The background of the entire image is a romantic night scene. A couple is silhouetted against a large, bright full moon. The sky is filled with stars and a few birds are flying. The overall color palette is dark blue and purple, with the white text providing a strong contrast.

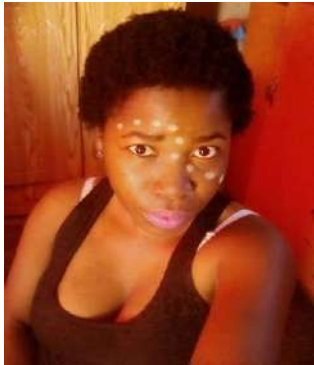
THE EDGE OF DOOM

Mash Keitumetse

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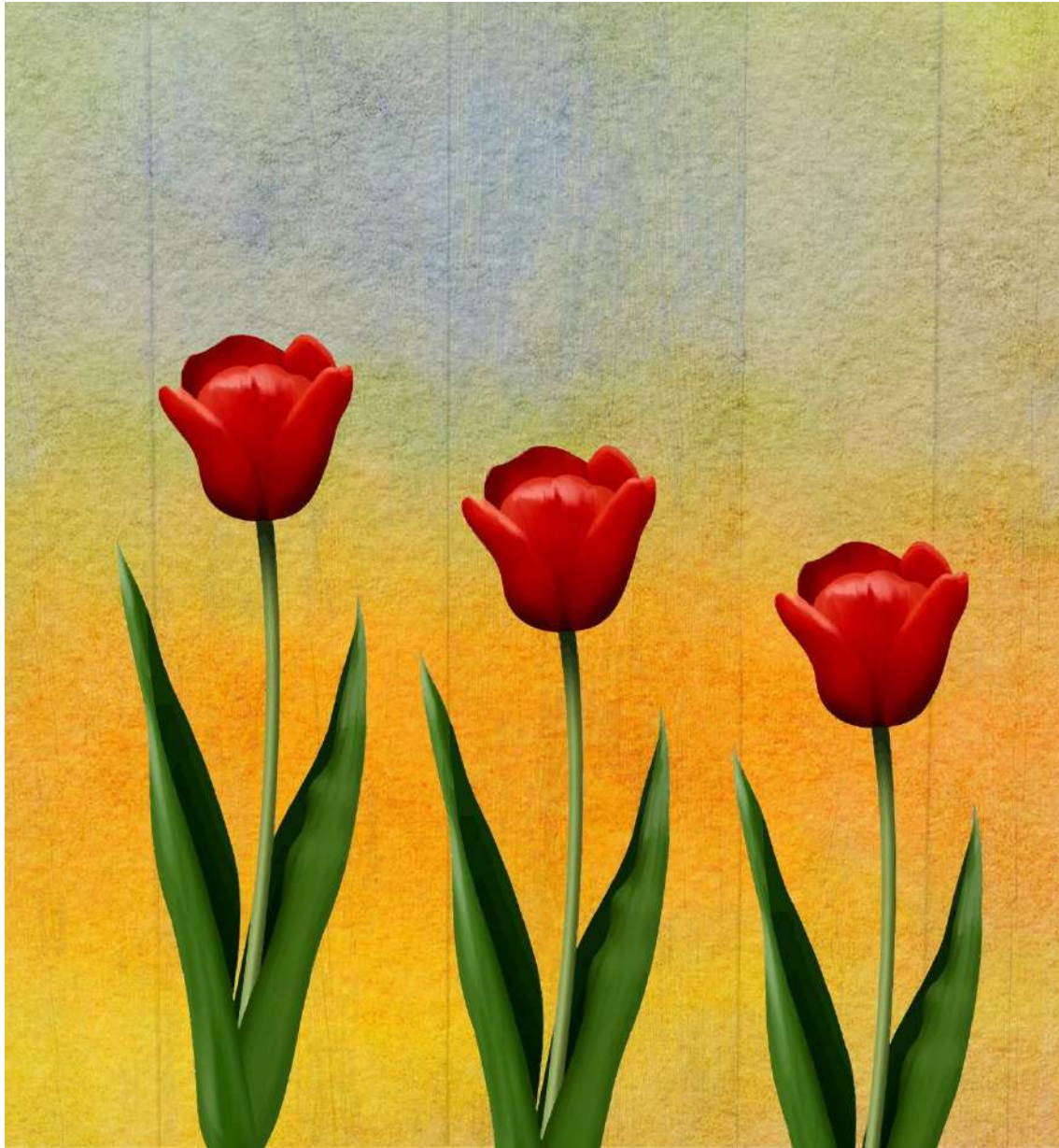
Mash Keitumetse is a media graduate from the University of Botswana. She has written for several publications in her own country. She is currently staying in Gaborone and pursuing her passion in writing and photojournalism.

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In loving memory of my late grandmother, from whom I discovered my love for reading. I took your storytelling to heart. May your soul rest in eternal peace grandma.



THE EDGE OF DOOM

Mash Keitumetse

Prologue

Marianne had hopes of a better future, at least she thought, after falling in love with a guy she had grown up to know as a brother. But it was not always like that. Her love for her brother cost her a life, and the life of her twins.

John knew from the beginning that he was calling for trouble for himself and for Marianne. She was young, naïve and unprepared. He couldn't resist. The death of Marianne's parents made every mistake possible for these two. Had they lived on, maybe, Marianne wouldn't have had to go through a lonely, depressing pregnancy.

The introduction of Jane into the love twist between her and John threw her out of the picture. She was determined to let go, to move away from the pain of seeing the love of her life with another woman. But where was she headed? A heavily pregnant 20 year old? To life or to destruction?

She would walk, come day or night. But it was not going to save her, in the dark streets of Francistown, trouble awaits her. Will she be able to reach her destination, the only place she know she was headed? In the hospital bed, cold and weary, she gave birth to twins, the bundle of joy she died before giving names.

'Ma'am they are twins, what would you love to call them,' the nice nurse had asked her. She was tired, but in her own mind she had reached the destination. She can now rest. But what of the two babies she left behind?

Mavis grew up in a children's village, bubbly and full of life. She enjoyed the privileges of every child.

'Mave my daughter, you should tell all your fears and dreams to God.' Mother Superior had once told her when she had asked about her parents and why they were living in such a big place

comprising of many children. There, she had learnt to pray for inner peace, for forgiveness and for the strength to face her future. At 18, she will leave the Children's village and start a new life away from foster parenting. Is she ready? Will she be able to face the future and make peace with the past she doesn't know yet?

"Here is a photo album I got from the midwife who assisted your mother at the time. It is the only thing I have for you, I hope it comes of help to you."

"Thanks Mother Superior", she had taken the album and hid it under her pile of clothes. She was not going to go through it sooner. She has exams to write in order to get herself a place at the University. Anything else can come after that.

Anything else that came after needed a stronger person. Will Mavis shoulder on? In her tertiary life she began her journey to look for her parents. It was in this journey that she lost a Dad and a twin brother. The family she never had, but vowed to live for.

During the summer of 1968 in the densely populated city of Francistown, Marianne walked into the delivery room of the hospital weary and hungry. "Hold on kid we are already there," she murmured to none but herself oblivious of the surrounding as the world came spinning on her. She tumbled on a heap.

"Ma'am what would you love to call them," a voice came, distant and blurry.

'Marianne!'

Born in Francistown, 20 or so years ago, Marianne is the first daughter of her carpenter father and a maid mother. When she was 16 she fell in love with John, John, Marianne's Knight in armour was a well built, tall and handsome young man with African full lips and eyelashes that women are painstakingly trying to achieve with mascara. He is the man who introduced Marianne to the deeper depths of womanhood. Torn between love and family ties, respect and adventure, she found herself enjoying the sense of adulthood at such a young age.

Thought to be nothing but a nephew to Marianne's father, John came to stay with Marianne's parents when he was just a teenager, after losing both his parents to a fatal car accident. He was treated more like a son and eventually, he forgot about his loss and adjusted to his new life with his new parents. Marianne's parents had taken him under the cover of their wings and the arrival of Marianne as a new baby brought happiness to them and to John also. It had been years of trying for her parents and they called her after her late grandmother. Marianne's father would then call her

‘Mom’-a symbol of true affection and the love he had for her only daughter.

As a child, she would cry annoyingly to seek attention or to disturb anyone trying to catch a nap. John was always there for her, though he was 10 years older when she was one he always made sure to keep her company, to feed and play with her. It is with this connection that Marianne relied too much on John, on back riding to even sharing a meal. She grew up bubbly and confident from all the love that she did not ask for, Marianne was the only daughter, therefore, she did not have to ask, and everything was provided at her own disposal.

Marianne was only 16 when she lost both her parents. She was doing her Junior Certificate and was left with only one year to go into Cambridge. In the long summer nights, she and John spent their time playing cards and talking about their childhood memories. John by then was a primary school teacher and he had vowed to keep Marianne under his wings just like her parents did when he came to them lonely and lost, afraid of being on his own. It was in the cold winter nights that they will sit around the fire and seem to be lost in what the future holds for them.

‘Sometimes I wish mum and dad were alive’, said Marianne trying so hard to conceal the tear that was about to flow down her cheek.

Seated across her and hidden in the shadow of the fire, John who for some time had been watching her wondering what it is that is bothering her was lost in his imaginary life. The little girl that he had carried in his own arms for many days when she could not stop crying was fully grown into a remarkably beautiful woman. Marianne was wearing her pyjamas and they were tightly fitting around her budding hips, her face had grown fuller though she still had that childish twinkle in her eyes. Her protruding and subtle

breasts showed of one who had never been with a man before. John wondered if what he was seeing was really the little kid who would ride on his back until she fell asleep. He blinked, the picture of a well-rounded ripe girl-woman stood vividly in front of him. He swallowed. Marianne stood up to put more wood on the fire. He watched as her buttocks swayed from side to side. His heart skipped. He swallowed again and suddenly he found it hard to breathe. A warmth flowed through his body and settled just by his waistline. He shook his head

‘God help me.’ He confessed

‘John! Watch out!’ Marianne cried as a log twirled out of the fire and fell just by where John was seated.

He gasped. Before he could get back to his senses Marianne was standing next to him. Shaking the dirty imagination from his head, he moved away from the burning log.

‘Are you okay John?’ Marianne knew him better and could tell when he was bothered.

‘Yes, I tend to miss my parents also, you know, your mum and dad’. He lied. *Perfect John.*

Before he could continue, Marianne came and wrapped her hands around his shoulders. *At least they were both worried about the same thing.* Dumbfounded, John didn't know whether to return the embrace, instead, he let his arms fall to his side. *God, help me.* Marianne looked up to him and touched his cheek, a warmth flowed from her hand to the point on his cheek where she has just touched. She felt him tense. *Poor John.* She stood on her toes and brushed her lips lightly across his. In her lifetime, Marianne had always regarded John as her own brother, but as she stood with her arms around his shoulders she became confused. Her heart

skipped a bit and suddenly she was filled with panic, she pulled herself away and went back to where she had been seated before.

‘Thanks’. John said with a throaty murmur that was not even too audible to hear. *He is caught.*

‘I guess it’s time we both went to sleep before we start dwelling too much on the past, I have a test tomorrow, night Jay. ‘She said trying to sound casual.

‘Good night Lady M’. He said relieved to go back to his own room away from Marianne as quickly as possible.

In her room, Marianne thought of the few days just after the death of her parents, how she had cried all her tears on John's shoulder, how the poor guy had been nothing but the only fountain of living water where she could draw her strength from. Just recently when she had been all alone with him, John had avoided eye contact and she had secretly laughed at his sudden change of character. John was already in his late 20s but she had never seen him with a woman. *That's a score. She mused. Maybe she still had time.* She recalled the last few moments when his behaviour had been odd and how he tried all he could to conceal his emotions. *She chuckled.* She remembered how she had felt his muscles bulge when she wrapped her arms around his shoulders and the look on his face when what she did was merely to comfort him. She saw herself comparing him to some of the boys at her own school. They really are boys. John was more of a brother to him, besides the blood ties were not too much, at least that's what she heard from her parents.

“Marianne you should not rely too much on John, one day he will leave to have a family of his own. ‘Her mother has once told her when John was at college and she could not stop crying because she missed him so badly. All the years that John had been away training to be a teacher, Marianne had missed and longed for him to come

back home. On the day when he finally came back home to work at the local school, she could not believe it was the same John who she has always done a piggyback ride on him. She found herself astonished as he held her in his arms. That day she knew John in a different way. He had grown, his body was well built and he had a moustache. As he walked towards her, she saw that his pants fit him well, detailing everything that her mind eye was seeing .her mind drifted on John for too long until the wandering took her to her own land of fantasies, the dreamland of bliss and love.

John could not take Marianne's new image out of his mind. He tossed about wondering what has gotten to him. *For Heaven's sake, she is my sister.Goddamn it.* The cursing did nothing to ease the bulge that was already building in his underpants. He had hurt for days during the summer days when Marianne wore nothing but her see-through gown. *Does this girl really know that this thing of hers is transparent? Stupid girl.* But today's kiss was more than a hypnosis to him, though it happened in less than a second, to him the world stood still for a while. He took his hand down to the throbbing that was boiling in his loins. *Boy u got to behave.* It was around 2 am when he tossed for the last time and tumbled into a deep sleep with his hands between his thighs.

September 28 was Marianne's 17 birthday and she had already made up her mind about going to a boarding school to do her Cambridge. Her staying with John was making things complicated. She could spend half of her day analysing him and comparing him to most of the guys she knows, her classmates, her teachers and many other men she meets every day. In all these comparisons John would come top of the pack. She had found herself longing for him to come home earlier than normal and on days when he came late she would go to her room and patiently wait for the sound of his car. *If mother had told me what love is.At least if she was still*

alive. A tear would escape her eye but she would quickly wipe it away.

At around 7 pm when she was still in her room wondering when John would arrive and if he really remembered it's her birthday, she heard a soft knock on her door. Without thinking she ran for the door. Waiting there with a big smile on his face was her Dear John carrying a bouquet of pink and yellow flowers.

'Happy birthday baby.' *Baby? Did he call me baby?*

Marianne did not know if she literally flung herself on his arms or John picked her up. She was clinging to him when she suddenly felt her heart beating faster. She started to tremble. John was holding her tightly to him and she could feel his every muscle. She wanted so hard to be squashed by his body. She wanted to hold on and never let go.

'Marianne I am choking here', John said with a chuckle. She didn't let go, instead, she pushed herself deeper into his body. *God help me, if she continues like this I don't know what I will do.*

Marianne looked up and kissed him on the lips. 'Thanks for remembering.' This time it wasn't a light kiss, she put her juicy lips entirely on his for a moment and sucked. John did not know what to do, his mind told him it was a dream. He returned the kiss, parted her mouth with his and allowed her to receive what he has been meaning to give her. Marianne felt a sudden warmth rush through her body as she returned the kisses. The time stood still as the two lovebirds finally had their first kiss. Marianne could feel a bulge in John's pants and she squeezed herself tighter on him, wanting so badly to feel him in a spot that ached so much between her thighs.in an opening that had never been opened. At that moment all she wanted was him. John could not hold himself any longer, he was

hurting, he had been hurting for too long and had waited too long for this day. *Will she agree? Will I hurt her?*

He sucked her tongue and heard a moan escape her. He chuckled and pulled himself away. Like a hypnotized person Marianne still had her eyes closed and kissing into the air. John chuckled again and kissed her softly on the forehead.

'I love you, Marianne'

In nothing but a murmur, she replied, 'I have always loved you, John.'

John looked at her face again, with eyes heavy with desire and fully flushed cheeks he wondered what happened to the girl he used to know as his baby sister. The girl-woman standing before him unashamedly declaring her love for him was totally different from the baby he had changed diapers. This is a woman in love. *I will love you more Marianne.*

He went again to kiss her lips, this time with the urgency that has never been there before, desire filling him to the core, afraid that he will hurt her yet trying so hard to be gentle. He carried her back to her room and lay her on top of the bed. That is when he realized she was wearing her usual summer gown with no bra. Her full ripe breasts were protruding against the garment and he could barely breathe when he looked down at her hips who were tightly fitting her mini gown.

He went on top of her and took off the gown, his heart skipped a beat when he saw the ripe succulent breasts and he could hardly breathe when he finally felt her velvety soft skin. He took his shirt off, then went down to take his pants off and let his fly lose, he couldn't help but laugh when he saw the look on Marianne's face.

'I am all yours baby', he teased

'And I have always known that' she threw back with all the confidence she had left.

Her soft warm skin made him forget all the gentleness he ought to keep. He went for one breast and sucked it, a moan escaped Marianne's mouth. He teased. He went for the other and sucked it, pulling it between his lips, this time he could feel her breathing heavily and squeezing herself tightly on to him. *Hold on my little dove.* He went down her belly button and kissed it lightly. He had lost all the strength to hold on, he was hurting, he was aching, and the throbbing was taking a toll on him. He parted her thighs and inserted a finger in between her thighs, in the softest spot of her body, inside the fountain of honey. She squirmed. He pulled it out. He put it in again and rubbed his thumb against her swollen vulva. She had suffered enough. She grabbed at him. John knew there was no more waiting. He went over and kissed her lips. He parted her thighs with his knees and inserted himself inside her tiny warm opening, gently, looking for any sign of pain in her pain. He stopped every time he saw a change in her face. *It's her first time, I am not going to ruin it.* She pulled her slender hips to him to meet his every thrust, and this brought a smile on John's face. He drove all her passion away, exploring every place of her inner body. His thrusting quickened, his breath became heavier and suddenly their bodies moved spasmodically and Marianne squirmed and held him tightly underneath him. With all their passion spent, John leaned over and kissed her. Firstly her eyes, then her nose and down to her mouth.

'I love you so much Marianne'

"Marianne!", the nurse called again. Marianne could hear her name from a distant, she wondered why John was calling her, bothering her with all the questions. *She just wanted to sleep.*

The memory of the man who introduced her to adulthood and the love she had longed for years came flooding into her blurry mind. For a moment she didn't want to argue, she was going to pack her pride and leave the place she had once called home for the past 20 years. She wouldn't let John trample upon her, she wouldn't let him see how much she hurt. She was going to leave. Heavily pregnant as she was, this child is going to be her comforter, her reason to live.

"Why would I stay here and watch all these dirty affairs going on before my eyes as if I am not sane."

She was packing all her clothes into a bag when she heard the sound of John's car in the driveway. She stood still. *Can I do it?* She looked at her room again, the room where she made her first love 3 years ago, the room where John constantly feasted on her, the room where her mother has once scolded her for crying for John. The same John who was planning to marry Jane, a colleague. She looked at her protruding baby bun and hugged it. *We are going to make it baby.* She gathered all the strength she had left from the many months of crying to face the guy who was once everything to her. The guy who is now everything to Jane, a petite baby-faced schoolteacher. And nothing to her but a sperm donor.

I don't want to be a stumbling block to your happiness John, she had tried to conceal the hurt in her voice. The lump in her throat was building fast to flow into tears. But not Marianne, she had cried all the tears in her eyes the first few months when John had brought Jane home and told her she is just a friend. The same friend she found in bed with him and enjoying every moment of it.

John had never apologized but instead said something that Marianne will be trying the rest of her life to forget.

“Marianne, you are just a child. All this that has been happening was a mistake”. She had cried again when she told John that she had skipped her monthly periods and he had coldly told her to get an abortion.

‘I am not ready for a child Marianne, here is the money you will see what to do. She had looked at John and at that very moment saw a different person, a total stranger. She tried to answer, no voice came, and she felt the world spinning on her feet. She held onto the wall. *Mother, save me.* But mother was not there this time around. She woke up moments later on the same floor she had last saw John, but he wasn't there. She tried on her feet, one, and two. She regained her balance and went to look for some painkillers. *Lord if we didn't die today, we will never die.*

She remembered that all that she wanted to do was to tell John that she was leaving, leaving her parent's place. Her own home. It was no use, his brother-come –lover might be somewhere showering a petite pink lipped with tulips in a bathtub. She took her bags, walked through the stairs and cast a glance and maybe a last to the pictures of her Parents on the living room wall. *Bye Ma, bye Dad.* It was nearing dusk when the waitress came over to her.

‘Ma’am we are about to close.”

She did not bother responding, she took her bags and left. She walked through the street, not knowing where she was headed, she was going to walk. It was dark but she was going to go on.

Suddenly she heard something cuffing her legs, she gasped, and she tried to run. She was caught. A movement came from behind her, she heard voices, male. The footsteps came quicker towards her. A

foot tripped her to the ground. This time she was not going to fall on her tummy. Furious hands were grabbing her hands. Like a raged wildcat, she was screaming and biting, the strength of all her walk wore on. Another pair of hands went for her dress, *Lord this is not happening to mesh* dug her teeth into the nearest flesh, a loud groan came, and she had hit a target. A hard hand smacked across her face and she lost it'll her strength was gone, in her semi-conscious state she felt her dress being yanked off, a knee went between her thighs. She lay helplessly sprawled to whatever was going to come her way. She went out.

‘Marianne! A voice came.

She was not going to answer to John’s commands again.

‘Marianne, can you hear me?" .This time she could hear the voice clearly. She opened her eyes and could not tell the dark figure behind the voice.

‘Marianne, it's me, James’. *James?* What are you doing all by yourself at this time of the night? You almost got raped! Where do you think you are going? Do you want to kill yourself and the baby?

James, John’s colleague, where does he come from?

He helped her into the car and let her sleep in the passenger seat. She was cold and hungry. She didn't want to talk to anyone, she just wanted to go straight to her room and sleep. At least she is going back home. The fright of the earlier encounter had got to her, what happened? Where was James coming from? How did he know it was her? She was about to ask when she realized that he is not driving her home. She was in a totally new street. Though it was almost midnight, she knew she wasn't going home. James was humming to music. She woke up with a start.

‘Why? Aren’t you tired?’ he asked

“Where are you taking me?” She demanded.

‘Relax Marianne, I need to get you to the hospital’.

"Ma am, can you hear me?" The voice came again

Marianne tried to open her eyes, they were swollen and hurting, and she was tired, drained and empty. She was laying on her back with machines dripping all over her body. She had no strength. Her eyes walked through the room, she saw baby pictures, white and green curtains. Suddenly she heard a tiny cry. She tried to move, she couldn't. Her eyes laid on a strange face that was looking down on her. it was a lovely face, with a reassuring smile.

"They are twins, a boy, and a girl what names do u have", the nurse asked again.

“Ca ca-n I- h oho-ld them” she murmured wearily.

The nurse brought the two bundles closer to her, she took out a tired hand to try and touch them, she couldn't, and she was weary. She blinked. She closed her eyes again.

The machines went on alarm

“Doctor!”

Nurses came running from all directions. The distraught nurse was still holding the twins. Marianne opened her eyes one last time, she smiled. She was tired but she was happy, she wanted to sleep. Her eyes closed. She left her twins in the hands of the midwife.

Mavis was going through the old photos of her family, she stopped at a picture of a pretty girl-woman who looked to be in her early late teens, 16 or so. The girl looked happy and full of life. She had a childish twinkle in her eyes. The pictures were given to Mavis by Mother Superior at the Roman Catholic children's home. At the time, the older woman had told her gently that the following year she will no longer be allowed to leave in the children's village as she will be over 18. She had given her an old photo album and told her to study it, to make peace with the past and to prepare herself for the future. In the village, Mavis had been taught to pray hard until something happens. She was also taught decorum of manner.

She was now 18 and doing her first year at the University of Botswana. She was a beautiful, curvaceous young woman with a bright twinkle in her eyes. As she was seated in her dorm bed, she recalled her days in at the children's village. She had never heard anyone mention her family. It was only during the year leading to the final year that Mother Superior had given her the photo album. She hadn't said much about it. She flipped on to another page on the album, she saw the same girl-woman standing next to a handsome man, from the look on their faces they seemed to be happy. There were other several pictures of them in restaurants, at the library, and at the park. There was another picture of them cosy in the living room, a smile escaped Mavis. These two were in love. At the back of the photo, it was inscribed 'till death do us apart, Marianne and John.' *How come no one ever mentioned her parents?* Mavis decided it was time she searched for her parents. *How and where does she start?*

There came a knock on her door and the doorknob turned, on the doorway stood Brian, Mavis's boyfriend. A tall, coffee colored handsome young man. Brian was in his 3rd year.

"Hello love" he kissed her on the forehead and went on to kiss her neck.

Mavis looked at him with half-closed eyes, a smile on her mouth, her eyes were laughing at him. She wrapped herself around him. *She loved the guy. He loved her too.* Brian took hold of her lips and kissed them, he parted them and sucked her tongue, Mavis received as she was given. He went on to kiss her neck, with the other hand grabbing at her booty and kneading her breast with the other. She could feel his fast and heavy breath. She wanted him too. He carried her out of the bed onto the mat and lay on top of her. He kissed her smooth soft neck and they were rolling on the ground. Brian held her against the wall with her legs on his chest. She was burning for his presence inside of her. He yanked her dress and held her legs wide open. He rubbed his finger over her wet fountain, she was wet, warm and throbbing. He went on his knees and licked her swollen vulva. A moan escaped her. He put his tongue inside of her and explored her inner world. He thrust his tongue deeper inside and sucked. A warmth flowed her body, her hips moved up but he wouldn't budge, he went deeper and deeper.

'I love you Hun'

He whispered this as he held his hard member in his hand.

'I want you so bad babe', Mavis could feel a burning sensation in her loins. He chuckled and kissed her on the lips. He slipped his member into her wet tiny opening, going deeper with every thrust. He rode on lazily until his breathing came heavier and his speed increased, he had no control, he was going to run through the red light. Mavis's body was shaking vigorously as she went through

multiple yet long lasting waves of pleasure, she put her fingers inside Brian's ears, blocking all the ambient noise, getting lost in their own world of pleasure, passion running down their bodies. She couldn't help it anymore and begged John to stop. "Baby please stop, I'm going to pee myself" John kept going deeper with an accelerated pounding force. Her fountain of juices opened, they gushed out with all the force, she screamed and held onto Brian very tight, her nails piercing his skin. Her moans changed into loud screams. Brian covered her mouth with his into a kiss and their bodies briskly shook with one final wave. A major tidal wave.

Mavis woke up with Brian lying next to her, she pulled her hand from under his body slowly not to wake him up. She went to open the morning, the sun was shining outside and it reminded her of summer days back at the children's village. She laughed when she remembered how Mother Superior would not let any of the girls to sleep until 8 am on a Saturday. Here she had all the time in the world to give back to those Saturdays. Brian's phone vibrated on the table top. She looked over at it and at him, he didn't stir, he was dead asleep. *Maybe it's his mother. She thought.* She knew his mother and she loved her. She was like a mother she never had. Brian's mother had only sons and she regarded to Mavis as her daughter. She wouldn't mind if she answered her son's phone anyway.

She looked over at Brian again. The poor guy was sound asleep. She went over to the phone and picked.

"Hi babe", a rough voice came from the other side.

Hello, it's Brian's girlfriend, he is still asleep." She answered

'Ok cool, tell him to call me when he wakes.'" Click

She shrugged and put the phone back on top of the table.

Just as she was about to walk away, Brian stirred

‘Morning pumpkin’

‘Morning boo, slept well?’ chuckling over his affection of calling her a pumpkin.

‘Of course.’ She bent over and kissed his lips. He flipped over and grabbed her butt. They both laughed.

‘Ooh well, here is your phone, somebody said you should call as soon as you wake up.’

He went through his phone and his expressions changed, he seemed anxious and uncomfortable. He tossed it back on to the table.

‘Ooh its David, I am going to rush back to my room, I promised him to go play squash with him. See you later honey bunch.’

He kissed her on her forehead and quickly left.

She went back to her old photo album and looked through some of the pictures she hadn't seen, from all of them, she felt like she has known these people, there were other pictures of Marianne as a baby and who looked like John holding her on his arms. In one picture she saw what looked like a landscape of the home, detailing the plot number and the street. Hope flowed through her. *Maybe she can trace her background from there. Maybe there she could find someone who would tell her about her parents.* Semester break was approaching and she could use the opportunity to travel to Francistown and uncover her past, she felt a strange feeling sweep through her, she didn't like it but she brushed it all off. In all the storm of confusion that she was brought into, she will have to find her voice of reason. She knelt down, prayed to God to grant her the serenity to accept the things she cannot change, the courage to

change those that she can and above all, wisdom to know the difference.

Brian rushed into his room, worry and embarrassment killing him, wondering if there had been any exchange between Mavis and David on the phone. He didn't want to stay too long in her room. He was still wondering in his own thoughts when he was awakened by David's high pitched voice.

'Where you been at? Did that bitch take all the strength from you?'Huh

"Not at all, you know me" Brian boasted and winked at him.

"We will see about it,"

John was sitting in the living room when through the window he saw someone approaching. *How come we didn't lock the gate today?*

"Jane!" he called with urgency. As if what he was seeing was a going to choke the life out of him

Hello love, what's wrong", Jane came followed by her 3-year-old daughter. She stood with her arms akimbo as she too looked at what John was seeing. Panic and terror-filled. Little Dinny pulled her mother's skirt wondering what the tension was all about.

Knock knock! The voice called from outside.

John went to the door to see who that was. He stood dumbfounded when he opened the door, standing in front of him was a younger version of his first love, Marianne. He felt the ground tremble under his feet, hot sweat flowed through his neck down his spine. He

blinked, trying to clear the picture from his mind. The mist disappeared, the image remained.

'Good day, Sir. I am looking for Lot no.1438' The young woman spoke

"This is Lot no.1438."

The young woman smiled, hope and fright engulfing her, wondering what lay before her. The twinkle in her eyes showed pain, she gathered all her strength.

'My name is Mavis, I am looking for John and Marian...'

John lost hold of the wall he had been holding onto for comfort, he skidded and fell on his back with a thud. He went quiet.

John! John! Baby what's going on, Jane paced through the living room to where her husband was lying motionless. Little Dinny started to cry.

John! Baby! You can't die on me please, Baby! "Jane cried out.

Mavis woke up with a start, her last encounter with wanting to know about her parents had cost her a father and the only person she had questions for. She attended John's funeral and mourned for him like a father she ever had. She didn't know whether to cry or to keep still. Silent tears were streaming down from her inner soul. She cursed herself for the death of John, maybe she should have left the past be. She couldn't, she wanted closure, and she wanted to know so as to move on. She relied on her God for strength and direction.

It was after the funeral that a man who only introduced himself as James took her down and told her about Marianne and John.

‘I have stayed with John and Marianne for most of our lives and I am the one who rescued her from being raped one fateful night when she was running away from home. Marianne was heavily pregnant by then and John had found another woman and didn't want anything to do with Marianne and the baby. A woman full of pride as she was, Marianne decided to leave home, I don't know where she was going but she was in her final days of pregnancy.

I drove her to the hospital and she gave birth to twins, according to the midwife who was helping her at the time, she died even before she gave names to her twins. John didn't want anything to do with the kids, so it was the hospital's decision to give the children to foster parenting. At least there they would have parents again and live better, we thought. John was haunted by the images of Marianne. He went in and out of psychiatric hospital but he didn't want to see the kids, he had always been stubborn like that. He knew where you were based but the only person we lost track of was your twin brother, when he was five a Family in Hebron adopted him and we lost contact. Years went on...until you came to see John.”

Mavis couldn't stop herself from crying, she cried for the life her mother had to endure at the hands of her so-called father, she cried for Little Dinny who would grow up without Dad, and for Jane who was left alone in a haunted house. She wondered who her twin brother is, where he was and what kind of a person he is. He wondered what will happen when she told him that their Dad died because of her. She wondered if he would believe her when she told them that they were twins. She hated her life. She knelt down and prayed to God for courage, courage to live and focus on her life. Courage to not let the past affect her future. A future she had

planned with Brian, a future different from the life her mother had lived.

Back in her room, Mavis decided to call Brian to come over. His phone rang unanswered. *Maybe he is sleeping. She thought.* She tried to take a nap. Nothing. She decided to go to his room and check if he is there. She was approaching the door when she heard sounds, she recognized Brian's voice, and the other was grumpy and high pitched. She had heard this voice before. Where? She recalled the day when she answered his phone. She remembered the change in her boyfriend's expression after seeing the caller's name. She had never seen her boyfriend like that since they started dating three years ago. She laughed when she remembered that the caller's voice sounded like a guy's but the person had called her 'babe' assuming she was Brian.

The voices in the room grew louder, a high pitched laughter rang.

'Let's see what you got for me, babe'

Brian laughed, his laughter was heavy. Mavis waited. Quiet

The voices became quieter, they turned into a murmur. She pressed her ear into the keyhole. She couldn't hear anything but low deep voices. *Why is she eavesdropping on her boyfriend and his friend? She wanted to startle them*

She tried the doorknob, it turned. Unlocked. She peered through the small opening. Brian was standing on his feet with his trousers pulled to his knees and kneeling down before him was another guy. Brian's eyes were closed and the other guy was holding his member in his mouth and sucking it. From the look on his face, he

was enjoying every bit of it. Lost. The guy kept on sucking Brian's member, slowly, teasingly holding on his tiny buttocks. Mavis was hypnotized. No movement. No sound. The guy increased the pace, Brian held onto the back of his head tightly. The guy removed his mouth from the hard membrane and flung onto Brian's arms. Brian held onto his lips and kissed him hungrily. His eyes were half closed, heavy with desire. He lifted the guy onto the bed and laid on top of him, holding his hard-on in his hand.

"What the hell do you think you are doing!" Mavis flew into the room. Brian came back to his senses, he looked over and saw his furious girlfriend. Rage filled her eyes. He had a sick look on his face.

The guy took off, grabbed a towel and ran through the open door before Mavis could even realize she left the door open.

"Babe, it's not what you are thinking, David and I are just buddies we were playing"

"Play?" Mavis roared, hatred and anger filling her to her core. How do you play with a guy when both of you are naked? Do you even play with him sucking that? 'She asked pointing between Brian's legs. Before he could answer, Mavis landed a sickening slap across his face that threw him to the wall. He was about to regain his balance when she closed the door with a thud and left. He flew into a rage, fists flying all over the bed and kicking the air.

Mavis ran all the way to her room, like a mad woman, oblivious to what was happening around her. She flanked into her room, went through Mavis's Facebook profile. Therein Mavis's friends list she saw David Smith. She looked through his pictures. He looked like the same guy she caught 'playing 'with Brian. In his biography it was written 'Born gay, loving it. Go hang yourself if you have issues." She shivered. *Is Brian cheating? With a guy? But we made*

love and he told me he loves me. God wake me from this dream. She knelt down, talked to God in ways she knew, tears flowed from her eyes. She went into hysteria. She kept on. She was not going to lose. She is going to live, for her mother, for her twin brother she doesn't know and for her future with Brian.

She heard a knock. She had been sleeping for 3 hours. The knock came again, this time louder. She stirred and went to open the door. There in front of her stood Brian, pain written all over his face.

"Babe I am really sorry about what happened earlier. I am bisexual." He didn't let her usher him into the room. He had wanted for so long to tell her about his sexual orientation. It had been hard. He didn't want to hurt her. *Now that she caught him in the act, isn't it hurting? Mm, Brian?*

She shook her head, not wanting to believe what she had just heard. *Bi-, bi-what?*

"When did you start seeing him or is it her?" she demanded.

"About six months ago, I am so sorry babe but it is complicated, I like him and I love you."

In his room David was shivering, ever since he was born he had never loved anyone the way he loves Brian, he had thought he has found true love, he was sure Brian loved him too. Ever since running away from his foster parents, he had felt hopeless, longing for love and a sense of belonging. He knew he was born gay and had made peace with it. But his foster parents could not bear raising a boy who behaved like a girl. They scolded him. In the midst of these arguments, he recalled how his foster dad called him a

'hospital child'. He had cried all day, he wouldn't eat. His foster mum had come over to his room.

'David, it's high time you stopped your girlish behaviour, you are embarrassing us in the community.' She left without waiting for his reply. He was awakened from his past by the ringing of his phone.

"Hello"

'Hello David, it's me.' He recognized his mother's voice. It has been a year since he stopped going back home and taking their calls. He was about to cut the call when she said,

"There is something that I want to tell you, don't hang up. You have a twin sister, she is the only one left who might know all about your parents. I got a call from a certain guy who gave me her number. I thought it was best you called her and met. She might be your only surviving family. I will text you her number."

He received the text in a minute after the call. He called the number, a lady answered from the other side.

"Hello"

'Hello, this is Dayla, may I talk to Mavis?'

'Mavis speaking, how can I help you?'

"I want us to meet, there is something I really want to ask you in person, may we meet in the library auditorium at 3 pm?"

'Ok .no problem.'

Mavis looked over at Brian who was seated by the bed.

"Would you come with me to meet someone at 3, he might be having information about my long lost twin?"

'Ok babe, no problem'

At exactly 3 pm, Mavis and Brian were seated by the library. She was anxiously searching for anyone who might be looking for her. She dialled the number, the phone rang unanswered. She called again, this time she heard a connection click. No one spoke.

"Hello, we are seated by the second blue benches, I am with my boyfriend you can just come over." No reply. The call ended.

Mavis looked strangely at her phone, her hands started to sweat.

Seated across them, just 2 seats away was David Smith. He looked at the young woman who he has been talking to on the phone, his heart sank. He then looked at the guy who was seated next to her. It was Brian, his lover.

'I am David Smith, your long lost twin brother". A text appeared on Mavis's phone.

She looked at Brian, he grabbed the phone from her hand, before he could finish reading the text Mavis collapsed into the ground. He called for emergency assistance without knowing what was going on. Students flocked wanting to know what was happening.

'I couldn't live on to the shame that I have brought to myself. Bye guys. I love you all," read his Facebook status. He was found 2 days later hanging on a tree just by the school premises. David died without getting to know about his real family.

Mavis attended his funeral at Hebron. She gave her last respects to the twin brother she never had. She vowed to move on with her life, to live for her parents and for her twin brother. As for Brian, he couldn't live up to the mess he had brought to himself and to Mavis. He found solace in a psychiatric hospital.

Dear God

Thank you for the strength you have given unto me. For all the pain and the heartaches.

Yours with Love, Mavis.



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