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# **A Mistake Caused by Fate - Sybil's Story by Sandisiwe Gxaba**

## **Chapter 1**

### **Prologue**

When you crack open a book, there's usually a prologue and an epilogue, right? But does that really apply to life? Who determines our epilogue in this grand script we call life—God? Yes? No? Maybe?

In the realm of my upbringing, we were taught that God holds the reins, and we're merely actors reciting the scripts assigned to each of us. What could possibly go awry in that scenario? I mean, there's nothing inherently wrong with such an analogy, right? Wrong!

The divergence between a cinematic masterpiece and human life is stark. In a movie, when the credits roll, the characters cease to exist. But in real life, when you die, you're not just a character; you are the character, living and breathing within the confines of your role. Unfortunately, there's no escape after a long day, no retreat into the comfort of a book. That's life—a full-time job with rest only found in death.

Now, where am I heading with all of this existential musing? An excellent question. Truthfully, I don't know. I'm just a kid,

perched in front of her laptop, transcribing the chaotic symphony of thoughts flowing through her mind. And right now, this jumble of words is what spilled out.

I am Sybil Thandoluhle Adams, and yes, you guessed it. I am the offspring of a hybrid and a witch doppelganger. Has that combination ever made sense before? Does it even have the right to exist? A hybrid alone is an affront to nature—I shouldn't exist. And don't even get me started on the whole being-a-witch thing. In essence, my life is a mess, and I have zero control over it!

For the uninitiated, my parents are Anelisa and Ahlume Adams. I have siblings—Sibulele Kayla and Ntandoyenkosi Samuel Adams. Much like me

they are a blend of witch and hybrid, but unlike me, they can practice magic, and I'm just a freak who can siphon up magic. Yeah, my life sucks! Oh, by the way, I just turned 18, but my saga traces back to when I was 16, a college freshman a few days after my birthday.

So, buckle up and brace yourself for the rollercoaster because it's going to be one long and bumpy ride!

Oh, right, I mentioned prologues and epilogues earlier. Well, that was just to grab your attention, get you to read this with an open mind...

Apologies for the cerebral workout, but here's the real deal—our epilogues may be set from the moment we're born, but mine truly commenced when I was 16. That's when I unraveled the layers of my identity. Don't get me wrong; I was aware of my hybrid and witch heritage, but I had no inkling that being who I am would come with a multitude of burdens. No one warned me that being me carried a hefty price tag. I am the antagonist in my own story. Sounds absurd, doesn't it? Who becomes their own villain? Me. When you're the odd one out in your family, destined for a fate you can't escape, you become your own nemesis. Sadly, death is not a way out—I know because I tried, and it did not end well.

Now, let's delve right into it, shall we?

## Chapter 1

"Sybil, we're going to be late!" My friend's voice echoes through the hallway as she strides toward my room.

"Coming!" I shout, stealing one last glance at my reflection in the mirror.

"Beautiful as always," she remarks upon entering, and I can't help but smile. "Thank you, friend. Let's go," I say, grabbing my jacket and car keys.

Tonight, we're headed to a party, and for the first time, I've spun a web of lies to my parents and sister about my whereabouts. I'm not sure why I lied; my mom is usually laid-back, and unless we have prior commitments, she never says no to me going out.

"Let's go," Cassie urges, pulling at my elbow and leading the way to the door.

"Wait," I halt her. She turns, impatient. "I have to call home first," I explain.

"Fine. I'll be outside," she says, heading out with a hint of reluctance.

As I dial my mom's number, guilt begins to nibble at my conscience. "Hey, baby," she answers, her voice filled with warmth and love.

"Hey, Mom," I reply, trying to push aside the guilt that threatens to surface.

"How are you? How's the project going?" she inquires, unaware of the deception lingering in the air.

"It's going well, Mom. We're taking a break now," I fabricate, feeling a twinge of remorse.

"I miss our cuddles," she confesses, a touch of sadness coloring her voice.

"I miss you too, Ma'Sibeko. But I'll be home in no time," I assure, my false cheeriness tainting the conversation.

"And then we'll lay in bed and share the latest gossip," she adds, a playful note entering her voice.

I chuckle, knowing well that gossip isn't her thing. "Yeah, right, Mom. I love you, okay?"

She gasps theatrically, "Are you okay? Are you having a fever? Is there a soul taking over my baby?" I laugh at her dramatics.

"Mom," I scold, and she joins in the laughter. "I love you too, okay. Goodnight, Olu, when the brightest star shines."

"I know you're looking out for me," I finish, a phrase she used to comfort me when I was afraid to sleep alone in my room. "And no harm can come your way," she adds, a ritualistic reassurance she offers when I spend the night away from home.

"Kisses," I say.

"Kisses," she replies before ending the call. Guilt washes over me as my phone rests in my hand.

"Thandoluhle Sybil Adams," Cassie scolds, snapping me back to the present.

I turn to her with a forced smile. "Let's go dance the night away," I say, making my way to the door.

We walk and chat, heading to her car over light conversation. She hands me the keys, and I start her Jeep Grand Cherokee parked outside her parents' garage.

"You okay?" Cassie startles me, breaking my reverie.

"Uhm, yeah, I am, friend," I say, clicking the remote for the gate. We drive out, playing music on full blast toward the location of the party. I unlock the doors, and we step out of the car, entering the house.

I've never been a fan of house parties, but tonight, I've decided, what the hell, right? We step inside, and I'm greeted by my boyfriend, Ethan, pulling me into a tight hug.

"Hey, Chipmunk," he says, squeezing me until I can barely breathe.

"Hello, Ethan," I reply, trying to wiggle out of his grasp. He laughs, breaking the hug.

"You're so adorable. How are you?" he asks, holding me at arm's length, his charming Trey Songz smile on display.

"I feel terrible for lying," I admit, sulking.

He pulls me back into a comforting embrace and kisses the top of my head. "Let's drive you home then," he suggests.

I look up at him, surprised. "Huh?" I ask, seeking confirmation.

"Let's drive you home. I can't have you sulking all night," he insists, his tone serious.

"I won't sulk all night; I'm sorry," I assure him.

He smiles and kisses my forehead. "I love you, Chipmunk."

I can't help but blush. "I love you too, Bells

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" I say, laughing

He pokes me. "Don't start!"

"Bells" is a nickname his friends call him, stemming from an incident he refuses to share. He calls me "chipmunk" because I'm as short as my mom, and my talkative nature doesn't help.

"Let's just go in," I suggest, my hand around his waist, his resting on my jeans back pocket. It's become a norm for us.



Ethan, a first-year student at New York University, and I share the bustling city of New York as our current home. The elusive plan, whispered by our parents, involves a return to South Africa once our studies conclude—well, that's the narrative they weave. At 19, Ethan embodies the quintessential jock, spending his time on the basketball court. Our paths intertwined in college during my freshman year, and last year, he was merely a visitor. However, a series of events unfolded, leading us to where we are now—wrapping up a year together. In this chapter of our lives, happiness finds a cozy spot within our hearts.

In the vibrant world of high school drama, Ethan stands out like a character sprung from the pages of a teenage daydream. I find myself captivated by his striking presence, a living embodiment of heartthrob perfection. His face, a canvas of youthful charm, boasts a set of hazel eyes that flicker with an enigmatic gleam. Those eyes, framed by dark, expressive eyebrows, hold a gaze that could send any teen's heart aflutter.

Ethan's facial features dance in perfect harmony, with a well-defined jawline that adds a touch of maturity to his boyish allure. His nose, sculpted with a hint of nonchalant charm, sits above lips that seem custom-made for a mischievous grin. When he smiles, it's as if the sun breaks through stormy clouds, casting a warm and inviting glow.

But it's not just about the face—Ethan's physique is a testament to teenage daydreams brought to life. Standing at a height that feels just right, not towering but perfectly approachable, he moves with a casual confidence that makes heads turn in the crowded hallways. His shoulders carry the subtle strength of an athlete, a characteristic that amplifies his appeal.

And then there's the hair—a cascade of dark, curly locks that adds an unruly charm to his persona. Those curls seem to have a personality of their own, defying gravity with a carefree bounce. It's the kind of hair that begs to be tousled, a tactile invitation to explore the playful side of his personality.

Ethan, in the eyes of a 16-year-old caught in the whirlwind of teenage emotions, is the epitome of teenage dreams brought to life—a blend of captivating features, a physique that exudes both strength and approachability and a crown of curls that adds the perfect touch of untamed allure. Yet, beneath the surface, he reveals himself to be the epitome of humility and sweetness. But let's shift our focus away from him; delving further might just spark a desire for him in your own heart.

"Hey, yo, E!" a guy shouts, walking toward us. It's Ethan's friend. "Guys, E is here!" he announces to the masses. Ethan looks at me, and I shrug, unsure of what he expects me to do or say.

"Long time," Ethan greets, shaking hands with the guy, a stranger to me. "This is my girlfriend, Sybil. Chipmunk, meet my old pal, Luke."

I shake Luke's hand. "Hi, nice to meet you."

"Likewise, pretty thing," he says, turning back to Ethan. "E, you never told me she was this hot!" he exclaims, playfully hitting Ethan's shoulder.

"Why? So you can try to holla at her? No thank you, fam!" Ethan defends. "I'll see you around, yeah?" he says to his friend.

"Damn right! Nice meeting you, Sybil," Luke says, rubbing my shoulder in a way that makes my skin crawl. I shoot him a stern look, and he quickly removes his hand as though I burned him.

"Weirdo," I mumble under my breath.

"Sorry about that, Chipmunk," Ethan says, kissing the side of my head. The height difference is comically evident. Think Will and Jada Smith kind of situation.

"It's, um, okay, babe," I assure him.

"What will you be drinking?" he asks, leading me to the kitchen with people greeting him every now and then.

"Whatever you drink is fine with me," I reply.

We both refrain from drinking. I've tasted alcohol before, and I didn't see what the hype was about, while Ethan has never touched it. He pours us Coke, and we head out to the pool, sitting on a poolside chair together.

"So, how did your test go?" he asks, breaking the party ambiance with a touch of concern.

"I don't know, babe. I think I failed it. Physics never liked me," I say, sulking.

"You should have come to me for help, Olu," he says, using the serious tone he reserves for such moments.

"I know. Next time, I will," I promise, rubbing his knee.

"You need great marks to get into university, Olu!"

I sigh and cup his cheek. "We're at a party; can we not talk about school?"

He sighs. "Fine. I want universities to seek you out, not the other way around," he says, leaning into my touch.

I force a smile. "They will," I assure.

*Ethan...*

Every parent's dream right? Right. He's my favorite person every once in a while until he gets all serious and bores the life out of me.

He pulls me to him and kisses me until I forget what my name is, he breaks it and looks into my eyes "I'm sorry Ok" he says

I melt at the moment shared between us "its Ok" I say trying to catch my breath.

He smiles and I can't help but smile back, his smile is contagious "I miss you" he says brushing my lower lip

I shiver at his touch "I miss you too" the words roll out of my mouth before I can even stop them

He let's out a chuckle and then looks up at me "let's disappear from here"

I smile at the thought and give him my hand "let's go" I say

He pulls me up not letting go of my hand and leads me past the crowd all the way out. We get into his car and he drives us to his flat, he unlocks the door and I walk in first only to be met by a naked brunette wearing an open robe, her smile disappears at the sight of me

"Babe why are you just st..." he trails off "Tessa what the hell?"  
He asks with clear shock in his voice

Tessa pulls her robe and covers her body up "I uhhm" she clears her throat "I didn't know you'd be back this early" she looks at us and then runs off to one of the rooms, we hear a door bang and then it locks.

I'm standing there dumbfounded like 'what tf just happened?'

"Uhhm babe" he says behind me

I'm tempted to turn to him and hear him out but part of me is just so mad

"Sybil that was Tessa. She's dating Kurt" he says so fast he barely has time to catch his breath

"Kurt?" I say still shook by what I've just seen turning to face him

He swallows hard and nods "Olu you know I would never cheat on you" he assures me holding me at arms length looking into my eyes "I promise you Olu" he pleads

I can't fight the look he's giving me right now, he's eyes are pleading and begging me and I have a weakness for him "what is she doing parading around naked in your flat? When did you even get a flatmate Ethan?" I manage to finally speak

"First name basis. Oh wow" he sighs "its been a month now, I didn't tell you because I didn't think he would stay this long. He came to me as someone who needed a place to crash for a few days but he's still here and I can't throw my friend out" he says innocently

The door unlocks and we both look at it, Kurt walks in singing. He stops when he sees us "E, Mrs E hi" he says nervously

"Tell Sybil that Tessa is your girlfriend man" Ethan says

"Flip!" He curses look down, he looks up at me and I'm waiting for an explanation "E, Mrs E I'm sorry. Mrs E Tessa is my girlfriend and I am sorry for whatever you walked into, I didn't think you'd be back this early" he says unable to look me in the eye

I chuckle "when are you moving out?" I ask

"Babe" Ethan exclaims the same time Kurt says "Huh?"

I fold my arms "when are you moving out?" I ask sternly

"Uhhhm" Kurt says

"Dude sort out your stuff Ok. Babe let's go to my room" he says pulling me by the hand, we get to his room and he locks before turning to me "and then?" He asks with a straight face

I shrug "I can't have you welcomed by some brunette vagina when you come home after a long day!" I say with a bit of attitude

He chuckles and shakes his head "your jealousy is adorable. Come here" he says with his hand held out to me, I look at it and shake my head "you know you want me Miss Adams" he says giving me this look I can't even explain, its sexy, it speaks volumes. I stand there looking at him until he reaches me, as they say, the rest is history.

I'm kidding, I move back as he approaches until I hit the bed, he chuckles "you stupid" he says pushing me to the bed

"I get it from you" I say breathing heavily underneath him, he's balancing his weight with his hands on either side of my face, his cologne is doing a number on me and the way he's looking at me isn't helping at all. I want him as much as he wants me.

"Hey chipmunk" he says kissing my nose, I giggle, he moves from my nose to my lips pressing his body on top of mine. We breathing the same air, only he and I exist in this world and nobody else. I feel his nature rising as he moves from my lips to my neck, I let out an involuntary moan, he grinds on me making me really wet I can't even stop him. How we got naked is still under investigation. He kisses my inner thighs making his way to my palace, the moans slipping out of my lips are out of this world. He ravishes me like his favorite meal, I can't even hold



the orgasm I'm having let alone control the juices that are dying to leave my body. He goes on with his finger and tongue until I can't help but release at his command. He comes up to kiss me while inserting a condom, I'm ready for him. I've been ready. He slides in slowly, its so painful I'm literally digging my grave on his back with my nails.

"Almost there Chipmunk" he assures kissing my forehead. I scream as I welcome all of him inside of me. Its painful, he's big and perfect for me. I breathe out and then he starts moving slowly, what once was pain has turned into pleasure and his room is filled with our moans and groans. We explode calling out each others names but he doesn't stop there. He flips us over so that I'm on top. He let's me take control and I pin his hands down and be the boss on his rocket moving up at down at my own pace until we both about to cum, he flips us over and moves faster until we both cum. He gets off of me to go and dispose of the condom.

"Ethan" I scream at him holding him tightly, there's so much blood and I'm so scared "Ethan you have to wake up" I beg him with tears streaming down my cheeks "baby please don't do this to me" I plead and beg but there's no pulse. He's not breathing. I scream so hard its like the earth is shaking

"Chipmunk" someone shakes me vigorously "baby wake up" I open my eyes and its Ethan. I look at him and look at the pillow I'm hugging tightly.

I throw my arms around his neck and squeeze him tightly. I'm even shaking "chipmunk talk to me" he says holding me tightly "Olu you shaking" he says with his heart beating really fast. I can't utter anything, what I just saw is enough to make me shut out everyone. He brushes my back until I can slowly feel myself drifting off in his arms.

When I wake up I'm in what looks like a cemetery, there's so much fog I can barely see where I'm going, there's crows flying over me. I feel something lurking in the woods

"Hello" I shout and the woods move as though someone just ran past me "is anybody here?" I ask hugging myself. I'm terrified!

In the labyrinth of teenage emotions, Ethan emerges as every parent's dream—a charming enigma that captivates my heart every once in a while. He effortlessly becomes my favorite person until his serious side surfaces, threatening to bore the life out of me.

In those moments, he pulls me close, his lips on mine erasing the world around us. Breaking the kiss, he gazes into my eyes, uttering an apology that resonates through the air. I melt into

the shared moment, reassured by his words. "It's okay," I manage, trying to catch my breath.

His contagious smile lights up the room, and I find myself reciprocating the joy. As his fingers brush my lower lip, a shiver courses through me. "I miss you," he murmurs, and without hesitation, the words tumble out of my mouth, "I miss you too."

A chuckle escapes him, and he looks up at me with a mischievous glint. "Let's disappear from here," he suggests, igniting a smile on my face. Hand in hand, we navigate through the crowd, escaping to his car. He drives us to his flat, unlocking the door, and as I step in first, an unexpected scene unfolds—a naked brunette in an open robe, shock painted across her face.

The moment freezes, and Tessa stammers an apology, disappearing into one of the rooms. Dumbfounded, I stand there, grappling with the unexpected twist. "Babe, why are you just st..." Ethan begins, cutting off abruptly at the sight.

Tessa's explanation trails off, and the door slams shut behind her. "What the hell?" I mutter, my mind racing to make sense of the situation.

"Babe," Ethan addresses me, and part of me seethes with anger. "Sybil, that was Tessa. She's dating Kurt," he rushes to explain, his eyes pleading for understanding.

"Kurt?" I manage to utter, turning to face him.

He swallows hard, affirming, "Olu, you know I would never cheat on you," holding me at arm's length, pleading with sincerity. "I promise you, Olu

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" he implores.

Caught in the intensity of his gaze, I weaken. "What is she doing parading around naked in your flat? When did you even get a flatmate, Ethan?" I demand, finally finding my voice.

"First-name basis. Oh, wow," he sighs. "It's been a month now. I didn't tell you because I didn't think he would stay this long. He came to me as someone who needed a place to crash for a few days, but he's still here, and I can't throw my friend out," he explains with an air of innocence.

The door unlocks, and Kurt enters, nervously greeting us. Ethan instructs him to clarify his relationship with Tessa, and the truth spills out. "E, Mrs. E, Tessa is my girlfriend," Kurt admits, apologizing for the awkward situation.

I chuckle, cutting to the chase. "When are you moving out?" I ask sternly.

"Babe," Ethan exclaims simultaneously with Kurt's bewildered "Huh?"

"Dude, sort out your stuff. Okay. Babe, let's go to my room," Ethan suggests, pulling me by the hand. In his room, he locks the door, and with a serious face, he asks, "And then?"

I shrug, a bit of attitude in my tone. "I can't have you welcomed by some brunette vagina when you come home after a long day."

He chuckles, teasing, "Your jealousy is adorable. Come here," he beckons with his hand. I resist at first, but as he approaches, the rest unfolds.

I'm kidding, of course. I move back, playfully bantering until he pushes me onto the bed. "You stupid," I tease, breathing heavily beneath him. His cologne intoxicates me, and the way he looks at me kindles a desire matching his own.

"Hey, chipmunk," he says, kissing my nose. I giggle as he moves from my nose to my lips, pressing his body on mine. Breathing the same air, we exist in our world, and nobody else matters. His touches ignite a longing, and soon, we're consumed by passion. Exploring each other, we reach the pinnacle of pleasure, our moans filling the room.

Afterward, reality sets in. He disposes of the condom, but suddenly, a scream pierces the air. "Ethan!" I scream, clutching him tightly, terror flooding my senses. Blood stains everything,

and fear takes hold as I beg him to wake up. But there's no pulse, no breath. The world shatters around me.

"Chipmunk," someone shakes me. "Baby, wake up," Ethan's voice breaks through, and I open my eyes, finding myself clinging to a pillow.

I throw my arms around his neck, squeezing him tightly. "Chipmunk, talk to me," he pleads, holding me close. "Olu, you're shaking," he says, his heart pounding. Unable to speak, I let his touch soothe me until I drift back into a dreamless slumber.

When I wake up, I find myself in a mist-laden cemetery. Crows circle overhead, and a presence lurks in the woods. "Hello?" I call out, the woods shifting as though someone rushes past me. "Is anybody here?"

"Only you can let me out of here," a woman's voice echoes in the distance.

"Who are you?" I ask, scanning for her.

"I am your great-grandmother," she says, sounding closer now.

"Why can't I see you?" I inquire.

"Help me, Sybil. Get me out of here," she pleads, her hand on my arm, stealing my breath.

"Sybil," someone says, shaking me. "Olu," he shouts, shaking me again. I open my eyes, and it's Ethan.

"Thandoluhle, what's going on?"

*Picture this, right? A caramel-skinned Black American saying "Thandoluhle" in this like, totally terrified yet sexy British tone. I mean, can you even? It's like, "Tando-lush-le." Cute, right? I'm, like, totally mesmerized by how he says it. It's, like, my heart does this flip thing every time, and I'm just there, all swoony and stuff. Ugh, crushes are the best, especially when they come with accents that make your knees go all wobbly!*

Oh my gosh, guys, let me tell you about Ethan. He's, like, the cutest thing ever. Seriously, he tries so hard, but it's just adorbs. Especially when he says my name. I mean, it's hard not to giggle when he pronounces it like that. But, like, he's not laughing, and it's kinda weird.

"I just had a nightmare, that's all," I assure him, but he's not buying it. He's shaking his head, looking all worried. Ugh, can he get any sweeter? I can totally tell he hasn't slept at all.

"I don't buy it, twice in one night, Sybil?" he says, still shaking his head. Gosh, he cares so much.

I exhale, "When you found me squeezing a pillow tightly, I had a dream, or a vision, or whatever. You were bleeding on your heart, and I couldn't feel your pulse. You weren't shot or stabbed, just bleeding, and there was blood coming out of your



mouth too." Tears are streaming down my cheeks, "Ethan, I'm scared. I can't lose you," I say, burying my face in my hands. But, like, he's quick to pull me into his chest.

"Nothing will happen to me, Chipmunk," he assures me. "It was just a dream, okay?" he says, brushing my hair. Ugh, he's so calming.

I shake my head and pull away, "You don't know that, Ethan. I don't just dream. People like me don't just have dreams okay? I... I cannot afford to lose you. You're the only good thing going on in my life," and tears keep rolling involuntarily.

He pulls me back into his chest, not saying anything. He just brushes my hair back, kissing me every now and then until I'm more calm. "Ice cream?" he asks.

He knows me so well. Whenever I get all emo or dramatic, he offers me ice cream because he believes that there's nothing ice cream can't fix. And I agree, over the year I've been with him, ice cream has fixed everything. I break out of the hug, and he offers a cheerful fake smile. I can't help but smile and nod.

"Let's get dressed and go then," he says, getting up from the bed.

Okay, can I just say, if I'm not the worst girlfriend there is, then I don't know who is. Like, we have the best time ever, and within seconds my mind goes off to some crazy place where I see his

dead body. It's not the first time it's happened, but it's the first time Ethan's been there. Grandma Nelly said it's normal witch stuff, and I believed her. I know, I'm kinda stupid, right?

"Here," he says, handing me one of his basketball vests and a bomber jacket.

"Thanks," I say, getting up to wear his things. I look at myself in the mirror, and I'm kinda adorable with my pink puffy-looking eyes.

He hugs me from behind, resting his long arms on my shoulders. "You look adorable," he says, kissing the top of my head.

I fake a smile, "Even when I look like I've been crying all night?" I ask.

He chuckles, "Especially with those puffy eyes. Our baby should look like you and have my height," he says, laughing.

I turn to him and hit his chest, "You're not funny," I say, sulking.

He laughs, "Let's go," he says, pulling my hand. We walk to the frozen yoghurt café down the street, hand in hand, joking around like a young and in love couple does. We take selfies every now and then until we reach the café. We walk to the till.

"Hello. What will it be today?" says the bitter old lady behind the counter.

"She will have choc chip cookie dough ice cream, and I'll have choc mint, please. Three scoops each," he says, taking out his wallet. I shoot him a look. "You need it," he defends while paying. "Thank you," he accepts his change and hands it to me. "Don't you want a stuffed animal?" he says, pointing at a machine with a kid trying to get a stuffed toy.

I look up at him with a straight face, "Really, Bells?" I say.

He chuckles, "Even if you call me Bells, I'm still taking you there," he says calmly, pulling my hand. Like, seriously, how did I get so lucky with this one?

No way! That's seriously adorable! So, we hit this claw machine after all the craziness, and I manage to snag a Minnie Mouse stuffed toy. It took me a few tries, like maybe 5 or 6, but who's counting, right? The thrill of winning was all that mattered. But wait for it—my awesome boyfriend, the master of all things, decides to one-up me. He not only grabs a bigger stuffed toy but goes all out and names it Ethan Junior. Can you believe this guy? Such a playful goofball! Life's just one big game with him around.

We walk up to the counter, still laughing, and Ethan is making fun of my many failed attempts. The bitter lady behind the counter looks super annoyed because we took what felt like forever, or at least that's what she says. Ethan apologizes and takes our ice creams. He hands me mine, and the minute we turn our backs, we burst into laughter. Like, seriously, who knew getting ice cream could be this much fun? My boyfriend is absolutely the best!

Ethan can be such a goofball, you know? He starts imitating the bitter lady at the counter, calling out our order like a million

times, and we both burst into laughter. I can't help but playfully push him, but he just keeps on laughing.

He nudges me, all playful, "How are you?"

I smile, feeling all warm and fuzzy, "Thanks to you, I'm good now."

He sighs, his expression turning serious, "There's something you're not telling me," he says, stopping.

I stop too, sighing, "I had a dream, and this woman claimed to be my great grandmother. She said I'm the only one who can let her out, and when she touched me, I felt my chest closing up. I don't know what it means, babe," I admit, shrugging my shoulders.

He takes a deep breath, "You should talk to your grandmother about this. Find out what she knows about this woman."

I shrug again, uncertain, "What if she's not even my great grandmother? What if I'm fussing over nothing?"

"Talk to your grandmother or your father about this person or this dream, Sybil," he suggests.

I take a deep breath, feeling a bit chilly, "Let's go now. I'm a little cold," I say, starting to walk.

He walks up to me, putting his arm around my neck, "I love you, OK, Chipmunk?" he says, casually taking a scoop out of my ice

cream with his spoon. It only now hits me that he was distracting me to scoop my ice cream. Classic Ethan move—bully! He always manages to pull this on me, and I always fall for it.

"Hey!" I warn, giving him a playful hit.

He laughs, kissing my cheek with his cold lips, "Thank you," he says, laughing.

I can't help it; his laughter is so contagious. Maybe it's just because I'm so in love with him that even his laugh is sexy and contagious. I adore him so much that I can only picture my future with him. I know it sounds crazy to plan my future around him alone, but he seems perfect for me. Being a hybrid-slash-syphon witch doesn't make him treat me any differently. Instead, it feels like he loves me even more.

"Hey!" he nudges me.

I frown, "What?"

He squints his eyes, looking at me, "You better not be thinking about your high school boyfriend while standing next to me," he half-shouts, pointing his spoon at me.

I laugh so hard, tears streaming down, "The only person I'm cheating on you with is you, silly," I say

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poking him playfully. "I'm thinking about how lucky I am to know you."

He smiles, almost blushing, "Stop trying to make me blush, Sybil," he says, walking away.

I giggle, following behind him, "You're blushing!" I say, hugging him from behind.

He takes my hands, kissing them, "I'm not your friend, short stuff," he says.

I laugh, pulling my hands, but he's holding them tightly, "Hey, let go," I say, pulling.

"How does a person let go of their heart?" he says, placing my hands on his heart. I'm blushing like there's no tomorrow, resting on his back as he presses the elevator with my other hand.

"Hey!" I scold, being pulled, "This is abuse," I fake pout.

He lets go when the doors open, "I would never abuse my short person," he says, putting his arm around my neck.

I try to pull away but fail; he's tall and stronger anyway. "Mxm," I say, rolling my eyes.

He laughs, "That's cute!" he exclaims.

I mentally bang my forehead on my palm, "Whatever."

We get out of the elevator, playing and joking around. The passage looks like that of a hospital, but there's not much light. Being here, I can feel the bad energy and the coldness of the hospital corridor. I hear someone call me, "Sybil," she says.

"Who are you?" I respond, following the voice louder than the others that sound tortured and hurt. I make my way towards her voice, and she hasn't stopped calling out my name. I walk past an open room, curiosity getting the best of me. I stop and look. There's a woman chained to a bed, and there's a doctor who seems to be enjoying the sight of the woman trying to break free from the chain. "Help me," she whispers. I'm scared, and I don't know what's going on or what it all means. I walk towards this room, and the doctor turns to me, "Leave before you are trapped in here for good!" he yells, and the walls start crumbling down.

"Thando," someone says, shaking me, "Sybil, snap out of it," he says. I look at him, and he looks worried, "Sybil, what's going on?"

I shrug, "I don't know. I think I'm going crazy."

He looks at me and then holds his hand out, "Come," he says, pulling me to him,

"I'm driving you home, Syb."

I shake my head, "No!"



"Yes!" he says.

It's no use fighting him; he always wins anyway. I drag my feet inside his flat, and we head to his room in silence. I change into my clothes while he's watching me like a hawk.

"What happened to your arm, Sybil?" he asks, walking towards me.

"Huh?" I say, looking at my arms.

"This hand, Sybil," he says, pulling my arm to check.

We stroll into my parents' house, making our way to the lounge. The drive here was oddly silent, and for no apparent reason. I sense that the handprint on my arm and the dreams or premonitions that have been haunting me might have unsettled him. It feels like those eerie occurrences left him speechless, like he's grappling with how to respond or comfort me.

"Family," I declare as we step into the house, Ethan trailing behind me.

"Sybil, hey," Mom greets, lounging on the couch with her arms open, inviting me in. "Ethan, what a nice surprise," she adds.

"Mr. and Mrs. Adams, hi," Ethan replies shyly.

I embrace Mom. "Hey, Mom. Daddy," I greet.

"Hello, kiddo. Ethan," Dad says with that intimidating voice that makes Ethan look uneasy. "Sit," he commands.

We settle on a double couch, and I notice the absence of my siblings. "Where's Sibbu and Ntando?" I ask, scanning the room.

"Sibbu went out with her friends, and Ntando is in his room. I thought you were sleeping over at a friend's place," Mom says.

I sigh, blurting out my confession, "I lied to go to a party with Cassie. I'm sorry for lying," I rush through, avoiding eye contact.

"Mh," Dad grunts.

"Thank you for your honesty. We'll discuss this later," Mom says, maintaining a calm demeanor.

I glance up at them, unable to decipher their expressions. "Who is Lindelwa?" I inquire. Dad raises an eyebrow, and Mom shoots me a look.

"Huh?" Mom questions.

"Where did you get that name, Sybil?" Dad asks, frowning.

"Ethan, you should leave now," he adds sternly.

I hold Ethan's hand down. "He's not leaving, Dad. Who is Lindelwa?" I persist.

Mom takes a deep breath. "Lindelwa is your great-grandmother, a—"

"No, Anelisa!" Dad cuts her off abruptly.

Mom shakes her head. "It's pointless to lie to them, Ace. She was their great-grandmother."

"Who died?" Dad demands angrily.

I roll up my sleeve, revealing the handprint on my arm. "What is this, Sybil?" Mom asks.

"Where did you get that?" Dad inquires simultaneously with Mom.

"I had this dream where I met Lindelwa, and she was asking me to get her out. She said I was the only one who could get her out, and when she touched me, this showed up on my arm," I explain, detailing the other dream I had before coming home.

Mom covers her mouth in shock. "We're, um... We have to call Mom," she stammers

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visibly shaken.

"Why? It's just a dream, Anelisa; it means nothing," Dad asserts, sounding agitated.

"Mr. Adams, Sybil is not a sleepwalker, but today I saw her walk from the elevator to this other flat in our corridor, and she was talking to someone," Ethan adds.

Dad shakes his head. "No, it's what you think you saw!"

Mom also shakes her head. "No, Ahlume! Sybil and the kids deserve to know everything, Ahlume!" she insists.

Ethan places his hand over mine. "I should leave," he whispers. I turn to him, frowning. "I have to give your friend her key, remember?"

I sigh and nod. "Okay, fine, then." I look up at my parents. "I'll accompany Ethan out." Mom nods. We both get up and head out.

"I'll see you tomorrow, okay? Call me before you sleep, and if you have a bad dream or something," he says, kissing my forehead.

"I will. Thank you for being everything a girl could ever ask for," I say, hugging him tightly.

He kisses the top of my head. "You're my everything, okay?" he says, breaking the hug.

I watch him leave after our final goodbye and then walk back inside to find my parents sitting tensely.

"When did the dreams start?" Mom asks, breaking the tension.

I sigh. "Tonight."

"I started having weird dreams when I was 16. That's when I found out that I'm a doppelganger," Mom shares. "I didn't understand the dreams at first, and I didn't know who to talk to about them until I met my mother," she continues. I nod, and she breathes out. "Which is why I think we need to call Nelly," she says, and Dad is about to speak when she shakes her head. "No, honey. Nelly is going to know what to do," she assures.

Dad sighs, shaking his head. "Fine. We'll fly to South Africa as soon as you finish writing," he concedes.

I nod. "Thank you, Dad." I get up and sit on his lap, wrapping my arms around his neck. "Thank you, Daddy," I kiss his cheek, and he chuckles.

"Whatever, kiddo. You're still not off the hook for lying, though," he says.

I roll my eyes, and Mom laughs. "He's right. You're grounded. One week only because you were honest in the end," Mom says, poking me with her foot.

I chuckle. "Of course," I say, rolling my eyes again. "I love you too, parents," I express.

"Sybil, help me," a scratchy voice calls from a distance.

Terrified beyond belief, I respond with a shaky voice, "Where are you? Who are you?" I'm shivering, freezing cold, in a creepy hospital corridor, and I have no clue what's happening.

"Only you can help me. Please get me out of here," she pleads.

I wander off, looking around nervously. "Who are you?" I ask, but there's no response. I walk further and come across a door; I open it and step inside—or is it outside? The cold is bone-chilling, making me shiver.

"Chipmunk, I'm sorry," Ethan appears in front of me, bleeding on his heart. "I am so sorry, Chipmunk," he says and then collapses.

I fall to the floor, cradling his head on my thigh. "Ethan, wake up!" I plead, checking his pulse, but there's none. "Ethan, baby, please. You have to wake up. I need you," I cry out, slapping his cheeks lightly. There's fog around us, and the hospital is nowhere in sight. The voice that asked for help ceases to exist. I feel helpless and like a failure.

"Honey, Sybil, wake up, baby," Mom's voice cries out from afar. "Baby, wake up. Just open your eyes," she says, and I open my eyes slowly. "I'm right here," she assures, hugging me tightly. "I'm here," she repeats, and I wrap my arms around her, holding

on for dear life. "Come, let's get you inside," she says, breaking the hug.

I look around, and we're outside. How did I get outside? What the hell is going on with me? Mom notices the confusion on my face. "You were sleepwalking."

I look at her, bewildered. "How? I never sleepwalk."

She nods. "Yeah, that's what confuses us too. Something is going on here," she says.

I nod. "Yeah. I think Ethan is in trouble or something. How did I end up outside?" I ask.

We walk inside the house, and I sit on the couch with Mom. Dad walks in with a cup in his hand. "Here, kiddo," he says, handing me the cup.

I nod. "Thanks, Dad."

Mom looks up at Dad and shakes her head. "I'll call Neli now," Dad says, walking out.

I sip on my tea. Dad makes a mean cup of tea. "Mom, what's going on with me? Why me?" I ask in distress.



She sighs and shakes her head. "I wish I knew, baby. I really wish I knew. I don't like this any more than you do," she says, brushing my back.

"It's your grandmother; she wants to talk to you," Dad walks in with his phone in his hand.

I take it and put it on speaker. "Leli," I say, apparently unable to say Neli, so I end up calling her Leli, and I never stop calling her that.

"Hello, my baby," she says with a voice filled with nothing but concern. "How are you doing?"

I shrug. "I don't know, Leli. I really don't know. I've been sleepwalking, and I've been having these dreams," I say.

"Lindelwa wants to get out, and she's using Sybil," Dad interjects.

"What do you mean, Lindelwa wants to get out? Is that who Sybil's been dreaming of?" Leli asks.

"Yes and no," I say.

"Yes," Dad chimes in. "She has a handprint on her arm, Neli," he adds dramatically.

"She's made contact," Leli asks in shock. "I'll be on the first flight there. For now, we need to make sure she doesn't make any more contact."

"How?" Mom exclaims.

"Where is, uhm, Sibbu? You need her for this," Leli says.

We all look at each other. "Sibbu is out with her friends and won't be back until tomorrow

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" Mom says.

"Can't she siphon me instead? I mean, I am a hybrid, after all," Dad says. I shoot him a look. "It's the only way, Sybil," he says.

"That could actually work, Ahlume," Leli says.

I shake my head. "NO! It's only going to bring him pain. Let's wait for Sibbu instead," I argue.

"I can do it. Leli, just tell me what to do, and I'll do it," Ntando says, walking in. We all turn to him.

"No, Ntando," I say, shaking my head. "It's too dangerous. I know the spell Leli wants to do, and it's not safe for you to perform," I say.

He shakes his head. "Olu, I can do it. You're my sister. I would do anything for you," he says, brushing my hair back.

"What can we do to help?" Mom asks.

I sigh because clearly there's no arguing with any of them.

"I've been practicing. Don't worry, Olu," Ntando assures me with a smile. I fake a smile back. "What should we do, Leli?" He asks.

"You will need to draw power from an external source; you're not strong enough to do this alone," Leli says.

"Granny, I can do this on my own, trust me," he assures confidently.

"Ok, then," Leli says with a lazy chuckle. "Now I need you to bound her inside a circle, use salt," Dad walks out to probably fetch the salt, "place 12 candles around the circle," Mom walks out to also probably fetch the candles. "I need you to stand inside the circle and switch the candles on. Do a boundary spell to keep her inside; this will be able to keep whatever is trying to reach her inside the circle, and also this way, it won't try to reach out to any of you in the house," Leli explains.

"Why specifically 12, Leli?" I ask, confused.

"That is a conversation for another day. For now, let's focus on the matter at hand. Do you have everything with you?" She asks.

"Yes," Mom says, walking in with 12 white candles in a small woven basket.

"Good. Make the circle in the center of the house and place the candles around the circle. You'll tell me when you're done, Ok?" She says.

"Yes, Leli," Ntando says, making the circle in the center. From there, he places the candles, and then I stand inside the circle. Within a second, the candles switch on. "Done, Leli," he says.

"This is going to hurt you, my baby," she warns.

I nod. "It's Ok, Leli," I assure.

"Ntando, repeat after me," she commands before chanting a spell.

The enchantment they're weaving aims to shield me from the torment of my dreams. It won't halt the dreams themselves, but it ensures that if I venture into whatever realm my dreams take me, denizens of that world won't be able to reach out to me. Additionally, it's designed to curb my sleepwalking and zoning out, transforming those experiences into something akin to a normal dream.

As the incantation unfolds, a searing headache engulfs me. Echoes of voices, pleas for help, reverberate in my mind. Amidst the clamor, I sense the pain these ethereal voices are undergoing. Desperate to break free, I attempt to escape the invisible barrier enveloping me, but it's as if an impermeable glass confines me within the protective circle. Crumpling to the

floor, I clutch my throbbing head, hands pressed to my ears, beseeching Ntando to cease the incantation. "Please stop. It hurts," I cry out in pain.

"It's almost done, baby, just hold on," Leli pleads as Ntando chants the same spell over and over again.

The agony becomes too much to endure; it's as if this migraine has unleashed a level of pain I never thought possible. It surpasses the discomfort of even the worst hangover headache. My pleas for Ntando to halt the incantation persist, but he persists as well. Eventually, I sense myself slipping into unconsciousness, and just like that, I'm plunged into darkness, escaping the overwhelming pain.

I wake up in my bed, and Mom is sitting beside me, lost in deep thoughts—or so it seems. Attempting to sit up, I realize I have no strength at all.

"Hey, Mom said you'd wake up weak," she says, helping me sit up with a pillow supporting my back. "Here, drink this; it's supposed to make you feel better," she adds, handing me a glass with water that has green leaves.

I shoot her a look and shake my painful head. "I'd rather die!"

She chuckles. "Glad you're back! But, honey, you have to drink it," she insists.

"Where's Ntando? Is he okay?" I ask with panic.

She smiles and nods. "He's fine, baby, he's sleeping," she assures.

"Mom, are you sure?" I ask, eyes wide with worry.

She nods. "Yes, now drink!"

I smell it, and it's disgusting. How am I supposed to drink it?

I pinch my nose and gulp it down in one go, then hand Mom the glass. "I hate you," I manage to say after swallowing it.

She giggles. "I love you too," she says, pecking my nose.

"Is she okay?" Dad asks, walking in.

"Yes, she's okay, honey," Mom responds.

He sits next to Mom. "Lindelwa, your great-grandmother, comes into focus—an enigmatic figure locked away in the land of the dead by your grandmother, Nelly. Baby, she's a malevolent force. When she treads the realm of the living, she was entangled in dark dealings with Monalisa, Sibu's mother. In her earthly existence, Lindelwa wove a sinister web, manipulating Monalisa and tainting her with an evil that stemmed from a cursed alliance.

The intricate threads of their collaboration unraveled, revealing a twisted plan. Initially, Lindelwa sought to compel me to end your mother's life during her first year at the university—a sinister inception to a tale that unfolds like a dark tapestry.." I clasped my mouth in shock. " Furious that her wicked scheme had fallen apart, she resorted to a more sinister plot—abducting your mother and cunningly substituting Mona as Sweet Lip's replacement. The nefarious act was executed with meticulous precision, all designed to cloak her absence from our notice." Mom places her hand on Dad's thigh. "During that period your mother was missing, I did a lot of things I'm not proud of."

"None of which you did on purpose," Mom cuts him short. I look at them both and can tell that there's something they're not telling me.

"Before your mother returned, I was turned into a hybrid, and Mona into a vampire. Your grandmother cast Lindelwa into the land of the dead, and since then, she was never heard of or spoken of until you dreamed of her," he says, looking down.

"Why me? What does she want from me?" I ask.

Mom sighs. "Your birth right sets you apart. You're not just the firstborn; you're a daughter of a doppelganger witch and a hybrid, a unique fusion that makes you the pioneer of your kind." I clasp my mouth in shock. "That puts a target on your back." She places her hand on my knee and rubs it. "Lindelwa schemed for me to bear you, intending to sacrifice you to the leader in her dark realm. This twisted plan, she believed, would grant her unparalleled strength

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surpassing every other witch in existence. The malevolence didn't stop at sacrificing you; she sought my demise in the process, envisioning my death during childbirth. This calculated act aimed to force your father into the dreaded transition into a hybrid, completing her malevolent design," she says.

"But obviously, that was a lie. She just wanted more power, but Neli stopped her in time," Dad says, squeezing his wife's hand.

She offers a smile. "Which is why she reached out to you. That's why she says you're the only one who can get her out because



only you are strong enough to destroy or rather to take a trapped soul out of that place," Mom explains.

I look at her confused. "I don't understand."

She sighs. "No other witch could breach the barrier between our world and that accursed realm until your birth, dammit! You're a damned syphon witch, and that's precisely why she's fixated on you. You have the twisted ability to suck the power from that infernal veil, tearing it down and releasing those souls onto Earth. It's a dangerous burden you carry, and that wicked hag wants to exploit it for her own malevolent gain. Damn her and her vile plans! You're not just some pawn in her twisted game; you're my daughter, and I won't let her use you like some supernatural tool!" Mom adds.

I look at Mom and then at Dad; all I'm thinking is 'how the hell do they know all of this?'

"Get some rest; you have school tomorrow," Dad says, getting up off my bed.

"Will you be fine to sleep alone here?" Mom asks with concern.

I smile and nod. "Yes, Mom, I'll be fine."

She looks at me a bit skeptical before getting up. I slide down with my pillow and watch them stare at me all worried.

"We love you, Sybil," Dad says.

I nod. "I know, and I love you guys too," I say. They nod and head to the door. "Mom," I say, and they both stop and turn to me. "Can we please talk about something?" I say.

"I'll meet you in our room," Dad says, kissing Mom's cheek. "Don't keep my wife for too long!" He warns, making us both laugh. He walks out, and Mom comes to join me in bed.

"So what's up?" She asks, brushing my upper arm with her fingers. We're laying on our sides facing each other.

I sigh. "I'm worried about Ethan."

"I've been meaning to ask about that. You were crying, and it was like you were cradling him," she says, frowning.

I nod. "Suddenly, he appeared out of nowhere, his apology hanging in the air. He clutched his heart, blood staining his chest, and he continued apologizing until he finally collapsed. Without thinking, I dropped to my knees and cradled his head on my thighs. It felt painfully real, like it was unfolding right before my eyes, Mom." Tears roll down my eyes to my pillow. "What if I'm the one who should be apologizing to him? What if I'm the reason I keep seeing him dead, Mom?" I start sobbing. I can't get this picture of him dead out of my mind; it's like it's been glued to my mind, and there's nothing I can do about it.

Mom sighs and wipes my tears. "You know what I do when things get too much?" She asks. I shake my head no. "I pray,"

she says. "It probably doesn't make sense to you, but I feel like there's nothing prayer can't fix. I grew up praying, and when things got hard, prayer was always there to fix things for me. You're God's child before you're a witch, baby," she says, tucking hair strands behind my ear. "Come, let's kneel down and pray for guidance and understanding," she says, getting up.

When she's on her feet, she pulls me up, and we both kneel down to pray.

"Morning," I chirp, sauntering into Ntando's room. He's engrossed in his phone, facing the other side. After the comforting prayer session with Mom last night, I slept in a lighter mood. A call to Ethan afterward reassured me; my boyfriend's panic-laden voice displayed genuine concern. He truly is a sweetheart.

"Hey," he greets, turning to face me. I hop onto his bed, pulling his blankets over me.

"How are you feeling?" I ask, adjusting the cozy layers.

"I'm good, don't worry about me," he smiles, poking my nose.

"You're my little brother; how can I not?" I tease, wearing a fake smile.

He affectionately places his hand on my cheek. "You're my sister. I'd do it all over again if I had to, and also because it's fun watching you cry out in pain," he chuckles.

I poke and playfully punch him. "Hey, that's mean!"

He laughs. "You know I'm joking. I'm glad you're okay."

"I'm worried about Ethan," I confess.

"Why?" he inquires, his eyes fixed on mine.

I shrug. "I've been having these dreams of him bleeding on his heart. I'm scared something might happen to him."

He widens his eyes. "You don't think they have anything to do with our great-grandmother, do you?"

"I don't know, little bro. I mean, I have one dream after the other. What are the chances?" I ponder.

He exhales. "Are the parents up yet?" he asks, sitting up.

I shake my head. "No, they won't be awake for the next hour."

He rises and extends his hand. "Come, let's go to the basement."

I shoot him a look, and he raises an eyebrow. "Wait, you're serious?" I inquire, to which he nods. Placing my hand in his, he helps me get up.

Hand in hand, we head to the basement. Switching on the lights, Ntando walks to the wall and touches it, causing a door to materialize. I look at him in astonishment.

"You coming?" he asks, opening the door.

"What's this?" I inquire, raising an eyebrow.

He grins. "Don't ask. Just come," he says, making way for me. I enter, and he follows, closing the door behind us. Clicking his

fingers, candles illuminate the space. I glance around and notice a wall filled with grimoires.

"I've been collecting those," he mentions.

Approaching him, I ask, "Where did you get these?"

"Grandma Neli. Sibü isn't interested in practicing, and you, being a syphon witch, barely show interest. Gramps gave them to me to keep," he explains nonchalantly.

Walking closer, I inquire, "Does Mom even know this room exists?" He nods. "What?"

He turns to me. "She knows. They bought this house from a witch," he reveals. "Now, come here; let's do this," he says, offering me his hands. I take them into mine.

"Close your eyes and block out everything," he instructs.

Following his guidance, I shut my eyes

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focusing on the dream of Ethan. A searing pain engulfs me as I visualize him bleeding, my heart wrenching. My brother's calming voice breaks through, guiding me through the distress.

"Breathe," he says. Slowly exhaling, I manage to compose myself. "What do you see?" he inquires.

"He's dead," I utter, tears streaming down my face.

"Where are you?" he probes.

"In a cemetery, surrounded by graves," I reply.

"Whose graves do you see, Sybil?" he asks.

Looking around, I respond, "It's Lindelwa's grave."

"What else do you see?" he continues.

I search for something, and Lindelwa materializes, her hands stained with blood. "What did you do?" I confront, rising from the ground.

"Not me, Sybil. You!" she insists with a sinister smile. I shake my head. "Whatever happens to Ethan is your fault. You can save him, you know."

"How? What do I need to do to save him?" I implore.

"Give your life, Sybil. End your life to save your boyfriend," she suggests, and with that, she walks away.

"Sybil!" my brother yells, bringing me back. I open my eyes.

"What did she say?" he questions.

"She said I need to give my life to save him. She said his death would be on my hands," I reveal.

"She's lying!" he asserts.

I shake my head. "What if it's true?"

He holds me at arm's length. "If you were meant to hurt him, then you would know," he reassures.

I remain unconvinced. "I love him, Sam, and he was bleeding in his heart. What if I'll be the reason he dies?"

"If you love him the way you say you do, then you'll do everything in your power to protect him," he advises, letting go of me and heading to a table.

"What are you doing?" I ask, following him.

"Remember Mom telling us that Leli gave her a necklace of protection? Well, here you go," he says, handing me a necklace.

"Remember there was a time when Leli couldn't touch Mom or be anywhere near her without hurting her?" he recalls, and I nod slowly. "Well, this is that necklace Leli created for Mom. This necklace has magic stored in it and was laced with a protection spell."

I inspect the necklace. "So what? Am I supposed to give this to E? It's girly for one, and secondly, how certain are we that it will do what it did for Mom?" I question, scrutinizing him with furrowed eyebrows.

"That's why you have me. We'll modify the spell on the necklace and transfer whatever magic it has to a chain, or a ring, or a watch—something you know he'd never take off, no matter what," he explains, rolling his eyes.



I try to think of something, but my mind draws a blank. "I don't know, Sam."

He hits his forehead. "Sometimes I swear I'm the older one here." I shove him, and he laughs. "Look, get a chain or something so that we can do this, okay?" he suggests.

I nod and pull him into a tight hug. "Thank you," I say, squeezing him tightly.

He laughs, trying to break free. "Yeah, whatever. Your boyfriend had better pay lobola for you and make me his best man!" he jokes, pushing me off.

Entering the lounge, I'm still grappling with the events in the basement. We move into the kitchen, quenching our thirst with water before deciding on breakfast.

"Siblings," Sibü chimes in, strolling in dressed in last night's outfit.

"Hey, sis," we echo in unison, breaking into laughter.

"If I didn't know better, I'd say you guys rehearsed that," she teases, throwing herself onto one of the high chairs.

"No rehearsals needed. Great minds, Sibü," my little brother beams proudly, and I roll my eyes.

"Alright," Sibü says, "what are ya'll making?" She asks, eyeing us expectantly.

Ntando glances at me. "Don't look at me. I don't know," I say, shrugging my shoulders.

"Make omelettes or a typical American English breakfast," Sibü suggests, strolling to the sink.

"Omelettes it is," I decide. "Also, let me fetch my phone real quick," I add, walking out. I reach my room and notice two missed calls from E and a few from Cassie. As I'm about to call E, my phone rings, and it's him, so I answer.

"Bells," I say.

He sighs with relief. "Don't you ever scare me like that, Thando," he scolds.

I frown. "How did I scare you? I literally just got to my phone now," I say, still confused.

He lets out air. "You weren't answering your phone. I thought that maybe you were having one of those dreams, that's all," he explains.

*Where did I find this guy again?*

"No, babe, I'm fine. Sorry I didn't answer. My phone was left in my room while I was with Ntando in his room," I explain.

"It's okay, babe. I worry too much about you," he confesses.

I blush. "I appreciate that

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babe. So, listen, I need something of yours you never take off," I say nervously.

He chuckles. "My birthday suit, maybe," he jokes, laughing.

I laugh too. "Really, babe?" I say, rolling my eyes.

"I don't have anything I'm constantly wearing, babe. Why do you ask?" he inquires.

"Well, I think you're in danger, and I think you need protection from me," I say, speaking rapidly.

"Why would I need protection from you?" he asks.

I sigh. "What happened to that gold chain of yours?"

"I don't know, somewhere in my room," he says.

I mentally bang my head against a wall. "Well, can you look for it and bring it to my parents' house?" I request.

"Uhhm, okay, Chipmunk," he says. "Other than bringing your chain, can we go out for lunch?"

I find myself smiling, not entirely sure why. "I'm grounded, remember?" I say, feeling a bit shattered.

He sighs. "Can't you talk to your mom?"

I sigh. "I don't know. I'll try, babe."

"Please," he pleads.

I can already picture his puppy eyes, and I melt at that thought. "Fine, I'll talk to her."

He chuckles lazily. "Thank you. See you in a few hours," he says before ending the call.

I'm left there dumbstruck with my phone in my hand. My guy is stupid and cute at the same time. I head out and bump into mom about to knock on my door.

"Hey," she says with that warm smile of hers.

I return the same smile. "Hey, Mom."

She looks at me, squinting her eyes. I shrug my shoulders.

"What?" I ask.

"Ask what you were planning on asking," she says, folding her arms. I giggle.

"Were you eavesdropping?" I ask, squinting my eyes.

She laughs. "No, I read minds," she says. I shoot her a look, and she laughs. "Your boyfriend sent me a text earlier begging me to let you go to lunch," she says, handing me her phone.

Ethan comes by and picks me up then we drive off. Breakfast with the family was nice but now I'm off to have lunch with my amazing boyfriend.

"You Ok?" He asks glancing at me sitting on the passenger seat I nod and place my hand over his on the gear "yeah babe I'm good" I say

He nods and looks straight ahead "I'm worried about you Thando" he says

"Why?" I ask knowing very well why

He shrugs "everything that's started happening to you. It worries me that there's nothing I can do to help" he says then looks at me for a split second before returning his eyes on the road "last year you were fine. A few days back you were fine, now you sleep walk and wind up outside" he says

I sigh and tighten my grip on his hand "nothing will happen to me. I'm a witch remember? These things are bound to happen babe" I say "all I need is to make sure nothing happens to you that's all" I say then kiss his cheek

He parks in front of his mother's house then turns to me "you need not worry about me. I'm the guy here" he says squeezing my cheek

I giggle like a little kid "whatever. I love you Ok?" I say placing my hand on his cheek

He pecks my lips "I love you more Chipmunk" he says unlocking

the car doors "don't worry, they left this morning. Some  
baecation what-what" he says getting out  
I open my door and step out then close it. He walks over and  
takes my hand into his and we head into the house where we  
walk into the foyer that leads to the lounge. The design of his  
home is vintage meets modern with colours charcoal,  
turquoise, cream and red. Its beautiful.

"So I fixed us a picnic for two at the back" he says nervously,  
he's so cute with his full pinkish lips, brown eyes, nicely shaved  
on the sides fade with a mini scruffy fro going on but very clean.  
He looks like a fuckboi with this haircut

"You should cut the hair. You look like a fuckboi" I say

He rolls his eyes "I did this cut for you" he says

I chuckle "I never asked you too" I say with a shrug

"So much for trying to look good for my girlfriend" he says  
faking disappointment, he knows I don't like the hairstyle

"at least I love you" I say bumping him with my shoulder

He giggles "whatever bae" he says. As Ethan leads me into the  
backyard, my breath catches in my throat at the sight before  
me. The garden unfolds like a mini enchanted paradise lifted  
straight from a dreamy movie set. A gentle fountain releases  
cascades of crystal-clear water, its melodious song dancing in  
the air. A finely sculpted statue stands proudly, whispering tales  
of timeless romance. A winding rose passage, adorned with

delicate blooms, beckons us to venture deeper into this magical realm.

But it's the pool that steals the scene, a centerpiece covered with a glass that glows like a million fireflies trapped beneath its surface. The soft illumination transforms the water into a liquid jewel, casting a dreamlike glow across the surroundings. I find myself unable to contain the overwhelming beauty of the scene, and a solitary tear escapes, tracing a path down my cheek.

The air is thick with an otherworldly charm, and for a moment, it feels like time itself has slowed down to let us savor the enchantment of this hidden paradise. Ethan glances at me, his eyes reflecting the same awe, and he gently wipes away my tear. The garden becomes a silent witness to the emotions swirling between us, an oasis of magic in the tapestry of our teenage romance.

"this is beautiful" I finally manage to say

He chuckles "yeah I know, I'm romantic like that"

We both laugh "whatever babe. This is really beautiful. whats the occasion?" I ask, he smiles and I raise an eyebrow "did I forget our anniversary?" I ask worried

He laughs "no. its your birthday tomorrow and I figured you'll be with your family and I wont get your attention with your grandmother in town" he says. I cover my face with my hands



and he kisses my hands. I'm in tears I can't even help myself  
"come on don't deny me that pretty face" he says pulling my hands

"this is too much" I finally say

He smiles, his smile speaks volumes. It tells me just how much he loves me and I know we both too young and chances are we probably don't even have a future together but this moment right here is worth everything.

"nothing will ever be too much for you" he says kissing my cheek "come" we head to the pool, I am still in awe. We get to the pool and we both sit down across each other "before I forget, here is that chain you wanted" he says handing me a gold chain

I take it and place it in my handbag. "you actually listen" I say  
He chuckles "only you"

I get home and I'm drained I can barely do anything. No it's not sex

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after the picnic we went to a game arcade in which we played a dozen games that involve exercise and dare I tell you it was fun but my body feels like I've been at the gym, every inch of my body hurts and he has the nerve to tell me that it's because I'm not physically fit. Imagine! I walk in the house and my family is in the backyard and they sitting and laughing which is

something you barely see considering how my sister is barely ever home. my phone rings and its Cassie

“babe” she says

“hey buddy, how are you?” I ask

She groans “I have a major hangover. I miss you, where are you?” she asks

I laugh “I just got home babe. I slept at Ethan’s place. I’m sorry for leaving you there” I say

“argh don’t sweat it, I knew you’d disappear” I say

She laughs “I know you too well babe. So we going out?” she asks

I shake my head “no babe. I’m grounded and my grandmother is landing tonight or tomorrow morning” I say

She groans “you suck and so does your grandmother. Ok happy birthday in advance. Bye now” she says speaking fast and then drops the call on me

I walk to the family and greet and they all respond, I sit next to Ntando

“why me?” he cries out dramatically making all of us laugh

“cause you the last born” I say sticking my tongue out at him

He rolls his eyes “boring. Mom and dad please have one last child so that I can bully him or her. this thing of Thando always bully me cause I come after her is not fun anymore” he says making us all laugh

“so it was fun at some point?” dad says

We laugh "it probably was babe" mom adds  
Ntando pouts "you guys are boring you know that!" he says  
I kiss his cheek "at least we love you little monster" I say  
"When is grandma landing?" Sibbu asks  
Mom looks at her watch "tonight I think or tomorrow in the  
early hours of morning" mom says. Sibbu nods. "why do you  
ask?"  
She shrugs "no reason. So Thando what are we doing for your  
sweet 16?" she asks changing the subject. knowing her theres  
something in her mind that she wants to do or theres a place  
she wants to disappear off to  
I shrug "I don't know"  
"we'll just go out as a family and have fun" dad says  
"yeah" mom supports her husband which leads to him kissing  
her cheek. We all roll our eyes and murmur "hey!" she scolds  
and we all laugh  
"how do you think you guys came about?" dad says caressing  
his wife and we all laugh  
"child ears and eyes old people" my brother says covering his  
face  
"yeah get a room people" Sibbu says  
"this is our house" dad says kissing mom's neck and mom lets  
out a moan  
"we are out of here!" I say getting up and so does my brother  
"yeah I'm with them. We'll close the blinds for our own sanity

thank you very much” Sibü adds following behind us  
I've lost count of how many times I've accidentally stumbled upon the world's most embarrassing show—otherwise known as my parents' love life. You'd think that two grown-ups with kids would be more discreet, but nope, not them. It's like they've taken a vow to keep the romance alive, teenage kids be darned.

So, every time I approach a room, be it the kitchen, the lounge, or just about anywhere, I've developed this habit of knocking like my life depends on it. Because, trust me, the last thing any 16-year-old wants to witness is the over-the-top affection of their parents.

It might sound crazy, but despite the awkward encounters, I secretly adore the love fest between those two. They're like eternal teenagers trapped in grown-up bodies. It's as if they've unearthed the secret to freezing time, forever reliving their twenties. Crazy, right?

But you know what? As wild as it is, their love makes me dream. I catch myself daydreaming about a love as vibrant and enduring as theirs. I want what they have, that unbridled connection that transcends the chaos of life. And more than anything, I want to share it with my Ethan—the person who makes my heart race, just like my parents' love does for them. “got the chain?” Ntando asks turning to me, I nod “awesome

lets go" he says pulling my hand

"where to?" Sibü asks

I look at Ntando and he looks at me "We going to the basement  
he finally says after a stare debate

"to do what?" she asks

I look at her "don't you have any plans for today?" I finally ask  
annoyed

She shakes her head "I thought I'd spend some time with you  
guys" she says

Ntando furrows his eyebrows, I guess he's as shook as I am "ok"  
we say simultaneously

She looks at us with her eyes popped out waiting for a response  
"so? Can I join you guys?" she finally asks

I look at Ntando "Why are you looking at me?" he asks

I shoot him another look "cause you the one doing all of this"

He sighs "6 hands are better than 2 I guess" he says

"awesome" she says with a smile

Its not that we don't like Sibü, its just that she's never involved  
in magic nor does she take interest in the stuff we do so hence  
our reaction.

We lead the way to the basement and Ntando does his thing  
"I didn't know there was a secret room down here. do the  
parents know?" she asks

Ntando nods "yeah. Don't touch anything or else you out of  
here" he says with a straight face and Sibü nods "wheres the

chain?" he asks turning to me

I take it out and hand it to him "will it work?" I ask

He shrugs "its our best bet" he says placing the chain on the table

He pours salt around it and then places mom's bracelet in the centre

"what are you guys doing?" Sibü asks

"transferring the spell from mom's bracelet to this chain" says Ntando

She frowns "this is for Ethan. We scared his life might be in danger" I say placing my hands on Ntando's hands

"need help?" she asks and Ntando nods taking her hand into his and I take the other one

"repeat after me" he says and then he starts chanting and we chant with him.

We feel this cold breeze hit our skin and we see the chains rise  
"Ntando whats going on?" I ask as the chain I had bought flies towards me

"i.... I" he stutters "I don't know. duck" I duck and the chain flies towards the wall and breaks. We all turn to the wall breaking the circle

"The fuck just happened?" I ask

Ntando shrugs "i... I don't know. it was supposed to work"

"clearly it didn't because the chain broke!" I argue

"Sybil breathe" Sibü says touching my shoulder "I'm sure theres

a reasonable explanation for whatever just happened right now” She says and I shake my head “Listen to me, I am sure there is another spell we can try” she says  
Just then my phone rings and it’s a number I don’t recognise  
“Hello?”  
“Sybil you have to come here. its Ethan”

As soon as his name escapes their lips, an icy grip wraps around my heart, freezing every hopeful thought and dream. The mere mention of his name is a haunting whisper that echoes through the corridors of my mind, stirring up a storm of fears and uncertainties. In that moment, the vivid dreams we crafted together become fragile illusions, threatening to shatter with the mere suggestion of his absence.

A surge of panic courses through me, tricking my mind into a labyrinth of dark possibilities. The thought that he might be gone, lost in the vast unknown, tightens its grip around my chest. The idea of a future without him becomes an unbearable weight, threatening to crush the dreams we wove together. He isn't just a part of my life; he is my life.

The prospect of losing him, my everything, is an abyss too deep to fathom. It's a darkness that engulfs the warmth of our shared moments and leaves me stranded in a cold, desolate reality. The fear of a future without his presence feels like a void, an emptiness that no amount of time or distance can fill.

I'm not ready to face a world where he doesn't exist, where his laughter doesn't dance in the air and his smile doesn't light up my days. The very idea of his absence is enough to send tremors through my soul, and I cling to the hope that this is just a cruel trick of the mind.



He isn't just my future; he is the heartbeat of my existence. Losing him would mean losing a part of myself, a part I'm not prepared to live without. The fear of that loss is suffocating, and I find myself praying that it's just a baseless fear, a phantom conjured by my imagination. I can't handle the idea of him being gone. I can't handle losing the person who completes my world.

Arriving at his apartment, I'm greeted by a scene that sharply contrasts with Ethan's usual pristine living space. Beer bottles scattered haphazardly on the floor create an unexpected chaos in what is typically a haven of order. My brows furrow in confusion; Ethan, a paragon of neatness, couldn't possibly be responsible for this disarray.

His living space is a reflection of his personality—organized, tidy, and meticulously arranged. The sight before me feels like a disruption in the natural order of things. Ethan might not be a neat freak, but he certainly values cleanliness, so the mess strewn across the room is a jarring anomaly.

The dishevelled state of the apartment raises questions, and my mind races to find a plausible explanation. I know Ethan well enough to realize that he wouldn't willingly let his living space descend into such chaos. Something is amiss.

As I navigate through the sea of beer bottles, I can't help but feel a sense of unease settling in. The atmosphere is charged

with an unspoken tension, a departure from the usually harmonious ambiance that envelops Ethan's home. The disorder clashes with the familiar serenity, leaving an unsettling impression.

My instincts whisper that there's more to this scene than meets the eye. With each step, I tread carefully, mindful of the anomaly that has invaded Ethan's haven. The mystery of the messy apartment deepens, and a knot of concern tightens in my stomach.

This unexpected chaos becomes a silent plea for answers. I brace myself for the truth, hoping that whatever disrupted the tranquility of Ethan's space won't disrupt the peace we share. The clean freak in him deserves an explanation, and I'm determined to unravel the mystery behind the untidy façade that contradicts everything I know about him.

In a whirlwind of emotions, I burst into Kurt's room, my heart pounding with fear and confusion. "What's going on here? Where is Ethan?" I shout, my voice laced with urgency.

Kurt, nonchalantly emerging from his room, calmly informs me that I just missed Ethan, who was rushed to the hospital by an ambulance with Luke. Disbelief courses through me, and every fiber of my being screams to lash out at Kurt. Despite the mess around, I restrain myself, acknowledging that he's not worth the energy.

"Clean this mess up and pack your shit. Leave," I command sternly, my frustration evident. The messy state of the place aggravates me, compounded by the memory of yesterday's unwelcome intrusion of Ethan's privacy. "Leave the key in the mail hole when you're done," I add before grabbing Ethan's keys and storming out.

Sibu awaits in the car, engrossed in a conversation with someone, presumably a parent. "Yes

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Mom, I'll call you when we get there," she assures, ending the call as I slam the car door shut. My mind is a chaotic mess; I just want to see Ethan, to know that he's okay.

"And?" Sibu inquires, breaking the tense silence. I hurriedly text Luke for the hospital details, relaying them to Sibu as we speed towards it. Parking, I sprint inside, leaving my sister behind, my desperation escalating.

Inside the hospital, Luke paces in distress, and I approach him, seeking answers. "I am so sorry, Sybil," he says, pulling me into a tight embrace. Pulling away, I demand to know what happened, only to hear a terrifying account of Ethan's sudden seizure and unexplained heart bleeding.

"What do you mean? What are the doctors saying?" I press, desperation tainting my voice. Luke, equally lost, reveals that no one has informed him of anything.

Two agonizing hours pass with no updates. I've exhausted the corridors, seeking answers from anyone who would listen. Sibü urges me to call my mother, but the thought of worrying her halts me. In a moment of despair, I head to the restroom.

Inside, a mysterious nurse cryptically tells me, "You know what you have to do." Bewildered, I question her, but she vanishes. Confused and drained, I return to Sibü and Luke.

"Luke, call me if there's any change with him, okay?" I instruct, my thoughts clouded by worry. As I walk away, my sister calls after me, but I can't face her. My world crumbles as I confront the possibility of losing Ethan.

In Ethan's apartment, I confront the remnants of his absence. The room's scent, a poignant reminder, overwhelms me. Lights flicker, and a dark presence fills the room. A mysterious voice urges me to do what I must. The stakes are high, and I grapple with the uncertainty of the consequences.

Texts sent, I find a stake with my name on it. Trembling, I question the unseen force, demanding assurance that Ethan will wake up. The voice, both eerie and indifferent, offers no guarantees. Tears streaming, I raise the stake to my heart,

whispering, "This is for you, E." The pain intensifies, consciousness fades, and I succumb to the darkness, driven by a desperate hope for Ethan's recovery.

\*ANELISA – Sybil's Mother

There's this thing called a mother's instinct; any mother who is a mother can tell you that they can feel it in their body when something is not right with their kids. Ever since the kids left, I've had this pit at the bottom of my stomach. I spoke to mom about it, and she herself feels like something bad is about to happen. She suspects that Sybil might do something or rather something is wrong with Sybil, and I can't help but feel the same. Nelly went to the kitchen to make us something that might calm both of us down. As I am sitting like that, I get a text from Sybil, which reads:

"Mom and Dad,

You are both amazing parents, and I want you to know that, Mom, you are an incredible mother – never doubt that. Dad, you've been nothing short of the best father any daughter could ask for. I love you both so much.

To my dear siblings, you are the world's best and occasionally the worst siblings anyone could ever ask for, but I wouldn't trade you for anything. You are all amazing, and I love each one of you dearly.

I'm sure you're wondering about this sudden outpouring of love. Well, I'm about to do something reckless to save someone

I love, and I believe you, of all people, understand this more than anyone, Mom, because you've once done the same for Dad. Ethan needs me, Mom, and this is the only way to help him. I'm sorry for the worry and concern I'm causing. I love all of you deeply!"

By the time I finish reading it, I can barely breathe. My heart is torn into pieces, and tears won't stop flowing from my eyes.

"Sweet Lips," my husband startles me, bringing me back. I look up at him, and his face is filled with concern at the sight of me crying. "Sweet Lips, what's wrong? What's going on?" he asks, sitting on the table in front of me.

I hand him my phone. "It's Sybil," I say.

"Anelisa, we have to find Sybil. I just got a call from Sibub," Nelly says, walking into the lounge.

"Anelisa, what the hell does this text message mean?" he asks, his voice filled with mixed emotions.

I shrug. "She's gone," I whisper.

"No! Sybil is still alive, she can't die, Anelisa. She's immortal," Ahlume argues.

I shake my head. "No one is immortal, Ahlume, and you know that," I say.

He shakes his head. "We have to find our daughter!" he says, getting up from the table.

"I think I know where she might be," Nelly says.

"Don't you two get it?" I shout, startling both of them. "She's gone!" I say, crying. "My baby is gone."

"She's not gone, Anelisa! Sybil is still alive," Mom says.

"Don't you think I'd feel her if she was? She's dead, Mother!" I argue, getting up from the chair.

Ahlume grabs my hand and pulls me to him. "Sybil is alive, Anelisa. I am not giving up on our daughter just like that!" he says.

I'm shattered. I understand Sybil can't face death, yet her spirit has vacated her body. Whatever she unleashed opened a gateway to the world of the dead, a realm where malevolent forces now stir. Sybil, a formidable witch, practices as a syphon, drawing power from unconventional sources. Born of a doppelganger witch and a hybrid, she stands as the inaugural member of her kind

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a testament to her unparalleled strength. She alone possesses the ability to pry open a portal connecting our reality to the eerie expanse of the deceased.



Lindelwa honed in on Sybil's vulnerabilities, recognizing her as the most pliable and potent target among her peers. Sybil remains physically intact, yet her essence wanders in the realm of the departed.

"Sybil's spirit is gone, Ahlume. She's stuck in the world of the dead," I say.

He shakes his head. "You don't know that, Anelisa," he argues.

I give Nelly my hand; my daughter and I are connected spiritually. "Here, do your thing and tell me what you see," I say.

Nelly gazes at me, and her hand clasps mine; she closes her eyes, transporting us into an apartment. Before me lies Sybil's lifeless form on the floor. I'm aware that Nelly witnesses the same haunting scene. Suddenly, a shadow, or perhaps a presence, emerges from Sybil's inert body, unleashing chaos in the room as if a hurricane or tsunami is in full force.

"Anelisa, what is going on?" Nelly asks.

Who would have thought that I would know more about this witch business than my mother? I guess raising witch kids makes you curious.

"See the shadow that walked out of her body?" she nods.

"That's Lindelwa, freed from the world of the dead. She's alive and needs a body to host," I explain.

She lets go of my hand, and my husband is looking at both of us, waiting for an explanation.

“Lindelwa is out,” I say.

“NO!” Ahlume says, shaking his head in denial. “That’s not possible. She’s locked up in the world of the dead. There’s no way out!”

I shrug. “She figured a way out, and she’s going after Sybil for her power,” I say.

“Then we have to protect Sybil at all costs,” Nelly says.

I shake my head. “Only she can protect herself from this one.”

My husband looks at me like I’m mentally ill. “Anelisa, we don’t have time for this; our daughter is in danger! Just because it’s her mess doesn’t mean it’s hers to clean up,” he says. “I’m going to find my daughter,” he says, storming out.

I cherish my daughter more than anything in the world. As a mother, my instincts scream at me to protect her, to shield her from any harm that may come her way. Yet, as I sit here, I realize that this is Sybil’s battle, a confrontation with her great grandmother that only she can navigate and conquer. My love for her is unwavering, but I must recognize the boundaries between motherly protection and allowing her the space to face the challenges that define her own journey.

“Mom,” Ntando says, walking in.

“Hey, baby,” I say, pulling him into my arms.

“What’s going on with Sybil?” he asks, with so much concern.

“Your sister is fine, baby,” I assure.

“Mom, I’m not a kid; you can tell me what’s going on,” he says, and I find myself wanting to laugh. He’s so cute, and he looks so much like his father.

I sigh. “You look so much like your father,” I say, brushing his mini fade.

“Mom!”

“Look,” I say, handing him my phone.

He takes it and starts reading it. “NO! Sybil cannot do this!” he says, frustrated. “Mom, we have to do something.”

I shrug. “Like what?”

“You can’t just give up on her, Mom,” he says. “We have to find a way to help her,” he says, pulling my hand to the basement.

I look around and its dark all over, i'm on the floor. I get up and look around but theres so much fog i cant even see whats what.

"You that Adam's witch aren't you" a voice says but i cant see the person it belongs to

"Why cant i see you? Who are you?" i ask looking around towards the direction where the voice might have emerged

"I'm Ariana" she says and I finally see her shadow, I cant see her face proper because of the darkness "You don't know me but I know you. Everyone around here knows you" she says

Her voice is sweet and angelic it makes you curious as to what she may look like, I'm pretty sure she's beautiful

"Where am I?" I ask

"This is the world of the dead, this is where dead supernaturals who have committed the worst crimes are sent to for torture" she says

"I cannot be here" I say

"You killed yourself Sybil, you belong here like the rest of us" she says "Your crime is releasing the worlds most dangerous supernatural creature to ever exist and for that you will be punished" she says, I feel her take my hand into hers

“What are you doing?” I ask in panic, at this moment I am scared for dear life and it doesn’t help that I cant see the person pulling me

“I am taking you to the master to receive your punishment” she says

I shake my head and pull my hand “This is a mistake, I don’t belong here. I should not be here”

She chuckles “that’s how we all feel, I killed my whole coven by mistake and here I am today. How are you any different” she asks

We stop in front of a beautiful big house. Theres lights everywhere and I can finally see her face and just as I thought she is as beautiful as they come I’m even jealous.

“Look! I was manipulated” I say

She laughs “so was I, your great grandmother had me convinced that she would help me control my magic by me linking my coven members to myself and had me kill myself but little did I know that killing myself would kill all of them. Most people here were manipulated by your great grandmother. She runs this place but while she’s gone its run by this other super powerful witch” she explains

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sans-serif">"I have to get out of here, my family is in danger. My boyfriend. Shiit is Ethan ok?" I ask

She looks at me with pity "Ethan? Your boyfriend?" she asks

I nod "yes him"

"forget about him, he's dead"

I shake my head "NO! he's not dead, he cant be dead" I argue

She pulls my hand "come let me show you something"

I follow behind her and we get to this beautiful antique of a mirror "look at this" she says touching the mirror and I see Ethan laying in the hospital bed and doctors trying their best to save him until machines go off and they make that beeping noise indicating that he is dying

"Please don't let him die, please save him. He has to wake up please" I beg her

She looks at me "I'm not supposed to do this but.." she touches the mirror and then I see some positive movement, the doctors look hopeful as though he might actually wake up "He's going to be ok" she assures me

"Thank you" I say throwing my arms around her neck and pulling her in her a hug, she hugs me back and then we both break it "thank you so so much"

“you did not see me do that ok?” she warns

I nod like a little child “I promise” I say “Ariana we have to get out of here, I’m sure that with your magic and mine we can find a way to get out of here”

She shakes her head “I am stuck here Sybil but maybe you can get out” she says and just then we feel this breeze of cold air that makes both of us shiver. I feel voices chanting and I know for a fact that it has to be my little brother

“Whats going on?” she asks blocking her face from the heavy dust

“its my little brother, he’s found a way to get me out of here” I say and soon after its lights out for me

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I wake up and i'm in my room and mom is sitting beside me, thoughts of everything come rushing back and i just cry. I need my mother's hug and her to tell me that its going to be ok

"Mom" i say with a scratchy voice

"Oh Sybil baby" she says pulling me to her arms

"mom" i cry out and she brushes my back

"Its ok baby" she says brushing my back, feels good being in her arms again

i break out of her arms "Is Ethan ok?"

she nods slowly "he's awake"

i smile but my smile breaks the minute i notice the look on her face "Mom whats going on?" i ask

she sighs "he's unresponsive" she says

i look at her for a while trying to comprehend what she might possibly mean "What do you mean he's unresponsive?"

she looks down "he doesnt talk or eat or do anything baby, he's just a body"

"what do you mean mom?" i ask

"its like he's brain dead baby" she finally says "his brain activity is dead"

i swear my world just came crushing down on me.

How? What happened? What did Ariana do?

"What do you mean mom? i dont understand" i say

"Sybil you've been out for a week, you the only one who can locate Lindelwa's whereabouts" she says

What?



I survey my surroundings, engulfed in darkness. The events leading to this moment flood back into my consciousness, and I realize that Sybil is my only hope.

"Finally, you're awake," rasps an elderly voice, belonging to none other than Sybil's great-grandmother, Lindelwa. She approaches me, crouching down with an air of scrutiny. "You're scared," she observes, her presence both eerie and unsettling. "I won't hurt you. I need Sybil to fulfill a certain task, and as long as she cooperates, you're safe. But you'll stay here until we're done."

Questions whirl in my mind like a tempest. "Where am I? Am I dead? What do you want from her? She's only 16," I blurt out, attempting to break free from the invisible constraints that bind me.

"You are so cute," Lindelwa remarks sarcastically. "You're not dead. Your body remains in the real world, while your spirit is trapped here. This is a realm where supernatural spirits are confined, those that are pure, of course. When Sybil died, she inadvertently opened a gateway, allowing some of us to traverse between supernatural worlds."

Confusion clouds my expression. "Supernatural? I'm not a supernatural being. I'm human," I assert, grappling with the unsettling revelation.

She chuckles

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her tone dripping with condescension. "Wait! You didn't know? You're a doppelganger," she reveals, pointing at me. The revelation shakes me to the core; there's nothing extraordinary about me, or so I thought.

Addressing my other queries, Lindelwa unveils her true motives. "I seek power. I need Sybil to help me resurrect my husband," she declares, leaving me visibly stunned. "You see, your girlfriend is the first of her kind—a hybrid witch born of a doppelganger witch. Moreover, she's a syphon witch, making her more potent than any witch in existence. Only she possesses the ability to achieve what I need."

"But she doesn't have magic," I protest.

Lindelwa chuckles again, revealing Sybil's sacrifice. "After she took her own life to save you, she lowered the veil between the world of the dead and the living. That gave me the opportunity to walk out," she explains with a touch of pride. "Don't worry; she won't be dead for long. As soon as she wakes up, she'll be

desperate to save you, and she'll have no choice but to find me for help."

I'm shaken, grappling with the betrayal by the person who should love her most. While Sybil may not be a saint, she certainly doesn't deserve this from someone claiming a familial connection.

Lindelwa elucidates her ultimate goal. "Everything I've done is to raise my husband from the dead. He's not imprisoned where I was. I discovered that he's held captive in a place even darker, and only Sybil can reach those depths. He's in a realm darker than the one that confined me."

Skepticism surfaces in my mind. "What if he found peace already? What if Sybil can't find him?" I challenge.

Lindelwa sighs, a rare glimpse of vulnerability flickering in her eyes before she masks it with coldness. "Then I'll provide her with a little motivation. I know he's alive. I can feel his presence," she asserts confidently, leaving me to ponder my newfound identity and the unfolding supernatural drama.

I find myself in the quiet realm of a hospital room, pondering the cruel twist of fate that landed Ethan, someone so inherently good, in this struggle for life. The cold sterility of the single bed clashes with his warmth, and I grip his icy hand, yearning for the moment he opens his eyes.

Beside me, Mrs. Forbes, Ethan's mother, maintains a stoic presence. We share this silent vigil, united by our concern for the unconscious young man. A knock disrupts the hushed atmosphere, and none of us bother to turn and acknowledge the newcomer.

"Mrs. Forbes, hi," a familiar voice penetrates the room. I'm too numb to turn, but the voice continues, "Hi, Sybil." Tessa, Kurt's girlfriend, places a hand on my shoulder, unleashing an unexpected rush of visions. I glimpse her collaboration with someone she refers to as "mom."

The room's energy shifts, and when Tessa withdraws her hand, life returns to its eerie stillness. Mrs. Forbes acknowledges her presence with icy formality, questioning, "How are you holding up, Sybil?"

Swallowing my resentment, I reply, "I'm fine, thank you."

Her inquiry turns to the doctors, but Mrs. Forbes interjects, demanding a private conversation. Tessa exits, leaving a palpable tension in the air.

"Ethan never told me about her," Mrs. Forbes remarks, prompting me to shrug off the discomfort. "Probably because she's Kurt's girlfriend."

Mrs. Forbes shakes her head. "I never liked that Kurt. He was always too wild for Ethan, and I have no doubt they had something to do with him being here."

"I don't know, Mah," I admit, uncertainty clouding my thoughts.

She interrupts, revealing her awareness of the supernatural. "I know what you are, and I know what she is. I've always tried to shield Ethan from the supernatural, but these things have a way of revealing themselves."

Confused, I stammer, "Mrs. Forbes—"

"You're a hybrid witch, and she's a heretic," she declares, dropping a bombshell that leaves me breathless.

"I am the leader of my coven

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" she continues, her gaze piercing. "Ethan is currently stuck in the supernatural world with your great-grandmother."

"Mrs. Forbes, if you're a witch, then Ethan—"

"He's not a witch; he's a doppelganger," she discloses, shattering my understanding of Ethan's identity.

"I don't understand," I murmur, grappling with the sudden revelations.

Mrs. Forbes takes a deep breath, revealing Ethan's adoption due to her inability to conceive. "You see, Sybil, I could never have kids of my own due to my own screw-ups. My husband and I adopted him; his real parents died in a car crash. His mother chose him over herself."

I stare at Mrs. Forbes, trying to absorb the weight of her words, feeling the ground beneath me shift.

"I understand it's a lot to take in," she acknowledges, her eyes never leaving her son. "But, Sybil, you're the only one who can stop all this. You're the only one who can save him."

Overwhelmed, I confess, "I triggered it. Had I not tried to play hero, he wouldn't be here."

"Sybil, Tessa was the one to mess with the chain, not you. She was the one who spelled it so yours wouldn't work. It was the only way to get to you," Mrs. Forbes clarifies, unraveling a complex web of deceit.

Shocked, I struggle to comprehend. "No, Mah, it can't be. Why would she do this? She has no motive."

"Your great-grandmother wants to get out of the world of the dead, and when you killed yourself, you played into her trap. She's out now, roaming the streets with Ethan's spirit trapped in the supernatural world," Mrs. Forbes explains, dropping another bombshell.

Unsettled, I question, "But a vampire witch, how?"

"With a mother like Taylor, it's possible," she responds.

Confused and shaken, I squint my eyes. "Taylor?"

"Yes, your father's aunt," she affirms.

I reject the claim, chuckling in disbelief. "My father doesn't have an aunt. Grandpa was the only child."

"Ask your mother. Call her and hear what she has to say about it," Mrs. Forbes suggests, leaving me stunned by the intricate web of supernatural connections.

Ethan's life now hangs in the balance, tethered to the revelations that have upended my understanding of reality.

SYBIL

"It's nice to finally meet you, Sybil. You're very beautiful," says the witch who's been haunting my existence. I shoot her a cold glance.

"Sadly, I can't say the same. Let's just get this over and done with," I reply, teeth gritted.

"Follow me," she commands. I trail behind her until we reach a door, the atmosphere feeling eerily familiar. It hits me – this is the hospital from my recurring dreams, a place shrouded in darkness.

"What happened here?" I inquire as she opens the door.

"In the days of yore, this hospital stood as a beacon of healing, renowned for its excellence. Yet, the tale takes a dark turn in the annals of history. Your great-grandfather, driven by anguish or perhaps a quest for retribution, reduced this sanctuary to smoldering ashes.

In those fateful moments, I, heavy with child, sought solace within these walls. Tragically, negligence reigned supreme, and I bore witness to the loss of my unborn child. The weight of grief became an insurmountable burden, and in a frenzied outburst, my husband, fueled by despair, set ablaze the very structure that failed to protect our precious creation. The flames



devoured the once-hallowed halls, leaving nothing but scorched remnants of a once-thriving haven for the ailing.," she recounts. A bone-chilling reality descends, casting its shadow upon my consciousness. The spectral tendrils of truth intertwine with the threads of my dreams. The hospital that has haunted my slumber is not merely a figment of my imagination but a spectral prison, a desolate purgatory for souls ensnared in the snares of a long-forgotten tragedy. The ethereal cries of those abandoned linger in the air, echoing through the corridors of a once-vibrant institution, now condemned to an eternity of spectral unrest.

She offers me a seat, but I decline. "Fine. This is a mixture of doppelganger blood and Tessa's blood. It helps you transition properly into a hybrid and gives me access to your mind to see whatever you see."

"I'm not letting you into my head!" I protest.

"Sybil..."

"No! Find another way because I am not letting you inside my head!" I assert.

"Fine!" she snaps, hitting the table. "Now I have to mix this all over again."

"You don't have to. I need a little magic to split whatever you mixed in this into their respective ingredients," I grasp her arm,

feeling the pulse of her dark magic beneath my fingertips. As I absorb the essence of her power, a surge courses through me, unlocking visions of Ethan's predicament. Images flood my mind—a dark room, shadows dancing in a macabre ballet, and there he is, restrained, a captive to the malevolent forces at play.

She wrenches her arm away, shooting me a venomous glare. The connection fades, leaving an echo of her energy lingering within me. A shiver runs down my spine as the weight of the visions settles in. The urgency to free Ethan intensifies, fueled by the unsettling images etched in my mind.

The room, the chains, the palpable darkness—I must navigate this otherworldly maze to liberate him from the clutches of despair. The stakes are higher now, the path more treacherous. With newfound determination, I prepare to confront the looming shadows and retrieve Ethan from the abyss.

"Don't you ever do that again!" she warns.

"Of course," I reply. Facing her concoction, I weave a spell, the incantations flowing from my lips with an eerie cadence. The mystical words cast a veil over her senses, rendering her incapacitated. With her momentarily subdued, I seize the opportunity to delve into the recesses of her mind.

In the labyrinth of her thoughts, I uncover the hidden chamber where Ethan is ensnared. The revelation fuels my determination as I prepare to enact the next crucial step. My focus shifts to the mixture before me, a blend of E's blood and the herbs she assembled.

As the spell to separate the components unfolds, a surge of power courses through the room. Her awakening cuts through the mystic atmosphere, but the spell is already in motion. The contents of the bowl obey the ancient incantations

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and E's blood remains while hers spills out in a chaotic dance.

Compelled by necessity, I consume Ethan's blood. The reaction is immediate, an electric current coursing through my veins. My body convulses in response to the potent elixir, and with a final surge of energy, I collapse to the ground, my senses a maelstrom of sensations. The sacrifice made, the next phase awaits—rescuing Ethan from the shadowed depths that bind him.

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**LINDELWA**

I seize the opportunity, body-jumping into my great-granddaughter's form. Though I've always sought to resurrect my husband, I can't help but care for Sybil. She lies on the floor,

unconscious, leaving me uneasy. What spell did she cast in my absence? Attempting to probe her mind, I'm met with an inexplicable barrier. Is she more powerful than I anticipated? I wait until she stirs, concerned for her well-being.

"You collapsed," I inform her, observing her feigned smile. Despite my motives, I can't deny the familial connection. Sybil is a volatile force, teetering on the edge of self-destruction. Her power, immense for a 16-year-old, demands careful handling.

"Let's just get this over and done with," she declares, rising to her feet. Approaching a table with a map, she demands Ethan's picture. Handing her a photograph of my late husband, I question her intent.

"What are you going to do with his picture? You can't find him using a locator spell," I caution.

"Your husband never died," she discloses, placing his picture on the map. I react with disbelief.

"What do you mean he never died?"

"Your husband performed a body-jump spell with the help of a witch. He let them kill him while his spirit jumped into another body," she explains, pointing to the map, revealing his presence in our city.

"No! It's not possible. He would never do me like that," I protest.

"He clearly wanted nothing to do with you. The least you could do is respect his wishes," she retorts, her smug expression triggering my anger.

"I've done what you asked of me. Now I want Ethan," she demands.

"No," I reject her demand.

"You forget who I am or rather what I am. I know where he is, but I wanted to see whether you would really keep your end of the deal or not," she taunts, her words causing my blood to boil. I writhe in pain as she inflicts torment upon me, begging for mercy. Sybil relents only when urged by an unknown voice.

"Stop it, Sybil. She's not worth it," the voice advises, and she gradually relents.

"Honey, she will get the punishment she deserves, just not like this," her mother intervenes, pleading with Sybil.

"No, Mom. As long as she's alive, I will never find peace. No one will ever find peace," Sybil declares, and blood pours from my eyes as she unleashes her supernatural wrath.

"Sybil, baby, please," her mother pleads, and Sybil, in a moment of vulnerability, breaks down and cries. The intricate web of family dynamics and supernatural struggles unfolds, leaving us all entangled in the consequences of our choices.

## 1 MONTH LATER

## SYBIL

Lindelwa is finally confined to the prison she deserves – a realm where her malevolence cannot seep into our world. I should revel in this triumph, the expulsion of a malevolent force from our midst. Yet, a shroud of mixed emotions envelops me. Her insidious influence is severed, and her manipulative whispers silenced, but I cannot dismiss the profound toll this ordeal has exacted upon my existence.

The labyrinthine complexities of the past month unfolded in a symphony of chaos. The struggle was relentless, the stakes unfathomable, and in the end, I emerged battered but undefeated. My parents, architects of a well-woven deception, shielded me from expulsion, crafting an elaborate narrative to veil the true nature of my absence. The school corridors now hum with the dissonance of whispered speculations – tales of phantom pregnancies and clandestine procedures that dance around the truth I'm not quite ready to share.

Cassie, my resilient comrade, stands by my side, a testament to the enduring bonds forged amidst the chaos. We traverse the halls, and every gaze fixates upon me, the subject of conjecture and wild rumors. The whispers serve as a dissonant soundtrack

to my return, a harsh reminder that, despite the victory over Lindelwa, shadows of my recent struggles linger in the minds of my peers.

"Let them talk, friend," she says, linking her arm with mine. I manage a smile.

"It's okay. High school wouldn't be high school without the rumors," I reply, trying to console myself. This month has been the worst, but I'm coping. I don't have a choice, after all. We enter the class and take seats at the front, engaging in conversation.

"Mrs. E," a voice calls from behind me. I turn, not hearing that title in a while.

"Hi, Jaden," I say, acknowledging a boy from my class, your typical smart and cute jock, though he's not Ethan.

"Heard you and Mr. broke things off," he says, and my heart shatters. What happened, you ask? Let me walk you through our break up.

It was two days after he woke up from his slumber. He was fine, with his memory intact. I had been contemplating seeing him since his mother called me about his awakening, but fear gripped me. According to my understanding, Ethan lay in that hospital bed because of me, and had I not been in his life, he wouldn't have been caught up in my family's crossfire.

I walked into his room, finding him channel-hopping while pressing his phone aggressively.

"Hey," I greeted, and he smiled, opening his arms to me. However, I walked in and sat on the chair next to his bed.

"Everything okay, Thando?" he asked, frowning. Normally, I would have jumped at the opportunity of being in his arms again, but I couldn't. Not with what I was there to tell him. I took a deep breath.

"Is everything okay, Sybil? Talk to me, please. Did I do something to upset you?" he asked, concern etched on his face. Tears rolled down my cheeks.

"I can't do this anymore, Ethan," I said, wiping my tears.

"What do you mean, Sybil? What are you talking about, Chipmunk?" he asked, confused. I shook my head, my heart breaking.

"Ethan, I can't do this anymore. There can't be an 'us' anymore. I'm not right for you, and as long as I am in your life, your life will always be in danger. Me being with you puts a target on your back," I confessed.

"Me being a doppelganger puts a target on my back, Sybil, and not you," he argued, but I shook my head.

"Even so



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Ethan, things between us can never work. What if I harm you? Then what? Ethan, I love you too much to risk your life like I did." He placed his hand over mine, and I pulled away.

"This is for the best. Tomorrow, I'll drop your things off at your place and bring back your key. I love you, Ethan, and I always will," I said, walking out, or rather, running out.

"Sybil!" he shouted as I ran out. I bumped into his mother.

"Sybil," she called, but I just looked at her once and ran out, getting into my sister's car. I couldn't handle what I had done. Who the hell dumps the love of their life in a hospital bed because of her? I spent the rest of the day in bed crying my lungs out, with my mom and sister comforting me.

The next day, I took his things to his place and passed by the hospital. I was told he was in the shower, so I left his keys on the table and left before he could see me. I deleted his number and all our pictures on my phone, even though I still had those pictures in my cloud and on my laptop. I had his calls blocked and his number blocked everywhere.

When he was discharged, he came to my parents' house, but I asked them not to let him in. Imagine how that went. He barged into my room, shouting for me, with my father following behind, telling him to leave.

"So that's it? You get to say your piece and I don't? Is that who you are now, Sybil?" he yelled, holding back tears. His eyes were red, evidence that he had been crying. It broke my heart to see him like that.

"Leave my house, Ethan," my dad roared.

"Sybil, don't do this to us. Please, Chipmunk," he pleaded, tears rolling down his cheeks. I shook my head with tears of my own.

"Ethan, please leave. I don't want to see you," I said, trying to hide the pain in my voice but failing dismally.

"Come on, Ethan, you heard her," my dad said, pushing him out of my room. When I was sure they had left my door, I took a pillow, covered my face, and cried out loudly. The pain I felt at that moment was not one that could be healed easily. It was more painful than when I stuck a dagger in my heart. I spent the rest of the two weeks in my room, avoiding the outside world with my phone somewhere out of arm's reach. I couldn't allow myself to be tempted to call him.

That

's the story of E and me. I take a deep breath.

"Not that it's any of your business, but yes, it's over," I say, turning my head back to the front.

"Heard E packed his stuff and left," he says. I keep quiet, letting the tears roll down my cheeks.

"Nobody asked you, fool," says Cassie while brushing my back. How could E just up and leave? What about school? What about his family? His friends?

"Excuse me," I say, getting up and running to the restrooms. I enter an empty stall and allow the fresh tears to roll down my cheeks. It's been a month, and the wound is still fresh, as though it happened yesterday. I have never been this torn before. I cry until I hear the first bell. I get out, and there's a girl from the same grade as me, with whom I share language classes. "Hey," she says. I wave.

"Everything okay?" she asks. I nod and wash my face. My eyes are puffy, and I'm frustrated.

"Sit, I'll fix your face," she says. I look at her, frowning.

"You don't want everyone to think the rumors are right now," she says, smiling innocently. I sit on the bin, and she puts a little makeup on my face, making me look better than I did a few seconds ago. "I'm Syre," she says after shaking my hand.

"Sybil."

"You're a witch," She says after shaking my hand, I look at her  
"I'm a heretic"

ETHAN

"You the new guy?" says a girl behind me, her voice sweet and cute. Something about her reminds me of Sybil.

"Yeah, Ethan," I say, turning to her. She offers her hand.

"Ariana. So, what are you up to?" I chuckle and shrug.

"I'm going to wash my things in the laundry room... You?" She says, "During the week? I'm on my way to school." I nod.

"Nice to meet you, Ethan," she says, getting out of the elevator. I close the doors and head down, my phone rings in my pocket. It's mom.

"Hey mom," I say. "Hey baby, how are you? Are you settled in?" She asks all these questions at the same time.

"Mom, I'm ok, geez, it's been a month already," I say.

"But are you coping? When you left, things weren't ok, you weren't ok, baby. I'm worried about you," she says.

"The change of scenery is good. Here, there are no places to remind me of Sybil," I say, she breathes out loud enough for me to hear.

"Ethan, Sybil loves you. Despite everything that happened, she loves you," she says.

"I know mom, and I love her too," I say. "BUT?" She says.

"But she doesn't want me anymore. I can't keep begging to be in a person's life that doesn't want me in it to begin with, mom. Sybil did what she wanted to do, and I will respect that," I say.

"Ok. I didn't call to argue with you. I called to warn you, something bad is coming your way," she says, and I'm confused.

"What do you mean, mom?" "Something or someone bad is looking for you. If they haven't found you already, Ethan, just please be careful, honey, ok? Don't just trust anyone," she says, sounding almost terrified.

"Mom, you're scaring me," I say, and the lights in the laundry room start to flicker.

"I think you need to just come home so that I am able to protect you," she says. The lights haven't stopped flickering. One of them breaks... more like bursts, startling me. What is going on? What does mom mean?

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SYBIL

What's a heretic doing here? I mean, the last heretic I ever heard of was Tessa, but Tessa disappeared when I sent Lindelwa to the land where she belongs. Her and her granddaughter.

"What do you mean you're a heretic? The last living heretic I sent to the land of the dead," I say, getting up.

"We'll talk after school, ok?" she says, packing her kit up.

"Ethan needs your help, Sybil," she warns, walking out. I follow behind her, and I can't see her in the corridor. It's as if she just vanished. I walk to class trying to call E.

"Miss Adams, you are supposed to be in class," says our headmaster.

"Sir, I know, but I just had to make a quick phone call," I explain.

"Hand over the phone, Miss Adams. You will get it after school," he says. I look at him and perform a spell to make him forget I was ever in the halls at this hour. I run to class and sit down. At least our teacher isn't here yet. She walks in and greets everyone.

I get this weird vibe from her

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almost like she's a supernatural creature. HOW?

"I am Mrs. Elena Montez, and I am your new History teacher," she says, writing her name on the board. I've heard the surname before but where?

"Uhhm since it's already late in the year for an introduction, you guys will each introduce yourself to me as we go along. Maybe if I ask you a question or you have a question to ask me... something like that, ok?" she says, and we all nod.

"Great, so which chapter did your last teacher teach you guys?" she asks, leaning on the desk, opening her textbook.

"Mrs. Montez, I am Jaden, by the way. May I ask what happened to Mr. Pete?" he asks.

"I have no idea Jaden. I saw a post and applied, and now I'm here." "Heard he gave free marks to a certain student for sexual favors," says Jackson, and he and Jaden fist bump. God, these two are idiots.

"Even if he did, it's not any of your business nor is it part of your syllabus," says Mrs. Montez. "Everyone turn your books to chapter 10," she says, paging through her book.

"Evolution of humans. What can you guys tell me about what you have learned about evolution?" she says, looking around, and nobody raises a hand.

"You, Miss Adams. What can you tell us about the evolution of humans?" I look at her, how does she know me? Why did she pick me?

"I know that humans evolved from apes and stuff," I say.

"What is stuff, Miss Adams?" I shrug.

"I don't know, didn't really study ahead, Mrs. Montez," I say.

"If you want to pass my class, and this goes to all of you. Reading ahead is very important. We will have a class test every day before we start a new chapter based on the previous day's work," she says, and everyone starts complaining, making noise.

"So Mrs. Montez, what if the previous day was a holiday?" asks Jackson, and people, or rather his squad, starts laughing.

"Then we will see how to go about it. Until then, that's how things are going to go. Also, no noise in my class, and when I give you homework, I expect it to be done and sitting on my desk before I get to class. I will not be taking in any homework during my lesson and after my lesson. If you can't submit it in due time, I expect a valid reason as to why you were unable to do so. When I ask a question, I expect a real answer and not things like 'and stuff,'" she says, looking at me. I roll my eyes.

"If you guys respect me, then I see no problems between us," she says and then starts teaching us. At this moment, I feel like I'm back in primary. When we are done with class, she asks that I remain behind, and Cassie says we'll meet at the cafeteria.

"Please sit," she says, pointing at a chair and desk in front of her desk.



"May I ask what this is about?" I say, settling in the chair.

"It's not school-related. I just wanted to meet you properly, that's all," I look at her with a raised eyebrow. That's creepy if you ask me.

"No, don't even think about it that way. Our coven has heard a lot about you, and we would like you to help us put someone away into a prison," she says, and I swear I was never ready for this.

"Mrs. Montez..."

"Before you turn me down, Sybil, think about Ethan's life and how whatever decision you make now will affect him either in a good way or a negative way," she says, and my heart sinks to the bottom of my chest. Why can't these people just let me enjoy my youth? I'm only 16, for Christ's sake!

I step out into the corridor, trying to process Mrs. Montez's revelation. Pulling out my phone, I dial Ethan's number, hoping it remains unchanged. The ringing accelerates my heartbeat, leaving me uncertain about what to say.

"Sybil," he answers, sounding either shocked or upset. His plea for me to speak tugs at my emotions. He shouldn't be reaching out to me this way, considering everything that has happened. I manage to take a deep breath and respond.

"Hi, Ethan," I say, finding refuge in a bathroom cubicle, locking myself in.

"It's so good to hear your voice, Thando," he says, and my heart shatters. I'm the cause of his pain, the source of all his troubles. Danger follows him because of me.

"How are you?" I inquire.

"I know you didn't call me for small talk. Thando, just say the word, and I'll take the first flight back. I miss you so much, I miss us," he confesses. My eyes well up, and tears flow uncontrollably.

"Please don't do that, it's hard as it is," I plead.

"It doesn't have to be, Sybil. I can come back, and we'll pick up where we left off. Don't you miss me? Don't you love me anymore?" he asks, his words tearing at my heart.

"Ethan, your life is in danger. I need you to take care of yourself. Bye," I say, ending the call. He tries calling me back, but I reject his calls. I can't bear it. Desperate, I call my sister.

"Aren't you supposed to be in class?" she questions.

"Sibu, please come fetch me. I don't think I'll survive the whole day here," I plead through sobs.

"No

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Sybil! You cannot afford to fail. You've already missed out on a lot. Do this for Mom and Dad, little sister," she insists sternly.

"Sibu, I can't," I beg.

"If I find out that you bunked, I'll tell Mom," she warns. Ending the call, I'm left distraught. The voice of someone else interrupts my solitude.

"Sybil, are you in here?" a voice calls from outside. Not Cassie, but who could it be? I wipe my face and step out.

"You again," I mutter, finding the heretic.

"What do you want from me?" I question.

"You need me, not the other way around, Sybil," she asserts. I raise an eyebrow.

"You may be the strongest to ever live, but even you need help," she continues. I look at her blankly.

"Ariana, a very powerful witch, was said to be spotted roaming the streets. I believe you met her when you visited the supernatural world?" she asks, and I nod.

"Ariana was working with your grandmother when Ethan woke up brain dead. It was her doing," she reveals, leaving me speechless.

"Ariana is after our coven, and she needs Ethan's blood—all of it—to get to us. She needs both doppelgangers to die to suck us off our magic," she explains.

"No, Ariana wouldn't work with my grandmother. She wouldn't," I insist.

"Sybil, Ariana and your great-grandmother go way back; they are friends. But when Ariana's body was burnt, she jumped into a young witch's body, and now she's trapped in that body for the rest of her life," she discloses, leaving me with more questions than answers.

"Why?" I ask.

"Power. If both doppelgangers meet their demise, and she absorbs the essence of my coven's magic, she would possess enough supernatural energy to obliterate the barriers of the supernatural prison." she reveals, unraveling a dark and dangerous plot.

Ugh, seriously, I'm just 16. I should be knee-deep in crushes, sneaking out to meet a cute boy, and maybe rebelling a bit at home. Bunking classes to chill with a boyfriend? Totally the dream. But no, life's got different plans for me. Instead of daydreaming about lovey-dovey stuff, it's like the entire world decided to dump its problems on my shoulders. And guess what? It just keeps piling up! When do I get a break from all this drama? It's like the universe is on a mission to make my teenage years the most chaotic ever. Can't catch a break, can I?

"So, what do you want me to do?" I ask, rolling my eyes.

"One of the doppelgangers has to die, rendering their blood useless," she says. I chuckle, "Won't change the fact that they're doppelgangers, though."

"Both their blood is pure, Sybil, and as long as their blood is pure, then they are able to get what they want," she explains. I'm tired, drained even by all this drama. I need a break!

"If one of them died, it would cause an imbalance to nature, would it not?" I ask, and she shakes her head.

"Doppelgangers are nature's mistake," I chuckle, cutting her off, "Nature makes no mistakes, though." She looks at me annoyed.

"So I should kill your boyfriend and get it over with?" she asks.

"Look! Ethan is innocent; he plays no part in this. I will do whatever you ask me just so he lives and is not affected by any of this," I assure. She looks at me with doubt.

"I always keep my end of the deal," I say. She breathes out.

"Meet me at this place tonight," she says, shoving a paper in my hand. "6 pm sharp. Don't be late," she says sternly and walks away. Wow!

I open the paper, and the address leads to some kind of sacred ground for witches. Apparently, there was a witch massacre years ago that claimed about 100 lives of the most powerful witch coven to ever exist at that time. Their magic still lingers on, as their bones were never consecrated. You can imagine the potent energy present on that land.

Deciding to head back to class, I resolve to give it my best shot. After school, I take a taxi straight home, leaving Cassie to mingle. Leli is in the kitchen when I arrive. I greet her, and she responds. I sit on the high chair; she's cooking with her back turned to me.

"If you do decide to do this

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know that you're risking your life. You might end up getting trapped in a prison world, or you might even die," she says, still not looking at me.

"Leli, what are you talking about?" I ask, confused.

"Turn your boyfriend; it will make his blood useless," she says, turning to me. "As long as both of them are alive, they will always have a target on their back," she says, going back to the stove.

"But Leli, he'll still be a doppelganger," I say.

"Yes, but he will be dead; his blood will be useless. That's how we saved your mother and Mona back then," I look at her and then lay my head on the counter. I'm drained.

My brother walks in, greeting. I wave with my head still on the counter. He touches my shoulder, and it feels like a wave impulse is sent to every nerve in my body. I see images flashing—thunder strikes, floods—and the minute he removes his hand, it all goes away. I raise my head.

"What the hell was that?" we say in unison. He shrugs, and so do I.

"What?" Leli asks turning to both of us.

"I... I don't know how to explain it; he touched me, and I started seeing things, floods, thunder... I don't know," I explain, still in shock.



"Your brother is the key to this whole thing," she says. We look at her like she just said something crazy... Actually, she did just say something crazy.

"Key to what?" he asks still confused.

"You need him in order for the spell they want you to perform to work," she says, and we look at her like she just said something unbelievable.

"I don't understand," I say.

"What spell?" he asks at the same time as me.

"You and your brother are bound by blood. Your bond is strong, and your magic is stronger together as you two are the same. In order for the spell you want to perform to work, you need him to keep you alive. You need him to have a foothold in this world. His magic will keep you alive and protected from whatever evil you will encounter," she explains, but it all sounds like Greek. We are even more confused than before.

"Sybil, the place you're supposed to go to later has enough magic. Yes, you've transitioned, but you're still a syphon witch, and they need you to syphon the magic on that land to save them. A witch can never carry that much power. You will die. It will consume you until you implode."

ETHAN

Sybil's left me in a bewildered daze. What just happened? How am I in danger? You'd think I'd be accustomed to the peculiarities surrounding me, being in love with a witch and all. But it still manages to catch me off guard. The flickering lights, which had been dancing mysteriously, have abruptly ceased.

"That's weird," I mutter to myself. The flickering lights halt the moment Sybil calls. I mechanically throw my clothes into the washing machine, pressing buttons without much thought. In an attempt to divert my attention, I reach out to old friends, but my efforts lead me back to conversations with Sybil. As I revisit those exchanges, I find myself contemplating if my love for her will ever fade. She's my everything, and I can't fathom how fortunate I am to have her in my life. Locking my phone, Sybil's picture graces the screen. She's stunning.

"Hey." I jump as someone walks in.

"Hi," I respond.

"Girlfriend?" the newcomer points at my phone on the table.

"Sort of," I reply, and he chuckles at my vague response.

"I'm Caleb," he introduces himself, offering a hand.

"Ethan," I say.

"So, how long have you two been together?" he inquires.

I shrug my shoulders. "About a year," I mention, thoughts drifting to Sybil. "But she dumped me a month ago."

"Ouch," Caleb sympathizes.

"Sorry," I force a smile.

"What's up with you?" I ask, attempting to shift the conversation.

Caleb shrugs. "I don't do relationships, bruh. Girls mess a guy up, you know?"

I can't help but chuckle, acknowledging his point. Relationships are different, especially with Sybil.

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SYBIL

The logic in Leli's words resonates with me, but the idea of putting such a strain on my little brother troubles me. I release a sigh at the thought.

"Let's go down to the basement," Leli suggests.

My little brother interjects, warning us about Dad's disapproval. We all acknowledge that he wouldn't approve.

"But what choice do we have?" I respond, and he merely shrugs as we follow our grandmother.

"So, what should we do?" I inquire as we descend into the basement, uncertain of the path that lies ahead.

As we enter the basement, I can't help but voice my question.

"What should we do?" I ask.

Leli closes her eyes, and suddenly, a book falls off the shelf, startling both of us. It's an eerie occurrence. We exchange glances and approach the fallen book together. Leli places it on the table, uttering an incantation. The book responds by opening up, and its pages start flipping by themselves until they come to an abrupt stop.

I gaze at the ancient pages, sensing an aura of mystique emanating from them. The atmosphere in the basement becomes charged with an otherworldly energy, and I feel a mixture of excitement and trepidation.

"What is this spell?" I inquire, my curiosity piqued.

Leli, with a sense of gravity in her expression, explains, "This is a spell that will link you to your brother."

I exchange a glance with my brother, uncertainty lingering in the air. The basement, filled with the scent of old parchment and magic, becomes a place of both mystery and necessity.

"But what about the visions we had when we touched?" I express my concern.

Leli sighs

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"Not everything you see is meant for you to stop or intervene in. But what you saw is something we will need to unlock."

The ancient pages seem to hold secrets, waiting to be unveiled. My brother and I prepare ourselves for the connection that Leli is about to create between us, binding us in a magical circle. As the incantations begin, the basement becomes a sanctuary of mystical energies, and I can sense the threads of magic weaving a connection between my brother and me. The air crackles with anticipation.

When we snap out of it, a subtle but profound change has occurred. The unspoken bond between us feels stronger, and I wonder about the implications of this newfound connection.

"Did it work?" Leli asks, her eyes searching for confirmation.

"There's only one way to find out," I say, poking my finger, and my brother reacts with a small cry.

"It worked," he affirms, sucking his finger.

The basement, once shrouded in secrecy, now stands witness to the evidence of our intertwined fates. The ancient pages of the spell book, having played their part in the intricate dance of magic, rest still on the table. In the quietude of the

underground chamber, my brother and I, bound by the unseen threads of a mystical connection, stand prepared for the uncertain path that lies ahead.

"So what now?" he asks.

"You call your teacher and meet her where she requested," Leli responds.

"And what happens with Ethan?" I ask.

"Ethan will be fine," Leli says. I don't know how to feel about what she's saying, but what choice do I have?

"Call Elena Montez, Sybil, and go meet her," she instructs.

I nod and walk out, bumping into Mom.

"Hello kiddo," she says.

"Hey, Mom," I reply with a fake smile.

"You're home early," she observes, giving me a look like she's trying to read me.

"Sybil Thandoluhle Adams, what's going on?" she demands, displaying her typical dramatic flair.

"Mom, no need to be dramatic over this," I say, hoping to calm her down.

"Dramatic? Your sister called me worried about you, Thando. What am I supposed to think?" she insists.

I shrug. "Sibu overreacted over nothing. Mom, I'm fine. There's just some witch business I need to take care of."

I try to walk past her, but she grabs my arm.

"You cannot keep risking your life like this, Thandoluhle," she warns, using my second name. Anelisa Adams doesn't yell or shout, but she can be stern.

"Mom, I signed up for all this the minute you gave birth to me."

"Sybil, you're only 16. You shouldn't have these kinds of responsibilities at all. You're a child!"

"One with massive power. One who's part hybrid and part witch," I retort.

She sighs, acknowledging the truth in my argument.

-SYBIL

"I know Mom will be worried sick, but I have to save my boyfriend. Despite all that's happened, E is my boyfriend, and I care about him a lot. I sigh at the thought of him. I go to the location, and they are already waiting for me.

"I'm glad you came, Sybil," she says.

I chuckle sarcastically. "You left me no choice. What do you need?" I say, bored.

"This ground we're on is sacred; lots of people died here, so we need you to give back their magic to us," the woman explains.

"Give back their magic? Why didn't you consecrate their bones or something?" I question, looking at her.

She takes a deep breath and lets it out. "With what bones, Sybil? We need you to syphon up the magic here on these grounds and find a way to get it back to us."

I sigh. "So what? I suck in the magic, and then the next thing I implode? We all know what happens when a witch sucks in that much power," I remark.

She looks at me, walking over and putting a hand on my shoulder. "You know how the harvest ritual is done, right? We



can do it like that. Have the magic flow from you to each one of us.”

I chuckle. “You must think I’m stupid. I have to die for that to happen.”

“But that’s the beauty of it, Sybil. You don’t die. You are the definition of immortal,” she assures.

I pop my eyes out. “So I’m supposed to risk my life? Death for me is different compared to the death you guys experience. If I died again, havoc would occur. People would die!” I explain, not that I’m special, but if I died, there’d be a way to free my great-grandmother from her prison.

“So what do you suggest?” she asks.

I look at her and shrug my shoulders. “We need to send Ariana back where she belongs, or your boyfriend will die together with his doppelganger, and Ariana will be unstoppable.”

I take a deep breath and let it out. I look at Syre. “I’m not doing any harvest ritual, but this is what will happen. The magic here is too much for one person, it’s way too much for even two or three, so I will need 12 people to join me in the circle after I’ve consumed the magic so that we can do a splitting transference spell. I need the most powerful witches of your coven, and syphon witches cannot participate; else, a lot could go wrong.”

They nod and pick the 12 people I requested. I create a circle that will keep the magic within us all. I am hoping Ntando can handle this; else, we are screwed! I place my hand on the ground and start chanting to take in the magic and store it between my brother and me. I can literally feel it consuming me. It's a lot more than I had anticipated. I suck it into my system until it's all finished, and I collapse to the ground."

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-SYRE

Sybil falling was never accounted for in our plans. She cannot die; otherwise

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we will never get rid of witch Ariana. I try waking her, but she doesn't respond.

"What's wrong with her?" Cory asks.

"The magic was too much even for her," I explain. It's pretty obvious what happened, but we don't register information the same way.

“Is she dead?” My mother, Aria, asks. She is my great-grandmother’s granddaughter and is also a heretic. Our coven has a lot of heretics for some reason, which is weird considering we originated from witches. I walk to Sybil and try chanting a wake-up spell, but that fails too. I touch her forehead, and she’s burning hot.

“What happens now?” I ask, and nobody responds. The ground begins to shake, and red rain starts pouring. Sybil begins to cough, reminding us of her presence. She gets up on her feet.

“Are you okay? What’s going on?”

“Nobody should have this amount of power; it causes an imbalance. We need to perform the spell now,” she demands, and we all get into a circle, holding hands. She begins chanting, and we chant with her. The magic flows into our systems. It’s a lot, but it will hopefully be enough, and we will be able to hold so much magic. When the spell is complete, the rain stops, and the sky clears.

“I’ve played my part. You’re on your own from here,” she says, walking away.

“Sybil, wait,” my mom says, and she stops in her tracks.

“We need you to locate Ariana for us. You’re the only one strong enough to. Please find her,” I add, hoping we’re not asking too much of her.

“After this, we are done! You go back wherever you came from, and no harm comes to Ethan or his Doppelganger!” Sybil insists.

I shake my head. “One of the doppelganger’s blood needs to be useless, Sybil.”

Mom shoots me a look. We all know they are an imbalance of nature and should not exist. As long as both are alive, they’ll always have a target on their back.

-SYBIL

Fatigue and frustration weigh heavily on me as the whole doppelganger situation dominates my thoughts. If it were within my control, I'd eliminate both of them, freeing myself from the constant turmoil surrounding their existence. I abandon them and head straight home, seeking solace.

Upon my arrival, I discover my brother lying in bed, his energy drained from the recent events. I turn to Leli for reassurance.

"Leli, is he okay?" I inquire, and she glances up, offering a nod.

"He's fine, just worn out. His body isn't accustomed to handling such power," she explains, attempting to ease my concern.

I chuckle, anticipating our mother's likely disapproval of the chaotic situation.

"Mom can't possibly be happy about it."

As if on cue, my parents enter the room, Mom immediately expressing relief at my return.

"Sybil, thank goodness you're back. Are you okay?" Mom asks, holding me at arm's length, her eyes scrutinizing my well-being. I can't help but chuckle at her dramatic concern.

"Mom, I'm fine. I'm just worried about Ntando."

Dad, with his imposing presence, demands an explanation for Ntando's condition.

“What happened to him?” he grumbles in his alpha voice.

“You might want to sit down for this one,” Leli suggests, indicating the chair in Ntando’s room. Dad settles on it with a sceptical air.

“Well?” he prompts, directing his gaze between Leli and me.

“I was trying to save Ethan and his doppelganger from being sacrificed,” I confess, interrupting Leli's attempt to speak. Dad fixes me with a firm stare.

“What are you talking about? What is she talking about?” he demands, his voice unwavering.

“Ethan is a doppelganger. His other self is in South Africa. Remember Ariana, the witch locked in a prison world? She got out, seeking revenge and power. Another coven sought my help to draw enough magic to send her back to a prison.”

Dad scrutinizes me, seemingly doubting my every word. I proceed to clarify.

“I needed Ntando’s help to conjure enough magic. Our bloodline is the same, and we are similar, except he’s not a syphon witch like me.” Understanding slowly dawns on Dad as he nods.

“You’re awake, why isn’t he?” he questions, and I shrug, looking at Leli for an explanation.

“The spell was too draining for Ntando; he’s not experienced with magic, so he can only hold so much,” Leli explains, and Dad nods.

“And there’s nothing you can do to wake my son up?” he asks, and Leli shakes her head.

“We’ll wait for him to wake up on his own,” she reassures calmly. Patience becomes our only option as we wait for Ntando to recover.

“Let's leave him to rest,” Leli suggests, but Mom vehemently opposes the idea.

“I’m not leaving my son alone. No more magic, no more spells, no more nothing! I can't keep living like this, worried that I might lose a child due to magic. It's not fair, Mom,” Mom declares, her voice breaking. I realize she is not just worried; she is deeply hurt.

“Lisa,” Mom shakes her head, but she is not swayed.

“No, Mom! These kids are done with magic. I don’t care who says what. I’ve been quiet for way too long, sat back and let you guys do as you please, but I’m done. This, this is enough now. If I ever see or hear that any of you were practicing or performing or whatever, I will get rid of the basement

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and that includes everything in there,” I plead with my eyes, hoping for a hint of jest, but Mom remains resolute. Dad, putting his arm around my shoulder, guides me out.

“She’s just sad; she’ll come around,” he assures, though I sense his uncertainty. He, too, wishes for a different outcome.

“Yeah, sure,” I respond, disappointment evident in my voice.

“May I please go to my room?” I request, and he nods, granting me permission. I retreat to my room, seeking refuge. A shower serves as a brief escape, providing a temporary reprieve from the chaos. I hope, moving forward, I can distance myself from the responsibilities tied to Ethan. He shouldn’t be my burden; I simply want him safe. The yearning for his presence intensifies, and I miss every aspect of him. Exhausted, I succumb to a deep nap.

Awakened by my phone, it's Cassie on the line.

“Babe,” she exclaims, radiating liveliness.

“Hey,” I respond.

“You okay?” she inquires, and I sigh, uncertain of my emotional state.

“I don’t know, friend. I miss him,” I admit, laying bare my feelings.



"It's okay to miss him, Syb," she reassures in a comforting tone.

"I dumped him, Cas, it's my fault," I confess. She sighs, understanding the weight of my words.

"And you think he wouldn't take you back?" she questions.

I shrug, uncertain of his intentions. "I don't know. Maybe he would, or maybe he wouldn't," I speculate.

She chuckles sarcastically.

"Ethan loves you and would practically do anything for you. Just talk to him; things are okay now, right?" she suggests. I shrug again, questioning the reality of the situation.

"I don't know, Cas, as long as he's with me, he's a weakness. He will always have a target on his back because of me." I can almost envision Cassie shaking her head in disbelief.

"Just call him," she urges. We converse for a while before ending the call. Deciding to freshen up, I head to the bathroom to brush my teeth and wash my face. As I make my way to Ntando's room to check on him, I find him engrossed in his phone. Taking a seat beside him, I initiate a conversation.

"You okay?" He nods, a smile breaking through.

"Yeah, I'm great. You?" I offer a nonchalant shrug.

“I was mostly worried about you, but I’m glad you're awake now,” I say, nudging him. His smile widens.

“Everything worked?” He inquires, and I nod.

“Yeah, it did, at least I hope so.”

Maybe Cassie is onto something. Perhaps I should give him a call. I dial his number, and it rings unanswered, leading to voicemail. If he were in danger, I would sense it; he's likely avoiding my calls, a response I can't blame him for after what I've done. Attempting once more, the ringing persists until I reach his voicemail. I decide to let him be and try to focus on some schoolwork. If I pass, it will be by God's will. An hour later, my phone rings, and it's him. I answer with shaky hands.

"Hey Chipmunk," he greets as soon as I answer. Why did he have to use that nickname?

"Sybil, I know you're there, please say something," he pleads, pulling me back to reality, as I hadn't realized how silent I'd become.

"Ethan," I say with a groggy voice, tears welling up and clouding my eyes. God, I've missed his voice.

"How are you, Chipmunk?" Why does he have to act so civil and normal? I don't need this. Not now.

"I miss you," I say, letting the tears roll down my cheeks.

"God, I miss you so much," I add, with a mix of chuckles and cries.

“What do you miss, Chipmunk?” His voice, huskier than usual, does something to me. I'm out here crying, and he still has the nerve to ask such questions.

“I miss you, I miss your scent, I miss your smile, I miss the way you touch me, I miss all of it, Ethan,” I admit, my emotions laid bare.

He chuckles, his voice carrying a huskier tone. Is he feeling amorous or emotional?

“I miss you too, Sybil Thandoluhle Adams,” he confesses, and it's as if he opened the floodgates. I start wailing, even hiccuping.

“Say the word, Sybil, and I'll come back,” he pleads, his tone tugging at my emotions.

“I can't, E. I want to so badly, but I can't. You're not safe as long as we are together,” I try to explain, knowing he may not accept it.

“Sybil,” I shake my head

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attempting to halt the tears but failing.

“E, your safety means everything to me. As long as you're a doppelganger and I'm a tribrid, your life will always be in

danger,” I say, hoping he understands but praying he challenges me.

“Then turn me. Make my blood useless,” he says with determination, almost convincing me.

“I can't do that to you and your family, Ethan. Turning you means you die, and if you die now, it means you can never reciprocate,” I explain with a heavy sigh. I don't want him to die without a version of him, cute and alive. It would be unfair.

“I don't care if it means I get to be with you,” he declares, and I can picture him saying all these things. This guy does things to me.

“Ethan, please,” I plead.

“No, Thandoluhle. This is madness!” he sighs, being difficult for no apparent reason. I'm trying to keep him safe, and he's not having any of it.

“You're being unfair, Ethan,” he chuckles.

“What's unfair is you not granting me my wish after everything that's happened. What's not fair is you choosing my life over yours. You're being unfair, Sybil. You made choices for me, for my life, without thinking how those choices would affect me,” he argues, sounding on the verge of tears.

“Sybil, I love you,” my breath hitches. I've longed to hear him say those words again, craving them for as long as I can remember.

“I did what I had to do for you, Ethan, for your safety. All I ever thought about was you and your feelings,” he chuckles.

“Me and my feelings?” he mocks.

“If you did, then you would have considered how ending things without reason was going to affect me. You were unfair, you were selfish,” he fires at me, rendering me weak and hopeless. I have no comeback.

“I had a choice to make, and if that choice meant you hating me, then so be it. All I've ever done was to keep you safe and out of harm's way. CRUCIFY ME FOR LOVING YOU SO MUCH!” I yell the last part; all this is too much for us to be having it over the phone.

“I can't hate you even if I wanted to. I cannot crucify you for anything, Sybil. You have a hold on me, over my heart. I don't care what happened between us, but I don't want us to end. Not now, not like this,” he says, sounding defeated. I'm drained.

“So what do you suggest, Ethan? Because I'm all out of options here,” I say and sigh.

“I want to be with you, and I will stop at nothing, just as long as I get to be with you, Sybil Adams. That is only if you want to be with me too.”

What do I do now? What do I even say to him?

-ANELISA

As a mother, one of the little things you pray for is that your daughter never has to carry a burden greater than her own strength. Sybil didn't ask to be born, none of us did, but we are here today, and my babies have it the worst, especially Sybil. Yes, Kayla was the first of their kind, but Sybil is born of pure witch blood and hybrid blood, unlike Sibü. Sibü is my husband's and my doppelganger's daughter, and unlike me, her mother was not born of a witch. What hurts the most is watching her go through all of this, and I am beyond clueless. I don't know anything about what she's going through, other than the research I've done and what Nelly has taught me over the years, but even that is not enough. I cannot protect her from herself, and that frustrates me more than anything. I throw myself on the bed, and my husband walks out of the shower with a towel around his torso. God damn, he's fine! He walks up to me.

"SweetLips," he says, and I give a faint smile looking up at him. He cups my cheeks.

"There's nothing you can do. This is their lives and will forever be their lives," he says. I shake my head.

"They weren't supposed to be born. We shouldn't have conceived," I say, and he looks at me.



“Now you're just being crazy!” he says and walks away from me to lotion his body.

“Ahlume, we were warned not to conceive. Your grandmother did say that our child would have to be a sacrifice,” he doesn't respond; I know he's mad at me for saying what I just said.

“Ace,” he looks at me in the mirror; he's fully naked. Such a distraction.

“I shouldn't have said that, but look at what they are facing and tell me that you don't feel the same way,” I say, and he pours lotion into his hands.

“They are here now, Anelisa, and all we can do as their parents is to support them and help them when they need our help. We cannot live their lives for them! This is their fate, and we cannot change it,” he says, then continues lotioning his body. I raise my hands up in defeat and return to the bed. He turns to me and walks towards me.

“SweetLips...” I cut him off.

“She's unhappy, Ahlume,” I say with my voice failing me. I've never seen my daughter this unhappy. Sybil took both mine and her father's personality; she's humble and doesn't talk much, not out there like the rest of her siblings.

“What do you suggest we do, SweetLips? I'm all out of options,” he says. I shrug.

“I don’t know, let's try and cheer her up maybe. Make her a sweet sixteen,” I suggest, and he chuckles, pulling me to my feet.

“If you think that will cheer her

then we’ll do just that,” he says and kisses my forehead.

“I hate seeing you this distracted when I should be your distraction,” he says, making me look up at him, my arms wrapped around his waist.

“You are a distraction,” I say with a naughty smile, and he gives me that naughty smile of his, wiggling his eyebrows at me.

“How about I distract you, then?” he says, pushing me back on the bed. I smile.

“I love the sound of that,” he bends down to kiss me, but his phone rings, disturbing us. He doesn’t stop kissing me until I break the kiss.

“Answer it; it could be the company or Siby,” I say, and he gets off me, annoyed, walking to the table. He looks at it before answering.

“Ahlumile, this had better be good,” he says, really annoyed. I chuckle. He is so sexy! His dick is hard. I walk over to him, and he puts his phone on speaker.

“Anelisa’s here,” he says.

“Hey sister. How are you?” I giggle.

“Hey brother. I’m coping, and how are you?” I ask.

“Great, we’re in town, and we were hoping we could do something as a family,” he suggests, and I look at my husband.

“Your timing is perfect. Your sister-in-law wants to throw Sybil a sweet sixteen,” Ahlume says.

“It’s Sybil’s birthday?” he asks, stunned.

“Was,” I say.

“Oh, she must be so mad at me. Organize everything and tell me the time and venue, okay? Tomorrow I’ll pick her up from school,” he says.

“She would love that, and no, she’s not mad at you. It’s just been busy, and it slipped our minds,” I say.

“You guys forgot her birthday?” he asks, shocked.

“NO! We just didn’t celebrate it, that’s all,” Ahlume defends.

“Listen, bro, we were in the middle of something. See you tomorrow,” he says and ends the call.

-SYBIL

"So, did you call him?" Cassie asks as soon as we get out of the class; it's break time.

"Yes, I did," I reply.

She looks at me expectantly. "And?"

I shrug, feeling a mix of emotions. "We spoke, and we both want to get back together."

She screams excitedly, and I look at her. "So, it's official?"

I shake my head. "I chickened out. I can't be with him, Cassie. His life will be in danger."

She rolls her eyes. "You keep sabotaging your own happiness here, Sybil. Ethan is not in any danger!"

I sigh. "I can't do this with you!"

I say and start eating my food. "Fine, the conversation dropped. So, there's this guy," she says.

I chuckle. "Which one?"

She laughs. "Oh honey. It's the same one this time around. It's still Dylan."

I smile. "Mhhh... so?"

She smiles. "We're officially dating."

I smile and hug her. "That's great, babe," I say, breaking the hug.

"Yeah. Thanks, babe."

We converse about this new boyfriend of hers, and then soon it's back to class. The day ends quicker than expected, thank God. As we walk out, I see my uncle standing outside his car looking like a blesser. I run to him, and he picks me up, spinning me around.

"Hello, Sybil," he says, putting me down.

"What are you doing here? When did you get here?" I can't even hide my excitement.

"I'm here on business, but I had to come and take my niece out for lunch. I landed last night," he says.

"I have to, uhhm, call Sibu and tell her not to bother fetching me then," I say, and he chuckles.

"No need. I already told her. So where do you want to eat?" He asks, opening the door for me.

"The most expensive restaurant," I say, and he chuckles.

"That paper bag is yours; I hope you're still collecting," he says as I pick up the paper bag. I have a collection of these rare stones; he got me into collecting them.

“Of course, I still collect. Thank you so much, uncle,” I say after seeing the new addition to my collection.

“You are welcome. Got that at this other museum. Apparently, it's said to have magic powers or something,” he says, and I laugh.

“Yeah right, uncle. Those kinds of stones don't exist anymore,” I say, and he chuckles.

“Are you sure about that?” He says, pointing at the rock on my hand. It turns pink.

“What just happened?” I ask, and he shrugs.

“You happened,” he says.

“How? I mean

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this shouldn't happen,” I say.

He shrugs. “Well, it changes colors when you hold it,” he says, taking the stone from me, and it goes back to being grey.

“See?” I am beyond speechless.

“Mile, this is the best birthday gift ever,” I say, kissing his cheek, and he chuckles.

“You are welcome, my angel,” he says.

“Where’s aunt?” I finally ask, realizing I didn’t bother asking about his family. He married himself a lovely Indian lady from back in varsity. They have a son named Terrence.

“She’s at the hotel sleeping, and your cousin is at school,” he says.

“He must be grown now,” I say, and he chuckles.

“You have no idea. He’s a handful,” he says, and I laugh.

“How are you? Your father’s been keeping me up to date with what's been happening,” he asks, and I sigh.

“So much has happened that I don’t even know how to feel anymore. At some point, I felt numb to everything, and then I found myself back to having emotions over everything. Uncle, this baggage is too much for me to handle. I shouldn’t be going through any of this. I’m only 16, and having to drag Ntando into this is the worst thing about all this,” I explain, and he looks at me for a while and parks the car. He walks out to open my door for me. I get out, and he locks the car. We walk into the restaurant and are allocated to a table for two. We sit down, and they bring us menus.

“We are never given baggage we can't handle, baby,” he says, and I sigh.

“It doesn’t feel like it for me. I swear I’m constantly being tested about how far it will take before I break,” I say, and he pulls my hand to him.

“Even so, suicide is not the answer. You scared us, my angel when you attempted killing yourself. We love you and we care about you. We want our old Sybil back and not this powerful witch we don’t know,” he says, and I shrug, pulling my hand away from his.

“It's not easy. I can't be happy until I’ve served my purpose,” I explain, and he shakes his head.

“You can't say that, Sybil. Your purpose is to be your age and to enjoy your life as you should. Yes, you’re a powerful witch, and there's nothing any of us can do about it, but baby, live. Live your life while being the witch that you are,” he says. I just nod.



-SYBIL

"I'm happy to have my uncle here. I missed him. Yes, I have my mom and dad, but sometimes it just feels like they don't understand, and Uncle Ahlumile understands me more than they or Sibu ever will.

"Uncle Mile, please," I say, trying to dismiss this conversation.

"Sybil, you know we all care about you and we hate seeing you go through all of this. You only just turned 16," he says, or more like pleads.

"It's only going to get worse. There's nothing I can do, uncle; this is who I am," I explain.

"And your grandma can't suppress it like they did with your mom?" He asks, and I shrug.

"It was easier to suppress it with Mom because she is also a doppelganger. But with me, I'm a Tribid, so no, that can't happen. And even if it were to be suppressed, I'm a syphon witch, so automatically I can syphon my vampire and wolf nature," I say, and he lets out a sigh.

"That's hectic," he says, and I shrug my shoulders because what else can I say.

“And what about Ethan?” He asks, and I shrug, sipping on my drink. I feel his eyes piercing on me.

“I ended things,” I say, avoiding eye contact at all costs.

“Why would you do that?” He asks, sounding really shocked, and I keep quiet. The waiter brings my food.

“Sybil,” he says, and I look at him.

“It was to protect him, Mile. As long as he is with me, then his life is always going to be in danger,” I say.

“Oh, and on top of that, he’s a doppelganger, so you can imagine how that will go,” I say, and he eyes me bored.

“Come up with a better excuse. You can keep him safe more than anyone else ever could, Sybil! You’re a Tribid, the most powerful being there is and ever will be. You're the only one that can keep the guy safe, Sybil!” He scolds. I let out a sigh.

“This is why I don’t tell you other things,” I say, rolling my eyes.

“Roll those eyes all you want, but you know I’m right, Sybil! You love the guy, and he loves you.”

“Mile, this is not why we're here. My relationship with Ethan is over, and nothing you say will change it,” I say dismissively. He chuckles.

“Oh is it now?” He says challenging, and I look up at him.

“What do you mean?” I ask, and he shrugs with that annoying smile of his.

“All I’m saying is that you made a mistake!” He says dismissively. I ignore him and continue eating.

“How's school?” He chuckles.

“School sucks. One of my teachers is a witch, and she blackmailed me into performing a spell for her and her coven,” I say. He chuckles.

“Your life is too complicated. So how did she blackmail you?” I look at him, and he chuckles.

“Ethan? Damn!” I nod.

“See why he and I can't be together,” I say, and he rolls his eyes.

“Your relationship is over, but it changes nothing because you will always rescue him!” He says, and I don’t even argue because he’s right. Why am I so easily manipulated?

When we finish lunch, he drives us to my parents' house, and my siblings are both back while mom and dad are still not home.

“Where are the parents?” I ask Sibü, and she shrugs.

“Who knows? Been trying to call them, and none of them are answering,” she says so carelessly.

“And you didn’t think to call their offices?” I ask because I’m mainly just worried about them.

“Those people are grown; they can protect themselves, so chill, little sis!” Kayla says so calmly.

“I think one of us would feel it if something had happened to any of them. Chill,” Mile says. I just look at them and leave them in the lounge to go change into something more comfortable. I have messages and missed calls from Ethan, nothing new there.

“Sybil,” someone says behind me. I don’t want to turn because then this voice I’m hearing will be more than just a dream. His cologne hasn’t changed, I can't believe he’s really here. What's he doing here?

-ETHAN

“I’m miserable without her; my life is not the same. I’m not coping in my studies and in sports. Life is just an endless nightmare. I don’t even get why she won’t take me back, especially since she’s the one who dumped me for no reason.

My love for Sybil is one I cannot put into words; it's suffocating, it makes me act without thinking, and it consumes me. I’ve

never cheated on her; other girls don't faze me one single bit. One would swear she put a spell on me because I really cannot look at another girl, let alone see another girl the way I see her. It's been a day or so since we last spoke, and no, I haven't given up. I've been calling and texting, and she's been ignoring me throughout. I'm done with tests, so now I'm on my way to see her. I talk to Siby, her sister, and she helps me get into her home. I don't know what to expect at this point. I'm scared, if anything.

She walks in and changes into her sweatpants and a loose t-shirt. I walk out of the bathroom, and she's facing the other side. God, I've missed her so much. I want to pull her into my arms and never let her go, but I'm scared I won't get the response I'm hoping for.

"No. I'm dreaming," she says, still not turning to me. I walk over to her and touch her shoulders.

"You're not dreaming," I say, and she shakes her head no.

"You're not real," she says. I chuckle. She's so dramatic. I turn her to me, and her eyes are tightly closed.

"Look at me, Syb," she shakes her head at my command. I can't help but chuckle.

"Please," she shakes her head.

"How are you here?" she asks. I cup her face.

“Open your eyes, Syb. I want to see those beautiful eyes,” I plead, and her eyes peel open. I smile.

“Hi,” I say, tears roll down her cheeks.

-SYBIL

“What are you doing here? When did you get here? How are you here right now?” I ask, overwhelmed with joy, love, and excitement. He chuckles with that sexy baritone of his.

“How are you?” he asks, wiping my tears. I’m such a cry baby.

“I am...” My breath hitches; I’m just so happy.

“You are?” he asks. This guy is really going to make me say it.

“How are you here right now?” I ask, and he chuckles.

“I took a flight to come and see you. I had to see you,” he says. I just wrap my arms around his waist, and he lets me, kissing my head. Yes, I’m that short. I just cry, and he lets me. God, I’ve missed him. This is home to me. No other arms would wrap around me so well as his.

“You shouldn’t have come back,” I say in between my sniffs.

“So I should leave?” he teases, and I get off his chest and shoot him a look which makes him crack up in laughter.

“I missed you,” he says, and I just smile, unable to respond. He pulls me to my couch and lets me sit on top of him.

“I missed you too. Ethan, I’m sorry,” I say, and he cups my face and kisses me. God, I missed this. I’ve only been dreaming

about this man's kisses ever since he left, okay, so shoot me. I break it, and we look at each other, just having a moment.

"It's okay, we're okay?" he asks, and I nod. For some reason, seeing him and being this close to him, I cannot reject him. Instead, I want us to make the distance thing work. I'm so over me trying to push him away when I know damn well I want him and I want him. He looks at me in disbelief.

"You serious?" he asks, with visible shock in his voice, and I nod.

"I'm dead serious," I say, and he chuckles, pulling me in for a bone-crushing hug.

"I love you, Sybil," he says.

"I love you too," I respond, still buried in his chest. I'm so happy; my heart is jumping for joy. I don't even want to allow myself to think otherwise because this is what I want, and this is where I always want to be.

"I'm so happy right now," he says, peeling me off his chest, and I just smile because words cannot describe how I'm feeling at this very moment. We are disturbed by a knock. I look at him, and he nods.

"Come in

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"I say, not getting off of him. The mere fact that he is in my room means that my family knew he'd be here.

"Like your gift?" It's my little brother and Siby. I look at them confused.

"I'm your gift, late birthday present type of thing," he says, and I look at my siblings still in disbelief.

"You guys planned this?" Siby nods.

"But," I start off, but Ntando cuts me off.

"You've been down lately, and only he can cheer you up the way we would like you to be. I won't even ask if you like the gift because you're busy dry-humping the guy," he says, and we all just laugh. He did not just say that.

"I'm still older than you, Ntando," I say, throwing a little cushion at him, and he laughs.

"We'll give you two a bit of space, but don't forget you're still under your parents' roof," Kayla says, closing the door without even waiting for my response. He laughs.

"You can be loud," he says, and I hit him playfully while he chuckles, looking ever so good.

"Oh, shut up, you make me scream," I say, and he gives me his ever so seductive look.

“Oh, do I? I’d love to hear you scream my name. Been a while,” he says with a smirk. I shove him playfully.

“Ethan, behave!” I say, and he chuckles.

“I’ve missed you. Is there no chance that I can take you home and bring you back later?” he asks, and I shake my head no. My vagina, on the other hand, is screaming at me for my stupid unthought-of response.

“I want to, but I can’t. My uncle is here, and my parents aren’t back yet,” I say, and he nods.

“I get it,” I cup his adorable face.

“I love you, though, and I would love to scream your name multiple times,” I say, and he smirks.

“Stop trying to make me hard when you won’t even service me,” he says, faking a pout, and I chuckle, kissing his amazing lips. I can never get tired, or maybe it's because I haven’t tasted him in such a long time.

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-SYBIL

Life with Ethan here feels too good to be true. I’m happier than I’ve been in a long time. We're more in love now than before.

He's everything and still the sweetest; he hasn't switched up on me to date, so of course, I'm happy. My family threw me a sweet sixteen, and Ethan was, of course, there, and we had the best time ever. The witches have been quiet, I don't know if that's a good thing or a bad thing, but I'm okay with peace in my life, and it seems like Ethan isn't in any danger, so that's awesome. We're going to South Africa, and I don't want to leave Ethan here, but what choice do I have? My sister is friends with this other witch Nia, so we've asked her to keep an eye on Ethan while we are away for the holidays. She's a great witch, really, and very lovable.

"You sure you can't stay?" Ethan asks, rolling us over. I spent the night at his home. I've already packed, so that's why I'm this chilled with him.

"I want to so badly, and you being this hot is very tempting, but I can't," I say, and he chuckles.

"You think I'm hot?" he says with a smirk that sends me over the edge.

"You know you're hot," I say, shoving him lightly, but his hands are already around my waist, so he pulls me down with him, making me giggle. He looks into my eyes.

"Hey," he says, and I smile.

"Hi," I respond.

"Can I ask you something?" I furrow my eyebrows because his tone is suddenly serious.

"Shoot," I say.

"Have you ever compelled me or used your magic on me in any way?" he asks, and I'm taken aback by his question.

"Where's this coming from?" I ask because really, I'm that confused.

"Just a thought that's been weighing heavily on my mind," he says, and I pull myself away from him, trying to get up, but he doesn't let me.

"I don't mean to offend you or anything like that, Syb, but I was just asking," he says, and I won't lie; I am offended.

"I've never compelled you or did anything of that sort. Sibb suggested I compel you when I ended things, but I couldn't do that to you. I didn't want to erase myself from your mind. You deserve better than that," I say, and he loosens his grip around my waist.

"Thank you for not doing that to me," he says, and I just get up and turn away from him, but he grabs my arm before I could get far. He's now sitting up.

"Babe, you mad?" he says because I know he's not asking.



"I have to get home; don't want to make everyone late," I say, but he doesn't let go of my arm.

"Baby, I'm sorry for asking. It's just that Luke mentioned something, and I..." I cut him off.

"And you suddenly doubted that whatever you feel for me is actually how you feel or have been compelled into feeling. Ethan, don't you think if that were the case, I wouldn't be the way I am with you? I've opened myself to you and laid myself bare to you. I'd never compel you to do or feel anything. I'm not that manipulative, and it hurts that you suddenly doubt me and our relationship as a whole," I say, and he looks remorseful. I yank my hand and grab my things, but he's faster than I am to reach the door.

"I'm sorry. I shouldn't have asked you that; it was wrong of me. I shouldn't even be doubting you. I love you, Sybil," he says.

"Yeah, well, it sure doesn't feel that way. Please move out of the way so I can go home, or do I need to compel you?" I ask sarcastically. He lets out a sigh.

"Chipmunk, you know I didn't mean that," he says.

"Let's do this, for your safety and for me to not compel you. Move out of my way, Ethan, so I can leave you in peace and never bother you again," I say, standing before him. I'm more hurt than I am annoyed; I would never compel Ethan to do

anything, and the fact that he would even think me capable of something like that hurts me truly. Maybe this is a good opportunity to dump him and just stay away from him until whatever evil I'm fighting off is captured and banished.

"Sybil, please," he says, and I grab the door handle behind him, and he lets out a sad sigh and moves aside.

"Bye, Ethan."

.....**The End**.....

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