

X

The Morning After

I turned over to see her still asleep. Slowly I pulled back the sheets and made my way to the speaker, moving quickly but quietly, hoping not to knock anything over.

I lowered the volume of the music and switched off the lights. I didn't think this would be the place it happened but I don't regret it. Her hands. Her lips. Last night was amazing.

She looked so peaceful on the living room floor in our makeshift bed. I was scared at first but I kept telling myself she initiated it, she came down the stairs in the lingerie, she found the playlist on Spotify and she kissed me like she'd never kissed me before.

It had been months since I last had sex, so the surprise was definitely welcome. I could tell she was inexperienced and that I would need to take the lead, I would have to treat her like it was first time because to be honest, this was the first time that intimacy was her choice.

At first it was awkward and my repetition of 'Do you want this?', 'Are you sure?' and 'Is it okay if I touch you there' seemed to only make her more nervous. Eventually she put her finger on my lips and whispered, "If you keep asking, you'll make me change my mind... If you really want me, show me."

She then began undressing herself in slow motion, in what seemed like a rehearsed routine. It wasn't as erotic as I am sure she intended. There were moments I could see she forgot her moves or she became self-aware but I smiled through it and encouraged her, 'Yes baby. I like that'.

Now her robe lay on the couch and her lingerie somewhere between the cushions or near the fire place, what I remember was she made sure to throw it far away once she took it off.

I didn't try to undress her. As much as I wanted to show her I couldn't wait to have her, I was just as scared. It has been eight months since she shared her past with me and plans of having sex sort of just faded away. I feared every attempt would be a trigger, every kiss or hug would be seen as unwanted touch and even asking her if she was in the mood felt like I would be placing a curse on her.

Intimacy became something undesirable.

Kissing was a waiting game, if she didn't kiss me or hold my hand, I restrained myself. I wanted her more than I wanted her touch, she brought a calm to my life and if I had to go a little while without sex, I would survive. It felt like being a boy in high school once again, finding chances to lock myself in the bathroom and let one out to calm the urges.

It was our first time, so I didn't expect much. I wanted her to take the lead, if not directly but at least hint what she wanted me to do. The only time I took control from her was when she wanted to go down on me, I quickly held her hand, pulled her

face up and kissed her. Oral sex isn't something one rushes into, it is something personal and I wasn't sure she was ready for that or if she would enjoy it.

She then got on top, gently slid it in and just sat there. She looked at me and I looked at her. I put my hands on her She bit her lips and moaned while she

Quickly the shy girl faded away and someone else was making love to me.

She knew what she was doing. I could tell in the way her hands ran up and down my chest, in the way she kissed my neck and put my hands on her ass. She clearly knew what she was doing, it just broke my heart that her experience came from a painful past. Since the night of her confession, she told me how they would demand she perform for them, recreating scenes from erotic movies and she must make them feel like she was enjoying it.

It felt good at first but I guess she could tell that my mind was distracted. She kissed me while placing her hand on my face and whispered in my ear, "*Please. Help me make new memories*".

Hesitant as I was, I didn't want her to feel rejected.

“When we started dating...”, she whispered in my ear, “... you used to tell me all the things you’d do to me once you got me in your bed. Here I am Angelo... Have your way with me baby”.

“Are you sure?”, I asked.

She nodded her head and responded, *“Give me all of you.”*

Finally we were making love and it was worth the wait.

I looked at her once again just to make sure she was still asleep. Still moving quietly and making my way to the kitchen.

We still had a few hours before brunch with Jessica and Kyle. He was insistent that we be there early. Lonwabo was certain that Kyle finally proposed to Jessica and they couldn’t wait to tell us. Their relationship was one I always aspired to have, their communication and understanding of one another made me believe that real love was possible.

A lot of people would look at us funny whenever Lonwabo and I said we had no plans of getting married. Other than Namisa’s parents, I didn’t really have many couples to look up to and my

mother hasn't really dated anyone since my father. Lonwabo on the other hand saw her mother change partners every time they stopped giving her attention, so the notion of forever wasn't really something we felt was for us.

All we wanted was to be together.

I always loved having my own space but living together changed my perspective on individuality. Being with someone didn't mean I had to lose myself but rather I just had to allow someone else see a different side of me, a more complete picture of me, even the parts of myself that I didn't like. I enjoyed our quiet moments when we sat in silence, neither one saying anything to the other and just being there. She read a book and I would work on a client, her holding my hand or running her finger up and down my arm every now made it clear she was there with me.

Our lives had some sort of normalcy despite our pasts. It was something I never thought I would have.

Cooking together, going on dates and even taking care of Oratilwe, we were a family. Being together, the good morning texts and midday phone calls became our form of intimacy.

She changed a lot about me. Without realizing it, I found myself praying with her in the mornings or reminding her to pray in the evenings.

Meeting Lonwabo was truly the best thing to happen to me. I wouldn't know what I'd do if I lost her.

“Morning Angelo, I am going to shower”.

I turned to return her greeting and she was gone, leaving behind the sound of her footsteps as she made her way up the stairs.

She woke up sooner than I expected. I was hoping I would be done cooking by now and she'd wake up to breakfast in bed. With time I became more of a romantic now, planning surprise getaways and outdoor picnics. Bubble baths and valentine's gifts.

Kyle and Jessica getting engaged would be great but very mistimed. Even though Lonwabo and I weren't rushing to get married, I bought her a ring, a promise ring. I was going to ask her to be my life partner.

In my head, I rehearsed the proposal a million times. It happen at home, I would pretend to be sick so I could take the day off

and prepare everything. I would cook, scented candles, rose petals and a playlist of our favourite songs. A three course meal with a gift served per plate building up to the grand reveal.

I still want to do it and I hope she won't think that I am asking her now because we had sex and I have to commit because I took her virtue.

Suddenly the music paused and my ringtone began to echo throughout the house. Playing music through your phone via Bluetooth had its own faults.

“Hey man, where are you guys? Are you still coming?”, he asked.

“Kyle, we are coming Loni is getting ready now. What's up?”, I responded.

“Jessica said she saw a missed call from Loni and we were wondering if you were still on your way.”

“Don't worry, we are coming. After Loni is done, I will shower quickly and we will be on the road”.

I hung up the phone and rushed to finish off breakfast. Once again burning the toast and forgetting to add salt to her eggs. She always says I am forgetful when I am in a rush. For the first two weeks I would always pour milk in her coffee forgetting that she is lactose intolerant but it was habit, I always poured milk and too much sugar in mine.

I didn't want Kyle to call again, so I set up the table and went upstairs to take a shower and tell her the food was ready but Lonwabo was still in the shower and the door was locked. I knocked but no response. She normally got lost when taking a shower, it was part of her meditation and quiet time. I figured it would be best if I didn't bother her and so I went to the bath in the guest bedroom.

Doing my best not to waste time, I bathed and got dressed. Went downstairs to find Lonwabo eating breakfast and reading some of the letters from her students.

“Morning beautiful”, I greeted and kissed her on her forehead.

She looked at me and smiled in response.

“I forgot to add salt to the eggs again but this time I at least got it right. Scrambled eggs and not boiled”, I said while winking my eye.

She giggled and said, “*You are amazing Mr Chef*”.

“Are you ready to go?”, I asked.

“*Almost. Just need to finish putting stars on the letters and then we can go. The kids go crazy when they see gold stars.*”

I took a slice of toast and made a quick cup of coffee for myself while she continued with the letters. As we were about to leave, I got an SMS from Kyle.

“*DUUUUUUUUUUDE.*

We are getting married. Our families gave us their blessings. We are getting married in two months.

Hurry up and get here so we can celebrate”.

It was no longer just brunch but a celebration. Lonwabo's instincts were right like they always are.

My best friend was getting married, my career was progressing, Namisa and I were getting along, I was building a relationship with my daughter and my love was being reciprocated, what more could I ask for?