To my parents

Mom, Dad,

I want to take this opportunity to have an open and honest conversation with both of you about something that has been on my heart for a long time. I have carried these feelings with me for years, and I believe it’s finally time to express them fully. My intention is not to blame anyone or bring up the past in a negative way, but rather to share my journey of understanding, acceptance, and love for both of you.

Growing up, I knew that our family was different. Even before I fully understood what was happening, I could sense that something was off. When I was in Grade 1, I noticed the tension between you, the fights, the moments of silence, and the unspoken pain in the house. At that age, I didn’t have the words to describe what I was witnessing, but I knew that our home didn’t feel like what I saw in other families. I wished for a home filled with laughter, where we all shared moments of joy together, but that was not the reality I experienced.

By the time I was in Grade 3, everything became more intense. That was the year, Dad, that you told Mom the truth about yourself. Even though I was young, I could tell something major had happened. I remember the fights escalating, the tension growing stronger, and eventually, Mom made the decision to take me to Limpopo. At the time, I didn’t understand why I had to leave. I remember going to school to collect my stationery with you, Mom, and seeing you break down in front of the teachers. That moment has stayed with me all these years because, even though I didn’t fully understand the pain you were carrying, I knew it was something that changed everything.

Moving to Limpopo was hard for me. I didn’t want to leave home, and I didn’t like the idea of living away from both of you. I felt confused, lost, and out of place. But I adapted, and when I finally returned to Grade 5, I thought maybe things would be better. By then, we had moved into a new house, and Mom, you had a more stable job. I hoped that this meant things would improve, but the fights continued. I started noticing more details, understanding more about the struggles between you. I saw how arguments over simple things like the car would escalate into something bigger, and I could feel the distance growing between you.

Then came the moment that changed everything. That Sunday morning, as I was sitting on the couch watching TV, I saw the argument between you both escalate so badly that it almost turned physical. That moment shattered something inside me. I had never imagined that things could get to that point. When you, Dad, threw the avocado at Mom, I realized that the situation was beyond fixing. And that’s when Mom decided to move out, taking me with her.

Leaving home again was painful, but this time, it felt different. We weren’t moving to Limpopo; we were just moving away from the life we knew. Mom, I remember asking you why we had to leave, and you told me I was too young to understand. You said you would tell me when I turned 16. Looking back, I understand why you made that decision. You were trying to protect me from pain, but at the same time, I was already feeling it.

Life after the separation was not easy. We moved into a backroom in Lotus Gardens, and I saw how hard things became for you, Mom. I know you were only earning very little money at the time, and between paying for the car, rent, and helping Grandma, you had very little left. I saw you struggle, Mom, but you never gave up. You made sure I had everything I needed for school, even when it was hard for you.

At school, I started failing very badly. The emotions I was carrying inside were affecting me, but I didn’t know how to talk about them. I cried in secret, feeling like I had lost the family I once had. I didn’t understand why things had to be this way. I wanted us to be like other families—happy, together, without so much pain.

When I moved back to Limpopo for Grade 6, life became a little more stable. I had my uncle Nhluvuko, who was like my best friend, and that helped me adapt. Dad started giving more money for food, and things felt a little easier. But still, there was something missing. I missed having a real home with both of you in it.

Then, in Grade 8 (2020) , everything changed again. While I was visiting you, Dad, I borrowed your phone and came across some messages. I noticed conversations and a group chat involving other men, and it became clear to me why you and Mom had separated. That moment gave me a deeper understanding of everything.

At first, I was in shock. I had grown up with a mindset that rejected the idea of being gay, and suddenly, I was faced with the reality that my own father was. It was hard to process. I felt anger, confusion, and sadness all at once. I felt like my entire world had shifted, like the foundation I was standing on had crumbled beneath me.

But as time passed, I started to see things differently. I saw that you were happy, Dad. I saw how you and Jabu laughed together, how you seemed at peace in a way I had never seen before. I started to understand that this wasn’t something you chose—it was simply who you are. And as I visited you more, I realized that I had no reason to be angry. You were still my dad, and that would never change.

When I was 16, Mom finally told me the full story, and she was shocked to find out that I already knew. I never told you, Dad, that I knew, because I wasn’t sure how to bring it up. But now, I want you to know that I have accepted it. I have no anger toward you, no resentment, no blame. I just wish things had happened differently, that I had been able to grow up in a home filled with love rather than conflict.

Even now, at 18, I still have moments where I feel the weight of what happened. I get emotional when I see happy families because I never got to experience that fully. I sometimes wonder what life would have been like if things had turned out differently. But at the same time, I know that everything happened the way it needed to.

I am grateful for both of you. Mom, you are one of the strongest people I know. You went through so much, yet you still made sure I had everything I needed. You sacrificed so much for me, and I see that. I appreciate you more than words can say.

Dad, you have always loved me, and despite everything, you have always been there. I know that you went through your own struggles, trying to live a life that wasn’t true to who you are. And I understand now why things happened the way they did.

What I want more than anything is for both of you to have a good relationship, even if marriage didn’t work out. I don’t want us to carry pain from the past anymore. I want us to move forward as a family—not the traditional family we once were, but a new kind of family built on understanding and acceptance.

I love you both, and I hope we can continue to grow together, not apart.

Your child

