

A smile saved for my daughter

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This is the story of my close and dear friend as she told it to me.

It was my first year at London High School when I came across this young handsome black guy with sparkling eyes. I felt my heart melting. I wanted to be with him. I could not see the other boys at school. I started spying on him with my friend at break time. Until he realized that he had a secret admirer. I would do anything to catch this guy because I knew and felt he loved me; as did I.

He was a soccer player; soccer was never my thing, but now soccer was my friend. I would watch him playing – from the top where I could see everything. I could watch him all day running around wearing his white school shirt, sweating and smiling every time he missed a goal, chewing bubble gum all the time. I knew this was a crazy thing to do but I watched him playing soccer whenever I got the chance. I did not mind having my head in the clouds for him.

I did not know he was my classmate, Brian's friend, until he came to my class and found me at the door talking with Brian. He stood right in front of me and asked about Brian. I trembled and then he said he wanted to speak with me personally. I did not say no because I knew I was in love and I did not want the moment to pass me by. He asked for my digits (phone number) and I gave them to him.

There was nothing we disagreed about. With him I could feel the pleasure of love. Everyone told me to leave him because with him I could never know what was going to happen. They told me he is no guy a girl would want to be with. People judged him by his appearance. I judged him by his heart which I could see through his chest. Somehow I saw the love inside him and told myself that people had wrong thoughts about him. With him my heart found peace and paradise.

He invited me to his house. I wore a peach dress with a gold chain and black shoes. As I knocked on the door I felt something was going to make me happy. No one knew where I was at that moment.

One morning I woke up feeling nauseous. I could not eat. I felt something in my stomach. I was scared. 'Could it be that I am pregnant?' He bought me a pregnancy test. As we looked at the line moving I prayed to God I should not be pregnant. I was shaking. I blinked my eyes. My pulse rate increased. I could feel my body sweat. I could not hear anything but my heart beat. The line stopped, I exhaled with relief. Then the second line appeared. I felt scared. I wanted to take back everything that had happened. I dropped a tear. He hugged me and promised to take responsibility. I felt I was not alone.

I gave birth to an African baby girl in a quiet room where the only sound was of passing cars and the wind outside. I did not look as happy as I should be. I had received a message from his family that he got hit by a car and could not make it to be with us today. That a black car at London Road had taken his life. I felt the world was against me. Everything felt as unreal as a dream. I did not want to accept he was gone.

As I held my baby in my arms I felt a warm rush of air on my face. My baby's fingers surrounded my thumb. A tear drop fell down my cheek as my baby squeezed my finger. I looked at her as I held her. I

recalled everything he said until my mind stopped. That was when I said “God am I blessed?”

It was time for me to go back to London High. I repeat: London High—which is next to London Road where his life had been taken. Every time I got to London Road all I would see were red roses flowing in a river of blood and no one around. All the leaves from the trees would fall as I passed.

School was never the same. Nothing is perfect in this world, neither was my friends’ love. I was alone. No one wanted to be with me. My friends treated me differently. They would tell me I had the heart of a black cat – it is believed a black cat brings bad luck.

At break time at school I stood on the balcony, looking towards the spot he liked. I would see him laughing with his white teeth, then I would blink and he was nowhere to be found. I knew loneliness was always searching for a friend and I was that friend at that moment.

I would feel myself locked in a dark room with no window to bring light from the sun. A room where I could not differentiate between day and night. I asked God ‘Am I in the right place?’

I knew I had to move on in life and fulfill my dreams, but what made it hard was what I had left behind. I could not celebrate my baby’s birthdays because to me it would have been like celebrating the death of her father. As I looked in the mirror I would see my reflection crying and I would fake the smile on my face. I tried to fight back my feelings to make sure I am alive for my baby, but my feelings were defeating me on the inside. I had no one to talk to because no one seemed to understand the pain within me. My heart continued bleeding.

Until one morning my baby put a real smile on my face. Her crying woke me up. As I looked at her big sparkling eyes I felt the pleasure

of love within my baby. It was the same pleasure of love I used to feel in her father's presence. I knew I still had him in me. I knew I had to stop dwelling in the past. I knew I had a future waiting for me.

I turned a new leaf the minute my baby put a smile on my face. That is when I started celebrating my baby's birthday. I accepted things had changed, that I have a baby to raise and that she shall not be the victim of things going on in my life. I knew that with hope and education I could survive the difficulties I faced. My baby has grown up into a very smart girl of three years. Her name is Khutso which simply means peace.

This was a life time lesson from being a teenager.

