

There's a blue door on my right. To the left is a red one. Blue is my favourite colour. I put my faith in the comfort of that thought and push the blue door open. Bright waves of painful light crash into my eyes, forcing me into an involuntary squint. When the door shuts behind me, I find myself in a colourful room plastered with life. There are lush growths of bright petals along the walls. Bars of bright LEDs snake above, across the roof, all beaming down onto the flowers. This floral canvas is broken on the other wall by another door – a bright yellow one. In the middle of the room is a pedestal, with a glass encasement on top. I am drawn to it. It is an object at the centre of its universe, and I am affected by its gravitational pull. When I'm close enough, I make out a single rose flower in the glass. Bright red petals bloom on top, and below, a thorny stalk extends. Beauty on top of pain. Ying and yang. Beside it is a note lying on what appears to be a stack of polaroids. The note reads *'To Afi. With love.'*

I recognise the rose - I bought it. I recognize the handwriting too - It's mine. I also recognise the name, Afi. Afi is my girlfriend. We are engaged to be married. What I do not understand is why they are here, and why, the first Polaroid is a photo of her. She is sitting at a bench in a park, pointing her smile at a subject out of frame. She looks younger, more radiant... content. The large hat on her head doesn't hide her raised cheekbones. She is smiling at something. Or someone. I pull the top photo off to reveal a second one. It's Afi again. This time she's not alone. She's in the arms of a man.

Nuru.

He was her boyfriend for 10 years. When they separated, it broke her apart. She said she cried for days and I have no reason to believe otherwise. She loved Nuru and now she loves me. The bright lights flicker overhead, casting fleeting moments of shadow across the photos in my hands. I go through the three remaining to confirm they are all of her. Afi my great love. The woman whose wit and sharpness would catch the brightest professor off-guard, and whose charm had bewitched two different sets of pageant judges. She is alive in all of them, in a manner I used to be familiar with. She's made of warmth. Her lips hold the taste of ambrosia, and her eyes are pathways to the stars. Galaxies unfold when I look into them and when she embraces me, I am transported there, soaring with the stars, a bright twinkle above everything and everyone.

I look around at the colourful room. It is a happy place, made from flowers that spell joy and scents that lift one's soul. The yellow door on the other wall matches the flow of the room. Had I my way,

I would have stayed here longer, savouring the design around me. But I am called by the sound the silent door sings, an enchanting tune that draws me into its orbit. Before I leave the room, I look behind me one final time. The pedestal is intact, with the glass over the rose. The note lies there still. The pictures do not - those are in my hand. Turning around, I push the yellow door open.

This room is dark. Where the last room had life, this one is a void. There are no bright lights above to illuminate the entire room. There is no pedestal in the centre of the room. There is only one light, hanging on the other side of the room on a door. Was I not so intrigued, I would have returned from where I came but I near the door, one foot ahead of another cautiously. At the foot of the door, is what appears to be a scarf. It is fashioned from a bright pink silk material, with careful lines of design embroidered into its fabric. It is soft and smooth, warm as though it was just taken off someone. I recognise this scarf. It belonged to Afi. It is the same scarf draped over her shoulders in the picture with Nuru. The only thing she kept from their breakup. The same scarf that went missing early on in our romance. She mourned its demise when it went missing. At the time, I thought she had to let go of it and move on. Now I'm not so sure. I count five more photos next to the scarf. They appear daunting, even scary. I reach for them uncertainly, before straightening up.

The first photo is more recent. It is also of Afi. The warmth of her smile is gone from her face, replaced with a scowl that does not belong. To my eyes, she is perfect still, save for one thing; when I look into her eyes, I am met with nothing. I shuffle the picture to the bottom of the pile. Yet again, the second photo is of her. This time she's playing with something on her finger; a ring. The ring I gave her when I asked her to marry me three weeks ago. She is seated at her desk at work, leaning back in her chair as one finger idly touches the ring. Her face is turned from the camera, but I know her well and I can tell she is not smiling in the picture.

Heart beating harder, I bring the next photo on top. It is a shot of a house from the front, from beyond the driveway. Afi is walking out the door. I know this one Or I should say, I know this day. I do not need to see her face to know she was angry when the photo was taken. We had just fought and she stormed out. Hours later I would find her in the park crying to herself on a bench. I felt foolish when I saw her like that. I had been careless with my choice of words. Why do we cut the ones we love the deepest with the sharpest knives in our arsenal? Fingers considerably trembling, I flip to the next picture and catch my breath. This time it is a picture of me. From when I was younger, some months before I met Afi. Arms folded in front of me, earphones stuck into my ears

and the raised edges of my cheekbones from where the smile on my face ended. It is a bright day in front of the college library. I look... happy. I put the photos away without looking at the final one.

When I open the door, I am scared.

This room is brighter than the last one, yet darker than the first. There is a single bench in the room, and on it, is a familiar face.

“Afi? What are you doing here?”

Afi raises her head and throws a feeble smile at me. “I thought I’d see you here Larweh.”

“Why is that?”

In response, she brings an arm up and waves the contents at me. They appear to be photos. Of the same kind as the ones in my hand. Her gaze lingers on my left hand and its contents for a little while. Then she laughs dryly.

“I see you’ve had yours as well.”

“I have.”

She gestures for me to sit and I oblige.

A fan spins gently above, pouring gentle waves of air on our shoulders. The room is hollow, barren of any life except us. This is a strange room. On each wall is a door, each of a different colour. There is the yellow one through which I entered, a red one, a blue one, then a green one. All the colour in the room is sucked into the doors, and they appear the only bright sections in an otherwise dull space. Four bright pillars of light in the darkness. Afi lets out a small sigh. I can tell she is troubled by her silence. It is as telling as heavy clouds predicting rain. Above, the fan creaks through another slow rotation.

“Who took these?”, she asks.

“I don’t know.”

“I...er... I have pictures of you. From before we met and...after.”

She shifts her upper body upwards into a sitting position before turning to look me in the face. The gates in her eyes are open once again. This time they lead into a space as vast as it is empty. I turn away from them, too afraid to gaze further. My response comes out in a whisper.

“Same here. You seemed happier before me.”

Afi grunts and remains silent.

“When did it happen?”

“I don’t know, Larweh.”

“Do you still love me?”

She turns away from me. “I thought I did...now it’s all... confusing.”

I take a breath before I speak again.

“There’s something I need to tell you. It’s about your pink scarf.”

Afi looks my way and smiles. “You stole it and threw it away in the dumpster behind your work. I know.”

“How?”

She waves her stack of photos in response.

“In here.”

“Doesn’t that make you angry?”

“A few hours ago, it may have. Now...now I don’t know what to feel. These... pictures. I don’t know who took them, but what they imply...”

“Have you been... faithful?”, I am almost scared to ask.

Afi gives my hand a reassuring squeeze. “I have. And you?”

“I have as well.”

“Then perhaps the only ones we have been unfaithful to is ourselves.” She concludes softly.

We are facing each other again

“We’ve worked at this for five years, yet we haven’t moved.”

“Hey, we’re engaged, remember?”, she lifts a finger.

“I thought you wanted to get married. That’s why I proposed.”

Afi grows silent as she stares at the ground.

“I did.”

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“Well. I also have something to say. When you first asked me out, I thought I could grow to love you. That’s – why I accepted.”

“Has all of this been a lie?”, I sigh in confusion

As though sensing my growing frustration, she draws closer, diminishing the space between us on the little bench.

“Remember when we hiked to the mountains?”

I chuckle softly. “You mean when we tried to hike? We never made it there because I got us lost.”

“I thought you were losing it when you tried navigating with the stars.”

“Sadly, that wasn’t the most stupid thing I did that day.”, I am laughing.

“You tried to hitch the tent over the bed of the truck”, she lets out a laugh.

“Mr. nature man.”

We laugh in tandem like we used to. Two souls bonding over a raw emotion. Free from the burden of the reality of life. Alive once again in the purest sense.

“That is a good memory. My favourite of us.”

“It is”, she reaches one hand out to hold mine on the bench.

“It’s good to know we had good times.”

Her gaze moves to my stack of photos again and this time she takes them. The warmth returns to her face as she flips through them. Her cheeks raise along a contour I am familiar with, and the brows on her forehead spring to life. From stiff ridges to supple ripples across the face of a clear lake. She is reminded of a time before now, long gone, but still within reach of the ever-long arms of recollection. When she reaches the last photo, she pauses. I watch as her face becomes a mask again.

“What of her?”

“What of who?”

In response, she turns the photo around in her hand and hands it to me.

It’s the one I could not bring myself to look at. I had the faintest of suspicions it would be included in the previous room. Now suspicion is a fact. Inside the picture are two subjects; me and a colleague from work, out sharing a lunch.

“Brenda”, Afi answers my question. “You share a certain spark with her.”

I hand her back the photo.

“Are you saying what I think you’re saying?”

“Yes. Larweh. I am.”

“But –”

“Honey, it’s time we stopped lying to ourselves.”

Without another word, she removes the ring from her finger and places it down on the bench.

Tears dislodge and flow freely down my face. Inside my head, flashbacks occur of our time together. The awkwardness of our first kiss and the way her lips felt like home afterwards. The soothing sound of her voice in the kitchen while she cooked and the surprising depth of her snore at times in the night.

All gone.

Afi pulls me in for a hug and I cry on her shoulder. Loud like a wounded animal, raw like a child.

“Red or blue?” she whispers into my ear.

“What?”, I sniff through the tears.

“You came in through a yellow door. I came through the green one. That leaves red or blue.”

“Oh, that... Red I suppose. Blue is your favourite colour. You take that.”

“You would do that for me?”

“Yes.”

“Larweh? Do you know where we are? How we came to be here?”

I shake my head on her shoulder. The scent of her perfume hits my nostrils and I take in a large whiff.

“I don’t want this to end. What if the next one isn’t any better?”

“Then we move on. Flitter across the cosmos in search of the soul that makes ours whole. You and I love each other, but I fear that may not be enough now. If in the future our paths cross again, I hope we might be a better match then.”

She raises my head and gently plants a final kiss on my lips. “Goodbye Larweh.”

I watch as she walks out of my life. Towards the blue door, and away forever. A part of me wishes to stop her, but deep down, I’m accepting this new reality. Many tales are meant to be. Ours was not one of those. She pauses at the door before turning around. A final glance is all I get, and then she’s gone.