

[07/06, 15:01] Martin Martino: #A_PRAYER_AND_A_DOLLAR

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#PROLOGUE

They sat around the fire as they were all lost in a world of their own, the Zambian way of living for them was not something which was friendly.

The Bandas; Mr. Banda had grown up in a shanty compound of Lusaka township, he had no dreams of living big because of the hostile conditions he had grown up in.

At twenty one he met Misozi, his wife. She was only sixteen and had just reached puberty so there was nothing holding them back. Her parents gave her to him for a fifty kwacha note and that is how she had moved in with him.

At seventeen she gave birth to her first child Mabvuto, he was born at a time when they were total droughts in the area and like the sorrow in his mother's name, he too was given the name.

A year later she gave birth to twins; they almost brought her to her death as she was too weak and fragile. She named the babies Masauso and Misozi after her.

Mabvuto who was now twenty four was the black sheep of the family, always getting into trouble at whatever chance he got.

Masauso at twenty three was the most mature and he kept to himself most of the time, only talking when he had to. His twin sister, the only girl could be said that she was different from the rest of the family. It's like she had been born of different genes and this worried her parents and her brothers so much.

Whilst they found comfort in talking about their poor way of life, she had a totally different mindset of her own; believing that she would be the one to bring fortune to her family but everything has a price in the world that we live in, and if you can't put figures to it; some people count the roof on their back.

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#01

It was already five in the morning and as such she knew that she had to get up from her room, she was lucky enough to have her own bedroom even though she slept on the floor. The sound of women chattering outside was enough sign that it was time for her to start doing the chores or her mother would give her a mouth lashing.

Stretching her back, she quickly got up upon hearing her father's voice.

'Misozi are you still sleeping?' he asked

'No papa I am up.'

'Okay, you work quickly; your mother is not feeling too fine today so it is just you and the boys.' He

said

She heard him walk out a few minutes later and she sighed.

Her mother's health had moved from bad to worse the last couple of months and even though they went to the nearest health care, the only medicine they were given were pain killers.

'Don't just stand there. You need to work fast so that you can prepare food for us.' Mabvuto said before yawning

She looked at him then shook her head, she just couldn't understand why her parents put up with him even after all the things he had made them go through.

'Don't mind him, he will grow up some day.' Masauso said

She smiled upon hearing his voice even though she had not turned around to see him

He was everything and more that she needed in her life, he was not just her twin but her best friend and she knew that she would take a bullet for him.

'Stop giggling and work young lady.'

'I wasn't giggling.'

'You are born of me.'

'And heart of my heart.' She finished as per their little motto

She picked up the broom stick and right away started working around the house, it was a four bedroomed house which held the master bedroom, the guy's room, her room and the living room so cleaning wasn't so hard.

After she was done she went ahead and cleaned the compound whilst Masauso helped with fetching water as Mabvuto just sat there under the sun waiting for food to be prepared.

'Mama good morning.' She said after she walked into her mother's bedroom

There was an awful stench coming from there and even though she wanted to mention it, she just kept quiet.

'Good morning Miso.' She said before coughing

'Papa told me you are not feeling too well today, maybe we should go to the clinic.'

Miso's mother coughed, a dry cough that was cutting through her insides.

'How many times have we gone to the clinic, my body is now used to that paracetamol and now it doesn't do much.

'Maybe this time around something will come up, maybe a doctor will want to attend to us.'

She looked at her child and smiled weakly

'What did I do right to be given you? Your faith moves me.' She said touching her daughter's face lovingly

'Mama we will get out of this place someday, some day we will be the envy of this community. That I can promise you.'

'Miso be content with what we have right now, this world is not as it appears to be.'

Even though her mother had said this to her a million times, she still couldn't put it at heart. No one was subjected to poor conditions of living, she believed that everyone has been given equal opportunities and how we make it out of those conditions is one's choice at the end of the day.

'Miso are you still with me?'

'Yes mama I can hear you.'

'Now be a good girl and prepare me some water to bath.'

She smiled weakly and got up from the floor where she had been sitting beside her mother, she turned to look at her again before going out of the bedroom.

Their parents had told them that she was just having body pains, but she knew that it was more than that because body pains couldn't make one lose so much weight in a short period of time and much worse keep coming back for three solid years.

'You don't look fine.' She said to a Masauso who was rubbing his foot against the hard ground 'I met Bwana Howard.'

Miso rolled her eyes at the sound of that.

Bwana Howard owned a farm just a few meters away from their home and he was the richest man in their neighborhood. He had made advances at her mother a number of times but she had been strong enough to say no, his son on the other hand who was not just wealthy but a Minister also had been on her case despite him being married.

'What does he want this time around?' she asked after seeing how he was behaving

'He is employing.'

'Sau (Masauso) don't even think about it.' She said almost yelling

'Think about what?' Mabvuto asked coming towards them

'It is none of your business Mabvu.' Miso said

'Come on he is our brother and it is the three of us against the world.'

'You can trust him with your life but he will never know anything about me.' She said walking away so that she could prepare water for her mother to bath

'What is wrong now?' Mabvu asked his brother who was looking distressed

'Bwana Howard has a farm in Shimabala and he wants me to go and work for him.'

'I hope your answer was yes.'

'Well I was thinking I talk to you guys first.' He said when Miso returned

'Talk to us about what, see I might not be the ideal elder brother but I know that this is not the life that the both of you want. I am comfortable here, I know soon I will find a girl to marry and we will continue in poverty but the two of you are born of different blood. This opportunity has presented itself, you go and make something out of your life.'

Miso shook her head vigorously.

'You are not going anywhere, that man makes his workers work like animals and I don't want you being subjected to such a lifestyle.'

'Miso a good life doesn't come cheap, I have to work hard to get to the top.' He said convincingly

'I don't want to live another day without you Sau.' She said almost crying

'I am not leaving you, I am just going away and besides I will be just a few miles away but you know I am doing this for us. I can never allow you to grow up like this, I am going because of us.' He said kissing her forehead as she tried so hard to blink back the tears.

'Born of me.' He said

'Heart of my heart.' She responded with a smile as her tears hit her mouth

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#02

Miso managed to heat up some water for her mother and helped her to the bathroom, she noticed that the stench was a body odor that her mother was moving with but still she decided she wasn't going to make any assumptions.

After getting her comfortable in the house and making her some light porridge, she decided to go to the market where her mother owned a stand.

'I will be going to the market, please make sure you check on mum from time and again.' She told her brother Sau

She started off for chawama market where the stand was and along the way she kept admiring the beautiful houses that people had built, she had a dream that one day she would own a house like this and each time she kept telling herself that she would do everything in her power to make it happen.

'Good morning Miso.' Bana George who was her mother's neighbor greeted

'I am okay thank you.' She responded

She straight away went to the place that her mother kept her merchandise and lucky enough they still had some fresh vegetables and tomatoes from the previous day meaning she didn't have to go to Bwana Howard's farm to buy some.

'Why hasn't your mother come today?' she asked

Miso really wanted to tell her to mind her business but because society expected her to respect her elders even when they didn't act like it so she decided to respond.

'I just decided to help her out today.'

She must have noticed the tone of her voice so throughout the day she didn't utter another word to her. She was very lucky because she managed to sell everything at the end of the day and she knew that her mother would be proud because she had been complaining that business had been slow the past couple of days.

After putting back the empty baskets where they kept them in the night, she decided to buy some kapenta that she would cook for the night and got the vegetables that she had kept for home.

On her way home she kept thinking of what Sau had said and now more than ever she too wanted to make something out of her life because she couldn't imagine a life without her brother.

She had just gotten into the road that led to her place when it started raining, she looked at the distance to her place and so decided to just walk because she would still get soaked anyway.

The sound of a car made her move away from the road, she noticed that it had stopped just a distance from where she was and this made her turn to check if someone else was coming.

'Young lady jump in.' the man said after pulling down his window

She didn't need to hear him say another word because she was sure it was Josphat the minister, Bwana Howard's son.

'I am fine.' She said as the water continued to pour on her

'You don't want to get sick now, do you?' he asked

She shrugged her shoulders and decided to jump in.

Josphat immediately switched on the aircon and the vehicle started getting warm.

'I am Josphat by the way.'

'You have told me that a million times.' She said

She saw him smile from the corner of her eye and right there and then she just wanted to snatch the smile from his face.

'I am shocked you know my name.'

'Who doesn't know the Kapinda's in our compound.' She responded looking the other side

'Well I wish you knew me by the things I have done and not by my father's last name.'

'Unless you tell me you are not a Kapinda because only then can we stop referring you to your father.'

He laughed.

'What's funny?'

'You are more intelligent than you think you are Misozi.'

'And how do you know my name?' she asked this time looking at him

'Who doesn't know the Bandas?'

She chuckled and he smiled.

The rest of the drive was quiet as he could tell that she wasn't comfortable being in his vehicle, he came to a stop just a few houses from her place.

'Will I ever see you again?'

'You will unless I die today.' She told him holding the door but he locked it

'Of course you know what I mean.'

'No I don't and I need to get home and start cooking, as you can see I am the one with the relish here.' She said showing him the wet plastic bags

'I am sorry about your mother by the way, I really wish I could help. I know cancer is something that people rarely heal from.' He said

For a moment she thought she had heard the wrong thing.

'Excuse me?' she asked

'Oh my word you didn't know? I am sorry but your father came to dad for help and that is how I knew about it.'

'And I am guessing the bwana turned him down right?' she asked with hurt registered in her voice

'Misosi I am not my father.' He tried to say but the evil dagger she shot him was enough to silence him

'You have his blood running through you.' She said

He was defeated and he felt bad that she had to learn about her mother's illness like that and much worse from him.

When Miso got out of the car, she couldn't help but allow the tears that she had blinking back to fall. She was not dumb and she knew too well what cancer was and what it could do to the body. Her worst fear was that her family didn't have enough money to take her for an operation.

By the time she was getting to the house, the rains had stopped. Sau was waiting by the door for her when she got there.

'Are you okay?' he asked

She just broke down in his arms as she allowed the tears to fall, her worst fear was that her mother was probably dying and she was going to be there not able to do anything about it.

When she was done, he asked her to go and change into some dry clothes because she would catch a cold.

He immediately started preparing supper and told her to get some rest because he could feel that whatever made her breakdown was huge.

'You didn't have to.' She said when he came to call her to eat.

'Don't worry, she will be fine.' He said catching her off guard

'How did you?' she didn't finish her sentence

'There a lot of things that one learns by keeping quiet and observing.' He said

She smiled realizing just how blessed she was to have him.

They were all having dinner together when Mr. Banda's phone rang, it was unlike him to receive phone calls in the night.

'Hello.' He said

'Prepare your wife tomorrow by 7hrs, we will be going to the hospital to have her checked.' The voice on the other end of the line said

He put his plate down and smiled weakly at his wife.

'Papa who was it?' Mabvu asked

'The Minister, he says he will be taking your mother to be checked.'

Sau eyed Miso suspiciously.

'What have you done?' he asked her when they were about to sleep

'Nothing.' She said rushing to her room

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#03

The following morning Miso woke up with mixed emotions about the offer that Josphat had presented, she knew that something was up his sleeve and the other thing that bothered her was that Sau was probably suspecting something.

'Miso I am leaving.' She heard Sau say just outside her room

She grabbed a chitenge and a vest and went out to meet him.

'What do you mean leaving?'

'Miso we talked about this.' He began but she dropped her gaze

'I already talked to Mama and Papa and I trust that you are mature enough to look after everyone here.' He said tilting her head a little so that she could face him

'I am going to miss you Sau.' She said

'I would miss me too.' He said causing the both of them to laugh

He kissed her forehead when he heard the sound of a vehicle outside.

'That's me.' He said

'Take care of yourself Miso.' He added looking at her with concern

'I will.'

She stood by the door as she watched him run off, he was determined and she knew that he would make something good out of his life.

It was already morning and so she decided to start doing the house chaos so as not to delay her mother. By the time she was done, it was already six in the morning and water had been placed in the bathroom for her to bath.

'Good morning child.' Her mother greeted as she was led to the bathroom by her father

'Good morning mama.'

'Please quickly prepare her some porridge.' Her father said

She ran to where she had placed the brazier and started making the light porridge. As she sat there she began to imagine what life would have been like had she been born in a different situation. She always imagined that she would have made a great nurse, treating everyone that came to her for help. This was her secret dream but she knew it was far-fetched because her level of education was only up to the sixth grade.

When she was done, she placed it nicely on the little table in the living room for it to cool as her mother was dressing up. She could see that she was in pain but tried shielding it as much as possible.

'You will make a good wife someday.' Her mother teased as she ate her food

Miso smiled weakly, this is a topic that she always avoided. In as much as she loved her mother she hated the fact that she was married off at a young age, between her parents there was no love whatsoever. The only thing she saw was mutual understanding and submission. One time she had asked her mother why she never left but her response was that her husband was the only home she knew and she wouldn't leave him because then she would have no life aside from the one that she had now. Miso had never bothered to ask her again concerning that, it was more reason she wanted to be well groomed herself before committing her life to another person.

The knock at the door is what brought her back to life.

'Hold on.' She said standing up from where she sat

She held her chitenge a little tighter and went to check who was there.

'Good morning.' Josphat said with a bright smile

He wasn't formally dressed today and his scent is what hit her first.

'I will tell them that you are here.' She responded

She was just turning around when he caught her hand by surprise, lucky enough the door was closed or her parents would have seen what was happening.

'What?' she asked with gritted teeth

'It's so good to see you.' He said letting her go

She looked at him one more time before going into the house.

'He is here.' She announced

Her mother was already done eating so her father just helped her out.

'Lead her to the car whilst I get her papers.' He said

She held her hand and led her to the vehicle as Josphat held the car door.

'Here, please take care of your mother.' Her father said

For a minute she thought she had heard the wrong thing, why on earth didn't he tell her that she was the one to go to the hospital? She had not even taken a bath and was only dressed in a chitenge and vest with old flip flops.

'Now get in the vehicle.'

'Papa I haven't even brushed my teeth.'

'Young lady I don't care if you haven't bathed in five days, it is your mother's health that is my concern.' He said strongly

She knew that the tone he had used was a final say and she had no come back to that. So getting into the vehicle, Josphat drove off and an hour later they were at the University Teaching Hospital – Cancer hospital.

'We are here.' He announced after parking

He could see that Miso was not comfortable with what she was wearing and that made him laugh inwardly, she was beautiful and he was certain she didn't know this.

He got the nearest wheelchair and helped her on it.

'Let me do it.' Miso said

'I want to help.' He told her as he wheeled her inside

He went straight to the elevator and punched a button for the third floor then called someone on his phone.

When they got there, a nurse received them and took over Miso's mother informing the two that she would take it from there as the doctor was ready to see her and they could wait by the reception.

'You know garments just compliment a person's beauty right?' he began when they had just sat by the waiting lounge

'Can you kindly speak English.' She said causing him to laugh

'You are beautiful Misozi and you don't need to be over dressed just so your beauty can show.'

'No one calls me Misozi, not even my parents.' She hissed

'So out of everything I said that is the only thing you heard?' he asked

She was about to respond when a woman walked up to them.

'Denise.' He said getting up

'Why the hell have you not been picking up your phone?' she asked angrily

'For God's sake are you here to make a scene?' he asked pleadingly

Miso lifted her head to look at Denise, she was light in complexion one could have mistaken her for a yellow bone. She had on a yellow jumpsuit and black heels, her black handbag was being carried by a body guard and her hair and ring were to die for.

'And who is this? Your latest project?' Denise said a hint of sarcasm in her voice

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Miso shifted uncomfortably in her seat, this is not the kind of treatment she had expected to get from Josphat's wife. The woman was a beauty and everyone envied her but now more than ever she was beginning to accept that outward beauty is not what makes a person lovable.

'You are a Minister for crying out loud, people have obviously gotten pictures of you with this.' She paused pointing at Miso, her face disgusted

'Denise you are making a scene here.' Josphat tried to say but it was like he had just awakened a sleeping beast

'Make a scene? You are the one that is embarrassing yourself by being with this poor rugged girl.' She said holding her forehead

'Denise, or whatever your name is. Yes I come from a poor background and you just met me on my worst days but that doesn't give you the right to insult me.' Miso said now on her feet Denise clapped her hands in disbelief.

'Josphat where did you pick this one from for her to have the guts to talk to me like that?' she asked looking at her husband

By this time Josphat was just looking at Miso overwhelmed, he had never met anyone that had stood up to his wife. She was that one person that always brought the worst out of people, they feared her and whatever chance she got she made sure to kill their spirit.

'Now you listen to me you little.'

'No, I think you should listen to me. Whatever issues you have with your husband, deal with them. You can't go round showing the whole world how much of a façade your home is.' Miso said cutting her short

There was silence between the two ladies, Denise couldn't believe that she had been answered back and Miso on the other hand was ready to pounce on Denise if she was going to say anything to try and demean her even more.

'Ms. Banda.' The Doctor said when he came out of his office

'Yes.' She said walking up to him

'Can you please come to my office?' He said

She followed him quickly and made her way to the office before he closed the door behind him.

'Where is my mother?' was the first question she asked when he settled into his chair

'I need you to seat down and be calm because what I have to say; I am not sure how you will take it.' He said scratching his head

She noticed that even though he was talking to her and trying to be professional; he was awfully scared.

'How long has your mother had cancer?' he began hiding his shaky hands under the table

'I don't know, I just found out last night.'

'Well, it is bad.'

'And?' she asked eyeing him which was making him more nervous

'Can you stop looking at me like that?'

'God damn it you are a doctor!' she said banging her hands on the table

'I am sorry miss but this is my first week here.'

'Your first week and you were asked to deal with such a crucial case huh?'

'My God do you want to kill my mother?' she asked hands akimbo as she was now on her feet

'Miss please calm down, I am the assistant Doctor here.'

'Excuse me?' she asked moving closer to where he stood

'Miss please.' He begged as her eyes fumed with anger but just then the door opened

'Kevin what is the meaning of this?' the horsy voice behind asked

'Doctor Khan I am glad you are here.' Kevin said moving away from Miso

She was a tiny being but her anger had made the room too small for him

'Miss I would suggest you take a seat.'

Miso turned around to face Doctor Khan, he was the most amazing being she had ever laid her eyes on but the anger she was feeling wasn't going to be melted away easy with good looks.

'I need you to explain what exactly is wrong with my mother.'

'I will do just that only when you seat.'

'The last time I sat, I was addressed by an immature human that calls himself a doctor. So no, I would rather stand.'

'Suit yourself.' He said putting his hands in his pocket

'Your mother's breast cancer has gotten worse and the only solution right now is cutting off where the disease is. That way we will stop the cells from spreading.'

Miso felt weak to her knees, not believing why a rich man's disease would be affecting poor people like her family.

'How much is the surgery?'

'You don't have to worry about that, the Minister has cleared all the costs. Paying back to the community.' He said a hint of sarcasm in his voice

She held his chair for support and slumped into it.

'You are in my seat.' He said

She looked at him for a minute then at her shaking feet.

'How many people have survived cancer?'

'Well on a scale of 1 to 10, in my five years of experience I can say.' He didn't finish his sentence because the door to the office opened

'What is she doing in your chair?' an angry Denise asked

Miso looked from Khan to Denise then got up.

'So where is she?'

'We have admitted her and she needs someone by her side as we prepare her for the operation.'

'When is that going to happen?'

'Well we need to prepare her first, so that should be like a week from now.' He said

'Thank you.'

'Next time don't seat in his chair.'

'I swear to God had it not been for my sick mother I would have dropped your guide.'

'I am pretty sure that poor sick mother of yours won't even come out of this alive.'

Shocking everyone in the room Miso slapped Denise hard across the face.

Denise was about to respond when Josphat came in and held her whilst Khan held Miso.

‘Josphat let me deal with your little slut, how can she lay her dirty hands on me.’

Miso shook herself from Khan’s grip.

‘You can call me whatever name you like but never talk about my mother.’ She said and stormed out of the room.

With the help of a nurse, Miso was directed to where her mother was. The cancer hospital was different from the rest of University Teaching Hospital. It was more spacious and was extremely clean.

‘Mama.’ Miso said allowing her tears to fall

‘Hey, don’t do this to yourself. I will be fine.’

‘Mama I am scared.’

‘Don’t be, I have very good doctors taking care of me.’ She said when Khan walked to her bedside

‘I haven’t seen you in a long time Khan.’ She added

‘Well I guess I wanted something away from my father.’ He responded

‘You two know each other?’

‘Oh you must have been young, he is the youngest son of Bwana Howard. The minister’s immediate young brother.’

‘Oh.’ Miso responded

Khan smiled warmly with his eyes

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#05

After seeing her mother and deciding that she was the one that was going to be by the bedside, she opted to go home because they both needed a change of clothes and she had to let her father know about the new development.

She walked to the lounge where she had left Josphat but he was nowhere to be found, after asking around from people; she was told that he had left with his wife and now she had to walk back home because she had not carried any money.

‘Mama I will be coming, let me just get some clothes and food then I will be back.’ She told her

When she walked out of the hospital, she took a deep breath and thought of the journey ahead.

Chawama was far but she had no other alternative. So taking a step at a time, she began to walk slowly making sure to use the inside roads so that she would get home early.

An hour later she was home and her feet hurt like crazy but it wasn’t a time to complain. After cleaning up and changing into something else, she packed some of her mother’s clothes and hers then prepared some light porridge as that was the only thing she could afford at the moment. She waited on her father to show up but he never did so she went to Bwana Howards farm to tell him about his mother’s condition in hopes that he would tell Sau about it.

‘Miso you are welcome.’ His wife said when she was ushered into the farm by one of the workers

Miso noticed that the lady had aged pretty much and her head was now crowned with silver hair which was falling off on the edges.

'How are you?' Miso greeted now on her knees

'Please get up, you and your mother are full of respect. I wish my children could have married women like you.'

Miso smiled weakly, she couldn't imagine herself being with either Khan or Josphat; they were both arrogant.

She sat just next to the lady and made light conversation before getting to why she had gone to visit her.

'Ma I came here in hopes that the Bwana is around.'

The old lady looked at her then back to the vegetables she was sorting

'He has been scarce, with the new land in Shimabala he has literally moved there.'

Miso scratched her head.

'Is there something you want me to tell him in case he comes back?'

'Yes I was really hoping that my brother can be informed about mum's illness.'

'Your mother is sick?' she asked concerned

Miso looked at her shock registered on her face.

'Mum has been sick for a long time now, we have asked for help from Bwana so many times. I thought you knew.'

There was disappointment and hurt registered on her face, her eyes glistened with tears and I could have sworn that she wanted to cry had it not been for Khan to disturb us.

'My doctor.' She said sniffing the tears away

'Hey queen.' He greeted kissing her on the cheek

'You finally decided to come and see me right?'

'I am not staying, I just wanted to get some fresh milk. You know I don't like all these processed products.' He said disappearing into the house

'One of the few good things I got out of this marriage.' She said but quickly pretended like it had not come from her

'Well I need to get going because mum is alone at the hospital.' I said on my feet

'Just wait for Khan, he will drop you there.'

She wanted to protest but she had already disappeared into the house. She came back minutes later with a basket full of fresh farm products and some fresh milk. They were chitenges, socks and warm clothing in a separate plastic.

'Ma you don't have to.'

'Consider it a present, not some charity.' She said rubbing her hand

They walked to where Khan had parked his car, he put the parcels for her in the back seat whilst she helped myself in the passenger's seat.

Unlike his brother he was playing soft music in the car and he was swift with his driving.

'Why does Denise hate you?' he asked when they were approaching kwacha.

'I just met her and I wouldn't say she hates me but that we just didn't click.'

'She isn't always like that.'

Miso just nodded my head.

'I pity her, Josphat wasn't always like that. He loved and treated her right before power got to his head, now he has changed.' He said a hint of hurt in his voice

'And you are telling me this because?'

'I saw the way he was looking at you, be careful Miso. You seem like an intelligent girl who has a bright future but I wouldn't want you ruining your life because of choices you can avoid now.'

By this time she had my attention drawn to him, she heard every single word that he said but her concern was why he cared so much and why he spoke like that of his brother. Yes everyone has a black sheep in the family but don't go around telling people about it.

'I think the next time you should mind your business.' She said when he parked in the parking lot
He breathed deeply

'Don't say I didn't warn you because I am that friend that rubs the salt in the wound to remind you of what I had told you earlier on.'

'We are not friends and I would prefer that you stay out of my business. Thank you for the ride.'

Miso said getting out of the vehicle

She got her things from the back seat and walked to her mother's ward, when she got there she was seated upright and chatting with a patient on a bed next to hers.

'Mama.' Miso said sitting down

'You didn't take long.'

'I got a lift when coming back though I didn't find papa home I guess I have to go back tomorrow.'

'Don't bother about your father, he knew that I was brought here so I am sure he will find his way sooner or later.' She said with so much spite

Miso looked at her and noticed the anger in her eyes, this is not the woman that she knew.

Something was totally wrong somewhere and her curiosity would make her find out

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#06 (Unedited)

They got home and the first thing that he did was to go to his study, he needed to find a way of helping Miso, he knew by doing this he was putting so much at risk but he cared less. Like what is the use of having a lot of money when you can't even enjoy it? What is the use of having a mansion when you can't even find any ounce of happiness in it? Well his wife said it was better to live in a mansion than being poor, her level of understanding was were too different from his. Josphat knew that he had made some pretty bad mistakes, he knew that he had done certain things that he couldn't even bring to the light but one thing that he was certain about was meeting Miso. He still remembers the first day he had set his eyes on her, she was going to the market with her twin brother, just the way she laughed freely is what had drawn him to her. He remembered sleeping that night and wishing that she was the one by his side, that was before he became the man that he was. He was still fighting his way up the ladder and when he finally became Minister,

so much had happened that before he knew it; he was married and his wife was the envy of a lot of people.

But his marriage started to crumble, it wasn't as perfect as it looked from the outside. Both he and his wife had pride and none of them wanted to humble themselves, they fought, they quarreled and both of them took to the bottle until he went to see his father again and saw her.

She was all grown now and from the hunger in her eyes he could see that she really wanted to make it out of poverty. But there was a problem, he saw how his young brother talked to her, Miso was a lovable girl and anyone that got to spend too much time with her would definitely be under her spell in no time.

He paced about in the study and yet nothing could come to mind, he wanted to do something for her, something that he would place money and emotional attachment to.

So like a mad man he drove to the hospital, it was already after visiting hour but that is what power did. It gave one the privileges that an ordinary citizen did not have.

He glanced at the watch and it was thirty minutes to nineteen, he wondered what she was doing as he got into the elevator.

Nurses kept blushing when he walked, he was good looking but of late life had taken a toll on him.

'Good evening.' He said almost whispering

'Jesus what are you doing here this time?' she asked in a sleepy voice

He noticed how she was holding her mother's hand even though the woman was sleeping.

'I wanted to apologize for earlier, I know I was supposed to tell you when I left but something came up.' He said

By this time a pile of nurses were busy coming to greet him and he didn't like the attention.

'Can we talk in the car?' he asked

Miso almost laughed but the lady that was on the other bedside offered to watch over her mother.

He looked at her as she led the way, she was wearing a different chitenge from the one she wore in the morning. She had on a pair of thick socks, a camisole and a thick sweater. She looked cozy and he couldn't help but smile inwardly.

They got to the car and he helped her with her door.

'So why do you want to see me?' she asked when they were looked inside and he had switched on the aircon

'For starters how are you holding up?'

She sighed

'I am not okay.' She genuinely said

She had not talked to anyone about her fears, she kept thinking of the operation and what the outcomes would be, despite being positive another part of her was just scared that something might totally go wrong.

'It's okay to be scared, actually it is very normal and I don't blame you.' He said

She allowed a little tear to fall.

He got a handkerchief from his side pocket and handed it to her.

'Here.'

'Thank you.'

She dropped a few more tears before telling him that she had to go.

'You can always count on me you know.'

'At what price?' she asked wiping the last tears

'Does it always have to be about a price? Cant someone just do something from their own free will without expecting anything in return?'

'You almost sound like your mother, though she said I shouldn't think of it as charity but a present.'

She laughed after saying that

'Oh that beautiful soul, you saw her?'

'I was there today, Khan actually brought me.'

Immediately his expression changed.

'What did Khan tell you about me?'

'But why would you think that your brother was bad mouthing you?' she asked

His face lightened

'You are too nice you know.' He said softly touching her face

'I think you should go, it is quite late for a married man to be out with another lady.'

He laughed lightly

'Marriage is not all rosy.'

'And I won't be the girl to listen to your lamentations.' She said with a smile

He smiled too

'Okay let me get going, but I need you to have this.' He said removing a bunch of notes

'I cant take it, it is too much.'

'Don't use it now, I am sure someday it will come in handy.' He said dismissively

She said her goodnights and went back to the ward, all this while Khan was watching from his office. Immediately Miso was out of sight he decided to call his brother.

'Khan.' Josphat said after responding

'Do not think about it, Miso is a good girl.'

'I genuinely like her little brother.'

'That is what you said with the last girl.'

'I was young and stupid, I didn't know what I was doing.'

'She is different and has a mother who is dying. Don't you have any mercy?' he asked

The two brothers went on and on about the past and what had been done, all this while Miso was standing by the door and listening to the conversation. She felt hurt that she was being talked about like a ball that can be tossed from one leg to the other.

'Khan and Josphat, I will make you my puppets.' She said wiping a little tear from the corner of her eye

[07/06, 16:30] Martin Martino: #A_PRAYER_AND_A_DOLLAR

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#07

The days that followed were crucial not just for Miso but for her entire family as well, Mrs. Banda had had her surgery done. For three days the doctors had kept her on an empty stomach, no liquid or solid entering her body in readiness for the operation. And when she had been taken into the theatre in the early mornings, all that Miso could do was pray and hope for the very best. Josphat had come to offer morale support but she felt mocked, even though she had wanted to tell him to his face that she knew exactly what he was up to, she had to keep her cool because of the people that were surrounding them.

'I need to go.' Her father told her

She scoffed, she honestly couldn't understand what sort of man could leave his wife in the hospital and only appear the day of an operation and also leave without knowing whether she made it out alive or not.

'I was hoping you could stay here so that I go home and get some rest, it has been a tiresome week and a change of clothes would also do me good.'

She tried to reason but the dagger he shot at her told her everything she needed to know.

'I will let you know about how it goes then.' She said before he could walk away.

She wiped the invisible sweat off her face, her life was definitely not going the way that she had planned and now more than ever she wished that her brother Sau made it big.

The door to the theatre opened and Khan came out, it had been a long twelve hours behind those doors and he looked tired.

'How is she?'

Was the first question that Miso asked

'The operation was a success but she is still in a coma, we need to put her in the intensive care unit just to monitor her progress.' He responded

She thanked him and allowed him to go and rest.

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He got on a Chawama bus immediately he left the hospital, he was no longer guilty about what he was doing and he was really hoping that his wife wasn't going to make it out alive so that he lives his life freely. For a long time he had thought of ways of leaving her but he just couldn't find a good enough reason, and when the cancer developed and got worse he used that as his escape goat. He found an empty seat and settled into it as he waited for the bus to get filled up, as he sat there he reminisced with a smile on how he had met Thoko, the woman that he wanted to spend the rest of his remaining life with.

It was a chilly night and he was coming from one of his drinking sprees, for some unknown reason he was beginning to feel this void and no matter what he took he still felt the same. He had become numb to everything surrounding him and each day was just another bitter sweet pain that he had to overcome.

Marrying his wife had been the right thing to do, he was of age and she was ready to be married off and so it had only been right. At first he never wanted more; it was okay that she bore him kids, submitted to him and gave him all the respect that he needed, that is what women out to do – so he was told. And for a while all this was okay until later.

After drinking himself to the pulp, he found himself heading towards Msisi compound, which was a

totally opposite direction from his home in Chawama. On his way, he slipped and fell into a pond of water and when he thought that death had claimed his life; he woke up in a strange environment. The room was small but well kept, even though the beddings were very light they smelt clean and fresh.

He tried to lift his head when a ray of light hit his face but he felt light headed and so he put back his head on the pillow.

The door opened lightly and an hour glass figure walked in. she was in his words the most breathe taking woman he had ever seen. Her face straight with a sharp nose, her eyes small and pressed deep in her face. She had thick kinky brown hair, one could have mistaken it for a dye but from the roots you could see that it was her natural hair color.

She had a tiny waist that looked like was being pulled down by the weight of her curves but just when he thought he had seen an angel, she clicked her tongue and walked out of the room.

He pushed himself until he was able to seat upright. He looked around the place for a while before standing up.

He found his shirt lying on a small stool just in the corner.

'And who will make that bed?' she had asked immediately she walked in

He was about to say something when she shot him an eye and he went to make it. When he was done she asked him to leave with no questions asked.

He left the place and with the help of people was able to find his way back, when he got back home that day he told himself he wasn't going to think about the hour glass lady but the more he tried to block her from his memories the more he thought about her.

So after a day he went back and this time around he found her outside washing some clothes.

'Hey.' He said in the most polite voice he could find.

And that is how he made frequent visits to her place, she challenged him; something that his wife never did.

She knew what she wanted and never did anything that she didn't want to do. She was so different from everything he had been taught and that was more reason for him to want her more.

The sound of his ringing phone disturbed him.

He looked at the caller ID and didn't recognize it.

'What?' he asked rudely

'Papa it is Miso.'

There was silence.

'Mama is out of the theatre, she made it alive.'

He clicked his tongue before dropping the line

[07/06, 16:30] Martin Martino: #A_PRAYER_AND_A_DOLLAR

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#09

The following morning Khan woke up earlier than usual, he couldn't believe that he had asked

Miso to spend the day with him. Yes she was likeable but he knew too well that his brother liked her and xhe getting close to her was only going to get him into trouble.

He plugged in his headsets and went out for his usual morning run, he loved staying in Olympia. The place was quiet and he didn't have to worry about who was following him during his morning runs.

He got back an hour later and straight away went to the bathroom, when he got out he found several missed calls. He looked at his phone and clicked his tongue. It was Denise, the woman just couldn't get it that he was never going to have a relationship with her, she was his elder brother's wife and yet she couldn't stop bugging him.

He settled for grey shorts with a black muscle t shirt and house slippers, he was hungry and needed something to eat real quick.

'Good morning.' His cousin Melba who he had taken in a few years back greeted

'Hey little one.' He said running his hand in her kinky hair like she was a puppy

'You know that I am a lady and you need to treat me like one right?' she asked

'Oh please.' He said walking over to the fridge

'There is some food in the microwave, just warm it.'

'Aren't you the best? What is a woman for when I have you?' he asked

He knew talking about women would earn him a tongue lashing from her, she always said that he was not getting any younger and it was time he found someone to settle with.

'Melba I don't see why I need a woman in my life, come on I have you for a few more years.'

'Khan you are human and every human needs to be with someone, you can't continue like this.'

She said

'Okay just so you know I have a date today.' He said not facing her

She looked at him waiting for that moment when he would say that he is joking

'You are not joking are you?' she asked pushing her plate of cereal aside

'Nop, I am not.'

She clapped her hands.

'Lord I have been waiting for this day all my life.'

'Don't get any hopes up, she is just and friend and I am pretty sure it will end at that. Besides Josphat likes her too.'

'Oh boy.' Melba said pulling back her plate

'What Mel?'

'I think its better you stay away from her, the last thing I want is for you and the politician being on each other's throats.' She said making invented comas in the air after saying politician as they always called Josphat behind closed doors

'Mel I said she is just a friend, nothing more nothing less.'

'I care about you.'

'And I appreciate it, but I and Miso are just friends.' He said almost getting upset

'What ever you say elder brother.'

They continued eating their food in silence until he left the kitchen, he knew that Melba had a point but he was trying to convince himself that Miso was just a friend and nothing more would happen

between them.

The sound of his ringing phone disturbed him, he saw the caller ID and switched it off.

'Denise you won't be the death of me.' He said angrily packing his phone in the drawer

He got his wallet and car keys then walked back to the kitchen.

'I am leaving now.' He said placing some money on the table

'And this?' she asked

'Do I need a reason to give money to my lady?' he asked causing her to smile

'Lord I envy the woman that is going to sweep you off your feet.'

'And I pity the man whose heart you will take because you will already know just how you should be treated.' He told her

She smiled

'And I will be unreachable today.'

'Denise again?'

'Yah.' He said scratching his head

'You really need to put that woman in her place or she will never give up on you.'

'Mel let me run along.' He said and walked out

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Miso just couldn't get anything right, looking at the clothes she had she began to feel like she only had rags in her washing basket

She laid out all the dresses she had on the bed and the few jeans that were almost wearing out.

'Lord the first thing I will do when I become rich is buy new clothes.' She said to herself as she settled on the bed

Her mother walked into the room startling her

'Mother.' She said catching her breath

'I noticed you have been behind these curtains for a long time, wanted to find out what is keeping you here.'

She sighed

'I am going out with Khan and I have no idea what I will wear.' She said

Her mother smiled

'Give me a minute.' She told her

She walked out of the room and came back with a plastic bag

'Have this.'

'Mother what is this?'

'Open it child.'

Miso opened it slowly and found a black dress, it was a boob tube and she had never imagined herself wearing such.

'Mama isn't it too short?'

'This is your first date child.'

She went through it again and saw the gold sandals

'Mama.' She said holding her breath

'This must have cost you a fortune

'Miso you are my only child and I love you, I knew this day would come. Don't make the same mistakes I did, have a little fun but never forget who you are or where you come from.' She said holding her cheek

'I love you mama.'

'I love you too child.' Now iron the dress least you embarrass me

Miso excitedly got the iron and put some charcoal inside, when it was hot enough she ironed the dress from the inside just in case some ashes spilt.

When she was done, she took another bath thinking that she had sweated.

'Good morning Khan.' Her mother greeted when he walked into the yard

'Good morning mother, how are you?' he asked

'Oh I could be better but I am fine.' She said

Just then Miso walked out and for a moment he was out of words. The little black dress fitted her perfectly exposing her knees and most of her upper skin.

'You look amazing.' He complimented

'Thank you.'

Her mother refused to go to the bwana's farm saying she would be fine on her own so they left her there and drove out.

'Where are we going?' Miso asked

'Allow me to treat you like the lady that you are.' He said exposing his white teeth

[07/06, 16:30] Martin Martino: #A_PRAYER_AND_A_DOLLAR

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#08

Days after talking to her father, Miso knew that it was just her against the world. She was discharged and now was home but her father had been scarce and not once did her mother ask anything. For some reason it's like she knew what was happening but what gave her most joy was knowing that she was alive and now the only thing that she had to concentrate on was her chemotherapy.

Miso sat outside one evening just after they had had their supper, it was a bit hot inside and now she just wanted to catch some air as she stood by the road side watching people rushing to their homes whilst others went to the local tarvans.

She stood there still when she recognized a familiar vehicle, she thought it was going to bypass her but it stopped just next to where she was standing.

She took deep breaths as he got out of the vehicle, he was casually dressed and looked calm as he put his hands in his pockets.

'Hey.' He greeted with a straight face

'Hai.' She responded casually

'How is your mother doing?'

'She is getting better.' She responded this time smiling

'That is nice, when does she start her chemo again?'

'Next week.' Miso responded

There was an awkward silence between them.

'Is she sleeping yet? Can I see her?'

'Ah, I left her awake. I am not sure if she is still up.'

'Well how about we find out?'

She looked at him not sure if he meant what he was saying but he walked past her and it was enough to show her that he was dead serious. They got to the door and he stopped allowing her to go in first.

'Miso, I thought you had gone to see your friends.' She said when she walked in

'Mama as if I have any friends.' Miso said standing aside to allow there guest to come in.

'Child you can't stop your life from moving just because I am sick, I lived mine you need to live yours.'

'Exactly what I keep telling her.' Khan said with a smile

'Why didn't you tell me that we have a guest? I would have worn better clothes.' Her mother teased

'You look beautiful just the way you are mother.' He told her with a smile

'Oh you are such a gentleman.' She said almost laughing

He was offered a seat just next to where she sat and they got chatting right there and then, Miso noticed that Khan was different from his elder brother. He was more calm and funnier and her mother seemed to be enjoying his company.

'I better live you kids alone, I need to get my beauty sleep.' She said struggling to get up

Both Miso and Khan stood up quickly to help her.

'Hey I can get up on my own.' She said

They left her fully aware that if they argued it would make her feel bad, she was sick and not disabled, something she always rubbed in her daughter's face.

When she had disappeared into the bedroom Miso suggested they sit outside, that way she wasn't going to be worried about her mother eavesdropping on them.

Khan helped with carrying the stools outside whilst she carried the brazier.

'Do you eat roasted groundnuts?' She asked him when they had just settled into their seats

'Who doesn't?' he asked

She stood up and disappeared into the house then later returned with a pan and some groundnuts which she placed on the brazier.

'You weren't working today?' she asked

'I am on leave, I really need to breathe. The hospital drains me.' He said wearily.

'Sorry to hear that but I always feel once you get a job that you love then you can't worry about breathing and all.'

'Well it looks that way, whilst I still love my job with a passion I still want to rest.'

'But why medicine, why not accounts? Or politics like your brother?' she asked running her hand through the nuts

'Well I wouldn't quite say dad pushed me into it but for him they are three professions for a man,

politics, medicine or engineering. If you don't do any of those three then you are less of a man.' He said smiling sadly

'I wanted to be a farmer, like him and my mother. I like getting my hands dirty but he said he only did farming because it was the only thing available and as long as he got his hands dirty he wouldn't allow me to follow in his footsteps.'

'But why didn't you just go against his words? It's not like you were a child when you were about to do what you wanted right?'

'Miso no matter how much you fight your parents at a certain point you realize that fighting them isn't worth it, you just have to do what they want just to keep the peace.'

She shook her head vigorously

'What?' he asked

'I wouldn't do that, I wouldn't be what I don't want just to please them.'

He laughed.

'It isn't even about pleasing them, Miso you only have one life and one set of parents. Trust me you wouldn't want to stay in their bad books for life, I decided to do medicine fully aware that someday I would leave their house and would do what I want.'

'And that was how many years ago when you decided you would change your profession?' she asked a hint of sarcasm in her voice

'Well I fell in love with medicine apparently.'

'I still think it isn't right to do what our parents want us to do even when we don't agree with them, no wonder we have what is called free will; to be able to make our own right and sound decisions.'

She said removing the pan from the brazier

'We will have to eat from here, I can't start washing a lot of dishes tomorrow.' She said getting some nuts from the pan

They ate and continued talking and without realizing it, it was quite late. By the time he was deciding to leave it was already after 9pm.

'What plans do you have for tomorrow?' he asked when she walked him to his car

'Home, with mum.' She said

'How about we go out tomorrow, let me get you away from this place.' He said

She eyed him.

'No I don't mean it in those lines, I know this is your home but.' He paused

'I can't, I need to be with mum.' She said with bent lips

'Let me take her to mum's tomorrow, I know she would love some company.'

'Are you sure?'

'Yes I am.'

'Okay tomorrow it is then.' Miso said

He unlocked his car door but turned to face her

'I quite liked spending time with you today.' He said

She smiled then said her goodnights before walking back inside.

[07/06, 16:30] Martin Martino: #A_PRAYER_AND_A_DOLLAR

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#10

She threw her phone to the wall when she tried his line for the hundredth time and it took her straight to voice mail, this was the sixth phone she was breaking in two months but that was the least of her worries because she knew that her husband had the resources to even buy her the world.

'Damn you Khan!' she yelled as she walked to her bedroom upstairs

The maids knew better than to get in her business, she was like a dragon and every time she breathed it was like fire was coming out of her mouth.

She pushed the door open with force and banged it before dropping her weight on the bed.

'Khan you can't keep doing this to me.' She said tapping her foot on the tiles

She stripped of her clothes and stood under the shower as the hot water hit her body, she continued to think of the many times she threw herself at him but he never got to notice. All those times Josphat was out there cheating on her and she went to him crying hoping he would fall for her charm and woe him into bed but he just ended up calling his brother to treat her better.

'Khan I will make you mine one way or the other.' She said scrubbing herself roughly

After she was done she went to the bedroom where she applied some lotion on her body and went through her walk in closet for something to wear. She was happy to be the minister's wife and have everything at her disposal but she desperately wanted Khan under her spell and each day he was proving to be difficult.

She picked a pair of grey skinny jeans with a white off the shoulder satin top and black wedges.

She did her make up to perfection and got her car keys. She was aware that he was on leave and the only place he could be was at his mother's or at home.

'Ma'am are you going to be here for dinner?' her senior maid asked

'I will confirm later but do prepare something for Josphat.' She said

Inside her house she could call him anything she wanted, she didn't have to pretend that everything was rosy between them.

She drove to Olympia at a high speed, she really wanted to get there in time. She was just about to hoot at the gate when it opened, she noticed that his brat of a cousin Melba was driving out.

Melba rolled down her window and Denise did the same as well.

'Denise, we weren't expecting you.' Melba said

'Is Khan inside?'

'No, he left an hour ago.' She responded

'And can I know why his phone is off?'

Melba bit her tongue so tight because the words that were about to come out of her mouth would get her beaten right there and then.

'I am not sure, I too have been trying to reach him.' She finally managed to say

'Melba don't play dumb with me, you know what I am capable of doing.'

'Who doesn't know you Denise?' Melba said in a low tone

'Did you say something?'

'Yes I did, I need to get going. My hair dresser is waiting.' She said rolling back her window

'Yack.' Denise said looking at Melba's kinky

She got her other phone and texted her husband that she needed him to send her some money then tried to call Khan only to find his phone off again. She sighed and drove to the farm hoping that he was there.

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'We are here now.' Khan announced when he parked

Miso was tired of sitting after being in the vehicle for almost an hour.

'Where are we?' she asked when he opened the door

'Welcome to Chaminuka Game Park.' He said

The place was beautiful, it was out of Lusaka

'Good morning Sir, Ma'am. Welcome to Chaminuka.' A guy said who had come to where they stood

'Thank you so much, where is the reception?' Khan asked

The guy showed him where it was and he walked hand in hand with Miso, she looked at him then he smiled causing her to have butterflies in her tummy.

He paid for game viewing then ordered some breakfast as well since the one hour drive had drained him, he also asked for some bath suites which they would use later in the day.

'I like this place.' Miso complimented sipping on her black tea

'I wanted to bring you somewhere away from everything, I think you work yourself too much.' He said with food in his mouth

She couldn't help but smile, he was so cute and everything he was doing was just melting her insides.

'Tell me Miso, what is your story?' he asked catching her off guard

'Well there is nothing much to tell about me, except what you see.' She responded with a heavy sigh

'That is not true, the way you just sighed shows that there is more.'

She bit her lower lip.

'Well I am Misozi, named after my mother. I have a twin brother, Masauso but we all call him Sau.'

She paused with a smile

'Sorry but why those names though?' he asked

'Well our mother almost died when having us, so she gave us those names.' She paused and sipped on her tea again

'I only went up to seventh grade because my parents didn't have money to sponsor me further, everything I have learnt I have had to teach myself and my brother taught me who was lucky enough to go up to his twelfth grade and Lord did he pass with bright colors.' She said smiling

'I don't get how you didn't go up to twelfth grade when your elder brother did.'

'Well you can say my father is the kind of man that believes a woman's place is in the kitchen, all my life I have been taught that as a woman I am supposed to hustle. Dad believes women are hunters like the lioness, we need to fend for the family - a prayer for lunch and a dollar for dinner.'

She said a lump on her throat

'The last phrase, what does it mean?' he asked with interest.

'If you can't afford to have all three meals, have food for one meal; which is a dollar and have hope and faith for the next; which is prayer.' She said explaining with so much knowledge

'You are staring at me.' She accused looking down

'I can't help it.' He responded with a smile

[07/06, 16:30] Martin Martino: #A_PRAYER_AND_A_DOLLAR

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#12

Time always seems to move fast whenever someone is having a good time, Khan and Miso had had a good thing going for the past two months. It was like they were meant for each other even though some days she looked at him and wondered if he would withstand the storm that was coming their way.

Yes she knew he would always stand by her side no matter what people said but society can get so evil that if one is not careful they can actually start to believe everything negative said.

Miso sipped on her green tea as she waited for the cupcakes that were in the micro wave to warm up. Like the past eight Saturdays, she had been spending her days with Khan and today he insisted she comes home so that they spend it the three of them; Melba inclusive.

She stared through the glass door at Khan who was trying to fix the remote, for some reason it had just stopped working and being the man in the house he had to tend to it quickly.

'You must really love him right?' Mel asked bringing her back

She smiled, looked at him then sipped on her tea again.

'Miso you didn't answer me.'

'Well Mel love is a big word, besides we have been together for two months only. We have a life ahead of us to talk about love.' She said now removing them from the oven

Mel smiled, the fact that Miso had talked about a life with Khan assured her that she was willing to make things with him work.

They both turned to look through the glass door when they heard noises in the living room.

'Oh boy.' Mel said looking at an angry Denise who was busy yelling

'Khan what do you take me for? Your phone has been off and the moments it was on you kept ignoring my calls.' She yelled

'Is there something I am missing?' Miso asked turning to face Mel

'I don't think I should be the one to tell you, but Denise is a very influential person.'

'She is married to Josphat not so?'

There was silence.

Miso walked to the living room and Khan looked at her with pleading eyes.

'You.' Denise said looking at Miso angrily

'What are you doing here?' she asked

'I should be the one asking you that question.' Miso responded calmly

'You even have the guts to talk back at me.'

Miso looked at her without a word.

'Am I missing something here? Is this the reason you have been avoiding my calls? Is this your newest project?' she asked giving Miso disgusting looks

Miso laughed shocking everyone in the room.

'What is funny?' an angry Denise asked

'You are funny, the last time I checked you called me your husband's newest project and now your brother in-law's'. Why do I get the feeling that you are the one who doesn't know your place here?' Khan moved forward as if to stop her from talking but she shot him an evil stare.

'Now Denise listen to me.' Miso began stepping just close enough so that she was eye to eye with her

Denise was taller and the heels she was wearing didn't do Miso any justice but she liked looking like the tiny person under her.

'I don't care whatever business is between you and Khan and honestly I don't want to know. But as long as I am a part of his life you will not bulge in here like you own him.'

She was about to respond but Miso stopped her

'Hush, I am not done talking. I know your type and I know what you are capable of, but the advantage that I have over you is that this man right here is mine and trust me you don't want to see the ghetto side of me. So leave.' She said pointing at the door

'Excuse me?'

By this time Mel was there rejoicing in her heart, she could never do what Miso had just done.

Denise was scary and no one wanted to cross her paths, Khan on the other hand was in shock because the only reason he never got to tell her off was that she was his brother's wife.

'Khan you are going to stand here and allow her to chase me out of your house?' Denise asked almost hurt

'Well you heard her and she is a part of my life so yah.' He said

Denise picked up her bag and left banging the door behind her.

'Girl you are fierce and I think I like you now more than ever.' Mel said doing an electric dance Miso just smiled.

'Can I have a word with you?' She asked turning to Khan

'Sure.' He responded and led them to the bedroom

'What was that about?' she angrily asked just after he had closed the door

He didn't know how to respond because he had never seen this side of her

'For God's sake Khan Denise is your brother's wife, how can you be tolerating her?'

'Babe I am not having anything with her.'

'Of course you are not and I am not saying that you are. But you tolerating her like that lives so much to be desired.'

'I just don't know what to tell her, she is persistent and won't leave me alone. I have told her so many times that I can't give her what she wants but she continues to come back.'

'You are not doing enough because if you were she wouldn't have come back.'

'Babe are you saying that I am enjoying this?'

'I am saying that she has seen something that continues to bring her back, you are not doing enough because trust me if I knew that a man doesn't want me I wouldn't continue going after him.' She said softly

'Babe let us just forget about Denise, she is just bad blood that if we continue thinking about her; we will ruin our happy moments.' He said now touching her face

'We can't, whatever I consent to now sets precedence for how this relationship plays out.' She said

He smiled, not once had he thought of it like this.

'I will deal with her, don't worry.'

'I hope your words are not void, make it happen.' She responded getting into his arms

[07/06, 16:30] Martin Martino: #A_PRAYER_AND_A_DOLLAR

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#11

"An unexpected love can be the best kind of love, bringing you to the place that you can only dream of.

And it can also be the worst, tearing your walls and burning you; taking all of you in the process."

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She went on and on explaining everything she had been through, she told him everything she had grown up believing and what her parents had made her go through.

'All in all I believe I was cut from a different material, I believe I was created for a purpose and that purpose is yet to be seen.' She said now wiping her mouth with the back of her hand

He didn't know what to tell her so he just rubbed his hand with hers.

'I believe you will get everything that you want Miso, everything.' He said causing her to smile

'So tell me about you, what is your story?' she asked leaning against her chair

'Well there is nothing much to say about me, I think our lives are already out there and people know it all.' He responded

'Well I don't want to believe what we hear, tell me the truth about you.' She said

'Okay as you already know, I am the second and last child of my parents. We have been raised with an iron fist, my father has always been a tough man and tougher on me because mum was always on my side. I can say that I am doing okay for myself, I am not seeing someone but taking care of my little cousin who is in University at the moment.'

'I guess that is all there is to say about me.' He added

'How old are you again?' she asked

'I turn twenty nine in a few months.'

'Wow, and you are not anywhere close to settling down?'

'You sound like Melba.' He accused

'That is my cousin's name, and she is tiny like you.' He said sending them both into a wave of laughter

Their tour guard came and led them to the vehicle that was waiting, they toured Chaminuka Game Park in an hour and it was thrilling for Miso seeing all those animals in one place. After that they went for a cheetah ride which she almost turned down but Khan convinced her.

'Lord I never thought I would do that.' She said laughing whilst tears streamed down her face

'I actually thought you weren't breathing right there.' He teased tickling her sides

She laughed her heart out and ran from him causing him to run after her.

They both fell to the grass and laughed some more

'Lord I wish this day could never end.' He said pinning her down

She bit her lower lip and touched his face

'You are good looking Khan.' She said

'And you are beautiful.' He said staring deep into her eyes

They stayed in that position for a while, none of them saying anything afraid that their words would ruin the moment.

'Allow me to love you Miso, I know this is quick and it could actually make you want to stay away from me but I just feel that this could work out.'

'I am a mess Khan, I don't have anything to my name, your family will never accept me.'

'You are a beautiful mess and we are all flawed humans. About my my family, we will cross that bridge once we get there.'

'But why me? Out of everyone else?'

'You are my zing.' He responded

'Your what?'

'That person that gives me energy, that person that adds some liveliness to my life.'

'And I have done that in just a single day?' she asked still biting her lower lip

'Can you stop doing that?' he asked staring at very movement she made with her lip

'What?' she teased knowing exactly what he was talking about

He leaned forward and placed his lips on hers, at first she tried to fight it but she slowly parted her lips; using his tongue he explored her mouth. Then remembering where they were, he smiled between her lips and kissed her forehead before laying there next to her

'I like laying here, I have actually forgotten my problems.' She said locking her fingers with his
'Miso.'

'Yes.'

'I want you to trust yourself more than you will ever trust me, I want you to know that you are good enough for anyone and you don't need an education or extra clothes to know that or feel that way.'
She smiled without a word

'Can I open up about something?' she asked

'Go ahead.'

'I overheard you talking to your brother, about him liking me and all.'

'Oh my word.' He said hitting his forehead

'Not to worry, I had planned on making you pay for everything. I mean both you and him.'

'And how were you going to do that?'

'I don't know, but I would have found my way.' She said laughing

He got up then put her on his back.

'I think we need to start off, I don't want mum hating me for taking you home late on our first date.'

He said

She laughed at his sensitivity

They got to the car and he opened the door for her after putting her down, she sat in her seat and he stood there outside looking at her.

'What?' she asked

'I like kissing your lips.' He said bending over to kiss her some more

'I might just like having you around Khan.' She said between kisses

'So this is official, you and I right?' he asked

She smiled shyly

'Yes it is.'

'Melba will never believe this.' He said touching his forehead with hers

'You guys must be really close right?'

'Yes we are.' He responded before kissing her lips again

The drive back home took longer than usual, they got into Lusaka an hour plus thirty minutes later because of the traffic which was around 4:30pm.

'Is it okay if I can pass through home I get my phone?' he asked

'Yah I don't mind.'

He drove to Olympia and when they were there he parked just outside so that he didn't have to spend so much time.

'Welcome home.' He announced

Miso couldn't believe how nice his place was, if not for her manners she would have been up and down admiring it.

'Take a seat whilst I grab the phone.' He said heading for the bedroom

He was just out of sight when Melba showed up.

'Hey.' She greeted

'Hai.' Miso responded

'I am Melba, but everyone calls me Mel.' She said extending her hand

'Misozi, you can just call me Miso.' She responded shaking her hand

'I see the two of you have met.' Khan said coming back with a warm hoodie that he helped Miso put on.

'Yes we have.' Both ladies responded at the same time

'Let me just drop her home, will be back in a bit.' He said

'It was nice meeting you Miso, do visit soon.'

'Same here Mel.' She responded

They walked back to the vehicle and he drove her to Chawama compound.

'I liked spending time with you.' He said when he had parked outside her place

'So did I.' she said

'I want you to have this, there is a new sim card as well. I will call you later so that you save my line.' He said handing her a boxed S8 edge

'Khan.'

'I will need to communicate with you babe, please take it.' He said

'Thank you.' She responded

'You are welcome my lady.'

He kissed her lips before allowing her to go.

He watched as she got into her yard and he smiled to himself. Whatever was happening to him; he had no idea but he liked the feeling.

[07/06, 16:30] Martin Martino: #A_PRAYER_AND_A_DOLLAR

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#13(Unedited)

She was angry and she could feel it within her soul, when she got home; she threw her bag on the couch and went straight to pour herself a glass of whisky. She needed something to relax her nerves or else she would end up doing something she would totally regret.

She gulped down the contents of her glass and got the bottle to pour in some more.

'Don't you think it is too early for a lady to drink?' Josphat asked walking into the bar area

'Says the man who doesn't keep his legs together.' She said rudely

He looked at her and then looked the other side, he was tired of fighting with her. He had had it to the coil and now all he ever did was to just watch her.

She gulped down the second glass and went to sit opposite him, she kept tapping her foot on the tiles and even though he was irritated he told himself he wouldn't ask what the matter was.

'Khan disrespected me.' She finally managed to say

'I don't know what the fuss is between you and him but I think it is high time you sort it out.'

'What do you mean?'

'Denise you always complain about how badly he treats you, maybe I should seat the both of you and ask what the problem is.'

She eyed him

'He has a girlfriend and she kicked me out of his house.'

'She did what?' Josphat asked before laughing

'What is funny?'

'Nothing.' He said and laughed some more

He stopped when he noticed that she was actually serious

'Wait you are actually not joking?'

'Do I look like I am joking to you?'

'Wow.' He said getting up

'I had no idea that Khan had it in him, getting a girlfriend I mean.'

'And he had to pick ghetto.' She said clicking her tongue

'Watch your tongue woman, not everyone is as privileged as you are.' He hissed

She snorted

'He is dating that Miso girl.' She blurted out

He stopped in his tracks and as if he had just seen a ghost

'What did you say?'

She saw the look he had on his face and she had an idea.

'He is going out with Miso from Chawama compound.' She repeated trying to read the expression on his face

Josphat walked away without another word, how was it possible that Khan had gone after the woman who he knew that he had feelings for? They were brothers after all and brothers don't do such to each other. It would have made a lot of sense if he didn't know anything but no; he just had to go after all.

Without wasting much time, he put his briefcase down and drove out to Olympia. He wanted to face his young brother and hear from his mouth if it was true that he was really dating Miso.

'What a surprise.' Mel said when Josphat walked in

He looked around the house and it was even better than the last time he had seen it, Josphat always felt like he was in a competition with his young brother. He made sure to get everything twice the price that Khan had gotten his household goods at but even so Khan's place always felt more welcoming whilst he on the other hand. Had a home with the most expensive furniture and yet felt like a barren womb.

'Is that how you welcome your elder brother?' he asked

'Forgive my manners.' She said with a smile

She genuinely liked him and knew that he was capable of being a good man but with his wife around it was impossible.

Just then Khan walked in.

'Who do we have here?' he asked as he got off the stairs

'Is that the new trend now?' Josphat asked unbuttoning his shirt

'You are welcome to our humble home brother.' He teased as they gave each other a manly hug

They both settled into a couch

Mel walked away and came back with a tray of fresh lemon juice and muffins that Miso had baked.

'These are good.' He complimented and Khan smiled

Mel excused herself and went to join Miso who was getting dressed in Khan's room

'How is work going?' Khan asked starting a conversation because they were both quiet

'It is all good, the money is amazing too.' He said with a smile on his face

Khan looked at his brother with pity, Josphat loved money more than anything in the world and if not careful he would end up alone.

'And how is work?'

'It's going just fine, you know I love my job.' He smiled

There was silence

'Denise tells me that your girlfriend sent her away.'

Khan snorted, he knew his brother had not gone there on a social visit.

'I would have done the same too, your wife needs to know her place. she needs to know that not everything and everyone revolves around her and so she must learn to tame her tongue.'

'Wow, and where is all this coming from?'

'It was only going to be a matter of time before I told her off, someone had to put her in her place.'

'Denise is many things but you know she is still my wife right? And so no matter who you date, they still have to respect her not so?'

'Respect is earned Josphat, she just doesn't bulge into this place like I am her husband. You are her husband.' He said

Just then Miso walked down the stairs and joined them.

She was in a peach flora off the shoulder dress with brown slippers; it was very hot and had decided to take a bath in Mel's room.

Khan looked at her and smiled, every day he fell deeply in love with her.

'How are you?' she greeted with respect

'I am good Miso, how are you?' he asked almost disappointed but didn't show it

She sat next to Khan and he locked his fingers with hers, all this while Josphat looking at them.

'I had no idea you two.' He stopped

'Well we were yet to tell you but I am certain your wife mentioned something.'

'Not exactly.' He said getting up

'You won't stay longer?'

'I just remembered I have a meeting to attend.' He said walking out without much of goodbye

He drove out of the yard like he was being chased and parked at the nearest secluded place

'Damn it Khan!' he yelled

'Why did you have to play me like that! you know I like that girl!' he screamed

[07/06, 16:30] Martin Martino: #A_PRAYER_AND_A_DOLLAR

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#14

Miso woke up quite early, it was one of those weeks where her mother had to be readmitted in hospital because of the Chemo sessions. She cleaned the house as fast as she could because she didn't want Khan to find her not ready once he got there to pick them up, afterwards she prepared her mother some water to bath then started working on the light porridge; it was the only thing she had been keeping down after the operation.

'You work too hard child.' Her mother told her when she was coming out of the bathroom after taking her bath

'Mama I just have to, or who will do the chores?' she asked with a smile

She had really stopped thinking about her father now, he had not stepped in the house since his wife's operation and for some unknown reason neither Miso nor her mother talked about it. It was like they just chose to pay a blind eye to it and let life rule itself out. Mabvuto also had disappeared

in thin air and none of them bothered about him; he was a grown up after all.

She quickly finished off then went to take a bath herself, Khan had just called her that he was on his way and he would be there in less than ten minutes.

'Good morning.' She greeted water still dripping from her body immediately she got into the house. He swallowed hard when he saw her, Miso was beautiful and he had to control himself most times because they had both agreed on a no sex before marriage policy.

'I don't want to have meaningless sex with you Khan. It is not that I am not sure about us but I just want this to last and I know sex can ruin a lot of good things.' She had told him

'Are you a virgin though?'

'No and that is more reason I am not walking down that road again.' She had told him honestly

'You are staring.' She accused when he couldn't stop looking

He had been so lost in thought that he had forgotten that she had greeted him

'Sorry babe, good morning how are you?'

'I am late.' She responded heading towards her room

He smiled when her mother walked in, she was a gentle soul and he felt bad that she had to go through all that she was.

'I told that girl to hurry up, now see she is keeping you waiting.' She accused settling into a chair

'That is fine, at least she has given me a chance to talk to you my lady.' He said causing her to laugh

She liked him, not just for her daughter but as a person too but just like Miso she had her fears.

What if he met someone that was of his standards and he decided to live her? She saw how her daughter had fallen for him and she was scared that it would break her.

'I am done.' Miso announced

She was wearing a yellow t shirt with a black skin jean and black sandals. Her face had no makeup at all and her hair was nicely twisted into flat twists. She was a natural beauty, she didn't have to try so hard and that was one of the reasons he couldn't help fall deeper in love with her.

'We are ready.' She said again

'We are ready like you finished earlier than everyone else.' Her mother said causing everyone to laugh

Khan helped with carrying their bags to the vehicle whilst Miso helped her mother walk, she sat in the backseat whilst her mother took the front with Khan. All the way to the hospital he kept making conversation with her and Miso contributed whenever she could, he noticed that her mind was elsewhere and he promised himself that he would find out what was wrong with her.

When they got to the hospital, he straight away filled in her mother's forms and she was immediately connected to her medicines.

'Can we talk?' he asked a distant Miso

'Sure.' She responded not looking at him in the eye

He led her to his office and locked the door behind her immediately she got in.

'Babe.' She said trying to grasp for air as he had pinned her against the door and kissed the oxygen out of her

'What is wrong?' he asked releasing her

'Nothing.' She responded but he crushed his lips on her again and this time trailing his hand on her neck

'What is wrong with you?' he asked again letting her go

'Noth.' She didn't even finish her sentence because his lips were aiming for hers again

He knew the effect her had on her body and most times he had to control himself because at times she just laid herself for him without realizing it.

'Josphat texted me, I don't know how he got my number but he says he will have me to himself at whatever cost.' She finally said releasing herself from his grip

He kissed her forehead.

'Took longer than expected.' He said now fixing her top

'What do you mean?' she asked also fixing his dust coat

He sat in his chair and asked her to take a seat just opposite to where he was seated

'Josphat is a very determined person and he will do anything in his powers to get anything and everything that he wants. He has the means too.'

She looked at him offended

'Are you saying that I am loose and that I will run into his hands?'

He kept quiet

'Khan honestly is that what you think of me?' she asked with a heavy sigh

'The last woman I was with ended up in my brother's hands, now don't get me wrong I am not saying that you are like her but remember he is an influential person and I don't know him to be one that losses his battles and honestly I would rather back off than fight my own brother.'

She stood up from where she was and sat on his laps.

'Why do you think I am still with you up to date?' she asked looking him in the eye

He shrugged his shoulders

'Because you love me?'

'That and more, babe I wake up choosing you every day. Yes we both have flaws but even in those flaws I still remember that it is you I want.' She emphasized

'So you won't leave me for him?'

She rolled her eyes causing him to laugh

'I need to tell you something as well.' She said now getting up

'Sure what is it?'

'You know my brother Sau right?'

'Your twin brother?'

'Yes him.'

'What about him?'

'Well it seems his supervisor is impressed with how well he has been managing your father's farm in Shimabala and now has been appointed to assistant supervisor.'

'You didn't mention your brother works for dad.'

'Well it must have slipped.'

'Okay so away from that, him being given a new position means he will be at least getting a better pay.'

'I am listening.'

'He wants me to enroll into tertiary education.'

'Wow babe that is nice, and have you decided what exactly you would want to do?'

'Well here is the thing, mum has also been talking about me going back to school using her life's savings.'

'Okay.' He responded

'So I have decided I will go into tailoring school during the day then sit for grade nine exams, I will be doing night school for that.'

'Wont that be too much for you?'

'Babe I will break my back if I have to, this life won't offer much to a grade seven drop out and besides I have good grades I won't just let them go to waste.' She said with so much hurt in her voice

'I will be with you every step of the journey babe.' He said holding her hand

'Thanks.' She responded with a smile

[07/06, 16:30] Martin Martino: #A_PRAYER_AND_A_DOLLAR

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#15

TWO YEARS LATER

Sau walked into the house with a bright smile on his face, nothing was better than coming back to a home that was full of love and laughter.

'Hey little man.' He said to little Xavier who was busy with his small car

'Miso!' he called as he picked up the boy from the floor

She came running with one heel in hand and the other on her foot

'Lord you scared me, is something wrong with Xavier?' she said getting him from his hands

'No, was wondering where you were.'

'Lord you should stop playing like that, you almost gave me a heart attack.' She told him kissing her child's forehead

Little Xavier smiled at her, Miso and Sau were the only ones that he had and she had promised herself that she would protect her child with her life if she had to.

'Are you ready?'

'Dude I have one shoe on how do you ask me that question?' she asked causing Xavier to laugh who was behaving like he was understanding what the two were talking about

'Let me hold him, you need to get ready or else we will be late.' He said getting the child from her

She smiled and rushed back to her room, she was going to get her diploma for the tailoring course she had done. It had not been an easy job but she couldn't be more thankful to her brother for always standing by her side even when the whole world had given up on her.

She pulled on a black dress that she had made herself, her feet were in black stilettos; her hair which she had allowed to grow into a curly length was dropped and she finished off the look with a

red lipstick.

She stared at herself in the mirror and felt a pain engulf her from two years ago but she quickly brushed it off knowing that she had come way too far to allow emotions to get the better of her. Looking to the side of her dressing table; she picked up her mother's portrait and kissed it.

'Continue resting in peace Misozi, I will always love you.' She said wiping a little tear

Sau walked in and looked at her intently, his sister was a strong lady. At twenty six she had vowed to do everything the world had told her she wouldn't do, she had picked herself up and made something out of her life.

'Mama is proud of you.' He said smiling

'I know she is, I just wish she was alive to see this day manifest. To see Xavier.' She said another tear dropping

'She has never left, she will always be here with us no matter what.' He told her kissing her cheek. She smiled at him and they walked hand in hand as he held the baby in another. She sat in the backseat whilst he drove them to the Copperbelt University where the graduation was taking place.

'Who would have thought that you would be here today?' he asked through the rear view mirror. She smiled as she was breastfeeding Xavier.

'Honestly speaking I am super nervous.' She responded

'And you know I had no idea that your school was under Copperbelt University.'

'I too didn't know until recently, imagine getting a diploma in tailoring without a grade twelve certificate.' She said laughing

'It can only be God.' He responded

'True.'

He focused on the road again when they drove into the school, they were already a lot of cars parked because people from different walks of life had come for the graduation. The tertiary school had branches all over the country but the graduation had to be done at the main campus.

'How do I look?' Miso asked nervously

'You look just fine, now give me Xavier.' He said getting the baby

They walked into the hall and it was nicely decorated with beautiful material, the guest speakers were all seated at the high table and students were seated in their seats. She recognized some of her course mates and put on her gown before going to her seat.

At exactly 09am the whole ceremony began and speeches were made according to protocol.

'Now for the three best students, we have come up with an award that will push them into bettering themselves as they begin their journey outside school life.' Their chancellor said

The top student was called, second and Miso came out third. They were given a sum of money which would help them start up their own business and she couldn't have been happier.

'I knew you would make me proud.' Sau said when the ceremony was over and now at hungry lion where they were having their lunch

'But you know it wasn't easy right?' she asked looking at Xavier who kept yawning

She picked him up and started to breast feed him.

'Lord that child can eat.'

'I wonder where he got it.' She laughed
'Probably from the father.' Sau said, the words slipping out of his mouth quicker than he intended
'Lord Miso I am sorry.' He apologized
'It's fine.' She said swallowing hard
'No it isn't, I know you never want to talk about what happened to you two years ago and who the father to your child is but I do hope you know that someday you will need to tell him the truth.'
'We will cross that bridge once we get there.' She responded an anger building up but she tried so hard not to show it

He lifted his hands in surrender and continued to talk about something else.

Afterwards they went to Ackerman's to pick up the clothes they had put on lay by for Xavier then she drove them home.

'I will bath him whilst you prepare for school.' He said

She rolled her eyes, she was glad that she was done with the tertiary education now she had to think of her grade twelve exams that were coming in six months' time.

'Can I just give up now?'

'Not in this life time.' he responded from the living room

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'What should I prepare for supper?' Mel asked

'I am not hungry.' He responded without looking away from his lap top

'Day five.' She said before turning on her feet

'What did you say?'

'I said day five.'

'What is that supposed to mean?'

'This is the fifth day without you eating.' She responded

She was genuinely worried about him

The past two years had been hard on him.

'Don't you think it is high time you move on?'

'Melba we have had this conversation over and over again.' He said

'And nothing concrete has come up not so?' she asked

'I just want the truth, I just want to know why she left without a word. Why she cheated on me with Josphat.' He said clenching his fits

'Sorry to say this but maybe Miso was not different from the rest, come on Josphat has money and he can buy anything in the world. I am certain he bought her.' She said before clicking her tongue, she had begun to despise Miso

'A lot just doesn't make sense Mel and I swear I will find out one way or the other.' He said remembering the video he had received of Miso in Josphat's arms.

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Miso and Say

[07/06, 18:06] Martin Martino: #A_PRAYER_AND_A_DOLLAR

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#16

Melba woke up early the following morning, she wasn't at all thrilled to be travelling with her cousin to the Copperbelt for the Conference he was holding with some students that side but on the other hand she was just glad that he was going to get some air. Maybe that is what he needed, a distraction.

She sighed when she thought of the ordeal two years back, Khan had been brought back home by some colleagues; they said he had knocked off early and being a Friday he had told them that they should go drinking. It was so unlike him but they were happy because he didn't have penguin hands and obviously he would treat them to a good evening. They said he had started off light until he requested for a change of alcohol, when they noticed how hard he was drinking; they decided it was time for him to go home and even though he protested they dragged him out of the place and drove him home.

She had been upset with him, he was not careless and never a heavy drunk but his phone had not been locked and she stumbled upon a video that made her hate Miso. She was disappointed that she had stooped that low and not even been considerate, after looking for her for a while they didn't find her; it's like she had just vanished into thin air and nobody knew where she was.

Josphat on the other hand had not even been remorseful about what he had done, he never apologized to his young brother and the only thing he said was he liked Miso first and so he was just claiming what belonged to him

Their relationship had not been the same since, they were like two strangers with the same blood flowing in their veins.

'Are you ready?' Khan asked disrupting her from her thoughts

'Yes I am.' She responded with a smile which he didn't return

She missed her cousin, she missed the jovial person that he had once been. Now all she saw was a man lost and yet not bothering to find himself, he had been so in love with Miso that her betrayal had killed the good in him.

They started off for the Copperbelt in the early mornings and were there in the late afternoon, Khan booked them into a hotel immediately and Mel straight away decided to get some rest. It had been a long journey and all that she wanted was to get as much rest as possible.

Later in the evening, she decided to take a walk at the nearest park, sleeping the whole time had made her feel a certain way and now all she wanted was to stretch her legs.

The park was filled with kids, most of them speaking in Bemba and she continued to smile. It made her feel proud when she heard people speaking local languages, yes English was the official language but she wanted kids to still carry tradition in them.

She decided to take a seat on one of the benches so that she could just watch from there, a certain gentleman was selling groundnuts and she decided to buy some whilst there.

Sau was holding Xavier in his hands, one headset plugged in as he talked to Miso. She was worried about them being at the park at that hour because it was getting chilly.

He settled into a bench and smiled at the lady he found and continued speaking.

'Yes I know it is getting chilly but don't worry because we are both covered.' He said before sighing

Since Xavier she was always behaving like the older one.

'Okay we will see you in a bit.' He said unplugging the headset.

'Wife?' the lady asked

He chuckled

'Trust me I wouldn't survive a day with her as a wife.'

She smiled stealing a glance at him

He was good looking and something about his eyes looked familiar.

'Can I hold him?'

'Oh sure, he is a sweetheart.' He responded handing over Xavier

'Oh Lord this baby is beautiful.' She complimented as Xavier smiled at her holding out his little hands to touch her face

'I have never seen you around.' He said

'Well it is my first time here, I am from Lusaka.' She responded

'Nice, I was born and bred there but we moved here some years back.'

'We?'

'I and my sister, Xavier's mother.'

'She must be a jewel looking at how gorgeous he is.' She said smiling at the child

'Yes she is.' He responded smiling himself

They stood up and walked around the park, since it was getting late; he decided to escort her to her hotel.

'This is where we say good bye.' She said holding herself tightly, it was getting chilly

He laughed.

'You should visit us one of these days before you leave, we would love to have you home for a home cooked meal.' He quickly said, she was a beautiful lady and he liked her.

He knew that his sister would be happy to see him with a girl, she had been accusing him of neglecting himself for her and Xavier.

'Let me talk to my cousin first, I might just come over whilst his holding his conference tomorrow.'

'Give me your phone.' He said

She handed it to him and he added his number and got a picture of himself to go with the caller ID.

'That is my line, call me when you are ready tomorrow.' He said

'I will.' She responded smiling at his image on her screen, he was a natural.

He said his goodbyes and walked to where he had parked the vehicle.

When Mel got to the hotel, she went to check on Khan who was in his room.

'Hey there.' She said noticing he was busy on his laptop

'Hey little one.' He responded not looking at her

'By the way I think it is better for you to just survey the place tomorrow whilst I hold the conference. I don't want to bother you.' He said not looking up again

She did a happy dance in her heart because she had been afraid that he wouldn't take it lightly.

'Are you sure you will be fine?'

'Mel you are young, let me not spoil your twenties.' He said

She walked over to him and pecked his cheek before dashing to her room.

'I will see you tomorrow.' She texted and hit send

Sau looked at the text and smiled.

'Ah Miso I am bringing over someone tomorrow, can I prepare lunch?' he asked screaming from his room

She quickly dashed out of her seat and joined him in his room

'No way, a girl? Let me find you something to wear.' She said now throwing clothes from his closet to the bed.

[07/06, 18:06] Martin Martino: #A_PRAYER_AND_A_DOLLAR

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#17

The following morning Sau woke up pretty early, he was excited about having his visitor home and he wanted to make an impression. Since he was working for a local supermarket whilst doing part time school, he was at work by eight in the morning. His boss noticed how he kept looking at the time but didn't say anything to him.

When it was exactly ten, Sau signed out and was on his way back home.

Miso on the other hand has done thorough cleaning up, she was excited for her brother because he had never mentioned a girl until then.

'Good morning.' Sau greeted immediately he entered the house

Miso wasn't shocked to see him home that early, in fact she had been surprised to wake up and not find him in the house.

'Good morning handsome.' She responded carrying a naked Xavier

'Can you kindly put some clothes on him?' He asked shaking his head

She laughed and walked away headed for her room; Sau was always uncomfortable seeing Xavier naked unless he was the one dressing him up.

After the two disappeared to the bedroom, he walked to kitchen and straight away went to the refrigerator. He needed to know what he was cooking for lunch, after standing there for a while; he removed some steak, mixed vegetables and some rice from the pantry.

He started with the steak which he prepared into beef straps, then added in the vegetables and cooked the rice separately. He made a coleslaw salad on the side and put everything in the warmers and the salad in the fridge.

'This place smells amazing.' Miso said uncovering the food

'Woman don't you dare.' He said moving to where she stood

'Lord I am excited to meet this girl, it looks like she has taken your breath away.' She teased

He wanted to respond but the sound of his phone took his attention

'Hey.' He said with a smile looking at the caller ID

'How are you?' the person on the other end of the line asked
Sau noticed that Mel didn't sound so excited to hear from him
'Are you fine?' he asked
'Well something came up, my brother's conference has been cancelled and he says I can't go anywhere without him.'
'Well that is not such an issue, how about you come with him?' he asked not even sure if he wanted to meet him
'Well, I just thought you won't be okay with it. And he can be such a pain.'
'Brothers are like that, plus he could keep my sister company.' He said with a smile remembering that Miso was around
'That is better, okay let us get ready. Just give me directions to your place in a text.' She said before dropping the line
Sau scratched his head a little and turned to Miso.
'So there is a slight change in plans.'
'What's up, I hope she isn't coming with her squad.' Miso said biting on an apple
Sau couldn't help but laugh
'It's actually deeper than that, she is coming with her elder brother.'
'And what is wrong with that?' she asked without flinching
'Oh, I just thought you would be a little uncomfortable.'
'On the contrary I am happy because it seems you guys are moving quite fast; already meeting each other's family.' She said before bursting into a series of laughter which irritated Sau
He rolled his eyes like a little girl and went to his room, he had picked a pair of jeans with a Gucci t shirt but now he was thinking of changing his clothes because he would be meeting Mel's elder brother. After looking through his closet for the millionth time, he decided he was going to wear black chinos, with a grey t shirt.

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Mel was excited when Khan accepted to go for lunch with her except the only reason he was doing it was because he didn't want her running into the wrong hands.
She settled for a pair of white jeans which were ripped on the knees and a yellow vest with a black blazer and black slippers.
Wearing only little make up, she went to Khan's room to tell him that she was ready. He didn't even try to look presentable and she didn't bother because it was enough that he had accepted to go with her.
They got on a cab and gave the driver the directions, they made little conversation on their way there and Mel was practically shaking causing Khan to laugh.
'Mel please don't tell me you like this guy this much.' He said laughing
'Well.' She responded and said no more
Truth be told she wasn't able to sleep, she liked him and even though she was trying to conceal it; it was evident that she did.
'We are here.' The cab driver announced
They paid him his money and got out then stood outside

They both looked at the place whilst holding hands, it was a block of flats and it wasn't at all bad looking.

'Will you call your boyfriend already?' Khan asked getting impatient

'He is not my boyfriend.'

'Yet.' Khan finished off

'He says he is coming.' She said locking her phone

Minutes later Sau came out and gave her a hug before greeting Khan

He looked at Sau for a while

'Have we met somewhere?' he asked

'I don't think so Sir.' He said getting nervous

The man was good looking and he carried himself with such charisma that scared him

'Khan is fine, Sir makes me feel old.' He told him

'Okay Khan then.'

Sau led them to the house and he thanked Miso inwardly for cleaning the house because he didn't want to disappoint his guests.

'Welcome to our humble home.' He announced when they got to the living room

'Thank you.' Mel responded

Khan was stuck on Xavier's photo that was stuck on the wall.

'That is a beautiful child.' He said sitting down

'He definitely is.' Both Mel and Sau responded at the same time

They chatted a little about how their trip was.

'Where is your sister by the way?' Mel asked

'She is in the bedroom probably getting dressed, let me check up on her.'

'I would suggest you don't, ladies love taking their time.' Mel told him

'Let me get Xavier so that you meet him.' He said looking at Khan

He disappeared into the corridor and came back later carrying the beautifully dressed Xavier.

'Xavier, meet uncle Khan. Khan, my nephew Xavier.' Sau announced

For a moment Khan thought he was being lied to, looking at Xavier was like looking at someone he had seen before.

[07/06, 18:06] Martin Martino: #A_PRAYER_AND_DOLLAR

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#18

(For Hibajene B Muzandu, thank you for the CHARM)

Miso kept struggling with what to wear, she wanted to be as simple as possible but also she wanted to show that she was a hard working single mother who was doing her very best to raise her child.

She went to the closet again and pulled out a blue bodycon dress that was just above the knees,

she got her house sleepers and roughly pulled her braids into a rough bun.

'This should do.' She said turning around to see her back

She walked out of the bedroom with her phone in hand, she was trying to switch off the data because she didn't want their guests thinking that she was rude.

'And here is my sister.' Sau said when Miso walked in

Her eyes met with Khan's, anger registering in them.

'Wow.' Mel said

'I know she is a jewel.' Sau said again not realizing what was happening

'I see you are Xavier's mother.' He said now the truth hitting him

'Yes.' She responded swallowing hard

She went over and shook his hand lightly, then turned to smile at Mel. She got Xavier and held him tightly as if her life depended on it.

Sau excused himself saying he had to start serving the food and Mel offered to help, so now it was just Khan and Miso in the living room.

The silence between the two was too much to bear; Khan didn't know what to say to her. For two years he had looked for her but to no avail and now that he had stopped she had to show up.

'What did I ever do to you?' he asked with hurt in his voice

Her own voice was stuck on the throat, she didn't know what to tell him. She had not prepared herself for this

'Miso I asked you a question, did you even love me?' he asked now tears forming in his eyes

'Khan we can't talk about this right now.'

'Wow, we can't talk about this right now? After two solid years of silence that is the best you could come up with?'

'I had my reasons for leaving and I would appreciate we pretend like we don't know each other.'

She said when Xavier looked at her.

He laughed, an anguish laughter.

'You told me you wanted us to keep ourselves, but you had to get pregnant huh? Is he the one paying for this house? Is he the one that asked you to move your mother from the hospital? How is she anyway?' he asked

Miso looked at him without a word.

'The table is set, Sau announced.'

'We are not staying.' Khan said standing up

'Did something happen?' Sau asked surprised

'I will call you.' Mel told him realizing what was happening

'Oh, okay.' He said as she ran after her brother who was walking very fast.

'Did you do or say something?' he asked looking at Miso

'Not now, and you have to stay away from that girl.' She said walking to her room

'No Miso.' He said pulling her by the hand

She stared down at his hand that was holding hers

'I am your elder brother and if anything you will have to tell me what is happening.' He said putting his foot down

She felt drained, seeing Khan had drained her. She had not stopped loving him and his sight had just awakened the emotions she had been trying so hard to hide.

'I am sorry.' She said her tears betraying her

He went close and held her, he knew better than asking her so he just stood there as she cried in his arms.

'Let me get some rest.' She said

'Okay, call me when you need anything.' He responded getting Xavier from her

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Khan was fuming when they got to the hotel room, there was no doubt that Xavier was Josphat's child. The resemblance was too great.

'I didn't think Miso was loose.' Mel said sitting down

'Now explains why she left without a word, I am glad you didn't have anything with her sexually.' She added

Her words were just like acid to an already open wound, he grabbed his phone and called Josphat.

'Hey little brother.' He said

'You devil how could you?'

'Whoa, Khan I know we are not the best of friends but you have no right to treat me like that.' He said

'For two years I looked for Miso, two solid years I didn't know where she was when in actual sense you knew all along.' He yelled

'Wait, are we still talking about your perfect little girlfriend. Don't worry she still thought of you even when I laid with her.' He said memories of that afternoon coming back

'How dare you hide such information from me? And is this why you don't worry about Denise not having a child? Because you know you already have an heir?' he asked

By this time Josphat was on the edge of his seat.

'What did you just say?' he asked

But Khan was too upset to play games with him so he just dropped the line

Josphat stared at his phone, was it possible that Miso had gotten pregnant? Of course it was knowing he had not used protection.

Using his contacts, he traced her number and called her.

'Hello.' Miso responded

'I want my child, bring him the nice way or I will make sure you never see him again.' He said dropping the line

She didn't have to be a genius to figure out what had just happened, she had dreaded this day.

She had done the best as a mother to protect her child from its father and now she had to play by his rules.

'Damn you Khan!' she screamed grabbing a pair of pumps from her shoe rack

'Where is Mel staying?' she asked looking at Sau

'What do you want to do?'

'Give me their hotel name please.' She begged tears falling

Sau had no idea what was happening but he knew better than keeping it from her. After telling her the hotel name, she drove there as fast as she could. Using some contacts, she managed to get his room number and went there. She didn't bother to knock but just pushed the door open and banged it behind her startling him 'Khan how dare you.' She said 'And the little miss perfect is here, did your baby daddy just call you?' 'When did you become like this? When did you change?' she asked feeling her insides break 'You did this to me, you broke me and left me to heal on my own.' 'How could you call Josphat honestly, your brother is a devil.' She said her tears betraying her 'You should have known all that before you lay with him.' 'He is going to take my baby Khan, your brother wants my child. Do you know what my mother's dying wish was; that I protect Xavier from Josphat, she knew the kind of devil that he is. Lord my mother's corpse must be turning right now.' She said holding her tummy as she broke down to cry 'Wait, your mother is? And Josphat, he didn't know about Xavier?' he asked a mixture of emotions filling him up She looked at him with hurt in her eyes and left his room 'Lord what have I down?' he asked holding his head [07/06, 18:06] Martin Martino: #A_PRAYER_AND_A_DOLLAR

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#19 (Unedited)

It was five in the morning and her eyes were still fixed on Xavier, she had been in this position the whole night because she really didn't know what to expect from Josphat. Memories of how he had violated her body flashing back. 'I will protect you with everything in me.' She said for the millionth time as she forcefully blinked her eyes but no tears were coming out The knock on her door didn't even shake her, she knew it was probably Sau who had come to see her. The door opened and he stopped in his tracks at the sight of his sister, this is not the person that he knew. She was broken and wasn't even trying to hide it. 'You need to talk to me.' He said handing her a cup of tea She just stared at him then back at her child He stood there for a while then walked out of the room. 'How is she?' Khan asked 'I have no idea what is going on here but I have never seen her like that.' He said settling onto the couch 'Let me see her.' 'I don't know man but I hope she won't be on my case.' He said getting up He walked him to her room and pointed at the slightly open door then walked back to his room.

He stood just by the door and took in the room, it was decorated in white and royal blue. He smiled, obviously the two colors to suit both her and Xavier.

'Hey.' Khan greeted

She didn't have to guess who it was.

'What do you want?'

'I couldn't sleep, I just had to see you.'

'Well since you have, now you can leave.'

He moved closer to face her then knelt just before her.

'Miso I want to help you and Xavier, but I can't do that if you keep the truth from me.'

'You were not supposed to see us, you were not supposed to call Josphat. Now he wants my baby.' She said still no tears falling her eyes fixed on Xavier

He felt defeated, how was he going to help her if she wasn't opening up?

'What happened to your mother?' he asked

'She died.'

'Damn it Miso.' He said kicking into the bed

She turned to face him then back at Xavier, it was like she had just gone numb.

'Talk to me.' He begged

'Why did you do this to us? Why did you sleep with Josphat?' he asked trying to keep it together

'He stopped sponsoring my mother, he said he had power to pay anyone to end her life. At first I thought he was joking but afterwards I discovered dad had been paid to mix her medications.' She paused to swallow

'He did what?'

'Your brother is a devil.'

'But your father? How?'

'Well he met a woman and he was desperately trying to marry her, so taking out mum wasn't so big an issue for him.' She said sniffing

They were both quiet

'So I am guessing in exchange he asked you to lay with him?' he asked the words making him nauseas

She just nodded her head

'But it was too late, the damage had already been done.' She finally said

'Mum found out that I was pregnant even before I did, she connected the dots and said I didn't have to sell my body for her health because she was tired and wanted to rest. She asked me to take care of Xavier and protect him with my life.'

'I didn't want to leave you, I didn't want to hurt you or do anything that would cause you pain but I am a mother now and I have to do for my child nothing but the best that I can.' She added when Xavier let out a little cry

Khan was silently watching her as she picked up her baby and rocked his back as she put him against her chest, now he was feeling bad for calling Josphat but it had been done and the milk had been spilt.

'Had I known I wouldn't have called him.' He said

'He was going to find out somehow, now all I can do is fight for my child.'

'Let me help you, allow me to fight this with you.'

'No Khan, Josphat is your brother and this is my battle.'

'He ceased being my brother the minute he thought we were in a competition, yes we might have the same blood running through our veins but that doesn't make us any close.' He said with spite
'Josphat is a very powerful man in the government, he will do everything in his powers to take my child away.'

She looked at him then put Xavier back to bed when he had fallen asleep again.

'Allow me to be a part of your life again Miso, allow me to love you and Xavier like he was my own.'

She didn't face him, afraid her eyes would give her away as eyes are the windows to the heart.

'I am scared Khan.'

'So am I.' he responded

She looked up to face him

'Yes Miso I am scared, a child is a huge responsibility. Xavier will either bring us closer as a family or break us even more apart but I am willing to take that chance with you.' He said kissing her forehead like he had always done

'You won't give up on us?'

'How can I? When you are the very reason I face each day, when you are the very reason I look forward to a better tomorrow?'

She smiled

'I have never stopped loving you babe, not once and the two years have just been evidence that you are the only woman I want to spend forever with.'

'I never stopped loving you either, as that monster pounded deeper into me you were the only person that was on my mind. I hurt more for you than for myself.' She told him

'Hush babe, that is all in the past now. I am here for you, for Xavier, for us.' He told her kissing her lips lightly

She smiled between his lips like back in the days.

'I love you.'

'I love you Babe.' He responded then kissed her forehead

[07/06, 18:06] Martin Martino: #A_PRAYER_AND_A_DOLLAR

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#20

He paced about the room not knowing what to do, the issue at hand was very critical. A child was not something that you just walk away from without feeling an ounce of guilt in you. He had been married to his wife for a very long period of time and she had told him countless times that she would never give him an heir as long as he continued to sleep around.

Yes a part of him desperately wanted one but none of the girls he had been with were worthy to

carry his child. He considered them loose and dull and so he made sure none of them got pregnant. And if they did he had his own doctor that helped in terminating those pregnancies. Miso on the other hand was intelligent, she knew what she wanted and he was certain she would make a good mother.

'Damn it woman!' he screamed hitting into his office chair

He was upset that she had kept such information from him, yes it had hurt a little when she just went mute on him but that had changed as time went by because he had found himself in the arms of another woman.

He picked up his phone and called his assistant.

'I need you to find me someone.' He said strongly

'Yes I will send you the details in a text and make sure she is here in twenty four hours.' He said dropping the line

He picked his brief case and started off for home, his day was not going as planned and another minute in the office would just make him lose his mind.

'Who has died today?' Denise asked not even looking at him

He clicked his tongue, they had both stopped trying. They knew their marriage was not working and so pretending that it was the last thing they wanted to do.

'Go on, the best thing you do now is just walk away from me.' She screamed after him

'Woman what is wrong with you? Can't I have some peace in my own house?' he asked

She shook her head and went back to the wine she was drinking, the only thing she was good at the past days.

Immediately he disappeared into the bedroom she allowed the tears to fall, yes he was not her favorite person on most days but this is not how she had imagined her life to turn out. She had been so engrossed in getting married to Josphat, a young man with a promising future and when the money had started coming in she couldn't be happier. She thought she loved him but it was what he came with that she loved, he had been very intelligent to see this and so he found comfort in whatever he could. She toured the world with his resources, she literally drowned in his money that by the time she was coming to the top she realized money is just vanity without any love. She allowed the hot tears to burn her cheeks as she thought of all those times she aborted his children because she believed babies would make her figure go away. And now the doctor's report said she would never have children again, something had gone absolutely wrong on her last abortion.

She picked herself up from the floor and decided to follow Josphat to the bedroom; she couldn't drown in her sorrows alone, she needed him to be there for her. To not just be a husband but friend too.

Without knocking she entered the room and found him pouring himself some vodka from their bedroom refrigerator. She stood there and watched as he gulped the contents of the alcohol then poured himself another glass.

'Will you stand there looking at me like I am some sort of stranger?' he asked coldly

She blinked back the tears that were threatening to fall, she was vulnerable and now more than ever she needed him.

'When did we become like this?' she managed to ask

He looked at her like she had lost her mind

'Are you talking to me?' he asked looking around the room for a third person

'Josphat come on drop the act, of course I am talking to you.'

He chuckled then walked to the bed, sat down and started to remove his shoes.

She watched him as he struggled with his laces, she remembered a time when she found joy in doing that for him. The little things that made both of them happy - he had been over the moon for him as he fought for his way up the ladder.

'Let me help.' She said moving closer

She knelt before him and undid them like she did back in the days, after that she removed his socks which she put on the side and helped him out of his tie.

'Are you okay?' he asked her surprised

'I miss you, I miss us.' She said looking down as tears fell

He looked at her trying to digest what she had just said.

'What is wrong with you?'

'What?' she asked

'I just miss you, I just miss us.' She responded

He shook his head then got away from her

'I haven't met you today Denise, remember we have been married for a long time and honestly speaking if at all you missed me I would have seen the sincerity in your eyes. All I see now is.' He paused

'What do you see?' she asked

'I don't know but you don't miss me, there is more to this.' He said now undoing his buttons

She sat quiet for a while as the tears continued to flow, she was debating on telling him but what did she have to lose?

'Josphat I will never have a child.' She said the words tasting bitter both on her lips and tongue

He laughed sarcastically

'You find it funny?'

'Well I thought you are the one that always preached that you don't want to have a child with a man like me, so why now are you telling me this?'

She looked at him with shock

'I didn't want to have a child with you because you have never loved me.'

'Woman your friends out there have children just to tie themselves to a man and you, you had to deny me that chance of being a father for that reason?' he clicked his tongue

'Josphat you have never loved me, how was I supposed to carry a child for a man that never even loved me?'

'I always thought you were an intelligent person, a child would have been a win win for the both of us. I would have had an heir and you would have had someone that would always love you. But no, you didn't think of all that right?' he asked shaking his head

There was silence

'It doesn't matter now.'

'It sure doesn't because my son is already two as we are speaking right now.' He said dropping the bomb

[07/06, 18:06] Martin Martino: #A_PRAYER_AND_A_DOLLAR

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#21

Sau sat there in silence as he heard his sister narrate everything that had happened to her two years ago, he had always guessed that it was bad but he never thought it was that bad. By the time she was finishing, she and Mel were both in tears whilst he and Khan were looking sorrowful. 'Why can't we just report him to the authorities?' he asked when she was done

'He is the authority.' Miso responded

'I have done all my research on Josphat, I know the kind of person he is and what he is capable of doing. I am not going to gamble with what he can do.' She responded

After sighing, she got on her feet.

'I guess it is time to face him now.' She said

'Are you sure about this?' Khan asked

'If I don't do this, he will try to make my life miserable and I won't allow it. I better face him whilst I still have strength.' She responded

The drive back to Lusaka was a painful one, Miso didn't know where she would start from because when she left two years back; she promised herself that no matter what she would never return. They got there in the late evening, she had already called FAY designers, one of the biggest designers in Lusaka that were willing to work with her.

She shared a room with Mel and Xavier whilst Sau shared with Khan.

The following morning, Miso woke up quite early. Sleeping had been a hustle so waking up wasn't much of a problem either. She took a bath and settled for a bandage nude dress and nude heels, she had no makeup on and her braids were nicely tied in a bun.

'Are you ready to go?' Khan asked

She smiled, she was leaving Xavier behind. They had planned on going early so that they found Josphat home

The drive to his place was quiet, each one of them lost in their own thoughts. When they got there he held her hand

'I want you to be strong for Xavier, you know he will try to use your weakness when you give him the opportunity.'

'I know.' She responded putting up a strong face

They got out of the vehicle and walked to the front door, Khan knocked once and was welcomed by a house help who told them that the madam would be with them in a minute.

Denise had not had a very pleasant night, but hearing that Khan was there to see them; she felt a little bit of strength.

She applied a bit of makeup on her eye bugs so that they couldn't be that puffy.

She walked gracefully to the leaving room but stopped in her tracks when she came face to face with Miso.

Khan stood up to greet her

'Denise.' He said politely

'What is she doing here?'

'Is that a way of greeting your guests?' Khan asked

Miso had totally forgotten about Denise, she was not ready for her drama.

'Is your husband in?' Miso asked without a care in the world

'What do you want from him?'

Just then Josphat walked in, he was shocked to see Miso seated there but he hid his excitement and shock quickly.

'What do we have here?' he asked faking a smile

'How are you Josphat?' Miso greeted standing up

'I am good Miso, how are you?' he responded shaking her hand

She sat down when he let go of her hand, Denise sat too. The men didn't say a word to each other

'I am sure you know why I am here but firstly I would like to enlighten your wife.' Miso began

Denise stared at the faces in the room but all of them were expressionless

'Denise I know from lady to lady this will break you and even though you are not my favorite person I need you to know that I am very sorry.'

'Oh, so you too can humble yourself?' Denise asked sarcastically

'Denise stop it.' Khan said

She raised her hands in surrender

'I have a two year old child, who happens to be your husband's child too.' She said

'Excuse me?' Denise asked feeling her insides break

Josphat smiled, Khan held Miso's hand.

'You come into my house, with no remorse or anything just to tell me that you had sex with my husband and you have a child together?' she asked

'Yes.' Miso responded

'You slut! How could you? Wasn't it enough that you had Khan and now you had to go for a married man, his brother?' she asked now crying

Everyone in the room was quiet waiting for her to stop crying.

'How did it even happen?' Denise asked

'I am not here to discuss how it happened.' Miso said not showing any weakness in her voice

'Oh Lord.' Denise cried

'Josphat how could you?' she asked more tears falling, the mascara on her face making two black thick lines

'It happened and don't pretend like I didn't tell you.' He said clicking his tongue

'I can't deal with this anymore.' She said getting up

Once she was out of their sight, Josphat spoke.

'I am glad you came to your senses, so where is my son?' he asked

'You are not getting him, he will never be yours just like he has never been.' She said strongly

'Excuse me?' he asked one eye brow raised

'You heard me Josphat, he is my son. Mine alone, he might have your blood flowing in his veins but he will never be yours.' She said now on her feet

He sat there in awe as he stared at her body, he had never thought that she would turn out to look like that.

'Then I guess I will see you in court.' He said with a smirk on his face

'I hope you are ready to be convicted for murder too.' She responded

'Excuse me?'

'Oh, let me enlighten you.' She said

She walked to where he was standing and whispered something in his ears

He looked like he had just swallowed a grenade.

'We can leave now.' She said holding Khan's hand as they walked out

[07/06, 18:06] Martin Martino: #A_PRAYER_AND_A_DOLLAR

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#22

The drive back to chawama was quiet, her father wasn't expecting her and that is what gave her more courage to go there. She was still angry at him, firstly that he had been used by Josphat to end her mother's life quickly. Secondly that he and his new wife had moved into the house he had built with her mother.

Khan looked at her, he didn't know what was on her mind but whatever it was must have been really bugging her.

'Are you sure you want us to proceed with this?' he asked

She swayed in her seat.

'I don't know but this has to be done somehow, my father is the only person that can save me from Josphat now.'

He held her hand.

'Whatever happens remember that I am here to stay, I won't leave you; not now, not ever.' He told her kissing her hand

She looked at him and smiled.

'Thank you for being here.'

They parked just outside the grass fence, it looked like that was the only thing he had improved with the place.

She swallowed hard as memories of her mother hit her, she was a good woman and despite cancer being a deadly disease she didn't have to be drugged to her death by selfish people.

She got a chitenge that was in her hand bag and changed into slippers.

'I will call you if at all I will need you.' She said

'Please don't hesitate to do so.'

She kissed his lips lightly and got out of the vehicle. She moved to what looked like a gate and

pushed it open, the place hadn't changed. It was like she had left it two years ago and at this point she was trying so hard not to cry.

She saw a lady putting some clothes on the line and she guessed it was her father's wife but she looked younger from the last time she had seen her.

'Excuse me.' Miso began getting the lady's attention

She looked at her without a word

'I wanted to find out if Mr. Banda is around.' She said avoiding to say dad

The lady clicked her tongue and walked away.

Miso stood there in awe not knowing what had just happened

'Don't mind that witch, which Mr. Banda are you looking for?' An older woman asked

'The owner of this house.' She responded

The woman looked at her for a while

'Please come with me.'

She led the way and walked Miso to the back of the house, there was a reed mat laid and a man that looked like her father was laying there.

'Awisi Mabvuto (Mabvuto's father) there is someone looking for you.' She said

She helped him to seat up as he leaned against the stool that was put behind him

'Miso.' He said with shock his voice barely audible

The lady looked at Miso.

'How are you?' she asked still standing

He looked down with shame and said no word

'My dear take a seat, I will be with you in a moment.' The lady told her pointing at a stool just opposite her father

She walked away and only came back with a jar of tobwa.

'This is the only thing we can afford.'

'You don't have to.' Miso said with a smile that didn't reach her eyes

'Can you please excuse us?' her father asked looking at the woman

'Sure.' She responded and walked away

None of them said a word to each other, Miso noticed just how much her father had grown. He was no longer the pompous man she had grown up knowing, it's like death was looking for him and it wasn't feeling any mercy for him either.

'Child I am sorry.' He began but the look she gave him made him stop talking

'I am not here for your apology, I am here for one thing only.'

He looked at her, tears glistening in his eyes.

'I have a child with Josphat and he wants to take him away from me, since you know what you did; I need you to testify against him if need be.'

'I have a grandchild.' He said more to himself than to her

'No you don't, I ceased to be your child when you played a role in my mother's death. You ceased to be my father when you abandoned me and Sau and went on with living your life. The only child you have is Mabvuto.' She said now on her feet

'Miso I am dying.' He said with all the strength in him

'I hope death only claims you after you do what you are supposed to.' She said
'Miso please listen to your father.' The woman that had welcomed her earlier said
Miso looked at her, then at her father before settling back on the stool.
'The woman I had married.' He paused to cough
The woman got up and passed him a cloth which was by his side to spit.
'I thought she was everything that I needed not knowing that she was sick, she agreed to be my
wife even with the virus in her.' He said now tears falling
Miso swallowed hard
'I guess karma never forgets its victims' address right?' she asked
'My dying wish would be to see your son, my grandchild. Allow me to just feel an ounce of love
before I die.'
She laughed, shocking the two as tears fell down her cheeks.
'An ounce of love before you die?' she asked
'Do you even know the conditions in which he was born? Do you have any idea how I managed to
raise him up to where he is today? Do you know what I had to give up?' she asked now on her feet

'I only came to tell you that I need you to testify against Josphat, maybe; just maybe you will not
perish in hell.' She said as she got up

She walked as fast as she could to the front of the house only to be met by Mabvuto, he looked
distressful. It was like life had managed to punish him and her father.

'Miso.' He said

She turned to look at him

'Look at you, you have a successful young sister and here you are rotting in poverty like your
father. You can't even afford a decent meal for your child.' The young rude lady said as she
swayed with a baby on her back

Mabvuto just looked down as Miso walked away

[07/06, 18:06] Martin Martino: #A_PRAYER_AND_A_DOLLAR

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#23

It had been three days since she learnt that her husband had shamelessly made another woman
pregnant and now was fighting to get his child from her, she felt nauseated at the thoughts of a
man as powerful as Josphat stooping so low. This is not what she had imagined her life turning
into and after much thinking; she came to the conclusion that the branches were not wrong. It was
the roots that she was keeping in her house that were wrong. She didn't have to do anything to the
six inch heels, or the twenty two inch Peruvian hair because at the end of the day even when you
pluck out the branches; as long as the roots are in the ground, the tree will still grow.

She powdered her face one last time, she had called Miso earlier to meet her at Meraki cake and
bar at Makeni mall where she usually went to have her cake every time she was stressed.

She looked at herself one more time, she had gone out of her way this time to just look like a married woman. All these years she had just done things to impress herself and now more than ever she felt maybe if she had not neglected her home one bit maybe Josphat wouldn't have gone out there chasing after skirts.

She looked at herself on the mirror again, turquoise bandage dress with nude heels. Her hair was a bob grey that made her look younger than she really was. She sighed deeply and went through everything she was going to say before heading out.

Luckily congestion wasn't heavy and an hour later, she was seated on the table that she had reserved. She looked at her watch and wondered why Miso wasn't there yet, she had hoped to find her so that she makes a grand entrance.

She ordered a fruit shake and started going through her phone when she heard laughter coming her way.

It was Miso and Khan, she was in a black floral flared dress with yellow heels. Khan was clad in a black slim fit suit with a peach shirt and was carrying the baby on one hand and holding her hand with another.

Denise swallowed hard, she still couldn't get over the fact that Khan had denied her all those years but had settled for a girl without so much education.

'Sorry we are late.' Miso apologized with a smile

'Hey Denise.' Khan greeted her with so little emotion

'I guess this is where we say goodbye little man.' Khan said kissing Xavier who was busy smiling

'I will see you later beautiful.' He said now kissing Miso on the lips

Her cheeks flushed

She got the baby from him and kissed him on the lips one last time before he left. She took a seat just opposite Denise so that they could be facing each other

'Can I order you anything?' Denise asked

'No thank you, we are fine.' She responded smiling at Xavier who seemed to be hyper

Denise called for a waiter and ordered a slice of dark forest cake, she wasn't going to miss her specialty for anything in the world.

'You asked me to meet you here.' Miso said when Denise was busy digging into her food, forgetting that she had a guest

'I am sorry, I am just in love with their cake.' She confessed wiping her mouth with a napkin

'Then why not learn how to make it?'

'Excuse me?' Denise asked taking offence

'I mean if you like the cake so much, why not learn how to make it? Don't you think it will help you serve a lot of money and time? Plus you can have it at whatever time you want.'

'I appreciate your thoughtfulness but I think I have my reasons for coming here.'

'Which are?' Miso asked not giving up

'So that I can get away from my problems, so that I can forget that baby mamas like you exist.'

She screamed drawing attention

Miso sighed heavily.

'That didn't go well.'

Denise shot her an eye

'I asked you to come here just for one thing, I understand Josphat is the problem here and I will only be doing you a favor because I have decided to help you and make sure that he doesn't get your child.'

'I am all ears.' Miso said

'You see I know a lot of secrets about Josphat and if he decides to take you to court, I could stand as a witness. I could tell the court why I haven't had children for him all this while. Because I believe he will be the worst father to my children, I will tell the courts about all his affairs and that will work against him and in your favor. You can have your child to yourself and Josphat will suffer for the rest of his life.' She said excitedly

'And what's in it for you?' Miso asked after a while

'Well, I don't have to see you again. Or your child and I can watch Josphat wallow in sadness forever.'

Miso kept quiet for a while.

'I am sorry but I won't take it.' She said on her feet

'What?' Denise asked with shock written all over her face

'I won't take it.' She repeated then got up

She walked to the car park with Xavier in one hand and her handbag in another in search of a cab only to find Khan there.

'You didn't leave?'

'I don't trust Denise.' He said starting the engine

They drove the whole way and she explained what Denise proposed.

'Why didn't you take her offer?' he asked when she was done explaining

'My child won't be used as a pawn in her quest for revenge.' She said

'And why do you say that?'

'Denise is bitter, she is angry and doesn't care about I or Xavier. What guarantee do I have that she won't do the same to another child who God forbid Josphat might father some day? We will sort this out without hurting anyone in the process, we won't allow bad weeds to grow with the good ones least we bring down the whole harvest.'

He smiled; proud of how much she had grown.

[07/06, 18:06] Martin Martino: #A_PRAYER_AND_A_DOLLAR

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#24

Denise felt a wave of pain and anger run through her, who was this Miso girl to actually treat her the way she did? She wanted her and her child out of their lives plus Josphat not to know any happiness ever again and by all means she would do everything possible.

She sighed and ate the last piece of her cake, she had to drive to Chawama now to see her father, she hated that place but that was the only way to do things now.

From Makeni mall to Chawama where Miso's father lived, the distance wasn't far. She drove to the place with her head fixed on the target, if she had to entice the old man she would do it just to get what she needed.

She parked just outside the grass fence and without even wrapping a chitenge on her tight dress, she walked into the compound.

Feeling disgusted and almost turning back, she remembered she was only doing this once.

'How can I help you?' a young man who looked like was born of rags asked her

'I am looking for Mr. Banda, I am an old friend of his.' She lied

He eyed her from bottom to top, she smiled.

'Come with me.' He said after a while

She led him to the back of the house and there on a reed mat was a man lying down.

'Papa you have a visitor.' Mabvuto said

He didn't bother to look up because he didn't have strength, Mabvuto went to where his father laid and helped him up; putting a stool on his back for support. After that he offered another stool to Denise who almost declined but did when the two men kept looking at her.

'Can you excuse us?' She said looking at Mabvuto

'Papa will you be okay?'

'What is worse than this?' he joked followed by him coughing

When he disappeared, Denise fixed her eyes on the dying man and couldn't be more thankful that she had come here today.

'You lied to my son, I do not know you.' Mr. Banda said in a weak tone

'I can see you are dying.' She mocked

'Young lady if you are here to mock me, I would advise you leave and never return.' He said with all his strength

She laughed

'Trust me I am here to save you and all you have to do is shut up and listen.' She said taking charge

She looked at him again and could only think of one illness.

'I have the means of getting you medication, of moving you into a better home and probably giving you a better life for a long time.' She began

'Who are you?' he asked

'That doesn't matter, all that matters is that I can make you leave this place today and you will be in a better home. I will make sure your health is back on track and your immune system won't drop ever again. You can have the food you want and alcohol you want and women too.' She said in a conniving voice

His face brightened and she knew she had held the bull by its horns

'Except nothing is free.' She said wiping the smile from his face

'What do you want in return?' he asked

'You won't do what your daughter told you to do, you will varnish and never see her until I say so.'

He wanted to say something but she threw a stash of money on the mat.

'That is five thousand kwacha to get you food for today.'

She threw her business card on the mat too

'That is my number in case you change your mind, there is more where that came from.' She said and got up dusting her behind

Mr. Banda was left there looking at her, he couldn't believe what he was hearing. He so much wanted to make things right with his daughter before he died but then here was an opportunity presenting itself to better his life. He had missed his life, he missed going out there. He missed partying and having women in his bed, most importantly he wanted to find the woman that had infected him without any empathy.

'I will do it.' He shouted using as much strength

Denise smiled but didn't stop walking, immediately she got to the car; she called someone to come over and pick them up. In the next hour, another vehicle came that got Mr. Banda and Mabvuto without any of their items and took them to a house that she had built without anyone's knowledge.

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Khan was busy going through some files when his door opened, he didn't need to look up to figure out who it was, he knew her cologne.

'What do you want here?' he asked with less care

'Is that how you welcome a lady?' she asked pushing the door behind her

'Denise tell me what you want and leave.'

'I want you.' She said dropping her bag on his table

He stopped what he was doing and looked at her

'Excuse me?' he asked

'Khan tell me what I don't have, tell me why after all these years you had to deny my advances and yet went on and dated someone as cheap as Miso.'

'The same cheap Miso bore your husband a son, an area where you failed terribly.' He said

'Damn you Khan! Just tell me what I should do, tell me what you want from me and I swear I will do just that.' She pleaded

'Anything?'

'Yes anything.'

'Leave my office and never return; and if you can, divorce Josphat and start your life afresh because the city is about to get dirty.'

'I am not doing any of those things, I will leave this office but this is not the last of me you are seeing. I will be back and I will make you beg for me.'

She paused

'As for Josphat, I am not divorcing him. He is my meal ticket and if I can't have his love at least let me enjoy his money.' She said

'Then enjoy the money whilst the world laughs, he has filed for custody of Xavier. Full custody.'

'Josphat is not such a fool, he is a minister and wouldn't want to get his name in the mud; his ego wouldn't allow it.' She said getting her handbag

'He is a man who wants an heir love, not even ego is too big to put aside.' He said

Denise watched him for a while and stormed out of the office

[07/06, 18:06] Martin Martino: #A_PRAYER_AND_A_DOLLAR

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#25

For the first time in a very long time he was visited by his father, he had grown up admiring the man because he sacrificed so much just so his children could have the best in life. He slowly got out of bed, of late he was not so interested in going for work; he represented a busy office but he also knew he could work from anywhere in the world and things would still be moving.

It was his wife Denise that had told him that his father was waiting downstairs, she seemed to have regained her old self because she was no longer mopping around and knowing her, he knew she was either planning something or had done it already.

He walked down the stairs and his eyes met with his father's, piercing through him. He was afraid of that look, that look that left him feeling like a child and he instantly knew that this wasn't a friendly visit.

'Good morning father.' He said

'You have an entire province looking up to you and all you can do is sleep at this hour?' he barked looking at the wall clock not minding that the house helps were in presence

'Father I can work from anywhere in the world and things'

He didn't allow him to finish his sentence.

'We voted you into that office with full knowledge that you will be a good leader. We put you into that office to represent us and go out there when you have to.'

'You just said when I have to.' He defended

'We put you into that office, we can as well remove you!'

There was silence, none of them saying a word to each other. The room getting too small for father and son; Denise watched all this from the corner of her eye with pleasure, no one could put Josphat in his place like his father did.

'I don't think you came here to tell me how to do my job.'

'To the study now.' The old man commanded walking to where the study was as if the house was his

Josphat banged the door behind him

'You don't have to treat me like a child.' He said

His father turned to face him and punched him on the chest, causing Josphat to flinch like a child.

'I will do that and more if you choose not to respect me, I am your father young man.'

'I am not a little boy anymore and so you will not treat me as such.' He said standing eye to eye with the old man

'I don't know where I went wrong with you, I put in my two hundred percent just to make sure you are better than the man I was; the man I am trying not to be! I thought you were stronger than your little brother but no; I was wrong.' He said putting his hands in his pocket as if looking back at his life

'I have no idea what is wrong with you, but I don't appreciate you coming into my house and

treating me like you did when I was under your roof. Yes you raised us by an iron fist but things have got to change, I am not a child.'

His father shook his head vigorously

'You are not a child but will always be my child, that is something you cannot run away from. For as long as you still have my blood running through your veins I will have a say in your life.'

'What do you want from me?' Josphat asked rudely

'Seems you managed to become exactly what I didn't want you to be.' His father said before chuckling

'I won't waste any more time here but I want you to know that I am very disappointed in you, I am disappointed that you want to get Xavier from his mother.'

'Xavier?'

'Lord you don't even know his name, do you?' he asked with a mixture of disappointment and defeat

'I might not know his name now but that doesn't change the little fact that he is my son.' He said unapologetically

'I am ashamed to be called your father because that is not how I raised you.'

Josphat clapped his hands in mockery shocking the old man.

He turned to look at his son.

'What's the meaning of this?'

'You know what father; that is a beautiful show you just put up.' He said pointing a finger at him then continued to clap

'Meaning?'

'You coming in here and pretending like you are a good person, like you genuinely care about that little brat. All for what? Tell me what's in it for you.' He said now settling into his chair

'You know what makes you different from your little brother? He took after your mother's heart and my maturity. But you.' He paused to study his son's face

'You took after my cold heart and as for maturity, it seems power got the best out of you. I feel sorry for you Josphat, because when all this is over you will have no one to stand by your side. We all know that Denise is only here as long as the money is flowing, once it stops, she will find her way out of your life.'

'What is your point exactly?'

'This child is an opportunity for you to find yourself, to find that part of yourself that is capable of loving but no; once again you want to use this as a political rally. That is the problem with you damn politicians, you think everything is political.' He said as he cursed under his breath

'I will not allow Khan to be happy with Miso and that child whilst I have no taste of happiness.'

'So it's about jealousy after all? Don't you have it all? Money? Cars? Power? The devil for a wife? Can't your brother have that one thing that he never did whilst growing up? A family? Love?' he asked

He took one last look at him when he didn't say anything.

'I will make sure Miso never hands you her child but we want to be part of his life and I am sure Khan can be a better father to him than you.' He said and walked out

He met Denise on his way out, there was a time he thought she was the best for his son. She came from a very good background, well learned and her parents had good Christian values. He thought she would be a positive influence in his son's life but he had been wrong and now more than ever he wanted to make this right with Khan.

He got into his car and sighed, he was going to drive to his work place and talk to him.

[07/06, 22:46] Martin Martino: #A_PRAYER_AND_A_DOLLAR

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#26

"Sometimes people will treat you badly and walk all over you; don't worry. God takes note and let's karma come into play and if you are lucky, he will let you watch. His sense of humor is mean." Mills
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Miso packed the last material that was on the table before closing the warehouse, she was exhausted. Working for Fay designs was a mixture of different things – being thrilled, tired, drained, and excited and today she was feeling each one of those emotions at once and all she wanted to do was sleep.

She had just finished making the vice president's attire which she was to wear for the Easter dinner and she couldn't be more grateful that she was the one picked to do the job. It had made her use the last of her strength but she didn't mind because she found joy in every stitch.

She found the driver that had been assigned to her waiting outside.

'Good evening madam.' He greeted when she got in

'Ba Max you have got to stop calling me madam, I am way younger than you.' She said in her tired state

'Awe Madam I am used.' He said smiling like a child

She smiled back, there was no use in changing him.

He drove her to her place in PHI, Khan had insisted that she continues to stay with him but she had refused, she wasn't raised like that and cohabiting was the last thing she was going to do.

'I will see you tomorrow.' She said dragging her legs to the front door

She knocked once then let herself in, she knew Sau would be in.

'Hello.' She called but no response came

She dropped her bags on the couch and walked to the kitchen which smelled divine.

In an instant she felt all the weary wear off; she smiled when she saw who was busy in her tiny kitchen. She moved to where he was and hugged him from behind then bit on his ear lobe lightly.

'Hey.' She said

He bit his lower lip before turning to face her, it was hard staying away from her body but he had promised her that he would wait for her to be ready for him.

He kissed her lips lightly before she parted them and he found himself digging his tongue in her mouth.

'Something is.' She said between kisses

'What?' he asked trying to catch his breath.

'Burning.' She screamed freeing herself from him

'Oh crap.' He said lifting the hot pan from the cooker and dumping it in the sink

'See what you did.' He asked accusingly as he grabbed a sponge and some soap

'Where were we?' she asked naughtily following him to the sink

'Babe if you start doing this, I won't finish cooking.' He complained even though a part of him wanted to bring to life where Josphat had killed, he wanted to kiss the scars she hide from the world and just comfort her with his lips.

'I am not doing anything, am I?' she asked trailing her fingers on his chest

She couldn't believe she was the one being flirty with him, but Khan had proved himself in more ways than one and everything just felt right.

He put the sponge down and washed his hands then grabbed her butt before crashing his lips on hers. She moaned lightly and put her hands around his neck. He kissed her with every fiber in him, with an urgency that he had never felt before.

'I want you.' She whispered

'Are you sure?' he asked her as he continued to kiss her neck

She moaned some more as he placed his hand inside her shirt and reached for her nipple.

'Yes I am sure.' She responded

He removed her blouse and began to suck on her nipples as she stumbled to remain steady, he continued to do that as one hand caressed her body.

He smiled and looked at her, she was lost and was ready for him. But he would keep his word, at least to a certain percentage.

He lifted her up and put her on the kitchen table, lifted her skirt till the waist then dipped a finger inside her.

'Babe please.' She begged

That made him do it even more, when he felt her legs shiver he helped her out of her under wear then knelt before her and dipped his tongue inside her.

'Babe.' She moaned holding his hands tightly

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Josphat kicked the nearest stool he saw, this was just out of this world. Who did he think he was? Just because he carried the power of head of state so he could just boss anyone around? His wife looked at him and even though she was rejoicing she had to play the good wife by consoling him. She rubbed his back for the millionth time even though she just wanted to laugh in his face – at his face.

'We have built an empire; let us not worry so much about this, we will get over it in due time.' She advised

He looked at her and even though he wanted to scream, he knew it wouldn't solve anything. Like a wounded animal, he stood up from his seat and went to lock himself in his room. Josphat had

everything under control, never in his life had he imagined being fired. He had thought it was a joke when some of his friends told him what was about to go down but when it had been announced on national television that the president had fired some ministers, him inclusive for misuse of funds and the public office; he knew there was nothing he could do about it.

'Damn you Mr. President.' He cursed throwing things around in the bedroom

He had been Minister all the two terms that the President served in his office and he knew that if he won a third term he would still be Minister. But now all that had just gone down the drain, he had been so engrossed in getting a child that he didn't even love that he had forgotten about his job.

[07/06, 22:46] Martin Martino: #A_PRAYER_AND_A_DOLLAR

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#27 (Unedited)

He woke up just after 9am, he was having a terrible headache from all the drinking he had done the previous night. He walked to the bathroom and stood under the shower allowing the cold water to hit his body; this is not how he had imagined his life to turn out but now nothing much could be done.

He hit the shower glass as he thought of all the trips that he used to take; of course paid for by the government, the fat allowances that he got for seating in his office the whole day and doing absolutely nothing and now all that had varnished in just the blink of an eye.

After what seemed like forever, he wiped his body and walked to the bedroom. As if his life wasn't messed up enough, he found Denise packing her things.

He took one glance at her then walked to his dressing table where he picked up a bottle of lotion and started to apply slowly on his smooth skin.

He didn't have the energy to ask her what she was doing or where she intended to go, at this point all he wanted was to drown in alcohol and his sorrows.

'Can we talk?' she managed to say after clearing her throat

'She wants to talk?' he chuckled talking more to himself

'Josphat I know you are going through a rough patch but there is something really important that I want us to discuss.'

He put the bottle of lotion down, grabbed a fresh pair of boxers and put them on. After which he got a short and t shirt and dressed up.

'I am all ears.' He said standing just opposite her with his hands shoved deep into his pockets.

'Josphat I am leaving.'

'Safe trip.'

'I mean I am leaving you.' She said again

'Okay.'

She looked at him with shock

'Okay? That is all you have to say?'

'Tell me something Denise, what exactly do you want me to tell you huh?' he asked almost laughing, an anguish laughter

'I am just wasting my time here.' She told him forcefully grabbing her travelling bag

He moved to the small refrigerator in the room and got the last bottle of whisky that he had left, not bothering whether she was out of the room.

She stopped just half way through the door.

'Screw you!' she said the words slipping out of her mouth

His lips curved with a smile without even turning to face her.

'You know what Josphat; everything that has happened to you.' She paused as if calculating her next words carefully

He eyed her, then drunk from his bottle.

'Everything that has happened to you, you deserve it!' she yelled

'When you are done please close the door behind you.' He said in a calm voice

She laughed.

'I can't believe there was a time when I was madly in love with you. A time when I believed in your potential and everything you were capable of.' She blurted out making a disgusted face.

She stood there waiting for him to say something but he didn't instead continued to drink from his bottle.

'Josphat you are an excuse of a man now, a real man doesn't do what you have been doing to me. A real man was supposed to face challenges with his wife and talk them out and not going out running into the hands of every Mil and Mon he saw out there.'

He gave her a nasty stare, probably because she had touched a muscle.

'What are you getting at? You said you want to leave and I am okay with that, I haven't even held you back what I don't understand is why you are still standing in my presence.'

'This is the last of me you are seeing and trust me no one will ever tolerate you as much as I have. No one will ever have my patience and stand you.'

'Bravo!' he said clapping a number of times

'Not only did I marry a thief but an actress too.'

He took another sip from his bottle, put it down then grabbed it again to take a huge gulp.

'I think you deserve a standing ovation, you deserve your own award giving ceremony. You my wife deserve a grammy award because I don't think anyone could pull off what you have.'

'You are drunk and I won't waste any more time talking to you.' She said trying to walk out but he blocked her way

'I was going to allow you to go without hearing a piece of my mind but it seems you are so focused on hearing what I will say.' He said laughing in her face, his mouth odor hitting her

She closed her eyes a little, this was not her husband. The venom in his voice scaring her, the devilish look in his eyes making the hairs on her back stand.

'Josphat don't hurt me.' She pleaded

He laughed, pinning her more against the door then shook his head vigorously.

'I was but just a young boy, I loved you. I worshipped the ground you walked on. I was willing to do everything and more for you, but what did you do?' he asked trailing his finger on her cheek

She turned her head to the other side.

'I loved you Josphat.'

'Liar!'

'At some point I did, I wanted to make this marriage work.'

'No you didn't, you loved what my name came with. You loved the power, the prosperity. You loved that you could get the life you ever wanted whilst with me and now that you can't; you want to leave me.'

She didn't dare look at him, her tears falling as she struggled to get away from him.

'The more you fight me, the more it will hurt.' He said now moving away from her

He took his bottle and drunk from it.

'When they said that life wouldn't always be rosy I had no idea this is what they meant. Denise I could have laid down my life for you but you pushed me to the wall, the empty I love yous and I will stick with you through thick and thin!' he said that and hit his bottle to the wall

'I want you to get out of this house and out of my life, I never want to see your lying and good for nothing face in here.' He yelled

She wiped her tears.

'Everything you own, I won fifty percent. Yes I will not come back into your life but this is definitely not the last you are seeing of me.'

'Oh I missed my wife, now that is the Denise I know. Always looking for the finest things, eating from the highest of tables, conniving and manipulative. Being sweet doesn't look good on you, you know.' He said with a chuckle

'I will have to be damned to give you any of my hard earned money, you had your chance woman now run along.'

'I guess I will see you in court then.' She said with a wicked smile

'I will be happy to see your face when the jury learns just how you stole from me and built properties using my money.'

She looked at him with shock. He laughed

'Yes honey, I was a minister but still very brainy. And I know you have always loved my brother, so if you want half of my properties; how about we work as a team. Split those two up and we both win.' He said moving to where she was and kissing her on the forehead.

She didn't move.

'Now that's better, get your travelling bag and put back those clothes you bought with my money back in the closet.' He said

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#29

She looked at herself on the mirror just to be sure that she didn't over or under dress, she wasn't even sure about how the meeting would go but this was the only way out.

She wiped Xavier's mouth which was covered with porridge but lucky enough his clothes were still clean.

'Going somewhere?' Sau asked with a mouth full of food

'Yes we are.' She responded putting Xavier on her back

'Oh okay, do you need me to drive you?'

'No we will get a cab from the taxi rank.' She responded bidding him goodbye

She smiled when Xavier excitedly made small movements on her back – the joys of motherhood.

She walked to the taxi rank and got on the first cab she saw, she had called Bwana Howard the previous day and asked that she sees him; he was surprisingly willing to see her and had suggested that she goes to the farm.

When they reached Chawama compound, she felt a sting of pain in her heart. This place only held memories that she was trying so hard to forget; nobody had told her the anguish and pain and endless questions that one remains with after a bereavement. The grave holds so much they say, and only when you have greatly lost will you believe this statement. She looked away from her old place as she felt suffocated.

'Thank.' She said to the cab driver when he had parked just in front of the farm.

She took a deep breath and fixed her dress before putting Xavier back on her back, he made the little movements again making her relax a bit.

She walked in and was met by workers who were busy harvesting the fields, she smiled; she had once wanted to have so much money at her disposal and now that she did she knew that life was more important than anything material.

'Misozi.' Khan's mother said

Miso walked up to her, she didn't look any better from the last time she had seen her. She had lost more weight and her skin could be mistaken for a light plastic.

'It has been forever.' She said embracing her

'I have been busy.' Miso responded in a sweet voice

'Busy hiding my grandchild right?' the old lady teased

Miso smiled weakly

'Please hand him to me.' She said getting behind so that Miso could untie him from her back

The old lady got Xavier and the boy immediately started laughing and making happy baby sounds.

'Ah look at you, you are so handsome. You probably have your mother's genes.' She said kissing his cheek causing him to laugh

'It seems you two have already hit it off.' Bwana Howard said from behind

The two ladies turned to face him, he was in an overall with gumboots.

'Please go to the house, let me just change.' He said wiping the sweat from his face

The two ladies walked slowly to the house and talked about random stuff, it was so relaxing for Miso because she had not been sure about the visit. The old lady led her to the back of the house where a mini garden was, it looked different from the rest of the house and if one didn't know better; they would think it was a different place.

'This place is beautiful.' Miso complimented

'It is her doing, she and Khan. Whilst I took up farming, they did this.' Bwana Howard said looking

around

The ladies settled in the chairs

'You know at first he hated this place, in fact he hated the idea when I presented it to him but look at him now.'

He laughed.

'Well I guess I thought she and her son were just wasting time, imagine whilst I was out there in the sun farming so that we could have food on the table; she was here God knows doing what. But then I got tired of talking and two years later I couldn't believe what the place had turned into.' He confessed as he picked up Xavier

'Can you believe he only stepped foot in here after two years?'

'Woman my pride couldn't allow me.' He said patting her back lightly

A maid came through and put a jar of cold munkoyo on the table with three glasses and sugar.

Khan's mother stood up and poured the munkoyo in the cups and served Miso and her husband.

'Thank you.' Miso responded taking it graciously

They drunk in silence as the bwana continued to give little sips to Xavier who seemed to be enjoying the local drink.

'He is a beautiful baby.' His grandfather said

'I said the same thing too.' His wife responded

Miso smiled genuinely

'You wanted to see us.' The bwana began

Miso cleared her throat, she dreaded this moment.

'Yes I did.' She responded putting the glass down

The two now looked at her, their concentration on her.

'As you are both aware Xavier wasn't born in the best of conditions.' She paused when the old lady held her hand

'A child is still a blessing.'

Miso smiled

'I was getting to that.'

The two nodded

'I love Xavier, I genuinely do and I would never trade him for anything in the world.'

She paused again

'But?' the bwana asked

'I don't want Josphat to be a part of his life, at least not until he can be able to make his own decisions.' She said looking at them

'So you are saying that, you don't want this child to know about his father? But if he does it should be when he is old enough to make his own decisions?' the lady asked

'Yes.'

'Can I ask why though?'

Miso sighed, calculating her next words carefully.

'Josphat doesn't want anything to do with my child, he has made it his personal mission to use the fact that he is his father to make my life miserable. My child will not be used as a pawn in all this, if

anything I would rather he hurts me directly than using Xavier.'

There was silence.

'Is this about Khan though?' his mother asked

Miso laughed lightly

'Of course it isn't about Khan or anyone else, it is about my child. About Xavier, I don't want to raise him in an environment that doesn't appreciate him. I want my child to grow up.' She paused before completing her sentence

'We support you.' The two said at the same time

'What?'

'Yes we do, Josphat is my son and yes I did talk to him but it seems he won't listen to anyone else apart from himself, but all we ask is that you don't deny us a part in your son's life.' His father said

'Of course I wouldn't.' Miso responded with a smile

There was certainly light at the end of the tunnel for her and she was happy that the first step had been completed, now she had to move to the second one.

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#30

Khan was having a terrible day at work, he just couldn't get it out of his mind that Miso could prefer Josphat over him when it came to issues concerning Xavier.

He had just attended to his seventh patient of the day when her scent hit his nostrils, whatever time or day he couldn't miss it. He felt his anger build up just thinking of the kind of drama she had come with, he wasn't ready to deal with her yet here she was parading herself for God knows what.

'Hey handsome.' She said in a teasing yet sexy voice

He finished writing the prescription and gave it to the nurse he was working with.

'Make sure you give this to the patient and if the medicine is not available make sure they buy it so that treatment begins.' He said putting his pen away

'Are you going to pretend like I am not here?' she asked walking behind him

His anger was almost getting the best of him but he chose to control himself.

'What do you want here?' he asked immediately they got to his office

She closed the door behind her and put her bag on his table.

He looked at her for the first time since her coming, she was in a long beige trench coat with black heels.

'How long are we going to play this game?' she asked unbuttoning the coat

'Meaning?' he asked his eyes fixed on her face

'Khan we are both adults and I know you want me as much as I do you, so when are we going to stop behaving like kids and just get on with each other.' She said now the buttons open

She dropped it to the ground, underneath was a lace bra and a matching underwear.

'What are you doing?' he asked

'I know you like what you see, I know you want me.' She said biting her lower lip

Denise was a beautiful woman, she had curves in the right places and any man in their right mind would fall for her trap.

'I am giving you a minute to dress up or else you will not like what I will do.' He said his voice strong

She feared a little but did not show it, this was the only way to get him to lose himself for her; it was today or never.

'Do you know the difference between Zambian women and women from Florence?' she asked

'Denise I am warning you.' He said his voice stern

'Zambian women unfasten their bras from the back, whilst women from Florence Italy; do it from the front.' She said now unfastening her bra and letting it drop to the ground

Khan swallowed hard, her breasts were full and firm. Facing him and as if welcoming him.

'Denise please.' He said his voice almost pleading

She knew that she had him in a fix, if only she had thought of this a long time ago

She moved closer to where he stood making sure that they touched his chest, his breathing changed; his senses leaving him in an instant.

She held both his hands and placed them on her breasts.

'Denise.' He said lost in the emotions

'Say no more.' She told him

She took a deep breath before knocking, the last time she had been here things had gone as planned but after a while everything crumbled back to the ground.

'Good morning.' A lady who looked like a house help said

'Good morning, is Josphat in?' she asked

The lady looked at her from head to toe

'Yes he is.' She responded rudely

'Tell him that Miso is here to see him.'

The lady banged the door in Miso's face leaving her in shock. Minutes later she came back and ushered her inside.

'Make yourself comfortable, he will join you in a minute.' She said

'Okay.'

She removed Xavier from her back and put him on her laps, he was sound asleep.

'The lion has followed the humble sheep.' He said walking towards her his hands in his pockets

She looked at him trying to block the memories of that one time he took advantage of her.

'So let me see, you have come to give me a piece of your mind again? And this time you didn't come with your boyfriend?'

'Can you please take a seat?' she asked politely

'No I won't, this is my house not so?' he asked sarcastically

She took a deep breath, this was a bad idea. Josphat was always going to be as arrogant as he

has always been.

'Are you going to speak or maybe I go back inside?' he asked with a raised eye brow

She sighed

'I am not here to argue or to warn you.' She began

'I am all ears.'

'Josphat I hate you.' She said bluntly

'Wow.' He responded taken by surprise

'Yes I hate the fact that you came to me as a wolf dressed in sheep's clothing, I hate that you took advantage of me. I hate that because of you I lost my mother.'

Her voice was almost breaking now but she paused to keep calm

'Most importantly I hate that you are the man that my son will grow up to call his father.' She said through gritted teeth

He looked at Xavier who was sleeping then back to her face

'But no matter how much I despise you or what conditions Xavier was born in, he has your blood running in his veins and I won't deny him the joy of having a father in his life just because of the hate I have for you.'

His face softened, he had not expected to hear this from her

'I will make sure Xavier never hears about you not until the day he will be old enough to know right from wrong, only when he asks about you. Until then I will be both mother and father to this child because I know you don't have any affection towards him.'

She swallowed and watched as he took a seat

'I am not going to fight you because you win, I don't have the kind of money you have and worse I can't drain your blood from my child's veins. What was done was done and I can't undo it. So you win. You win whatever battle you have presented but all I ask is that you don't involve an innocent child in all this.' She said

He looked at her without a word.

'Miso I know you as a strong woman, why would you give up just like that?'

She laughed lightly

'I didn't give up, I just chose which battles to fight. When you have a child that you will love some day, you will know which battles are worth fighting.' She said now on her feet

'Miso.' He said

'Yes.'

'I didn't mean to fight you, I just wanted to be with you.'

She shook her head

'You are just selfish Josphat, if you wanted to be with me you would have used the right means and not what you did.'

'How can something so ugly bring about something so beautiful?' he asked looking at Xavier

'God is beautiful, he works in beautiful ways. You should seek him sometimes, you could use some beauty. Your life is nothing but dust, could be blown away any time. Empty like a barren womb, cold like the grave.' She said and walked out leaving him in shock

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#31

DENISE

'You lose decency when you get involved with someone who is already committed.' Milz

I roughly parked the vehicle in my parking spot, I was fuming and I could feel my bile raising as I thought of the humiliation I had just gone. I hit into the steering wheel a number of times as the hot tears burned and rolled down my eyes; making two black lines with the mascara that I was wearing.

'Damn you Khan!' I yelled as more tears fell

I wanted him at all costs but with each and every step I took which I thought was taking me a little further to getting him; I ended up getting disappointed.

I removed my heels and carried them in one hand, I didn't even lock my car. I walked to the front door and was met by one of the house helps.

'Please get my things from the vehicle.' I instructed and walked into the house

It was quiet as usual, how could so much money not give one happiness? I thought I had it all but even though I could afford everything I wanted I still couldn't stay happy.

I walked to the bedroom and found my dear husband seated in a chair staring at the wall, I wasn't ready for whatever drama he had this time so I just walked to the bathroom and ran myself a cold bath. When I was done, I wiped my body and wore a short dress then got on the bed and covered myself with a fleece blanket.

'Can we talk?' he finally said, talking for the first time since I walked in

I seated up right and faced him.

'I am all ears.'

He cleared his throat.

'This is not working.' He began

I chuckled

'Yeah right.'

'Denise honestly I am being as open and frank with you as possible.'

'Josphat you woke me up just to tell me things that I already know?'

He sighed then faced down.

'I am sorry.'

'Excuse me?'

'Denise please just have an open mind here and hear exactly what I want to say.' He said almost pleading.

I sighed again.

'I am sorry that I wasn't the best husband that any woman can ask for, I know love wasn't so much of a thing between us but at least I should have treated you better.'

He paused then looked at me.

'I am sorry things had to get this bad for me to realize that I have been bad to you, I should have let you go before we got here. You are young, vibrant and I am sure that there is still much you can do without me by your side.'

I felt a lump on my throat, I couldn't hold back the tears so I just let them fall.

'And I am sorry that you can't have kids anymore, I know I contributed greatly to that. Its cliché to say that had I not gone out there in search of younger girls, you wouldn't have gone gallivanting as well but in all honesty I blame myself and I wish there is something I can do to revise that.'

By this time the flood of tears that I had been holding back poured out, I had never thought that the proud Josphat would ever apologize and recognize his mistakes.

'Why now?' I managed to ask between sobs

'Josphat why now when I don't have much to live for? Why now when the very essence for my life has been turned to dust which can be blown away, why now when my womb is barren, cold and empty?' I asked again more tears falling

He rubbed his eyes as if blocking tears that were about to fall.

'This might sound crazy but I want to be a part of my son's life and I can't be if I continue living the way I have been.'

I laughed, shocking him.

'And here I was thinking that you have changed. Here I was thinking that you are a better man.'

'Denise I am trying to change, I am trying to be the best I can be so that my child can look at me without thinking twice about treating me like his father.'

I laughed again

'So where does that leave me? Now I am going to be the wife that couldn't change her husband, right? I am going to be used as a villain in your testimonies in some Pentecostal church somewhere right?'

"I was once married and things couldn't work out between me and my ex-wife?" I asked making inverted comas in the air as tears poured

'Then the congregation will scream their hallelujahs and amens right?'

'Denise don't do this, don't make it harder than it already is.' He pleaded

I laughed, laughing was the only thing keeping me sane in that moment.

'Denise this is why I want to let you go.' He said now on his feet

He came to where I was seated and handed me some papers, I didn't even have to look at them to see what they were. I tore them to pieces and threw them at him.

'You are a coward Josphat, you are a fool to think that I will give you a divorce after everything you have made me go through.'

'Denise let us not continue doing this, you know we are bad for each other.'

'So are we for anyone.' I yelled

'We are bad for each other but not good for anyone else Josphat, we are bad for the world, we are too poisoned to stay with anyone else. We are stuck together.'

He shook his head vigorously allowing the tears to fall, the first time in our thirty years of marriage.

'I need to be a better man, for my son.' He said now breaking down

I moved to where he was and held his head so that he could face me.

'We have hurt ourselves, we have hurt the world but the bridge is still there. We can still redeem what we lost. Not by running away but facing our problems head on.'

He looked at me with his teary eyes.

'I am broke and broken Denise.'

'You are not broke if you have a skill, and about broken; aren't we all are?' I asked smiling through my tears

He chuckled reviewing his teeth.

'Are you sure about this?'

'About holding you in my arms?' I asked laughing

He laughed as well

'About starting over? Meeting your son? Apologizing to Khan and Miso, your mother and father?

No I am not, but I am willing to give it a shot.' I said kissing his forehead

'Thank you for putting up with me.'

'No, thank you for never leaving. For always remembering where home is.'

THE END

Winnie

[07/06, 22:46] Martin Martino: #A_PRAYER_AND_A_DOLLAR

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EPILOGUE

He didn't know what he would say but he was so sure that no matter how she took it, it was best to come clean. He sighed and waited for her to come out of the bedroom.

'Hai.' She said with a smile

She handed him Xavier

'Hey little man.' He said lifting him a bit in the air causing him to laugh

'Lunch is almost ready, let me do the final touches.' She told him

She walked to the kitchen when Sau and Mel walked in.

'Hey you two.' She said

'Hey.' They responded uniformly

Khan knew he had to talk to her so he handed the baby to Mel and followed her.

'Hey you.' She said as she added some mealie meal to her paste which she was making into nshima

'We need to talk.' He said scratching his head

'Can't it wait? Lunch is almost ready.'

'It is something that is eating me up.'

She looked at him with a raised eyebrow then went back to her cooking

'It can't wait.' He said more seriously

She covered the pot with its lid and removed the relish from the grill which she placed on a plate.

'Can you help me with setting the table?' she asked cooking through her nshima for the last time before she nicely put it in the food warmer.

'Okay.' He responded defeated

They set the table and called everyone to eat.

'I have an announcement to make.' Mel said when they were half way into the food

Everyone turned to look at her

'I just got a job offer to work in Copperbelt.'

'Oh my word I am happy for you.' Miso said stretching out her hand

'Thank you.' She responded with a smile squeezing Miso's hand

'And when were you planning on telling me?' Khan asked upset

'I just thought I should do it when everyone was present.'

'Mel I am still your elder brother and I really think certain things have to be talked about with me first.' He snapped

'What he means is that, despite him being happy for you; he thinks you should have warned him because now he won't have anyone to stay with.' Miso cut in with a smile trying to lighten the moment

Mel smiled, she appreciated Miso coming to her rescue but didn't appreciate how Khan had come out.

They finished eating and Sau and Mel removed the dishes and went to clean them in the kitchen.

'Are you okay?' Miso asked when they were the two of them

'I just have so much on my mind.'

'I guess being your woman also means I have to listen to your sorrows not so?' she asked putting her head on his chest

He smiled.

'Denise came to the office today.' He began

'Whatever she wanted didn't succeed right?'

He laughed

'You know this is serious.'

'Babe come on, Denise is many things and as long as you stay faithful to yourself before anyone else that is the most important thing.' She said locking fingers with him

'You didn't sleep with her right?' she asked after some silence

'Of course I didn't.'

She sighed with relief.

'I don't want to know what happened then.' She said looking at him

'I went to see Josphat, I am tired of fighting him and I won't anymore. When he is ready to man up and be a father to Xavier he knows our address. But you my man is the only man he will truly have to look up to.'

He smiled then moved away before pinning her down.

'I love you.' He started then kissed her forehead

She smiled

'You are the only woman I want.'

He then kissed her lips lightly

He whispered some sweet nothings in her ears before placing his lips fully on hers again.

'Babe.' She said between kisses

'Yes.' He responded looking at her

'You are the only man I want Xavier to know as his father.'

The smile on his face was priceless.

'I love you Misozi Banda.'

'I love you more Doctor Khan.'

'Do you want to get hitched?'

'Oh Okay.' she said with shock

He laughed

'Wait, was that a proposal?' she asked before laughing

'Woman you want me to go all mushy on you?' he asked before tickling her

She laughed so hard and in that moment she knew she was home, that is the only place she wanted to be. Her little safe haven.

Winnie