthabi.

Jack, unlike Dylan and Sipho, did not give an over-the-top greeting. He simply looked into his rearview mirror and nodded his head. Nthabi could see he was smiling, but the smile was not for them. It seemed to be towards Thabang. It was the smile of old friends meeting up after a long time.

Unlike Dylan and Sipho, Jack was not as clean and crisp. He did not emit expensive scents of oud from Tom Ford like Sipho or expensive old leather from Ralph Lauren like Dylan. He had a natural scent. A sweet, unique blend of him filled the car.

Judging his skin, his nails and the state of his car, he was clean. But a subtle clean. It looked like this was him, and he did not have to prove himself to anyone. Nthabi looked at Thembi, and she noticed how Thembi was trying not to look at Jack. Nthabi felt jealous.

“Nthabi, give me your phone, please. Mpho instructed me to video call him with your phone when we meet,” Thabang said with one extended hand to the backseat.

Hearing Mpho’s name quickly brought Nthabi back to reality.

She quickly remembered Mpho's last words. She forced the jealousy out of her mind and heart. She sent Mpho a text first, saying they are now heading out. Mpho responded with a heart emoji captioned, "I love you". Her cheeks went red, and she gave Thabang the phone.

Moments later, Nthabi was surprised that they went to a house party instead of the club. However, this was not a random house party. The house they went to was deep in the richer sides of the city. It was a beautiful house that looked presidential.

To Nthabi's eyes, the mansion was not packed to capacity. The DJ was playing nostalgic house tracks, and the music was not too loud. It was loud enough to get people to dance, but still soft for those who wished to have conversations between their drinks.

They parked outside the mansion and Thabang quickly hopped out of the Atos to talk with the security guard who was screening Omphile, Portia, Dylan and Sipho in the RS3. Thabang pulled a couple of papers that looked like printed-out tickets from his jacket. He gave them to the security guard. The short guard shortly yelled for a small-looking guy with bands to wrap around their wrists.

They all got out of their respective cars and waited patiently for the small man to wrap the bands around their wrists. As Nthabi was standing outside, she stood next to Thembi and Jack. They looked like the perfect couple. Jack was well built, but you could tell his body could never produce a 6-pack. He wore simple Panda Dunks with a pair of jeans that looked like he bought from Edgars. He wore an oversized black shirt with the sleeves resting slightly above his elbows. He noticed that he had neatly tattooed an X on the upper part of his forearm.

Nthabi saw his facial features. She felt her heart begin to flutter. She began to feel heat in her stomach. Jack had a clean, rough look. His skin was clean and well-maintained, but she could tell that he had never gone for a facial in his life. His small goatee was messy but attractive. She saw him smile and saw that, unlike Dylan, he had a cute, crooked smile that suited his facial features. She saw Thembi wrapping her fingers around his. Nthabi felt jealous.

After about 5 minutes, the small man was finally done wrapping the bands over their wrists.

“Thabang, my plug! VIP!” yelled Portia. Nthabi could tell she had one or two extra drinks in the RS3.

They got into the mansion. It was not what Nthabi was expecting. But in the same breath, it fit the choice of her outfit for the evening. The air was filled with good music and laughter all around. In one section, there was an area dedicated to food, and that’s where most individuals were sitting. They decided to head to that area as well.

“I did not get VIP tickets for us to sit next to braai smoke,” Thabang said jokingly. Portia laughed and agreed. And so they merely ordered the food and told the chef that they were in the VIP section. The chef told them that he would bring the food to them in about an hour or so. That did not faze them as they had just arrived. Thabang then led the gang into the mansion and went to the first floor in which the whole floor was dedicated as the VIP section.

The first floor was not like the ground floor. It was dimly lit, providing close intimacy. It was laid out as a lounge with large round sofas placed carefully around large round glass coffee tables. The seating was arranged in such a way that waiters from the bars and the chef’s waiters could move easily and freely in

the space without invading people's space. Thabang identified an area at the back that overlooked the party down below, and they followed him to the spot.

Nthabi did not know exactly how to feel. She was expecting loud music and the smell of cheap perfume infused with cigarettes and alcohol. She was not expecting a sophisticated house party for elites. But in the same breath, she was thankful that for the first night out with her friends, it was something she felt she could handle.

She enjoyed the vibe. The weather was pleasant that evening. She enjoyed the music, and she enjoyed the company of her friends. And even though it made her feel uneasy, she enjoyed the endless stares of men as she sat with her friends.

"Where's Portia and Dylan?" asked Thembi.

"I'm not sure, I think on the dance floor," responded Nthabi. Seeing Thembi with Jack reignited the jealousy. She tried not to show it.

"Okay," Thembi said. Without a care for those around her, Thembi pulled a pre-rolled joint from one of the many pockets of her cargo pants. She lit it up and inhaled a huge amount of the smoke into her lungs. She slowly exhaled.

"Here, try it out," Thembi said as she extended the blunt to Nthabi.

Nthabi had never smoked before. All her life, she was told weed is bad for her. But here was Thembi, the peak display of how an African woman's body should look. Thembi looked her deep in the eyes. Thembi had the same intensity that Jack had in his eyes earlier when he was sitting in the car. The eyes weakened her, and she took the blunt.

Immediately, she felt light on her shoulders. It felt like the unnamed, invisible burden that rested on her shoulders vanished into thin air. Her body relaxed, and she felt the tense muscles that she didn't even know were tense become relaxed. At that point, she understood why Black Sabbath called weed the sweet leaf.

Nthabi saw Thembi look at her with a smile. Nthabi saw that Jack, next to her, looked at her with the same smile. She smiled back at them. She saw Thembi pull another pre-rolled joint from the many packets of her cargo pants.

“Enjoy that one, Babygal,” Thembi told her. Hearing Thembi call her Babygal made her blush.

The night went on, and Nthabi had not moved. The only time she moved was when she excused herself to the ladies' room. Jack had ordered two Hennessy V.S. from the bar. Those two bottles were being shared between the three of them. Portia and Dylan were nowhere to be found. Thabang was having the time of his life on the dance floor, and Omphile and Sipho had disappeared somewhere in the darkness.

The food had not yet arrived, even though it was an hour and 45 minutes after the initial hour that the chef had promised that the food would arrive. But they didn't make a fuss about it as Nthabi recalled a waiter coming to them to tell them that loadshedding had kicked in and they were using alternative energy along with the braai.

Nthabi felt calm. She could not stop herself from smiling. The waiter made a delicious cocktail from the bought cognacs. She did not taste the alcohol in the cognacs, but she definitely felt the effects. Along with the second joint that Thembi gave her, she knew that she was in the Port of Miami.

At the moment, Nthabi understood why people smoke. She understood why people drink. She understood why people spend so much money on going out.

She felt calm and comfortable in her skin. She felt like she was accepted by those around her. The endless men who kept checking her out made her feel worthy. Her inner insecurities, fears, doubts and worries evaporated with each exhale of the sweet leaf. Never in her life had she felt this happy. Not even when Mpho proposed to her and she said yes.

She looked around and saw Thabang come with the food.

Breathing heavily with sweat rolling down his forehead, Thabang said, "I think we can leave now. The weather is changing, and I had Bra Mike saying that the generators and inverters he has won't last anymore."

"Yeah, you are right," Jack said.

Nthabi had forgotten about Jack. Hearing his voice made her blush and her knees weaken.

Jack and Thembi stood up first. They looked like a couple already. They were not holding hands or folding each other's arms. But their aura blended perfectly. Nthabi saw Thembi look at her. Both their eyes were red, and Thembi in a slow, sweet voice said, "Let's go, Babygal."

Nthabi could not help herself. She softly bit her lips and lowered her eyes at Thembi. She saw Thembi give off a slight smile. Jack began moving forward, and with that invisible connection between him, Jack pulled Thembi along with him.

Nthabi tried to walk behind them but tripped on her heels and fell on the sofa. Luckily for her, Thabang was collecting the remaining cognac and saw her fall. So not to make her feel bad, Thabang laughed it off and helped her to her feet.

“Thanks, Friend,” Nthabi said to Thabang,” and oh, don’t tell Mpho, please.”

Thabang merely laughed and helped Nthabi to the car.

As they got outside, the lights in and around the mansion died. It was shortly after midnight. Nthabi saw Dylan and Portia in the front seats of the RS3. Portia’s hair suggested that they were in the car the whole time.

Sipho and Omphile were both beyond rational drunk and were kissing wildly on the back passenger seats of the RS3. Thembi sat at the back of the Atos, also looking drunk. But the two joints she smoked made her drunkenness as calm as the ocean during a low tide.

“Brada, I’m drunk,” Jack told Thabang,” drive the car, Homie.”

As Jack said this, he gave Thabang the car keys, and he launched himself at the back with Thembi. Thabang opened the boot of the car to place the remaining alcohol and the untouched food. After closing the boot, Thabang helped Nthabi into the front passenger seat of the car, and he went to the driver's seat.

“The night is still young,” yelled Sipho through the open window.

Thabang rolled the window and said, ”I agree. But loadshedding. Let’s just go to Dylan’s place. But wait. Sipho, let me go to Bra Mike to ask for some drivers. You guys won’t be able to drive”

Nthabi saw Thabang run off back into the mansion. She looked at the RS3 behind them. She did not see Portia's head. But she saw Dylan and her hair on his lap.

"Why did Thabang leave the lights on?" she thought to herself as she saw Portia raise her head from underneath the Audi's windscreen and fix her hair.

Outside the car, she saw Omphile kissing Siphso wildly. For some reason, they decided to exit the car. Perhaps because of Portia and Dylan. She saw Omphile's hands were fighting the belt buckle that was blocking her from what she really wanted.

Nthabi felt ashamed but, weirdly, wanted to watch. She wanted to watch her friends embrace their sexuality. Her friends were the hottest and most popular girls on campus. Students and staff members desired both of them but could never get them.

They were free. They were not ashamed of their sexuality. She realised how men desired them over the good church girls. Even the church "men of god" desired these so-called "harlots"; as one of the church girls in their class called Portia and Omphile when they were dressed in dresses so tight and short that every step they took, they had to adjust the dress from revealing too much.

She felt her eyes lower a bit. The waiter had poured her cocktail in a bottle, and Thabang placed it in the cup holder next to her. She took a huge swig of the cocktail. The alcohol rushed straight to her head. Portia seemed to have fixed her hair, and Dylan's hands were waving on the roof of the car. Omphile outside had finally wrestled the belt off Siphso, and now she was faced with the tricky buttons of the premium jeans he wore. Nthabi felt hot in her body.

She envied her friends for their freedom. She envied her friends' comfortability in their sexuality. She envied her friends' strengths in being intimate with men they had just met. She envied their resolve to get what they wanted regardless of what people say or think. She envied friends as she felt her nipples begin to pierce through her dress.

Thabang was still not back, and the envy in her body was starting to become toxic. She took another huge swig of her cocktail. She could not resist her hand reaching for her breasts. The feeling of nipples rubbing under the silk of her dress made her feel good. She tried to avoid watching Portia and Omphile. So her eyes wandered about and landed on the rearview mirror of the Atos.

Her jealousy returned with the same precise intensity as stepping on a Lego block. She saw Jack kissing Thembi. Or was it Thembi kissing Jack?

She could not tell. Jack's hand was underneath Thembi's sports bra. Her full breast was already overflowing over it. Thembi's hand was buttoning Jack's pants. Jack pulled Thembi close and turned her head towards him. Doing so, he looked straight ahead.

His eyes met Nthabi's.

Nthabi could feel the intensity in his eyes. It was only a brief moment, but it was enough for her to feel slippery between her thighs.

Guilt riddled her at first, as it was only Mpho who could make her feel that way. The fact that another man is making her feel roused riddled with her guilt. Mpho was all she knew. She would find certain classmates and other men attractive, but never had another man made her feel this way. She was taught, and she believed that sex comes from loving a person. That sexual intimacy is the peak of romantic love. Yet here she was. She was

ready to reach this peak with a total stranger.

A deep feeling of guilty pleasure made her quiver in forbidden excitement.

As she was looking in the rearview mirror, she noticed that Thembi had turned the tables. She was the one now who had pulled Jack and Jack's head towards her. In doing so, Jack's hand slipped out of the sports bra along with Thembi's full breast. Like Jack, Thembi gave a quick look forward. She had the same intensity in her eyes as Jack. Nthabi felt a deep well of jealousy stir inside of her.

Her nipples hardened and were visible on her emerald dress. She could not resist. She looked at Thembi and wanted her. Nthabi desired her. She did not care that she was a girl. She did not care that her mom would curse her or judge her. She did not care what the world would think of her. She wanted Thembi.

Seeing Thembi's beautiful body move and swirl under Jack's touch caused a second quiver of pleasure in her body. She regretted her dress being long, for she felt she wanted to touch herself. She heard Thembi give a soft moan. Jack's hand was firmly tugged under the cargo pants. This drove Nthabi to a point of no return, and she felt her legs begin to shiver.

"Ok, let's..." Thabang said as he hopped in the car. Nthabi felt embarrassed. Her arousal was obvious. Thabang said nothing and started the car.

Nthabi felt embarrassed that Thabang got in the car with one hand on her breast and the other pulling up her dress.

Driving to Dylan's place, Thabang did not say anything but just played music and talked about the party. However, Nthabi noticed that Thabang kept looking in the rearview mirror and her.

Jack and Thembi had stopped kissing passionately, but that didn't stop them from giving each other soft kisses.

Nthabi saw that Thabang saw she was focused on the two. Not knowing who she was looking at, Thabang assumed Nthabi was looking at Jack. So Thabang said, "We are about 5 minutes from Dylan. I am sure Mpho is sleeping, but I think I should tell him we are still okay."

Nthabi was surprised when she heard Thabang's comment. She did not feel guilty. She did not feel remorse. She did not feel ashamed. Instead, she felt enraged.

She felt enraged that Mpho was the only man who knew her sexually. She felt enraged that Mpho had sent half of her lobola, yet she was only in her final year of studies. She felt enraged that Mpho has had time to explore his sexuality and understand what he likes and what he doesn't like. She felt enraged that her sexual preferences were guided by Mpho's sexual preferences. She furiously drank the last bit of the cocktail. The alcohol did not help calm her rage.

They were all sitting in Dylan's TV room. Luckily, the electricity had returned. Thabang, the only one who was still sober, decided to warm the food. Portia and Dylan were sitting on the large couch that sat across the wall-mounted TV. Omphile and Siphon were sitting adjacent to them. In between them, Dylan had prepared a hookah for them to enjoy. They were clearly in their little worlds as Nthabi realised that she, Thabang, Jack and Thembi were forgotten by them.

Dylan decided to play soft jams on YouTube from his TV. Omphile and Portia heard their favourite song and wasted no time getting up to dance. The tequila shots they had when they arrived at Dylan's house re-set the effects of the alcohol in their system. Portia and Omphile began to dance with each other in front of Dylan and Sipho. Dylan, reached over to dim the lights in the TV room.

The atmosphere instantly intensified.

Portia and Omphile began to dance sensually together. Outside, Jack and Thembi were stargazing, sharing a blunt. Thabang was standing with Nthabi in the kitchen.

"I am worried about you," Thabang said.

"Why?" Nthabi asked. She, too, was under the influence of the shots.

"Mpho is a close friend. I purposely drank less than two Coronas so that I could be sober enough to protect you," Thabang said.

The statement ignited the rage she felt earlier in the car. Who said she needed protection?

Thabang noticed the change in her demeanour. He looked around and saw that everyone was preoccupied with someone. Feeling defeated, Thabang said, "Food is in the microwave. I'm just going to call Mpho to tell him you're safe, and then I'm going to my girl a few houses down. But if you need me, please call me. Your phone is Jack's car."

With that, Thabang left the house.

Nthabi sat in the kitchen by herself. She watched Omphile and Portia dance for the two men. At this point, they stripped their clothes with only their panties remaining.

Watching Omphile and Portia move their bodies in unison hypnotised Nthabi. The question plagued her mind once more: how could they do it? Not only were they dancing for two strange men, but they were dancing together. Nthabi watched as Omphile's breasts danced and swirled with Portia's. There was a poetic beauty to watching the two women dance together.

He noticed Dylan enjoying the show. His clear white teeth shone brightly in the light amber atmosphere of his TV room. Siphos, as well, was mesmerised by the dance. He lay on the couch with one hand holding the hookah pipe and his other hand in his pants.

Nthabi felt lonely. She felt she was alone. She sat in a melancholic state for a while in the kitchen. She knew that Mpho would cure her loneliness. She knew her loneliness could be cured through a new bond. She wished she were dancing for a stranger. She felt herself feel the pressing need to be alive in her heart. A well of tears formed around her eyes.

As the first teardrop was about to fall, she felt a warm hand on her shoulder.

"Come with me," Thembi said.

Hearing Thembi's voice filled her with a warm love. Thembi's voice felt like hot chocolate during winter. Her heart felt light and fluffy. A feeling that Mpho no longer made her feel.

Thembi held her hand and they went outside.

Outside Dylan's house, there was an enclosed lapa. Nthabi felt safe holding Thembi's hand. She looked back at the house to see if anyone could see her happiness with Thembi. But it seemed they were waiting for her to leave. Portia and Omphile had stopped dancing together and were giving the men lap dances-without the panties.

Nthabi did not feel envy. She was with Thembi. She was with her protector. The reason Thembi wore large cargo pants, especially in such situations, is because, in one of the pockets, there's always a weapon.

She remembered how one time she was at the ATM with Thembi and two guys tried to rob them. Thembi was wearing similar cargo pants. Nthabi was scared to the point she couldn't talk or move. What made the situation worse was that one of the guys held a knife. As the guys were about to move in to steal the money, Thembi pulled a small non-lethal pistol and shot both the guys in the chest. The pistol did not carry enough power to kill a man, but it had more than enough to make them wet their pants and crumble like blackboard chalk on the concrete pavement.

Unlike Mpho, who would have given the money to the robbers in the name of being safe.

They finally reached the lapa. As they entered, Nthabi realised that this was where Jack stayed. Maybe they share the rent with Dylan, or he pays Dylan rent, but he could tell by the décor that represented him.

Jack's living space was simple to the core. There was no visible furniture. Even his bed was a futon that he rolled up and placed next to the wall. He only had a TV mounted to the wall and a small JBL sound system placed under the TV. Those were the only articles of furniture that Nthabi saw in the room.

At first, she was startled. She was not used to such emptiness in someone's living space. But she saw how comfortable Thembi was. This made her feel comfortable as well.

"Jack, please light that Earthbomb stick for me and my Baby," Thembi said.

Nthabi felt like a baby being called Baby by Thembi. Nthabi felt weakened by how Thembi had found a way to tame Jack, who seemed like an impenetrable mountain.

Jack did as he was told and lit the incense sticks. He placed them next to his sound system and returned to sit in the centre of the room. Jack had no furniture at all. He did not even have any curtains or blinds to cover his windows.

"Here you go, Baby. Jack is for you," Thembi said. She handed Nthabi a freshly blended cocktail and two muffins. She knew the muffins were from the heavens. She gave Jack a plate of food and one muffin.

"Thank you," Jack responded.

Nthabi could not help but notice that Thembi and Jack were different from others in the TV room. Thembi and Jack spent the entire night talking. Before they went into Jack's lapa, they were outside discussing the stars, the universe and the mystical forces that guide the universe. As they were sitting on the floor, Nthabi could feel their sexual tension. It did not feel like the others' in the TV room, which will probably end when they become sober. Instead, this tension will probably last for a lifetime.

Nthabi wanted to feel the tension, and Thembi could sense that. Thembi was comfortable sitting on the floor with Jack, and so was Jack. They looked like secret lovers. Perhaps that's why Jack smiled when they got in the car on campus. Maybe that's

why Thembi did not pay Dylan or Sipho any attention. But in the same breath, Thembi never told her about Jack. The thought that Thembi kept a secret from her broke her heart.

“What’s wrong, Babygal?” Thembi asked Nthabi, seeing her shoulders slump.

“Uhm, nothing. Nothing,” Nthabi replied.

“Have a muffin and wash it down with the cocktail,” Thembi told her. As she was saying so, she was rolling a joint for Jack.

Nthabi saw that it was not the pre-rolled ones that she got earlier. The love and care that Thembi showed her by giving her the right joints earlier eased her into smoking. No wonder she didn’t cough when she smoked them. But in the same breath, she envied Jack. Why was he getting a special blunt and not her?

She did not want to dwell on the thought, and so she ate the muffin and drank the cocktail. The cocktail tasted better than the one the waiter prepared. She enjoyed it so much that she did not waste time eating her second muffin and washing it down with the cocktail again. She noticed that Jack had eaten a muffin and had not said a single word.

Looking at Jack, the feelings she felt in the car returned. As Jack sat on the floor eating the food that Thembi prepared for him, she felt herself becoming aroused.

While Nthabi and Jack sat together in the TV room, Thembi cooked a simple meal for Jack. She did not give her the food they bought at the party. She envied the idea. But seeing a man enjoying a simple meal of canned fish and pap enticed her. The simplicity of how Thembi can please this seemingly iron-clad man intrigued Nthabi. Nthabi looked at Thembi. She admired her.

As she watched Jack eat, the muffins slowly began altering Ntombi's mind. The libido-inducing incense was starting to thicken the air. Nthabi watched as Thembi stood over her like a goddess.

She had taken off her cargo pants and had only a brown lace panty on. Thembi's body was beautiful. The brown of her skin looked like pillars of polished bronze. As tough and hardcore as she was, she took extra care of herself.

Thembi's legs and entire body were waxed clean. There was not a single strand of hair on her except her eyebrows, eyelashes and hair. Every other inch of her body was smooth.

Nthabi could not resist but admire Thembi. She looked at her well-curated toes and slowly worked her way up. Nthabi felt the urge to hold her calves. She didn't fight the urge.

Her skin was soft. Her skin was smooth. Her skin felt like premium silk. Pressing her fingers on her skin and moving upwards felt like a hot knife cutting through soft butter. As she pulled herself closer to Thembi, she looked up and saw Jack thanking her for the food and walking to the kitchen. Nthabi's head followed Jack to the kitchen. As she saw Jack disappear into the kitchen, she felt a strong tug on her head.

"Focus on me," Thembi told her. She had the joint clasped between her fingers and, with one hand, pulled Nthabi's head up to her thighs.

Nthabi felt at home. She was aroused. She felt like ripping her dress off. She wanted Thembi. She wanted to experience her love. She forgot about Mpho. The feel of Thembi's soft, smooth yet firm thighs led to her feeling a hot throb between her thighs. The muffins kicked in, and she found herself fully focused on Thembi.

Even Thembi was surprised by how Nthabi pulled her to the floor. Jack had returned from the kitchen and had taken the blunt from Thembi. So, luckily, the fall was a safe one.

Thembi loved the aggression. She tried pulling Nthabi towards her, but she fought her off. Nthabi removed her dress so violently that she tore off one of her dress's straps.

She was not wearing a bra. Her panties were as wet as a towel thrown in a puddle of water. She removed them off and removed Thembi's as well.

She lunged at Thembi. She shot for a kiss. The kiss sent shockwaves all over her nervous system. It felt like the first time she ever kissed anyone. Thembi held her head passionately. The kiss was deep. Nthabi kept feeling her body giving short yet intense eruptions. Each felt good.

Thembi forced Nthabi to be beneath her. Her strength was too much for Nthabi. But she loved it. Mpho could never out-wrestle her. Not like this. Thembi raised Nthabi's left leg, keeping her right leg diagonally on the floor. With a burst of bottled sexual tension, Thembi positioned her legs between Nthabi's. She began to passionately and vigorously straddle Nthabi. Nthabi's entire body felt eruptions of intense sexual pleasure. Her body did not stop to quiver and shiver under Thembi's touch.

She could not resist. The pleasures she was experiencing could be heard by all who were awake. The love made between the two was passionate. It felt as if her soul was freed from a barless cage she called love with Mpho. Not ever in her life did she feel this free.

She saw how Jack was standing and watching them. That made her even more aroused. And Thembi could tell she was no longer focused on her. She paused for a moment and told Jack to join

them. Jack obeyed the command. He put the blunt in the kitchen and walked over to join the ladies.

Nthabi wanted to eat him. Jack took off his pants and kneeled on the ground. Nthabi was intimidated by what she saw. But she grabbed it and stuffed it in her mouth. She saw Jack get hurt by how strongly she grabbed. But she didn't care. Her protector controlled his man, and so she could, too.

Thembi decided to stop straddling her. Thembi crawled further down. The touch of her tongue on her sent pleasures her body had never known. In doing so, she felt Jack melt in her mouth remain solid. She felt like she was in heaven. She was experiencing what she wished for. She felt alive.

With her body still shivering from the sensual seismic shockwaves shooting through her body, Thembi ordered Jack to lie down and for Nthabi to get on top of him. Nthabi did not wait for him. She pushed him down, and Jack hit the floor with his head.

But this didn't break the passion experienced. She jumped on him.

She instantly felt filled. Her fingers dug deep into his chest. Thembi was kissing Jack. The sight of watching her protector taming her desire made her want them more. She began to ride him like a jockey trying to win gold with a close competitor by his heels. She was in her own world.

Both Jack and Thembi could tell. Nthabi's eyes were closed shut. She was allowing every inch of her to be filled. She was leaving no area empty. A thought of Mpho came to mind.

Mpho was her first. But now she realised he would never be her last. The faster she rode Jack the deeper her thoughts were.

Mpho would never allow her to kiss another girl. Mpho would never allow her to explore her desires. Mpho would never allow her to experience the pleasure he experiences.

Mpho was a selfish man who had given up his street card when she was just new to the streets. She concluded that Mpho was not the man she wanted in her life. She wanted to erase Mpho from her memory.

As she thought of unexplored sexual pleasures that awaited her, her body froze on her. Jack held her by the waist and drove himself deep in her. With that action, she flooded Jack's living room.

Nthabi fell back, shaking uncontrollably on the floor. Jack and Thembi watched her. They looked at her with eyes of happiness and pride. They were the eyes of a mother finally seeing her child graduate after failing for years. They saw that she was freed from the emotional and sexual bondage she was experiencing. As she lay on the ground, Thembi gently raised her up to sit.

"I love you," Thembi said.

"I love you too," Nthabi said.

Jack walked over to the two girls. He positioned Thembi to lay flat on the floor, where it was still dry. He decided to first ignite a new incense stick and play soft 90s R&B.

He went to his knees, and Thembi watched him. She smiled and braced herself. He held her by the knees and slowly opened her legs. Before he entered his woman, he told Nthabi to sit on

Thembi's face. Her body still shivering from the freedom she now received, she gladly obliged. Jack slowly entered between Thembi's full thighs.

Nthabi softly sat on Thembi's face.

He heard moans muffled by Nthabi's body. Jack held Nthabi by the neck and pulled her forward. He kissed Nthabi slowly and passionately. Thembi's mouth was soaked by Nthabi while Jack was deeply penetrating Thembi.

Little did Nthabi know that Thabang had not gone to his girlfriend. He had gone to get Mpho. When he returned, he walked in as the house was unlocked.

Omphile was sleeping on Sipho's body. But her head was on Dylan's body. Portia was on the floor, completely passed out, with her face fully stained with a white sticky-looking substance.

Thabang could hear a woman from the outside. In his heart, he was hoping it was not Nthabi. Mpho was not interested in investigating the other rooms in the house. Thabang and Mpho went through the outside door towards the screams of the woman.

From afar, they saw the lapa was faintly lit. They could hear that's where the sound came from. Thabang fabricated a story that Jack was crazy and had a gun. In his heart, he was merely trying to protect his friend from doing something stupid.

The closer they came, the clearer the vision got. Through Jack's curtainless window, Thabang and Mpho saw Nthabi. She was the one making the sounds.