

# There's Nothing Quite Like a Dream

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*Dreams feel real while we're in them. It's only when we wake up that we realize something was actually strange.*

-Inception

This morning the air was serene and Tebogo took it all in. She was sitting on a rock at the Walter Sisulu Botanical Gardens, amongst the prettiest of flowers and the grandest of trees, reading *The Waves* by Virginia Woolf and occasionally pausing to breathe in the fresh air to take everything in. Tebogo knew that this is what she had come into life for.

It was love that brought her to this place. Love, the gentle and spirited force, wheedled her into its divine embrace without being deceptive, without being certain about the destination it would lead her to. It guided her conscientiously, it seems, with dedication and careful attention to detail and for her life she followed blindly, enduring shock, trauma and fatigue through weary paths. She followed blindly the force, which she had little comprehension of. "Fear no more the heat o' the sun" and let the joy of love and life take you Tebogo.

And so she took it all in. It cast a dizzying spell upon her that made her yawn at Virginia's pretty words. Her eyelids went heavy from cradling the pressure of *good living* and so she took pauses from reading to look at all that was around her, including the flitting, dainty sparrows, the lushness of the greenery and the bright, ancient sun. She stood up and unfurled her red blanket to spread over the grass. A kind breeze aided her, making the blanket billow and stretch out like a sail in the wind until she laid it upon the ground and wondered where she would go this time. She rested on the blanket, with her back on the ground and tried to read, but the dizzy spell was taking her and she was compelled to put the book down. The sun shone upon her brown face and without resistance she let somnolence take her. She did not even get to have the daydreams one pleasures oneself with before getting to sleep. Instead, she went straight into slumber and then the dream state where one

usually has little control over oneself.

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*It was dusk – the sun was temperate and the wind was a soft gentle breeze that made her violet chiffon dress brush tenderly over the skin on her legs and thighs. She was being coddled by the earth, like a wanting child. She felt lightweight, as if a certain amount of gravity had diminished without it being too obvious. She looked all around her and saw that she was in a rich vineyard which stretched for many kilometers, making it impossible to see its end. She walked through the paths between the rows of crops, tasting each grape. After taking a third batch and devouring them with relish, she felt someone kiss her full brown cheek and she did not open her eyes for she knew who it was. It was Darling (sweet, loving darling) and thus she did not panic. “Love”, he whispered into her ear. “Darling”, she cried back and turned to her side to find him there, tall, dark and easy.*

*“I knew I’d find you here”, he said.*

*“Don’t try to fool me”, Tebogo said. “I know where I am. There’s less gravity here, the fruits are too good to be true and I’ve never been in a vineyard in my entire life and yet here I am. I am dreaming. Where are you now?”*

*“At the botanical gardens. I knew I’d find you there. Your phone was off, but I knew if I looked hard enough I’d be able to find you and I did. You looked so pretty sleeping that I knew I couldn’t wake you, so I slept too, hoping that I’d find you here... and here you are... and here I am...”*

*“Thank God...” She paused, listening to the gentle wind and love’s sound beside her. Being dusk, the sun blushed and danced coyishly in the sky making them look peachy and sun-kissed. They were looking at each other, happily and lovingly. “Let us carry on walking through the vineyard, Darling. It might not happen again, you know.”*

*They walked quite a distance until they found a bench with chairs, set with bottles of merlot and numerous crystal wine glasses that danced too and reflected across their sun-kissed skin. They sat themselves down while he poured for the both of them. When she sipped the wine, a stream of joy raced across her tongue. Her heart sang a song of love. The festival in her heart was so intense that she began to sob, he got down to his knees and cried “My Angel, my Angel” and asked what the matter was.*

*“The feeling Darling, it just takes my breath away really,” she said, “It’s just all so beautiful.”*

*“I know”, he said.*

*“It’s going to end. We have to leave soon, don’t we? Nothing lasts, ever.”*

*“I don’t understand,” said Darling, “You’re happy now. Isn’t that what you said? You don’t need to stay in your dreams anymore. You no longer need to do that to be happy.”*

*“I am happy Darling, but you know as well as I do that there’s nothing like a dream.”*

*“You needed them when you were unhappy though, when you were unable to cope... now that’s over, isn’t it?”*

*“You fool, there’s nothing like a dream.”*

*Of course. He knew that to be true, but he thought, hoped, that once depression left her, she*

wouldn't long to be here so often, nor would she need to sleep throughout the days. He could see, now, that she could easily trap herself inside a place of melancholy again, for the more she slept, the more sad she would become. The more she dreamt, the more she would never want to wake up and the more she felt the desire to not wake up, the more she would long for death. It truly scared him, but he didn't pester her about it because she already just called him a fool and her calling him a fool always meant "I'll hate you a little if you persist." So he didn't persist.

"Pour some more", she said and he poured for the both of them. She kept asking for refills until after the third glass when he said, "Love, that's enough. If we drink anymore-" but she gave him this look that told him she would call him a fool again so he stopped and poured another glass regretfully. He was going to say that if they drank anymore wine her emotions would intensify, forcing them to travel into the darker terrains of her subconscious. When they looked up into the sky they gazed at the sun with a dull fear for it was no longer blushing and was instead the colour of a furious red that made them look like hot, overripe tomatoes and although the wine was good it became too warm, and soon began to boil like hell.

They paused drinking the wine and she held his hand tightly (for they were going away now, to another layer of her subconscious). They were not necessarily hot but felt out of breath and exhausted and she was desperate just for his touch and his kiss. The earth spun beneath them and birds flocked together in the sky, sometimes gliding, sometimes fluttering and all the time going ballistic. Reclined along the bench, Tebogo felt her Darling's body spread over hers, felt his face against hers and felt his lips against hers for a long time, until they were too drowsy, until they slept again, until they felt themselves gone for a while and until they were once again somewhere else...

...Running down upon a hill in the midst of a vast plain, with grass so lush it looked and felt like fine fluffy hair and running down this steep hill, they could not stop. She felt, once again, lightweight. She was not even running with her own feet and their smiles, their laughter, caused no strain upon the face. Here, it felt as though they would not age a day. The temperateness of the sun and the caressing wind made them feel rather fresh, like flowers just brought in and placed in front of the flower shop.

Darling shone in this place and looking at him made her run towards him, grasp both his hands and spin uncontrollably with him... She was laughing, looking at him, laughing, gazing at him, laughing while wanting to cry looking at him, for here is where she wanted to be with him, here where he would never have to go off to leave and attend to work and all else that did not include the glory of love, here where the sun's heat would not bludgeon her soul and here where they were absolutely alone and untouched like hidden treasures. And true, she felt as though they were treasures and also that there were treasures within them: treasures of the soul, of happiness, of buoyancy, of fulfilled hope dressed in satin and sprayed with sweet perfume sensed by gods and goddesses only, who, with their sempiternal existence, listened attentively to the magical sound of their laughter that made them close their eyes and tilt their heads back as if they were listening to a sweet jazz.

And knowing all this, knowing that she was in love, knowing the person she was in love with, knowing that they were both treasures and that there were treasures within them and that their laughter made sounds that gods and goddesses could appreciate like art, led Tebogo to be taken by another dizzying spell, one resulting from the exhaustion good pleasure brings and one resulting from love.

In this rapture, Tebogo felt her feet lift up from the ground. (The universe was coddling her) Gravity forgot her and levitation was given to her, as a gift from the gods and she could not say no. So gradually she was lifted away from the ground and she did not resist, did not resist the universe coddling her. And Darling watched, with tears in his eyes, because he saw that this was a true

*happiness for her. He saw that Tebogo (with her hands closed upon her chest, her body elongated horizontally right there above him, and with her graduating without effort to the heavens) was happy. Love, making her levitate, led her dream to do what dreams do best, which is to really make life known, to bring the feelings we feel in our waking life to the surface, to bring one to the center of things....*

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Her eyes opened, like clouds slowly parting to reveal the sun, and the first thing she saw was the image of Darling, parting his eyes too.

“Darling”, she said smiling.

“Love”. He said, smiling too.

“When did you get here?”

“An hour ago maybe. You were sleeping. I didn’t want to wake you. You looked so at peace.”

“And I am even more at peace, now that you are here. I am so happy, Darling, now that you are here.”

This is what she said and he believed. She was always truthful (he believed in her and her love), but there was nothing like the truth she spoke when she had just woken up. Her words, just after having woken up, sounded like the rain outside of one’s window or felt like the wet earth beneath one’s feet.

“... and I am happy that I am here,” said he.

Above them, clouds gathered with a hurried frustration and a thin streak of lightning flashed. She felt all of this, sensed it and knew it as she looked lovingly into his eyes.

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