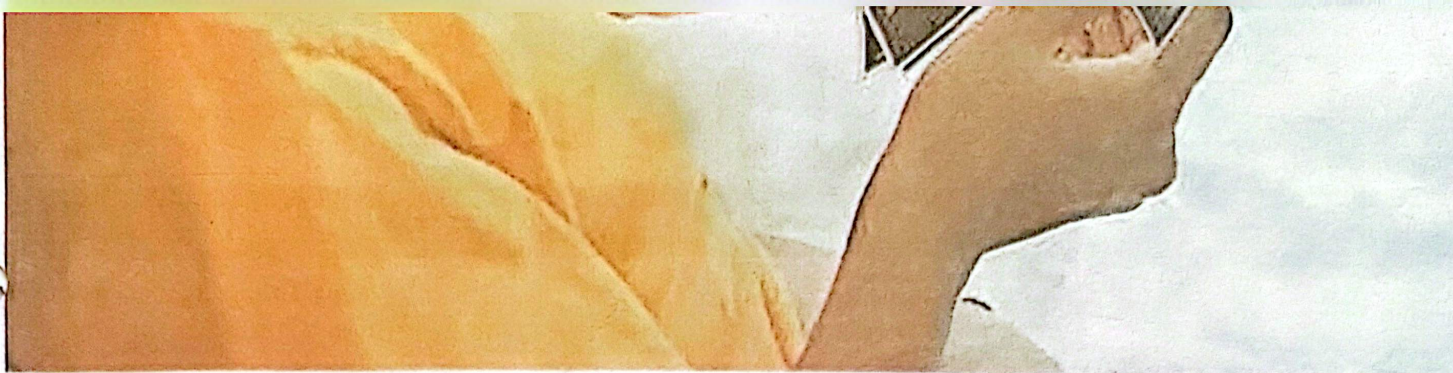




We are having a pension baby!



BLURRY LINES

with Tony Natif

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Ladies and gentlemen, we are going to be accidental uncles. Our friend Sandra, who vowed never to have a child, somehow found herself on the wrong end of the little blue line on the urine test. She is currently childless, in her 47th year and at the top of her field. Her dreams, as far as we have heard her say ad nauseum, are built around retiring at 50, building a small cottage on the edge of Bwindi Forest in her native Kihhi and spending the rest of her life traveling the world. Whenever we talk about children and all the dreams we have for ours, she

pulls out photos of her nieces, beaming with those great auntie vibes and tells us her uterus is out of commission. What she considers her parenting duty is to spoil her nephews and nieces rotten then send them to their parents. A bit like a loving grandma with a sugar factory.

Well, that was until a recent trip to Greece. The serial short term monogamist that she is, it really did not surprise us that she "found love" on a Greek holiday; a detail she kept from us until she could not. All we had gotten were beautiful pictures of white contemporary structures

set against blue skies and blue seas. Typical Santorini stuff.

I happen to be the friend group *musawo* (medical person) so I obviously was first to receive complaints of breast tenderness, metallic taste, slight morning fever, lethargy and a missed period. The missed period was not such a worry because she is at that age where they sometimes do not happen. But there was something about her demeanor that betrayed the fact that she was pregnant. I quickly and discreetly checked age-specific fertility rate for Ugandan women between the age of 45 to 49. It is around 29 per 1,000 women. For context, the normal rate is around 41 per 1,000.

The odds were not really in her favour but I said to her she might be pregnant. Panicky, she sent for a rapid pregnancy test-kit and a trip to the bathroom later, I had to congratulate her. Her gloomy face told she was not thrilled at all. She looked scared. My grinning congratulatory message nearly earned me

a slap but she somehow stopped mid-air and hugged me before calling her mum who was obviously ecstatic and kept referring to answered prayers. I wished I was the mum's pastor because that weekend offertory might have been hefty.

From her mother's side, Sandra is an only child. I advised her to call the Greek dude and tell him the news. She said they had broken up and he was back to his family in Liverpool. I asked if she was going to keep it. She looked at me and motioned to the phone; as if to remind me of the call she just had with her mum and how then she would have to break the news that she had "lost" the baby. That was a clear no go area.

My obligation as a friend was to discuss a few risks that come with pregnancy at that age and how to mitigate them. And offer support, of course! That and to marshal all our male friends to be ever present uncles. We are having a pension baby; from a real injury time equalizer.