

**2023 KALEMBA**  
**short story prize**  
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## *Dark Motives*

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The July evening air blew hard and bitterly outside the grey Toyota Mark X. It was among the few cars parked within the vicinity of the underground car park of Lusaka's Society Park shopping center. Inside the car sat a man. Alone and waiting. He sat in the driver's seat, staring out into the almost empty car park. He had chosen this particular location due to the minimal human traffic that frequented it. It had little to do with the fact that it was a Sunday evening but more of the fact that Lusaka residents hated metered parking, hence steered clear of them whenever they could help it.

Dingani had parked the car strategically, facing the entrance of the car park so he could see any vehicle driving in or out. He hated waiting, and she was running late - over an hour late. Probably intentionally to rattle his patience, for she knew how irksome he found individuals who didn't care for punctuality. No matter. He knew he wouldn't have to deal with this much longer. He kept looking out the windshield, almost wishing she wouldn't show up. The upcoming meeting had his stomach in knots, a sure sign of his apprehension. He hated to feel controlled, and the bloody woman surely had him by the ball sack, eager to squeeze them till they popped if she didn't get her way.

As he pondered on his predicament, a lone, stout figure at that moment materialized by the darkening entrance, walking briskly towards his car. He almost smiled when he noticed her walk into the parking lot. No car? Even better. She hugged the long black coat that almost fell to her ankles around her body, a body that he knew so well. She was finally here.

She entered the vehicle, settling beside him in the passenger seat without a word. The tension in the car grew overwhelmingly tangible. Dingani turned his head to study her; her arms were folded across her chest - a defensive stance. Her lips were pouting in a petulant manner - defiance. Her forehead was creased in a scowl that brought her two big moles on either side of her nose bridge closer together - anger. She

kept her eyes staring dead ahead, refusing to meet his eyes or acknowledge him.

“Jessy,” she shifted her weight on her seat at the mention of her name but stayed quiet, “we need to come to an agreement on this. It’s an embarrassing situation for both of us, and it would be better to make it silently go away.

“I’ll bear all the costs and ensure you have the best professional team with you to avoid any complications,” Dingani spoke in what he hoped was an endearing plea, yet his words sounded hollow even to him. Monotonous even. He didn’t feel like wearing his usual air of charm to get her to cooperate. He was tired of the act. All he felt was repulsion. For the first time in his life since his sexual awaking as an adolescent at the age of 16, he was repulsed by his actions.

Jessy was no ordinary fling to him. She represented the fetish he had failed to overcome that traced back to his teenage years. Being the Human Resource Manager at an exclusive I.T company where he worked as an I.T specialist, Jessy had pulled some strings to get him higher up the cooperate ladder. She eventually landed him the position of supervisor, a level below that of the Director of Operations. Dingani had used his good looks, charm, and eventually sex to get what he wanted from her. He complimented her every so often and brought her a gift every now and then to “appreciate her.” It was all too easy for him. He was a tall, slender man of dark complexion. He had full lips that revealed beautifully set even teeth whenever he flashed a smile. He coupled his good looks with an impeccable sense of style, often favoring slim-fit suits that adorned his physique. It worked well for him, and he knew it!

Jessy, in contrast, wasn’t attractive in the ideal criteria. Standing at a total height of 5’0 ft, she was a short woman with thick-set arms. Her figure was stout, while her face wore prominent lips, making her appear to be pouting all the time. She had a high, protruding forehead and deep-set dark, beady eyes. She never smiled much, owing to an ugly yellow discoloration of her left upper front incisor tooth. Under her chin, a large hypertrophic scar highlighted the point of impact from a childhood incident that gave her the discolored tooth and left her too self-conscious to offer toothy smiles. Her fashion style was young for

her age, comprising a high adherence to black tights, high heels, and tiny skirt suits that restricted her walking. She wore too much poorly applied makeup in failed attempts to mask the two large moles on her nose bridge. Dingani, however, saw past all her physical shortcomings. She possessed the 3 assets that satisfied his fetish; she was of brown complexion, had a generous bosom, and was 46 years old, making her 17 years his senior.

Older women with huge breasts were his weakness.

It all started 13 years ago, when his father's younger sister, aged 28, from a different town, briefly moved in with them after acquiring a new job that happened to be close to their family house. His father was often away on business trips, while his mother worked long hours at the local government hospital as a midwife. Being an only child, Dingani was accustomed to his own company and kept to himself mostly, leaving their visitor to entertain herself.

In the second month of her stay with the family, his young aunt started frequenting his room whenever his mother worked the night shift. She would tell him fascinating stories about places she had visited and what life as an adult was like.

"I can't wait to be an adult!" exclaimed a teenage Dingani as they conversed on one of her nightly visits to his room. At that, she looked at him darkly and said, "I can make a man of you right now if you like." Before he could ask how she could make him a man, she rose from his bed and stood up to face him so she was towering over him. With one fluid motion, she removed her dress, revealing her stark nudity to him. Dingani had never seen a naked woman and stupidly came to the realization that she had not been wearing underwear all along. He only had a brief moment to appreciate her very big full breasts and well-rounded hips before her bare body descended onto him, kissing him on the mouth, pressing him down firmly yet gently onto the mattress, and he felt himself react to her every touch...

From that night onwards, she never visited Dingani's room again. In fact, she went about her business indifferently as though nothing had happened. She had reverted to being his aunt despite disrobing him of his virginity. He hungered for more - to the point of leaving his bedroom door slightly ajar every night - hoping she would sneak into

his room and do it again, but she never came. This went on until the fourth month of her stay when she finally departed from their house to share a rented flat with her work colleague.

Dingani remained behind, sensually tormented. She had kindled a fiery lust within him that could not be satisfied just by any woman. It consumed him from deep within his loins. He desperately sought to relieve that moment. He felt no attraction towards girls his age, so he looked higher up his age group. His experience with his young aunt had birthed an insatiable, electric lust toward older women. But now here he was - terrorized by the very actions he so gladly took pleasure in. Jessy had still not said a word to him. She simply stared out of the windshield into the now-empty car park. It was just them.

"Can you at least explain to me again HOW this came to be?" inquired Dingani. He was grasping for an alternative approach to get her talking. "How are you 3 months pregnant? You told me you had hit menopause 3 years ago! Am certain you are not the next Sarah in the Bible! And you only told me about the pregnancy via text earlier today. Surely you knew about it all along!"

"IVF," she drawled out the letters laced with venom.

'WHAAAT?!' hissed Dingani

"IVF." This time, she turned to face him with a look of contempt. "I told you I always wanted to have my own kids, but all you cared about was using my body to satisfy your selfish desires, then returning to your young pregnant wife and playing the good husband. I had to take something for myself out of this relationship, too, and I didn't need your permission. What you were doing to me was sex exploitation, so consider yourself my unofficial sperm donor. I can care for them myself. I don't need you".

Them? What did she mean by them?

Dingani couldn't believe the words spewing out of her mouth...was this the same Jessy talking?

Naïve Jessy, who was always so eager to please him that he got every form of sex from her available to man, even if it was demeaning to her. She never shot down even his most eccentric suggestions. All she ever asked was what he wanted her to do. Zero objections.

He stared at her in absolute disbelief, his mouth hanging agape. He looked at her with new eyes like a veil had been cast off. Oddly enough, he seemed to notice just how large the two moles on her face were. Every time she frowned; they came so close together that they threatened to merge into one!

“I am expecting triplets!” she said smugly and gave him a full smile tucked with satisfaction.

Her words echoed loudly in his head. He felt a strong wave of nausea hit him, and he almost retched. This shit was getting more insane by the minute. What had he gotten himself into? She wasn't the first person he had had since his virginity was disrobed. He had had many like her before they crossed paths. Some had husbands and children of their own. Some were widowed.

Others just wanted a young man to excite them and help them overcome the proverbial midlife crisis. He had closed his business with them suffering no permanent consequences. And now this? There was no room to accommodate her and her spawn in his life. He loved his wife. What would she say? What would their work colleagues say? They had managed to maintain a professional front at work without raising suspicion of their romantic involvement. But he couldn't let this get out. The shame would be too much. The mere humiliation would be his undoing in the eyes of society. No. He had to convince her to get rid of the pregnancy, but even he knew why she had kept the news to herself this long. The pregnancy had already progressed to the point of raising the risk of health complications if termination was attempted. If he dared to push it any further, his attempts at conviction from his side would be met with even greater resilience from her end. His efforts would prove futile. He had to be smart about this. The glove compartment in his car already concealed his plan B, which he had earlier hoped he wouldn't resort to. Now he had little choice about it.

He took her by the hand, hating himself as he did so, and looked deep into her eyes. “I am sorry.”

She smiled at him graciously, misunderstanding the apology. She stared back at him feeling calm for the first time about their meeting since she had set out to meet him earlier. Maybe he would accept the babies one day and secretly help her raise them. She felt her heart

flutter at the thought. As though reading her mind, he let go of her hand and placed his on the steering wheel.

Dingani started the engine, and they drove out of the darkened car park onto Chachacha road in silence, neither wanting to know the other's thoughts. His were dark and gloomy. Hers were filled with color at the prospect of motherhood at last. Her two pregnancies from a previous relationship had ended in spontaneous miscarriages. The embryos just didn't take to her womb, her gynecologist had explained. A series of vigorous medications followed soon after to help rectify the issue. By the time she was considered ready to try again, her partner had impregnated another he had married, leaving her to her demise. She had buried herself into her workload until Dingani showed up, hungrily expressing his desire for her. She found it flattering that a young man like himself would go for someone like her. With his looks, women practically threw themselves at him, yet he had eyes only for her. His married status didn't bother her at all. Her biological clock was almost up, and she had already made up her mind. He was the perfect contender to father her children.

It had grown dark outside, and traffic was light. Not many people were on the streets as the wind was bitterly cold. Only a few strugglers among the street vendors still lined the corridors hoping to make a last-minute sale.

He made a right turn heading straight for the traffic lights near Stanley bus stop. To Jessy's surprise, the car crossed the Lumumba Road intersection, past the traffic lights, and straight into Chibolya, Lusaka's most notorious compound. Even police officers and military personnel never patrolled this section of the city due to its high crime rate unless they had to bust out a hardened criminal hiding within or break up riots. Criminal aggravations ranged from armed robbery, illicit drugs, prostitution, and scattered cases of human trafficking.

The badly potholed road was lined with dirty, small housing units on either side of the road. Most of them were in a deplorable state and desperately needed a fresh lick of paint. Despite the cold, several scrawny dogs ran around in a pack, crowding around a bitch in heat. They cast long, grotesque shadows when the headlights of the car hit

them. Most locals were indoors to avoid the cold bite of the wind, leaving most of the streets empty.

As the car drove deeper into the bowels of the compound, Jessy surveyed the surrounding. Something was amiss. She stole a sideways glance at Dingani, but his face revealed nothing; he just drove on as though in a trance.

She felt uneasy.

Three hours later, Dingani was parked outside his home in the Woodlands. He looked over at the now empty passenger seat and let out a sigh of relief. His demeanor was calm even though he had thought he would be shaking with anticipation of the aftermath. There was no turning back now. No reverse button to be pushed that would undo his deeds. All that was left for him now was to wait. There was a chance his plan could blow up in his face, and he could be imprisoned for what he had attempted, or it could work out perfectly, and he would finally put this whole incident behind him. He opened his glove compartment to remove the now empty pack of chloroform and the scrunched-up mutton cloth, which he threw into an empty, black bin liner. The pungent fumes were still strong enough to make one lightheaded. They needed to be carefully disposed of, and thankfully garbage collection was tomorrow. He still had a few amulets left over which he also tossed into the bin liner. The ones he had used were sufficient to achieve the desired effect. He wasn't sure how long the sleeping effect would last on her, but he hoped it would be long enough especially given her maternal condition. He was leaving his entire plan to play out based on the superstition of an illiterate community. He had staged it so

perfectly it was almost foolproof. Ensuring all was in order and leaving no trace of a previous occupant in the passenger seat, he left the car and made his way into the house.

The interior was dark, but the outdoor security lights provided him enough light for visibility. He headed straight for their bedroom and stood by the foot of the bed. He could make out the contour of his sleeping wife's figure under the bed covers with the prominent bump



on her belly. At 38 weeks, she could pop any day. She was well worth the risk he had taken. Had anyone seen him and raised the alarm, he was certain he couldn't have made it back home alive. He couldn't afford to lose his wife at any cost. If he was ever given a choice between saving humanity and her, he would pick her and let the world burn right into ash.

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The following night's headline on the national news segment at 7pm was splashed with blurred-out images of an unidentified middle-aged woman who had been burnt alive beyond recognition. The incident was said to have occurred in the early hours of that morning when some residents of Chibolya compound discovered a naked woman sleeping near a trash site that soon attracted a large mob gathering. Her wrists and ankles were described to have been adorned in odd-looking amulets, which became a whistleblower that dubbed her as a witch at which a death penalty by fire was promptly judged.

"Witnesses say the victim of the mob justice slept through the entire ordeal, only moving once to place her hands on her abdomen," said the voice of the newscaster. "This act convinced the group of onlookers that she was truly a witch as she did not cry out in pain while her body was aflame but slept on.

"Police officers who rushed to the scene dispersed the unruly crowd with canisters of teargas have picked up the body and deposited it at the University Teaching Hospital mortuary awaiting postmortem. Preliminary investigations have however revealed that the woman was about 4 to 5 months pregnant. Members of the public are urged to come forward with any information which may assist with the ongoing investigations and report any missing persons that may aid in the identification of the unknown woman. No formal arrests have been made yet. In other news..."

