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## **Mbewenhle Qwabe by Thembelihle Zwane**

### **PROLOGUE**

They say difficult days lead to better days but up to this day I'm still waiting for those better days. Out of 365 days a year there are 2 days that I never look forward to and today being one of them I wish we could just skip and jump to the next one. Not that other days are different but on this day the pain is insufferable. Whoever said time heals lied, the agony is still the same as it was 11 years ago.

Not ready to face this melancholy day ahead of me I bury myself under my blanket. Maybe the darkness under my blanket will shield me from the harsh reality and make me believe that it's still at night but it proves to be vain as I hear the cock crowing on my window. It's definitely the morning and the need to pass gas is not helping at all. I fling my blanket away before I suffocate in a toxic fog of my own flatulence. Shuuu do I have a dead rat inside my tummy?

“Mmm-mhm-mhhh sies maan is’shiphi esinuka kabi kanje!”  
(Mmm-mhm-mhh sies maan your fart smells repulsive!) My sister says as she walks towards the window grimacing. As if fart have ever smell like perfume. She slides the curtains apart before opening the window.

“Yeses your fart is suffocating me!” She’s still standing next to the window trying to breathe in the fresh air that is coming through the window.

I’m tempted to say if you knocked you wouldn’t be suffocating right now but knocking is foreign in this household. I learnt the importance of knocking the traumatizing way. I was piercing myself with a needle and I needed a spirit to apply it on my pierced earlobes so I went to my parents’ bedroom to get it only to find my father on top of my mother groaning like a wounded wolf and my mom purring like a cat. The trauma! The funny thing is they didn’t see me I’m the one who’s left traumatized up to this day. I swear I have never looked at them the same.

“Good morning sis.” I say with a sheepish smile as I sit on my butt.

“Kumele uchathe unenyongo!” she moves from the window and comes to sit on my bed.

I scowl at her, she knows very well that since I was a kid I have always been scared of doing an anema. I’d run across the mountains of Mozane whenever mom wanted me to do an anema and as I grew older it was a mission for my sister to catch up with me because I’m a runner. At school I used to enjoy Athletics. I have 4 gold medals and 2 silver medals. It’s such a pity that my school never took sports that serious.

“Wake up you need to help me cook.”

“I have to be at the store today.”

“Mnqobi...” I interject before she says anything further.

“Mnqobi has some errands to run today and he asked me to stand up for him.”

“Did he have to choose today to do those errands and he knows that baba doesn’t want you to sell alcohol.”

“It’s just for today only sis.”

“We always spent this day together Mbewu can’t the store close for today only.”

“Unfortunately that’s impossible money doesn’t wait for us.”

“So now money is more important than this day?” The iciness in her voice feels like a cold blade slashing right into my heart.

I roll out of bed, wrap a towel around my waist over my oversized sleep t-shirt and slide into my sleepers before walking out of my bedroom with my bucket of urine. I head outside, flouncing through the flock of chickens. Once I have disposed the urine into the toilet I wash the bucket. These things are still

following me around they don't even see that I don't have their food with me.

It's still early in the morning but the sun is shining bright and white fluffy clouds are drifting across the clear blue sky. It is a beautiful day to others but to me it's a dark and gloomy day like a cold misty morning. Everyday is a struggle but on this day it's a war. I wish I can just fade away and leave this world with its unfairness and wickedness.

I find my sister smearing thick liquid of ashes around the outside of the pot that we usually cook dumplings with to prevent the heat from ruining its shiny surface. I don't know where did she get this idea of cooking a feast every year on this day. As long as I remember in this household we only prepare a feast for celebration. There's absolutely nothing to celebrate on this day. How can we celebrate our despair and sorrow?

“Cela ukubeka amanzi okugeza eziko.” (Can I warm up the water on the brazier. )

“Okay,” she responds without looking at me.

I take the kettle and pour water inside before placing it on top of the brazier. I wonder what time did she wake up, the beef stew is already cooking on top of another brazier and its mouthwatering aroma is filling the whole rondoal. She's the beast in the kitchen!

The tension is almost tangible I can see that she's mad at me. Honestly I never get why she does this, to me it doesn't sound nice. I have been trying for 3 years to understand the purpose of this it always leaves me in turmoil. I'm not going to entertain her so I exit the rondoal and head to the main house. As I approach the main bedroom I can hear snuffles. The door is half opened. I stand on the door and see my mom on the bed staring at an album in her hands. Her tears are triggering my own.

"Oh ngiyakukhumbula mtanami," (Oh I miss you my child, ) mom says wiping her tears with the back of her palms.

I want to get inside and hold her for dear life but showing my face it would be like twisting a knife on already bleeding wound. It's bad enough that I'm a constant reminder of the

agonizing pain she's going through. I wipe my own relentless tears as I make my way to my bedroom and take my washing basin before heading to the rondoval.

The kettle is on the floor and the big pot of the dumplings is on top of the brazier that was warming up my water. I open the lid and dip my forefinger expecting to be burnt but the water is lukewarm. A heavy sigh escapes my lips as I pour all the water into my washing basin then walk out.

"Awusabongi?" (You are not going to say thank you?) she says just as I'm at the door.

I turn to look at her with a forged smile, all my teeth out.

"Thanks sis."

I don't wait for her to say anything but go to my bedroom and take out the clothes I'm going to wear before taking a bath. This water is just as cold as water from the Jojo tank to me honestly because I always bath with hot water no matter how

hot it is. She should've just said no I would have prepared my own fire to warm up my water.

There's nothing I dread then combing my hair after bathing. Unruly and frizzy that's definitely my afro. The clicks advert is me

I'm clicks the advert. I don't have energy to undo my sleeping knots and comb so a head wrap will do. It's not like I'm going to town.

I take the keys in my drawer and walk out with my washing basin filled with water of which I dispose outside. One can't carry something and go outside without having to be followed around by the flock of chickens. I give them their maize first before informing my sister that I'm leaving.

"You are seriously leaving Mbewu?"

"I don't want to go sis but I have no choice"

That's a lie actually. I want to be anywhere but here.

“The store can be closed just for today Mbewu. Why are you insisting on going on this day knowing that we spend this day together”

“Ubaba is not here it’s not like I’m the only one who’s not going to be here.”

“He’s coming back, around lunch he would be here.”

“Ay I’m going mina!”

“Watch how you talk to me!”

“What all is this noise about?” mama’s hoarse voice startles me behind me.

“It’s Mbewu mama, she’s doesn’t want to help me cook and she’s going to the store,” my sister says.

“Mbewu you can’t go to the store today. I’m sure Mnqobi can handle it alone.”

“He has some things to do today mama.”

“Utshеле bani lokho? This boy is abusing our kindness now. He can’t just decide not to come to work whenever it suits him without telling us.” (Who did he inform?...)

“You know that Mnqobi respects his job I think he told ubaba.”

“Why are you defending him usumqomile?” (...you are dating him?) my sister chirps in. I glare at her. Today she’s really doing her best to work me up.

“No I’m not dating him. This is not about Mnqobi, Mpilenhle but you. I don’t know if it’s your educated husband that gave you this idea of cooking a feast on this day or what but to tell you the truth it doesn’t sit well with me. As long as I remember in this household we cook up a feast for celebration. What are we celebrating today huh? We are celebrating the pain my twin

sister left with us? Are we celebrating the closure we never got by burying her body?"

For the first time in my life I walk out on my mom while she's talking to me and it doesn't feel nice as movies make it seem. I contemplate to walk back and apologize but I know that my mom always favors my sister. They're going to force me to spend this day on their terms and I'm not prepared to do that. I want to wallow in my pain and mourn for my twin sister whom I never buried.

"Awu ngilozi enhle, kunjani?" (Beautiful angel, how are you?)

Can this day get any better!

"Siyabonga hhayi namuhla ngiyacela." (Siyabonga not today please.)

"When then ngiloyizi yami enhle?" (...my beautiful angel)

"How about never?"

“Hayi angivumi wena ungokhethiweyo wami.” (I refuse you are the chosen one for me.)

I pick up my pace but he’s right next to me. There’s never a way to ignore him. How he always knows where to find me is a mystery to me because every time I step out of the Qwabe household he would be up to my face. It’s been two years now.

“Why don’t you give up though Siyabonga it’s been two years and my answer is still the same as it was two years ago”

“Akulula njengoba ucabanga Mbewenhle nami angizenzi ngenziwa uthando oluvutha amalangabi kuhle ko mlilo ka Dj Zinhle,” (It’s not easy as you think Mbewenhle I’m controlled by the love that is burning in flames like mlilo by Dj Zinhle) he says with a side smile and I manage to giggle.

“Goodbye Siyabonga.”

“Have a beautiful day my beautiful angel. I will see you later, ” he says and walks away.

Oh how I wish it's going to be a good day. My good days are long gone. I unlock the door and my day begins. This is my daily work, coming here to the store and attend the customers in my dad's shop. I wish I can say I do get paid just like they do in TV whereby a child get something for working in a family business. “Siyakondla nawe lesitolo ntombi yami” (This shop provides for you my girl) That what my father said this one time I suggested that he must pay me.

The store is huge and divided into two. There's alcohol side and grocery side. I manage the grocery while Mngqobi manages the alcohol side. Since he's not available today I'm going back and forth and it's tiring. I can feel my feet aching already but at least I'm not thinking too much.

The grumbling of my stomach reminds me that I haven't eaten anything the whole day. I grab a packet of simba chips and tropika juice before sitting down and eat. Am I not supposed to feel anything? I mean I'm her twin sister for crying out loud. We should connect somehow but all these years I have never felt

anything except the pain of her disappearance and the void she left.

I'm startled by the loud bang of the door shutting. I can hear that it's windy outside. I walk to the door and open it. Suddenly the weather has changed. Lightning lit the clouds and the thunder declares itself as the wind blows ferociously. I feel myself sink into a state of fear for I know that this can't be a coincidence.

In my terrified state I frantically lock the store and run home but it feels like I'm not fast enough. The darkness consumes the whole village and tears are blurring my sight. I can hear the sound of drums that is made by the whole community. The elders of the community can tell when the rain is coming in an unfriendly way. They believe that it signifies the anger of "Mnumzane" but the noise of the drums chase him away as it annoys him even though it didn't chase him away 11 years ago on this very same day.

It was just an ordinary day, my twin sister and I were playing outside then out of the blue the weather changed. The thunder rumbled across the sky and threatened to crack the world into

half. Just like kids that we were we continued to play even though mom kept calling us to get inside the house. The wind was violent and its sound was strange as if it was a howling melody. Through the darkness I saw her running towards the backyard and I ran after her while my older sister was running to the other side only for us to meet but there was no sight of my twin sister. I have never seen someone run fast like that in my whole life. I know it sounds like a fairy tale but it's true. Up to this day we have never seen her again.

We have never find peace and closure as a family. It's hard to go on without actually knowing what happened to her. Maybe today it is my day it can't be a coincidence. A bolt of lightning crack the dark sky into two and the thunder rumbles that I feel the ground vibrating. I have never been petrified like I am. The way home seems far but the way back to the store seems less. I decide to run back to the store only to not find the keys in my skirt's pocket.

Oh no please don't tell me I lost them! I frenetically search for them even inside my panties while I know very well that I didn't put them there. My father is going to kill me I can't lose the store's keys. I crawl to the veranda and hid there as I weep. The sound of the thunder reverberates, menacingly echoing as I say a silent prayer.

## CHAPTER ONE

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

Be careful of what you wish for as the outcome may not be desirable once it has been attained. I'm about to learn that the harsh way. There are days I wish "Mnumzane" took me as well with my twin sister so that I won't have to face this agony but now that is about to happen not only am I not ready but I'm petrified as well. The fear of the unknown is threatening to engulf me. Though I don't think God can hear me through this howling sound of the wind and the thunder that is menacing to crack the world apart, I continue to pray.

I feel a flash of lightning flickering behind my closed eyelids but I don't dare open my eyes instead I pray harder. A booming rumble followed, warning us about the wrath that is about to come. I tighten my arms around my knees that are pressed against my chest and bury my head on my knees. My heart is racing and I'm shaking like a leaf. Not knowing what to expect scares the hell out of me.

God please save me. I promise to never walk out on my mom while talking to me. I promise to never wish death upon me no matter how intense the pain can be. A shrill cry escapes my lips as I feel something touching me. I release the pee that I wasn't aware I have been holding and it runs towards the navy 5 step carvela shoe in front of me. I didn't know that "Mnumzane" wears carvela shoes, where does he get money and how does he go to shops isn't he supposed to be a snake?

"Nkosazane ufunani ngaphandle uyabona lezulu libi." (Princess what are you doing outside you can see that this rain is very bad.)

Jesus Christ! He even talks but why am I surprised if he can make a human being vanish into thin air he can do anything miraculous. I gather my strength and lift up my head to look at him expecting at least to see a head of a snake only to see the one and only son of Induna. We are lost in each other's gaze until it hits me that I've just peed on myself in front of a man and not just any man but the son of Induna. I shift my gaze from him and look down in shame. Now I wish he was really "Mnumzane" crazy I know but I can't help myself with all the mortification gripping me right now.

“I asked you a question nkosazane,” (...princess,) he says and I can’t bring myself to look at him nor open my mouth to say anything.

“Are you okay?”

No I’m not okay! I was expecting “Mnumzane” not you man. How will I ever get past this mortification?

“Come let’s get inside the store,” he says stretching out his hand for me to hold it but I sit there and not move an inch. He heaves a sigh and crouches before me.

“Nkosazane please talk to me.”

My tears do the talking, rolling down my cheeks.

“Are you hurt? Talk to me please.” The concern in his voice is loud enough for me to not miss it.

“Okay let me take you home.”

I shake my head no as I sniff away my mucus.

“Why? It’s not safe for you to stay like this Nkosazane.”

“I can’t go home without the keys. I lost them and my dad is going to kill me. I have to wait until the rain is over then go search for the keys.” I finally managed to say something through my crying voice.

“Okay let’s go to my car then and wait there”

Once again I shake my head no and thank him for the offer but he does the unthinkable. He scoops me up and walks out of the veranda with me heading to his car. I bury my head on his neck shielding myself from the huge painful droplets of the rain. The mixture of his woody scent with nicotine is invigorating. He places me down on the ground and opens the door for me.

“Get inside the car,” he says sternly, which makes it hard for me to protest.

I step inside of his car then he closes the door before running to the other side and joining me inside the car. His car smells like him and its really warm. At least it has leather seats. I don't have to worry about smudging the seat with my pee.

“Do you mind if I open the air-con to keep us warm?”

I shake my head no.

“Mangikhuluma nawe ngiphendule ngomlomo hayi ngekhandanda. Siyezwana angithi nkosazane?” (When I'm talking to you answer me with your mouth not your head. Do I make myself clear princess?) his voice is dripping with authority.

“Eh bhuti.” (Yes brother.) I say with a shaky voice.

“So tell me where did you lose the keys?” he asks while fiddling on the dashboard.

“On my way home bhuti.”

“Okay once the rain has ceased we are going to look for them.”

I feel warm air circulating around the car and my body relaxes.

“Let me know if it’s too hot for you”

“Okay bhuti.”

Silence lingers in the car as we wait for the rain to cease but it seems like it’s not going to any time soon. At least now it’s not that heavy as it was threatening to be I guess the noise of the drums did chase away “Mnumzane”

“This rain is not going to cease anytime soon. Let me take you home.”

“I can’t go home without the keys my dad is going to kill me. Those keys are not just any keys but the keys of the store and we don’t have any spare keys. Thank you bhuti for allowing me to stay in your car but now I have to go find them the rain is not that bad now.”

I look at the door, not sure where I should press or pull to open it. This is a typical fancy car and it’s way different from my dad’s 14 hundred of which you have to pull the handle outside to open it even if you are inside. He adores his car and sometimes I think the love he has for mom will never amount to the love he has for his car. I don’t know how many times it has broken down but he always fixes it and to tell you the truth the money that has been used to fix that car is enough to buy another car.

“Don’t go, you will catch a cold. Sit here, I will go myself and look for the keys.”

“Thanks bhuti but you don’t have to”

“I want to and you won’t tell me otherwise now sit down and relax. Please don’t get out of this car until I get back.”

I get the courage to look at him only to find him staring at me. I have never been this close to this man nor have I ever interacted with him. Handsome doesn't begin to describe him. He has a smooth caramel flawless skin and a longer bridged nose which is among his chocolate eyes with a slight hypertropia. You'd miss it if you're not gawking at him as I am right now. His full beard accentuates his heart shaped alluring lips. He's wearing a blue jean and a leather jacket only which is open and I can see his flesh and his pubic hair line on his lower abdomen.

“Why are you doing all of this for me? You don't even know me.”

He chuckles and brushes his beard as he looks at me intently.

“Ngiyangabaza ukuthi khona umuntu ongakwazi kakhulukazi owesilisa la endaweni yangakathi.” (I doubt there's anyone who doesn't know you especially males in this village.)

“What does that supposed to mean?”

“Let me go.” I watch him as he opens the door and steps out of the car leaving me with a myriad of questions.

I don't understand why should I be known by everyone in this area let alone males. I'm not even a bubbly person or maybe he's mistaking me with my best friend Isisa and people say we look alike now. That one is one bubbly person and she knows everyone. I mean everyone, even at school she was like that.

This man is a risk taker, how can he leave me with his whole car, ignition keys and wallet. If I was someone else I'd empty this fat wallet filled with R200 notes or better yet hit the road and never look back but hey I'm just a village girl who just peed on herself in front of a man that is every girl's dream in this village.

It's been a while since he's been gone. I'm starting to get worried now. The rain hasn't ceased yet. He had to leave the car behind because the gravel road for cars is different from the one that is used when we are walking. I open the door and just as I'm about to step out of the car he jumps in.

“Uyaphi manje ngithe ungaphumi la.” (Where are you going I said don’t get out of this car.)

He’s dripping wet and his face is slightly red now.

“I was going to check on you.”

“I said stay here Mbewenhle you don’t listen wena.” he doesn’t sound pleased at all.

“I’m sorry. Did you find the keys?”

“No I didn’t”

Oh God. I cover my face with my hands and heave a sigh. Dad is going to kill me. I can’t go home without the keys. I fear my father more than I respect him. He’s an uptight man and very strict at times.

“Don’t worry I have a plan. I just need you to allow me to go home and change first.”

“What plan?”

“Do you allow me to go home with you and change?”

I’m too desperate for help so I nod my head.

“Let me go check something

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” he says, stepping out of the car and runs to the door before going to the other side.

I’m not sure what he’s doing. A few seconds later he comes back and brings the engine to life then reverses out of the yard before driving off. When we arrive at his home I ask him to park at the gate. He agrees and steps out of the car then runs inside the gate, heading straight to the door. The Maseko household is so huge and they’re a well to do family.

He comes back running then we hit the road. Now he's wearing a navy brentford crewneck jersey with a black jean and another pair of 5 step carvela which is black in colour. I notice that we are going to Dundee. I want to ask how will going there help to find the keys but I don't want to sound rude or ungrateful.

"The keys you lost are for the store only right?"

"Yes"

"Okay they're four?"

"No five there's a burglar guard inside like the one outside." I say, wondering what his plan is. He nods his head slightly while focusing on the road. Once we arrive he parks his car and steps out of the car before disappearing into the stores. I wait for him and he doesn't take that long before he comes with a plastic of which he throws to the back seat before driving back.

By the time we arrive at my dad's store the rain is now drizzling. He takes the plastic and the toolbox in his boot then begins to remove the door handles on the doors and put new ones. That is so thoughtful of him I don't know how I will ever thank him for this. I count the money and put it into their separate standard bank bags while he puts the new lock in the burglar guard that is inside. Once I'm done I watch him doing his handy work as if it's a skill. He keeps biting his bottom lip as he screws the screw.

"Done."

"Thank you so much bhuti I don't know how I can thank you for doing this."

"You can start by not calling me bhuti. Angisiye ubhuti wakho." (...I'm not your brother.) I glare at him, why is he being rude?

"Don't take offense please, it's just that it makes me feel old," he says when he realizes that he really offended me. It doesn't even make sense to me, what he's saying that is.

I'm coming from a family where respect is something that was instilled in us since we were kids. He offers to take me home once he's done. I thought he's going to drop me by the gate but he insists on walking me inside the house and speaking to my parents. The moment we walk in my sister runs to me and squeezes me into a bone crushing hug.

"Thank God you are safe! I thought..." she burst into tears and I hold on to her for dear life as an assurance that I'm okay.

"Sanibonani," (Greetings) he greets my parents.

"Yebo mfana kunjani?" (How are you boy) my father responds as my sister passes me to my mother who kisses my forehead and holds me for dear life as well.

"I'm okay baba. I'm Muzikayise Maseko and I brought your daughter."

"Take a seat boy," dad says.

He does as he's told and explains to my parents how he found me and the state I was in when he found me. He doesn't leave a single detail well except the peeing part. My parents thank him profusely and express how they thought history has repeated itself as they heard people saying they saw me coming from the shop. So when I didn't arrive home they panicked, my dad and my little brother were about to look for me as dad just arrived from Ladysmith.

"Uwaka Maseko enduneni?" my dad asks bhuti Muzikayise

"Yebo baba"

"Thank you so much Ngcamane, Sidwabasiluthuli."

"I'm the one who's thankful. I should get going now," Bhuti Muzikayise says as he gets up from the bench.

"I will walk you out" my dad gets up as well and they both walk out.

“Are you okay my child?” mom asks me

“I’m okay mama I just want to take a bath and sleep.”

“You have to eat first before you sleep. While you bath I will dish up for you and make coffee for you. There’s hot water in the kettle you can take it.”

“Thank you sis.” I free myself from my mom’s embrace and get up from the bench before taking the kettle. I walk out of the rondoval and go to the main house heading straight to my bedroom. A sigh of relief involuntarily slips out of my mouth. Thank God I’m safe even though I’m still embarrassed.

“Sis” my little brother walks in with a five liters of bucket.

“I brought you cold water just in case your bath water is too hot”

“Thank you so much Lonhle”

He places the bucket next to the kettle on the concrete floor and looks at me sadly.

“What?”

“I’m glad you are home and safe.” his eyes sparkle with tears. I open my arms for him and he walks into my embrace.

“I love you sis”

“I love you too little bro”

“Did you have to say little?” he says pulling away from my embrace as I giggle. This one thinks he’s older than us just because he’s our only brother. He walks out. I take a bath and wear warm tracksuits and sleepers before joining my family in the rondoval.

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“How was it to be in his arms?”

“Jesus Isisa are you even listening to me!”

She laughs out loudly as she throws her t-shirt into a washing basin. It’s been two days since that day but I’m still gripped by embarrassment. I’m in the river with Isisa. She’s doing her laundry while I’m throwing stones into the water.

“The man understands you were terrified Mbewu. Anybody would be especially after what happened to Ndalwenhle.”

Ndalwenhle is my twin sister. My father with ‘nhles’ I wonder if he did it on purpose or what. My elder sister is Mpilenhle and my little brother is Mvelonhle.

“But I still feel embarrassed Isisa. What if he tells Ndondoloza? It would be a field day for that bitch. I will be the talk of this whole village!” I groan in frustration.

“I always tell you that you will die young if you worry about what people say about you. No matter what you can do friend, people are still going to talk. Ndongoloza is just a sore bitch, she’s Siyabonga’s ex, not girlfri...” she pauses as her big eyes widen looking behind me.

“What’s wrong?” I ask as I turn around oh here comes my knight in shining armour. What is he doing here? I sprint up and run home as fast as my legs could carry me. I can hear him calling out for me. I’m not ready to see his gorgeous face. Did he have to show up? Yazi impilo inswampe!

2

☆ Muzikayise ☆

“Whaaa!” I jump up my hands involuntarily folding into fists and ready to fight. He cracks up into laughter.

“You’re always ready for a fight one would swear you grew up in an apartheid era.”

“Argh just leave me alone Thuthuka” I say going back to my bed and laying down skyward as I was before he broke my reverie.

“Alright talk to me,” he says, making himself comfortable on my bed next to me.

“What are you on about?”

“You have been very preoccupied these past two days tell me what’s going on?”

“I’m not sure what you are talking about and besides what make you think that I will share my business with you while I know very well that the next thing you would do is to run to the kitchen and tell everyone”

“Ah malume I don’t do that anymore I have grown now,” he says scratching his head. ‘Uvovo liyakhpha’ that’s my nephew’s middle name. He used to be too soft for a boy but I made it my ultimate responsibility to toughen him up especially after the passing of his father.

Out of 5 children my parents have I’m the only son and I’m the third born. My father made sure that being the only son among daughters doesn’t make me a softie but instead a strong man that I am today and instilled it in me that it’s my job to protect my sisters regardless that the other two are older than me.

Thuthuka being the only boy among daughters just like me I groomed him as well to be the young man that he is today. I have to say that I’m proud of the man he’s growing up to be everyday.

“Has your life ever changed immensely in a matter of seconds?”

“Yes after my father passed away.”

“Okay let me put it like this. Have you ever met someone and your life turned upside down in a matter of seconds.”

He looks at me as his face lit up.

“Are you serious?”

“Yes man like a heart attack.”

“Oh the grandparents are going to be happy! Finally there’s going to be a daughter in law in the Maseko household. Where did you meet her and who is she?”

“Well it’s not really like meeting for the first time. I have known her since she was a kid and now she has grown into a beautiful remarkable young woman. I never had the courage to approach her because I didn’t want to be the reason she changes the way she carries herself and astray.”

“You never had the courage to approach her or you just don’t know how to approach her” he has an amusing smile as he asks this and I hate it that he knows my weakness. I’m not a man of many words. I just never know what to say to court girls. I believe in actions rather than words. I always go for easy target girls and my good looks make it easy for me.

“Usuyaphapha ke manje” (You are being forward now)

“Sorry malumes,” he says laughing. I hit him with a pillow which makes him to laugh harder.

“Let me teach you how to court a girl”

“Oh thanks but no thanks your pick up lines are whack”

“You don’t know what you are talking about malumes”

“If I don’t know what I’m talking about then that girl you want so badly is she your girlfriend now?”

“Ah phela that one is a hard nut to crack but soon she’s going to be mine”

“Oh you wish my boy, if I as a guy also find your pick up lines whack imagine the girls”

“You are underestimating me malumes. Let’s make a bet and see who’s the boss. So we have one week only to court these girls, a winner is the one who will use all his courting skills until the girl has no choice but to open her heart for him first.”

I look at him grudgingly. Mbewenhle is way different from the girls I usually go for and it won’t be easy to convince her to open her heart for me not that I have any other choice though I need that girl in my life.

“Deal!”

“Are you sure?”

“Ay nawe usuzenza inkunzi yesoka!” ( Ay you’re acting like you are a ladies man!) I say not hiding the annoyance in my voice and he laughs.

“Let’s shake on it then malumes”

We shake our hands.

“So what’s her name?”

“It’s not easy now to tell you boy after our bet what if you do me dirty.”

He cackles, throwing his head back then looks at me still laughing.

“I don’t play dirty just admit that you are scared I’m going to beat you”

“I’m not scared of you I can get any girl I want”

“Oh really is that why now you’re fantasizing about that girl instead of making her yours? There’s something you forget malumes and that is you are not the only guy who’s interested in her surely. There are guys out there who are promising her the world what makes you different from them?”

What he’s saying is no lie. That girl is every guy’s dream in this village. She’s such a beauty! Now I know when beauty was invented, that was the day she was born. Her beauty is something that I have never seen before and it can make you trip over something because you’re so preoccupied at her sight. It needs to be appreciated and the way she carries herself intensifies her beauty.

“You’re getting smarter each passing day

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” I say proudly.

“I learn from the best.” He gives me a side smile of which I return.

He annoys me when he gossips with the women of this household but I would never trade him for anything in this world. He’s a brother that I never had even though he’s technically my child. The age difference between us is 6 years I bet that’s the reason we get each other very well. He knows his place as much as I know mine. I believe that respect is a two way street, you’ve got to give what you want to get.

“So you really won’t tell me what’s her name?” he asks and I shake my head no which just reminds me of her. The pain and fear in her dark sparkling eyes still haunts me two days later after the incident and I can’t help a hankering to soothe her bleeding soul and make her feel safe all the time.

“Let’s go look for my goat.” I say getting up from my bed. He does the same then we head out.

Ever since the heavy rain one of my goats has been missing. Not just any goat but a very special one. That goat contributed to taking my business to the level it is now by giving birth to multiples. If something horrible were to happen to it that will literally break me apart.

When I started the business of selling goats I was under a lot of pressure. I had to prove to my father that I can build something of my own without his help. That was 8 years ago when I was only 20 years old. It wasn’t easy but I was determined to prove to him that I am the man that he raised me to be, the man that he’s proud to call a son.

I started by fetching water from the water pit for the community using my dad’s donkey cart. I charged R10 each bucket or container. Not everyone can afford Jojo tanks so my services were very helpful to the community. I saved until I had enough money to buy a goat. By that time a goat was just a mere R500 unlike now it’s close to 2K or more.

I was so happy when I discovered its first pregnancy. It gave birth to twins and from then my business of nurturing animals and selling their meat started with just one goat. The same goat that is missing right now. My dad was so proud of me and when he gave me all his businesses to run I just knew from there that he trusts me and believes in me.

We decide to take separate ways. The hours I spend roaming around and asking around turns out to be fruitless. I'm so exhausted and the scorching sun is not helping at all. You wouldn't believe that it was raining just two days back. I don't know how I forgot my handkerchief. Now I'm dripping wet with sweat and I'm sure I even smell. I use the other path so that I can pass by the river and wash my face.

There's this voice that impels me to pick up my pace yet it makes my heart skip a few beats as I get nearer to the river. It's mellifluous and gives me goosebumps. I feel my palms getting moist and my heart picking up its beat when I see her but she can't see me as her back is facing me. She's with her friend who seems to be doing laundry. I keep hearing my young sister's name but I can't grasp what they're both saying. She turns around and our eyes meet. In a split second she gets up and

runs away. I swear Caster Semenya is not as fast as this girl is! I try to call out her name but she runs faster than before. Ehh!

“Kunjani ntokazi” (How are you girl)

“Ngiyaphila unjani wena bhuti” (I’m okay and you brother)

“I’m fine. Is everything okay? Why did your friend run away?” I ask while looking at Isisa who giggles but doesn’t respond to me.

“Is it about me?”

“Maybe”

“What have I done?” The confusion in my voice cannot be missed.

“Nothing wrong you actually saved her life and thank you so much for that bhuti. I don’t know what I would’ve done if I lost her.”

“I did what any human being would have done. Goodbye”

“Not so fast Mr Maseko, help me carry my laundry home.”

“Excuse me?”

“You’re the one who chased Mbewu, she was going to help me,” she says with so much confidence. I want to give her a piece of my mind then I remember that I can use her to gain insight about Mbewenhle. I hold the other handle of her zinc washing basin while she holds the other one then we leave.

“What kind of a person is Mbewenhle?”

“She’s sweet and good hearted”

“Does she have a boyfriend?”

“You are asking a rather personal question bhuti. Why are you interested in knowing her?”

“Is that a crime maybe?”

“You can’t reply with an ask”

I shrug and decide to change the subject because I can see that she’s not willing to tell me more about her friend. I helped her carry her laundry for nothing and the handle of this zinc washing basin is hurting my hand!

Thuthuka found my goat but unfortunately it’s dead. These are the bad news I receive when I get home. I’m beyond broken. It feels like I lost a human being that meant so much to me. Now I understand why white people bury their animals and put flowers on their graves.

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It's proving to be difficult to find Mbewenhle. This girl makes sure that our paths never cross. I'm tempted to go straight to her home and ask for her but that would be so disrespectful. I only have 3 days left to win her heart which rather seems impossible. I have been checking her in her father's store but Mngobi literally chased me away and said she's not there.

"Next" I hear her saying that as I walk through the door. I had it all planned out but now that I'm here I'm shaking and nervous. I hate how this girl makes me feel. She attends a little boy who buys lollipops then walks out after receiving his change.

"Greetings gogo," she says with a warm sweet smile plastered on her beautiful face. Did I mention that it makes my knees shake?

"Greetings my grandchild ," I mimic an old woman's voice.

"How can I help you gogo"

“I want to know why are you running away from me”

She looks at me with shock, her eyes wide as if they will fall out of their sockets when I take off the doek.

“Bhuti Muzikayise!”

“I need to talk to you Mbewenhle”

“Talk to me about what? Jesus why can’t you get a hint I don’t want to talk to you”

“What have I done? I’m sorry for whatever that I did”

“If you’re really sorry you wouldn’t be bothering me”

“I’m sorry but I won’t stop bothering you because I need you in my life”

She tries to hide the shock in her face but it's already late.

“Is this the best you can do?”

“Huh?”

“Ushela ngama handle doors vele?”

She disappears to the other side of the store leaving me feeling like an idiot. Some girls laugh as they walk in looking at me wearing a pinafore and holding a doek. What was I thinking? Now I've just made myself a mockery of the village!

## ☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I press my eyelids shut inviting my sleep but it proves to be futile. The more I try to sleep it's the more he invades my mind and steals away the glimpse of sleep I have. Just when I was starting to get over what happened he showed his face in a disguise of an old woman. Now I'm back to square one, Muzikayise Maseko ave eyibibane ebhonsini! No actually a crack underneath the toe is better because when you apply earwax on it, it disappears like it was never there before.

He needs me in his life, what does that even mean? I may not always pay attention to the guys that court me in this village but I know very well that he's definitely not one of them. So when did he discover that he needs me in his life? Before or after that incident? Were the door handles his plan to warm his way into my heart? I know I sounded ungrateful but I wanted to set the record straight that just because he rescued me from my dad's yelling and beatings he shouldn't think I would just open my legs for him.

My eyes dart on the watch hanging on the wall when I switch on the light. It's the witching hour and not safe to be outside at this time of the night, not unless if you want to experiment if the witching hour is all a myth or not. One would think in a cultural village like Mozane you wouldn't find ghosts but believe me they're all over. You can get lost while going to the loo, the very same toilet that you have been using for your whole life. Funny right? Come this side and you would know that it's not funny as it seems actually it's hella scary! I don't even want to mention witchcraft.

I roll out of the bed and slide into my sleepers then take my throw. After switching off the light I walk to the lounge where I switch on the TV only before curling myself on top of the couch with a throw wrapped around me. I make sure that the volume is very low because my mom will come in here and yell about wasting power. If it was for her we would use solar power for the lights only but she has no choice because dad likes TV. Solar power is usable energy that is generated from the sun in a form of electricity. The solar energy is captured with photovoltaic solar panels that convert the sun's rays into usable energy.

Even though solar energy is a renewable power source as there will always be a consistent sunlight shining on Earth's surface

but on cloudy or rainy days it's sufficiency drops. Solar panels are dependent on sunlight to effectively gather solar energy. Therefore, a few cloudy and rainy days can have a noticeable effect on the energy system. Does it work at night? Yes it does but only if there's a solar-plus-storage technology that allows your solar panel system to access electricity overnight when solar panel production is dormant, through connection to a solar battery.

It's a good source of energy if only the government installed solar panels that are enough to fulfill our homes power needs. We can't even use appliances with these sizes of solar panels hence we only use it for TV and lights only. The government should've just installed electricity instead of solar power. Our lives haven't changed that much honestly except that we are no longer using candles. The lack of development in this village is a despairing situation.

I'm woken up by a light shake and when my eyes meet my mom's face my heart skips a beat. Not only doesn't she want us to waste power she also doesn't want us to sleep on her couches. I rub my eyes and sit on my butt. It's the next morning and the TV is still on. The look she's giving me I'm shaking inside.

“Mamami omuhle kunabobonke emhlabeni.” (My most beautiful mom then other mommies in this world.) I say trying to placate her. Is that a suppressed smile I’m seeing?

“Vuka uyobasa ngifuna ukwenzela ubabakho ukudla,” (Get up and go make a fire I want to make breakfast for your father) she says.

“Okay mama. Awusemuhle nje namhlanje.” (...you look beautiful today.)

Her face breaks into a huge smile. Through her thin face that was once chubby and those beautiful dark sparkling eyes that have permanent grief lingering in them she’s still the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. Behind the forged smile that she always wears on her face which one would mistake it as a genuine happy smile there’s intense grief. I can’t begin to imagine how it’s like to birth a child and raise her for 10 years only then she disappears out of the blue. She’s always smiling and hardly ever breaks down or at least not in front of us that’s why it really broke my heart to see her crying that day. I admire her strength honestly.

“Just get up already Mbewu before your father wakes up,” she says with her hoarse voice, blushing profusely. That’s her saying “Thank you my child”

I get up from the couch and stretch myself until my neck pops. I don’t even remember when did I fell asleep but the movie I was watching did help though because I didn’t think about him. I head to my bedroom to get a towel and wrap it around my waist before going outside to make the fire. We are almost out of the woods. I made a mental note to go and collect them today. I’m not going to the store today, I’m giving myself a day off. Mnqobi will survive without me. Once I’m done I head to the house and tidy up my bedroom first then clean the main house.

“Good morning sis,” my brother says as he emerges from the passage.

“Morning little bro.” I walk towards him and fix his tie. He never gets it right no matter how many times I show him so I have made it my duty to fix it everyday before he goes to school.

“You look perfect now.”

“Thank you sis wami. I’m running late I have an early Mathematics class today”

“It’s only February, what’s the rush with early classes?”

“Isn’t the new principal? He’s annoying!”

“I get what he’s doing though. Ukusebenza kusakhanya kuhle after all y’all are matriculants you have to be a great example of the school.”

“What’s the use of school though? I mean dad never went to school but he’s a successful man.”

“Dad is a successful man because he’s a hard worker Lonhle and everything he owns were his inheritance from his father.”

“Which means he will also pass his inheritance to us so why wake up everyday and go to school while our future is secured?”

“Didn’t you say you are late?”

“Bye” he walks out.

My father is an old fashion man who doesn’t believe that education is important at all. If it wasn’t for mom who insisted that we go to school none of us would’ve gone to school. She managed to take us to school until Grade 12 using her money that she made from selling tripe and bones to buy school uniform and stationery for us because father wasn’t going to waste his money on useless things. His words not mine, it didn’t even matter to him when I passed my grade 12 with good grades.

Mom tried to beg him to pay for my fees in a college or university but he blatantly refused and said he doesn’t have money. Funny enough when his 14 hundred breaks down he does have money to fix it. Another funny thing is when my

former class teacher paid my parents a visit and addressed them about a bursary that I could qualify for, Dad was breathing fire. “Angeke mina ngitshelwe omunye umfazi wakomunye umuzi ukuthi ngenzeni ngengane yami! Ufuna ukuyithatha indodakazi yami iyophenduka umahosha emadolobheni!” (I won’t be told by another woman from another household what to do with my child! She wants to take my daughter and turn her into a prostitute in the City!)

As if he listens to the woman of this household when she suggests something. There goes my dream of becoming a dentist. That day I cried a river of tears. I can never defy my father so making peace with everything was the only way I could do. I don’t like that my brother is disregarding the importance of education just like my father.

I give the chickens their maize first before going outside and take the brazier to the rondoval where I pour water into the kettle and put it on top of the brazier. I never bathe with cold water no matter how hot it is, not unless when I’m at emhlohlweni (virginity testing) because we bathe in the river. Yes I’m a maiden who’s very proud of her virginity.

I clean the rondoval as well while my water boils thereafter I go bath in my bedroom not before informing my mother that she can get started with baba's breakfast. Once I'm done with my morning hygiene routine I discard my water and go have breakfast in the rondoval.

"Sawubona baba." (Greetings father.)

"Yebo ntombi yami kunjani?" (Hello my girl how are you?) Dad says and has a bite of his butter and peanut butter sandwich. That is his favorite sandwich.

"Ngiyaphila ubaba unjani yena?" (I'm fine how is father doing?)

"I'm okay my child. Go underneath the tractor and take two eggs then make your breakfast

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" he says and I can't help the smile that breaks across my face. Eggs are my favorites but I prefer the ones that are naturally laid by chickens.

“Thank you so much baba!”

I run outside heading straight to the tractor and crawl underneath to take two eggs then go back to the rondavel to prepare my breakfast.

“Angishoke ukuthi ujwayele ukuya lapha uthathe amaqanda ezinkukhu zami,” (I’m not saying you should get used to taking my hens eggs) Dad says before walking out of the rondoal. Of course no one takes his eggs without his permission. In fact he never gives anyone except me once or twice in while when he wakes up on the good side of the bed. After eating my breakfast I help mama cook lunch while we talk about anything and everything.

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“Is it true that Muzi was at your father’s store wearing a pinafore?” Isisa asks

“Yes, can you imagine that man? I don’t understand why he doesn’t get a hint that I don’t want to talk to him. He disguised himself as an old woman so that he can talk to me”

It’s late in the afternoon, Isisa and I are collecting woods in the forest.

“Wow he wore a pinafore so that he can talk to you. Name any guy that would go that far in this village just to talk to you?”

“Not every guy is crazy like that man. I mean who does that?”

“Exactly Mbewenhle it shows that the man is really into you. He chose to embarrass himself by wearing a pinafore just to talk to you, now he’s the mockery of this village. The man even saved your life for crying out loud.”

“Yes he saved my life but that doesn’t mean I would just date him. He can’t buy my love with door handles”

“The thing is every guy in this village is swooning over you that’s why this means nothing to you while others can do anything to be courted by guys like Muzi,” she says while tying her bundle of wood with a rope as I do the same.

“Which Muzi?” A voice says behind us. It’s Ndongoloza and she’s with her friend Sibongile. They’re both carrying their bundles of wood on their heads.

“It’s none of your business Ndongoloza,” Isisa says dismissively.

“Stop deceiving Mbewu, guys are not swooning over her they are just feeling sorry for her because her twin disappeared. Sonke siyazi ukuthi iwele lakhe lagingiswa igabade her disappearance is just a facade”

“That’s a lie!” I retort

“Oh you didn’t know that when twins are born one would be killed it’s a tradition. It is believed that when they let them both live one of the parents will die.”

“You’re talking nonsense that tradition was done ancient years ago!” Isisa says

“Mbewenhle’s father just like any other man in this village he’s still living in an ancient era” Ndongoloza

No she’s talking rubbish my father would never do that or would he?

“Shut up bitch you just want to hurt Mbewu’s feelings because your ex boyfriend is courting her!” Isisa

Sibongile and Ndongoloza laugh out loudly. You know that annoying laugh that ends with ‘woohhh’ I want to jump on her right now and beat the shit out of her.

“Siyabonga loves me not her he just wants to sleep with her that’s all”

“I wouldn’t blame him, we all know that you are the bicycle of this village, even boys who are still learning to ride a bicycle they use you!” I riposte and Isisa cracks up into laughter which annoys Ndongoloza. She fires insults but Isisa returns them back until Ndongoloza gives up and they walk away.

“Do you really think she’s right?” I ask as we walk back home carrying our bundles of wood on our heads.

“Who?”

“Ndongoloza, about my twin sister”

“Hayi she’s lying Mbewenhle don’t even entertain those thoughts. I believe that your parents would’ve done that when you were born, not when you were already 10 years old.”

I’m not sure what to think or believe now and it’s a first thing I’m going to ask my mom when I get home. I need to know what utter nonsense of tradition is this? We say goodbye to each other and walk separate ways. When I get home I put the

bundle of wood with other things we use to make fire then walk inside the main house. Mom and dad are sitting on the couches watching TV.

“Ntombi yami usubuyile,” (My girl you are back?) My Dad says

“Yebo baba.” (Yes father.)

“Sit down”

I take a seat next to my mom and wait in anticipation.

“First of all your mom and I want to thank you my child for your good behavior and the way you carry yourself. You are not like other girls in this village who joined the reed dance but today they have 3 children while they are not married let alone reaching the age of 21 years.”

I look up at my dad in shock. I can't believe he really said that I mean he never said this before and for some obscure reasons I thought he's not even noticing.

“I’m the one who’s grateful baba for yours and mama’s guidance and words of wisdom.”

“You have grown into a beautiful young woman that we are very proud to call our daughter.” Dad

Now that melts my heart into ice. I wish I had a phone to record this.

“Ngiyabonga baba.” (Thank you father)

“We know that there’s a special boy in your life that wants to make you his wife. Your mom and I agree but it has always been my wish to do umemulo ceremony for you first before I get you married. I’m very proud of both of you that you want to do things the right way. So we reached an agreement that we would start the negotiations after your umemulo ceremony but for now uzoyomisa iduku kubo lomfana so that everyone in this village would know that you belong to someone now especially boys, they have to respect that you have someone and stop courting you now.”

Confusion doesn't begin to describe how I'm feeling right now.  
What is he talking about?

"I have to say my child that you have a choice. The Masekos are a well to do family. You will be well taken care of in that homestead and Muzikayise is a very good mannered, respectful and good looking boy," mom says squeezing my hand into hers while looking at me with a proud smile. Wait, did bhuti Muzikayise?...no he did not do that!!!

4

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

The man caught me off guard and I find myself complying especially after seeing how proud my parents are. It's been three days since my parents dropped a bombshell on me and the day to send the flag to the Maseko homestead has been confirmed. It's going to be next Saturday.

“Mama yini ukugingiswa igabade?”

Mama stops plaiting my hair and tilts my head so that I look at her. I'm unable to decipher the emotion displayed on her face right now.

“Where did you get that? Are you pregnant Mbewenhle is that the reason this boy wants to make you his wife?”

“No mama I'm not pregnant.”

“Then why are you asking this?”

“It’s because...” I heave a sigh not knowing how to say this without accusing her of something or hurting her feelings.

“Mbewenhle”

“Someone said Ndalwenhle’s disappearance is a facade wagingiswa igabade”

She lets out a heavy breath and looks at me sadly.

“Ukugingisa igabade is a Zulu tradition that was done ancient years ago. When twins were born an old woman of the family would take one twin and do whatever that needs to be done then bury the twin in the back yard. It was believed that if they let both of them live one of the parents would die.”

“How did the parents feel about that?”

“The mother would cry until she ran out of tears but there was nothing she could do as it was a tradition that had to be respected. Sometimes they wouldn’t tell the father that his wife gave birth to twins. As years went by some fathers were against the tradition and they let their twins live only to find out that it was just a superstition. Twins can both live and nothing would happen to their parents nor to them.”

“It was utter nonsense. Imagine those who killed their children for nothing.”

“Some traditions are insane honestly. Whoever said Ndalwenhle wagingiswa igabade is talking nonsense. This tradition was usually done after the twins are born and besides I wouldn’t have allowed that to happen. I would rather I die then sacrifice my baby’s life and besides I’m still going to die one day either way.”

I don’t know why I allowed Ndongdoloza to get to me about this because I knew that there’s no way my parents killed my twin sister.

Mama continues to plait my hair as we continue to chat. We hear noise first before my sister's rascals barge in followed by their mother. I haven't seen them in a while and I really missed them. I get up from the floor and open my arms wide for them. They both run towards me, each want to be the first to get in my arms but they both get to me at the same time.

"My pumpkins how are y'all?"

"We are fine thank you. How are you aunty Mbewu" asks Azanothe, my elder niece. She's five years old and her little sister, Avumile is 3 years old. How they are their father's clones but still the most beautiful children in the world it's a mystery to me. Ugly doesn't begin to describe my brother in law. Heeey the man is a combination of Gizara and Thifhelimbilu from Muvhango. I wonder how my sister kisses him. Bathi imali iyagezana but that man is still as ugly as filthy rich as he is.

"I'm okay sweetheart." I kiss both their foreheads and pass them to their grandma who kisses them as well.

“Greetings mom, sis,” Mpilenhle says as she sits down on the couch. We greet her back.

“I thought you are coming next week.” Mama

“I decided to come today because ubaba ka Azanothe is going to Johannesburg for a business trip and he will come back next week Saturday,” Mpilenhle replies to mama.

“Does he always have these trips?” Mama asks once again.

“Yes he’s working hard to build a legacy for our children.”

Mpilenhle

“That’s great. Mbewu go and get refreshments for your sister and nieces”

I go to the kitchen and do as mom said then come back with a tray of which I place on top of the coffee table then sit down on the floor and allow mama to continue plaiting my hair while we chat.

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“I’m mad at you

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” my sister says when we are finally alone and cooking supper in the rondoal.

“Why?”

“You didn’t tell me that you and Muzikayise are dating.”

I giggle

“I didn’t tell you because we are not dating.” I say and she looks at me confused. I explain to her what happened and once I’m done she laughs out loudly.

“Wow this guy is serious about you Mbewu.”

“I don’t know sis I’m conflicted about all of this honestly. He seems like a good guy but the way he did all of this scares the hell out of me. The parents are so happy about this, especially dad. The man is proud of me for the first time in my life. I was still in shock trying to digest this the next minute the parents have set the day.”

“I think this guy is good for you Mbewu. His intentions are genuine and pure. Stop worrying and give the guy a chance at least in these months while you’re waiting for umemulo you will get to know each other.”

“Alright I hear you.”

“He’s a good looking guy hey.” Mpilenhle.

Just as I’m about to respond we hear a knock and we both look at the door, it’s Isisa.

“Come in.” I say and she walks in before greeting us. Mpilenhle walks out giving us a space to talk.

“I have been sent by your man. He wants to see you.”

I haven't seen him ever since that day he came to the shop looking like a grandma. I don't know how I thought I would even hide from him forever. The man is marking his territory but we are barely in a relationship. Once I have sent the flag to his home that means everyone will know that we are in the relationship and guys have to respect that and stop courting me.

“Tell him I'm not home.”

“Haibo Mbewu you will hide from this man until when? Next week Saturday you are sending the flag to his home and you will have to spend few days there.” Isisa

“I know Isisa please don't remind me!” I groan in frustration.

“Come let’s go.”

I inform mom first that I’m accompanying Isisa to her house then we leave. I’m so nervous this would be my first time seeing him after it’s been confirmed that next week Saturday I’m sending the flag to his home. This actually means we are meeting for the first time as people who are in relationship. Iduku will only make it official and for the whole village to know.

“Stop panicking,” Isisa says when she notices that I’m popping my fingers none stop. I do that a lot when I’m nervous.

“Pass by when you come back I want you to tell me everything.”

“Where is he?”

“In the river”

“Okay sharp”

She walks back to her home as I walk to the river. The moment I see him my heart skips a few beats. I'm tempted to run back home but I cannot run away from him for the rest of my life. This is the man I'm about to commit myself into and next week Saturday everyone will know that. He's wearing a black jean and a brown waistcoat only which is unbuttoned exposing his well defined chest and pubic hairline on his lower abdomen. Of course he paired up his outfit with a brown leather moccasin carvela.

"Yeyeye." I swear I didn't mean to blush but the way he said my clan name tugs at my heartstrings.

"S'dwaba siluthuli." His smile broadens, showing off his white pearls. I must say that his smile is ugly, he looks like a cat when its yawning. Some people need to know that having beautiful white teeth doesn't mean you have a beautiful smile. He should stick to faint smiles.

"Kunjani?" (How are you?)

“I’m fine and yourself?” my voice is laced with so much confidence that I’m not feeling at all.

“I’m wonderful now that you are here.” he says and embraces me. I revel in his bear hug and taking in his woody scent.

“Thank you for joining me. Come.” He takes my hands and leads me to the big square like rock where there’s a picnic set up on top of it. He helps me sit down and takes off my sandals then sit down as well. This is beyond beautiful no one has ever done this for me. I mean I only watch these things in movies and silly me thought you have to be in a City to be able to do such things.

“All of this...you shouldn’t have but it’s beautiful.”

“I just wanted to thank you for giving me a chance.”

“Who said I’m giving you a chance?”

“Hawu Nkosazane usho kanjani manje?” (Hawu Princess what are you saying now?)

“You tricked me bhuti Muzikayise and backed me to a corner I didn’t have a choice but to agree.”

“I didn’t trick you Mbewenhle you are the one who said I should do better. I’m not a man of many words I believe in actions. I couldn’t think of any other way to show you how serious I am about you except asking your hand in marriage. I only have pure intentions for you. Ngivulele inhliziyo yakho ngingene ngitshale imbewu yothando. Ngiyazi awusuye umakhi kodwa ngicela uzowakha umuzi kababa.” (Open your heart for me and let me plant a seed of love. I know you are not a builder but please come and build my father’s house.)

The man is charming me! I’m a blushing mess.

“It’s not like I have a choice to refuse already kini sebelindele iduku.” (...at your home they’re waiting for the flag.)

“I don’t want you to feel like you are trapped, we can still postpone until you are ready to open your heart for me because as long as I live I won’t give up on you I will be a nuisance until you agree.”

“And you really know how to be a nuisance Mr Maseko”

He giggles and looks at me as if I’m the only special thing in this world.

“Angizenzi ngenziwa uthando olusha amaqandudandu njengo mlilo wothathe,” he says brushing his beard. Jizas I can’t stop blushing.

“Yeyeye.”

“S’dwaba siluthuli.”

“Wena ungowami.” (You’re mine)

I nod shyly and look down but he pushes my head up with his finger on my chin making me look at him. He's too close I'm breathing his woody scent. I can feel my heart galloping and threatening to jump out of my mouth as he nears his face closer to mine. I have never kissed a boy before and I'm not even sure what to do. What if I bite him or grind him with my teeth?

Our lips collide and my heart literally stops beating. He sandwiches my lips with his as his hands palms my face. I can taste nicotine in his lips. I'm startled by a strange sound that I make as he slides his tongue in my mouth. Jizas! I never thought something as exchanging spit can be so magical. He pulls back and looks at me deep in my eyes. I thought he has slight hypertropia that can be missed but at this very moment it's so visible that it makes me feel like he's not looking at me.

## ☆ Mbewenhle ☆

The cold water splattering all over my body snaps me out of my deep slumber. I jerk up in shock, gasping for air.

“Vuka intombazane enjani elala ilanga lizelingene enquza!”  
(Wake up what kind of a girl that sleeps until this late!) Mama’s shrill voice drags me out of my sleepy stupor. She’s standing before me with an empty 5l of bucket.

“The Masekos won’t tolerate laziness. They will send you back early in the morning and you will be the mockery of this village.”

I wipe my face with my blanket as mama walks out of my bedroom. A gasp escapes my lips when I look at the watch on the wall. Time reads 11:15am. Jizas this is so not me! I routinely wake up at 7am. See now I was woken up like I’m sort of a prisoner because of the crack underneath my toe! The man is living in his own world whereby he does things the only way he could which leaves one with no choice but to oblige.

Last night I heard a soft knock on my window only to find out it was him. He's lucky that we don't have dogs, well the man wanted to see me. In the middle of the night imagine? I tried to protest but Kayise has this way of making me relent. I found myself brushing my teeth and changing out of my oversized sleep t-shirt before jumping out of the window. The same window he had knocked on. I couldn't risk using the door as it always makes the sound when you open it.

We cuddled up in his car that was park just a bit far away from my home. He knows that he has to respect my father's house and when I asked him where did he get the courage to enter my father's house in the middle of the night his response was "My love for you Yeyeye gives me 3 reasons, one to live, second to die and third to kill" Jizas I melted into liquid gold even now I'm melting just by thinking about this. Oh my strabismus eyed man! For someone who claims to be not a man of many words he really does say the right things to me that soothe my soul and makes my heart sing love songs.

I was wrapped in his arms for almost half of the night. We talked about everything and nothing, kissing in between our

lovey dovey chatter. I enjoy every single second I spend with him especially in his arms when my lips are locked with his. He takes me to paradise when he kisses me. It's a new crazy feeling but it's amazing! I came back home at 4:30am and slept like a baby.

I drag myself out of my wet blankets and change into a shirt dress then slide into my sleepers. Now I have to hang my blankets outside and people would think I pee on myself when I'm sleeping yaz umfazi kababa kodwa! After hanging my blankets outside I head to the cows kraal with the dish and deposit cow dung into it then go to the Jojo tank to pour water inside. Once I have mixed the dung perfectly I head to the rondoal and start taking out everything in here.

"Usuqomile manje wena?" (You're dating now?) I turn and look at Lonhle. He's standing by the door with his hands tucked into his jeans. Isn't he supposed to be at school?

"Huh?"

“Ungizwile,” (You heard me) he says and walks inside the rondoal.

“Are you not supposed to be at school?”

“Don’t change the subject.”

“What subject?”

“I saw you last night walking away with a man and I followed you two. He was all over you and kissing you which made me sick!” The anger in his voice cannot be missed and I can’t help but laugh.

“You are laughing, you think this is funny?”

“Haibo Mvelonhle now you are forgetting your place. I’m 4 years older than you and I’m your sister you better stop this. Just because I don’t say anything when you act like you’re my big brother doesn’t mean you should disrespect me. I respect

you as my little brother but I won't tolerate you talking to me like I'm your peer."

He scratches his forehead. He does that a lot when he's frustrated and I have noticed that lately he's distant.

"I'm sorry sis it's just that I don't want any boy messing with you. I have to protect you from these horny guys of this village. It's sickening how every guy wants a piece of you."

I heave a sigh and smile faintly.

"Thank you bro for caring and being overprotective of me but Kayise is not a boy he's a man and he's going to be your brother in law."

"Muzikayise Maseko?"

"Yes."

“You’re telling me that out of all the guys in this village you chose that guy?”

“I have explained myself enough to you Mvelonhle you are a child I shouldn’t be sharing this with you. Come help me take out this table.”

“Wayikhetha nje impela indoda enenxemu,”

(You seriously chose a man that has strabismus) he says and burst into laughter.

“Fuck you Mvelonhle and help me with this table.”

Now I have to watch him finish laughing. God I’m so annoyed right now. I don’t know what’s funny

it’s not that bad the hypertropia that is. There are times you’d miss it. I don’t know kusuke kwenzenjani mayisivele igqama nje especially like that day after kissing me in the river. Lonhle finally stops laughing and helps me carry the table outside which is the only thing that was left.

“You have been distant lately.” I say as I begin plastering the floor with the cow dung. His silence impels me to look at him. He’s scratching his forehead while looking at me. Fear glints in his eyes.

“Talk to me buti wami.”

“Ngimoshile sis,” (I messed up sis) he says and paces up and down.

“What have you done Mvelonhle?”

“I...I...” He swallows spit and looks at me.

“I left my seed in another woman’s child.”

You could hear the pin drop. Wait...What?

“Lonhle noo!”

“I’m sorry sis.”

“Father is going to kill you!”

“Please help me sis I’m begging you. Dad can’t find out about this. We both don’t want the baby. We are too young for that, please help us.”

“You should’ve used protection Lonhle if you didn’t want the baby! Are you even supposed to be sexually active? I mean you’re 17 years old for crying out loud!”

“Don’t raise your voice mom could walk in now.”

I release a shaky breath. God what was this boy thinking?

“Who is she?”

“Zimiphi Gwala.”

What?!

“Gwala? Mvelonhle nooo!”

There’s bad blood between Dad and Bab Gwala. Years ago my dad’s cattle forcibly walked into Bab Gwala’s garden and ate everything that was there. Bab Gwala took out his gun and shot my dad’s cows, three of them died. Their fight was huge and Induna had to intervene.

“We love each other sis.”

“What do you know about love Mvelonhle?”

“Your question right now is not going to help me out of this mess.”

“There’s no way of doing this except telling mom the truth. She can try to placate dad of which is 0,1% possible.”

“Tell me what truth?” Mom

“Uhm nothing,” Lonhle says and walks out. Mom looks at me expectantly but I continue with plastering without saying a word to her.

“Mbewenhle Qwabe?” Lord have mercy on me!

“Mama.”

“What were you and your brother talking about?”

“He beat up some boy at school mom but it’s nothing serious the principal forced them to make peace with each other.”

Lying to my mom is not easy. I don’t know how she does it but she always knows when I’m lying.

“You’re lying, why would I need to placate your father? He doesn’t care what Mvelo does at school, in fact he’s the one that teaches him to fight for himself.”

“Ay angaz mama that what he sai....” (Ay I don’t know..) I don’t even finish that as she pinches my ear.

“Aahhhh Mama it hurts!” I scream in agony trying to get up from the floor as she pinches my ear even harder and swaying it.

“I won’t let this ear go until you tell me the truth, it would rather fall off!”

“Ouch mama I’m sorry I love you so much.”

I’m not snitching on my brother I rather sacrifice my ear but would Muzikayise still love me without an ear?

6

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

This woman is twisting my ear like she's turning the volume of the radio. Jizas I can barely feel my ear right now.

"Mom I will tell you the truth please let her go," says Lonhle and I don't even know when did he walk in. I feel a grip on my ear letting lose. It's so numb and hot.

"I was playing a ball and it flew underneath the tractor and broke a few of baba's eggs." Jizas this boy is still lying.

"How many is few?" Mama

"5"

"All of this is about the hens eggs? You two are full of games and you're delaying me!" The exasperation in her voice can't be miss.

It's only now I notice that she cleaned up so well and you would disagree that she's the woman who's always in pinafores. Her floral scent is pervading in the air and you can't even smell the strong smell of cow dung. She looks so perfectly gorgeous and young as she is. The pinafores makes her look older than she really is.

"Where are you going?" I ask

"I'm meeting up with your sister in Dundee and we are going to buy gifts and everything that you would give the Masekos the day of sending the flag."

"Where are my nieces?"

"Argh her mother in law asked for them so Mpilenhle had to drive them to Madadeni but now she's on her way to Dundee. That woman never wants me to spend time with my grandkids."

“She thinks highly of herself that one just because she’s a principal. Sometimes I despise educated people because of their arrogance and pride.”

“I’m not surprised her husband divorced her she’s pompous and condescending. No man can tolerate that nonsense. I’m leaving now, be quick Mbewenhle by the time we come back it has to be dry.”

“Okay mama. Bring some chocolate please.”

“Ask your man that you’re jumping windows for,” she says and walks out leaving me stunned. How the hell does she know this? I was so sure that no one saw me I guess I should’ve just used the door mxm!

I continue with my task at hand until I finish and let the door wide open so that it can dry up quickly. I wash my hands before preparing a fire wood to warm up my bath water.

“Thank you sis for not telling mom.” Lonhle

“I almost lost my ear for you Mvelonhle you better fix this problem.”

“How would I fix it? That’s why I need help from you Mbewenhle.”

“I don’t know how to help you Lonhle. There’s a baby on the way on top of that the girl who’s carrying the baby her dad is our father’s number one enemy. This is a mess I don’t want to lie to you.”

“See why they can’t find out about this.”

“You can’t hide the baby forever Lonhle.”

“I know but there should be a way.”

I get up from the bent position and look at him. Shame I feel sorry for him. Fear is evident on his face. The difficult part

about this is the bad blood between the fathers of these children.

“I hope you are not thinking what I think you are thinking.”

“I don’t know what to think sis I’m so scared.” A lone tear escapes his eye and rolls down his cheek. I pull him to my arms and embrace him. I wish there’s something I can do to help but my hands are tied.

“I’m sorry little brother maybe we should tell mom and she would know how to handle this.”

“No you know mom can’t hide anything from dad. She’s going to tell him and dad would beat the shit out of me or even worse disown me.”

There are so many chances of the latter and what’s so sad is that mom won’t be able to stop dad from doing that. Dad is the head of this family and whatever he says goes no one defies him. He pulls back from my arms and wipes his tear.

“What does Zimiphi say about this?”

“She’s angry at me and scared like me. I can’t even be there for her because she’s shutting me out.”

“Why didn’t you use protection Lonhle.”

“It was our first time and everything happened so unexpectedly.”

“Eish what makes this harder is the fact that her father and ours are at loggerheads. Bab Gwala wasn’t supposed to shoot dad’s cows.”

“Bab Gwala was also tired of complaining about dad’s cattle eating everything in his garden I guess he reached a breaking point.”

“Dad didn’t sent those cows there. Bab Gwala should’ve asked dad to pay for the damage not shoot his cows. I think his anger stems from jealousy.”

He shrugs his shoulders. I dash to take the kettle and fill it with water before placing it on top of the brazier. While my water is warming up I decide to talk about something light to distract him from thinking too much until my water is hot and ready for me to bath. The good thing is mom cleaned the house so after taking a bath and getting dressed I prepare myself to go to the store.

“I made you something to eat,” Lonhle says as I enter the kitchen. I look at the two plates of bread, sausages and eggs. I can tell by the yellow color of eggs that these are the ones that are naturally laid by hens.

“These are dad’s eggs?”

“Yes your favorite! Sit down and let eat.”

“Haibo Mvelonhle who gave you the permission to take the eggs.”

“I told mom I broke them njena I made 5 of them.”

Jizas this child! I shake my head and sit down. Dad is going to shout for the whole month for these eggs but I’m starving so I eat.

.....

“I thought you are not coming today

Advertisement

” Mngqobi says.

“I overslept and had to start with chores. Thanks for standing up for me.”

“You should start paying me now.”

I giggle

“Ngikubhadele ngoThoko yini ncono wena you are getting paid for this unlike me.” (Pay you with what at least...)

“You know how stingy your father is. He’s paying me peanuts!”  
We both laugh.

Dad is unfair Mngqobi deserves all the money he can get from this job. He’s a bread winner in his home and his three young siblings only got him. Their parents died years ago and Mngqobi had to step up and drop out at school so that he can take care of his young siblings.

“But I know how you can pay me.” I look at him all agog.

“Isisa,” he continues and I laugh. Now it makes sense! The guy is always asking me about Isisa and me being slow I couldn’t pick it up.

“God why couldn’t I see that! Don’t worry I will try to put in a word for you.”

“Thank you. Let me continue with my job,” he says and disappears to the other side of the store leaving me to attend my customers as well.

“Is it true?”

I look up from the magazine and look at him. The fury is evident on his face and he’s even shaking.

“Greetings Siyabonga.”

“Is it true Mbewenhle that Saturday you are sending the flag to the Maseko homestead for Muzikayise.”

I swallow hard and nod lightly.

“After two years Mbewenhle ngigqigqa emvakwakho ngikushela.” (After two years of courting you Mbewenhle)

“I’m sorry Siyabonga I told you that I’m not interested to pursue a relationship with you.”

He snickers and pinches the bridge of his nose while looking at me with eyes full of pain and anger. Now I feel bad but what did I do wrong?

“I thought you were playing hard to get. You made me believe that you would give me a chance.” Siyabonga

“You must have mistaken me...” he cuts me off

“Of course I must have mistaken you clearly you are not a girl who pride herself and carries herself with dignity it only took you for a second to date Muzikayise. That how y’all nina matshitshi nicasha ngomhlolo kanti aninasimilo. Clearly you dated Muzi because he’s coming from a rich family and his father is Induna! You’re so cheap Mbewenhle!” (... that how

you maidens are, you guys hide behind virginity testing while the truth is y'all have no moral...)

I have never been denigrated like this in my whole life. My heart is torn apart and I'm shaking like a leaf.

"Boy don't you dare talk to my girl like that!" Barks Kayise as he walks in.

"If it isn't the man who uses his father's wealth to get any girl he wants!" Siyabonga

"Boy mind your tone."

"What are you going to do huh?" Siyabonga says walking closer to Kayise who's chuckling in disbelief.

"You think I'm scared of you huh? Hey I'm not scared of you yellow bone boy! Lamabhande akho nezincweba azingithusi ngizokushaya unye mfana wami!"

Kayise throws a punch that sends Siyabonga right on the floor. I jump up from my chair and go the side where they are and pull him as he about kick Siyabonga who's groaning on the floor.

"Kayise stop it please!"

"This boy is taking me for a ride!"

Siyabonga crawls to the door and disappears. I look at Kayise who's jaws are clenched. He's so angry and his hypertropia is so visible at this moment.

"Are you okay?" He's asking me while I'm the one who should be asking him that.

"Yes I'm okay and you?"

“I’m okay but that boy made me do something that I hate with everything in me. The last thing I want is to have his blood on my hands.”

“Please don’t tell me you want to kill him.”

“No I’m not a murderer but if he doesn’t come back to me ngizomulula he will bleed clots through his nose and die.”

I gasp in shock as I look at his arms but I don’t see anything. Usually they wear these belt on their biceps. These are not just any belts but powerful belts that have strong muti on them. One who has these belts never lose in a fight and you can die if they beat you up even if they just slapped you. That’s how powerful these belts are.

“So he wasn’t lying unawo amabhande?”

He brushes his beard while looking at me.

“Do you see them?” Today he’s dressed into a leopard vest and shorts. No carvela today he’s wearing izinxabulela.

“Incweba yona?”

“I missed you so much sondela ngithi manqa.” (...come closer so that I can kiss you.)

“Muzikayise.”

“Suka sambe wami.” Look at me blushing arg this man!

“You do have incweba?”

“No I don’t baby just forget what I said. I shouldn’t have said that.”

“I don’t want Siyabonga to die.”

“He won’t die relax. I’ve got you something to eat. Let me go fetch it in my car.” He walks out. I would really hate to see Siyabonga dying even though he insulted me but I don’t wish him to die. He comes back with two takeaways and MTN plastic bag.

“What’s that, it’s smells nice.”

“Let go to your work station first and sit down.”

We do just as he said and when I open the takeaway my mouth waters at the sight of tripe. There’s stiff pap on the other takeaway but I prefer eating tripe with iphuthu. The soup doesn’t penetrate through the stiff pap it just flows.

“Mmmh yummy! Wait how did you know this is my favorite?”

“You told me?”

“When?”

“Just eat Yeyeye and stop asking questions but let me kiss you first.”

He doesn't wait for me to give him permission but attacks my lips. I feel a surge of butterflies in my tummy and moan in his mouth as the kiss intensifies. There's this thing he does with his tongue in my mouth that makes me moist in the wrong places and his hands that are stroking my bare thighs fans the flames.

“Your lips are so sweet they're surely going to be my addiction,” he says and pecks my forehead.

“Eat my love”

“Is it not enough that you went behind my back and ask my parents for my hand in marriage now you want to put a spell on me.”

He laughs out loudly.

“It wouldn’t be so bad now would it be?”

“Oh no Mr Maseko I’m not eating this food until you eat it as well.”

“You’re so dramatic!” He says and takes a piece of meat before shoving it in his mouth.

“See”

“Chew and swallow.” He covers his mouth with his fist as he laughs harder. I’m not taking any chances the man just told me that Siyabonga will die if he doesn’t come back azomlula only muti can be behind that reason. We end up eating together while chatting.

“I have something for you.” He takes the MTN plastic from the floor and hands it to me. I search through the plastic and there’s a box inside of it when I take it out I freeze. It’s a Hawei P40

“It’s mine?”

“Yes sthandwa sami this thing of not being able to reach you when I want to see you is frustrating me.”

Jizas this man! Lord knows how much I have been in need of a phone but dad doesn’t spend money on useless things \*eyes roll\*

“Ohh Kayise you should’ve bought ubhopopo this phone is way expensive.” I cannot hide the excitement though.

“You deserve everything expensive Yeyeye.”

“Thank you so much!” I plant kisses all over his face which makes him blush. Ncaa nkosh he’s so cute.

.....

The maidens are singing and dancing (ayasina amatshitshi) It's one song after the other, you'd think it's a competition. It's such a beautiful sight to see. Finally it's the day of sending the flag to the Maseko homestead.

♪♪Ulibhale

(Bhale)

Igama lami

(Bhale)

Ulibhale

(Bhale)

Isibongo sami

Omama bayiyizela

(Bayiyizela omama bayiyizela)

Weee mama yhoo

(Bayiyizela omama bayiyizela)

Omama bayiyizela ♪♪

I excuse myself as my phone rings and walk away from the singing of the maidens. The smile on my face when I see who's the caller.

"S'dwaba Siluthuli"

"How are you Yeyeye."

"I'm fine and yourself."

"I'm so happy that by tomorrow morning everyone would know that you are mine. Lizobeliphephezela iduku elimhlophe qwa egcekeni lako Ngcamane."

I can't stop blushing. I'm in love bakwethu!

"The maidens are about to leave is everything set that side?"

"Yes my love we are waiting for them."

“Alright I have to go.”

“Yeyeye”

“S’dwaba Siluthuli”

“Ngiyakuthanda.” (I love you)

Awww I’m swooning over him all over again.

“Ngiyakuthanda nami.” (I love you too)

I hang up and go back. Time is 11:00pm and it’s time for the maidens to go to the Maseko homestead. They take everything and leave while singing. Amaqhikiza amabili are leading the way. I hope everything will go well coz one of amaqhakiza akangithandisise kahle she better not mess things up for me but Isisa promised me that she will make sure everything goes well.

## ☆ Muzikayise ☆

It's so crazy how one can have so many feelings for one person, it's even crazier when you've just got to know that person yet it's feels like you have known her for the rest of your life.

Mbewenhle Qwabe, Oh baba wethu osezulwini! The mention of her name alone makes my heart skip a thousand beats. She captured my heart in a matter of seconds. The awakening moment of my life was that day when it was raining heavily and she was trapped in the veranda of her father's store. It was then I realize that every single moment of my life spent without her it was actually leading me to her.

"Muzikayise!" My father's voice snaps me out of daydreaming.

"Baba." I say sliding my phone back into my pants.

"Yini le oyigqolozele lapho kumakhalekhukhwini?" (What are you staring at on your phone)

“Nothing baba.” It’s a lie I was on the phone with suka sambe wami and when we ended our call I found myself staring at her picture which is my lock screen, smiling like an idiot. I’m so happy now that I can reach her whenever I need and want her.

“It’s that Qwabe girl isn’t it?”

“Cha baba.” (No father) I try not to blush but it proves to be a mission impossible. The things that lady does to me!

“She’s such a beauty,” he says and I nod with a smile on my face as I make sure that the van is locked.

“Just like her mother.” I look at him.

“Are you supposed to complement another woman?”

He laughs and looks at me, his eyes are dancing with laughter.

“Oh come on son I’m just telling the truth. That girl’s mother was every man’s dream. Out of all the men in the village that were courting her she chose Qwabe and it seems like history is repeating itself.”

“Are you one of those men?”

“Yes but I knew that I wouldn’t stand a chance. I was a poor man wearing rags and I smelled like a skunk to women well until I met your mother. That woman loved me for who I am and didn’t care that I had nothing to provide. I will always love and cherish her even when I’m gone from this world.” The smile on his face is the exact smile I always have on my face when I think of my brown skin girl which is every single minute of the day.

“That’s beautiful father.”

“Are you sure that this girl loves you for who you are but not what you have?”

“It’s not like she’s coming from a poor family father. Qwabe is a very successful man who has livestock and businesses that are doing very well.”

“But he’s not wealthy as us. We are the only well to do family in this village just like the Qwabes were the only well to do family back then in our days.”

“So you’re telling me that her father won her mother’s heart because he was coming from a rich family?”

“It could be possible but I’m not there what I’m trying to say is are you sure this girl is the one for you?”

“I’m hundred percent sure that she’s the one baba. I hate how people make it seems like being wealthy is the only reason you can get good looking women. Is being wealthy the only thing that can make us attractive to women? Don’t we deserve true unconditional love?”

“Of course you do deserve true love my boy but we have to face the fact that in life if you are nothing no one takes you serious especially women and unfortunately most of them have no intentions of loving but sulking men dry until they have nothing. I want you to be careful my son.”

“I hear you dad and I really appreciate your advice but Mbewenhle is with me because she loves me, what I have actually doesn't matter to her. She's not like other girls.”

“Really?” Thuthuka's voice says and I cock my head aside to look at him.

“Really what?”

“That she loves you? You didn't court the girl you backed her up in a corner by approaching her parents behind her back so she had no choice but to agree. You involved her parents because of your poor courting skills,” Thuthuka says with a smug on his face.

“If she doesn’t feel me she would’ve told her parents. I didn’t force her on anything she had a choice to refuse.”

“Keep fooling yourself malumes.” Thuthuka

“What’s going on with you these days huh? Are you still sore that I won the bet?”

He chuckles bitterly and shakes his head.

“Sore? Oh please I have many things to be sore about. You didn’t win this bet you cheated you were supposed to court the girl not this short cut you did. It proves what a weakling man are you.”

I feel the stinginess on the back of my palm and realize that I’ve just slapped him.

“Haibo Muzikayise why are you slapping the child!” Dad yells as Thuthuka holds his cheek, tears glistening in his eyes.

“This child should know his place baba. He has been very disrespectful lately and speaks to me however he wants nx!” I jump into the driver seat of the van and drive off. This boy is starting to forget his place now and I had to remind him.

Goats are close to my heart because that's where I started hence I nurture them myself at home and once they've grown enough to be sold for slaughtering I deliver them to Newcastle, where my business is located. That's where I'm driving to right now to deliver them. I have two of my cousins who are running the business for me because I have a lot on my plate. Running my father's businesses while making sure that my livestock farms are doing well and sustaining requires a lot of time.

The cattle and poultry farm is more profitable than the sheep and pigs farm, nonetheless I'm happy with the hard work I have put in to sustain my farms. When I arrive Ntokozo and I share pleasantries then he helps me take out the goats from the van and move them to their shelter.

“Mom told me that there's a woman that captured your heart and she's bringing the flag this Saturday.”

“Yes that’s true.”

“What is the meaning of this? Does this mean you’re getting married?”

“No idiot we are not getting married. This is the Zulu custom of making a relationship official and known to everyone.”

“I have never been to such an event before I’m curious.”

“You should come plus you love girls I’m sure you can score yourself a maiden.”

His face lit up at the sound of that. Bloody bastard likes girls too much.

“I would definitely be there!”

“But you must know that maidens are not like other girls that are charmed by your whack American accent.” I say and he bursts into laughter. He likes imitating Americans a lot I don’t know if he sees himself as one or what and it’s so funny to watch.

“Jealousy doesn’t suit you Gazi!”

“Whatever! I’m leaving now I will expect you on Saturday”

“Sure Gazi.” We bump fists then I hop into my van and drive off. The plan is to start at the farms first and check how’s everything but my plan is messed up when I receive a call from my dad who’s summoning me home.

There’s unfamiliar car parked in our yard so I pull over next to it and jump out of the car then head inside the house. I bump into my young sister at the door who glares at me.

“Why did you put your hands on him while you know very well what happens when you beat up someone!”

Thuthuka is the one that is a weakling man. One back slap and he's dying how is that even possible? I mean sidla umuthi owodwa futhi sagcaba ngomuthi owodwa.

“Don't raise your voice at me wena I'm not your peer.”

I skip to the lounge and to my surprise I find my father with the Ndaba boy and his cousin. I greet first before settling down.

“Muzikayise, these boys told me that you beat Siyabonga up. He has been swollen and lost his voice ever since you beat him up. What do you have to say about that son?”

I clear my throat and run my sweaty palms on my thighs over the pants.

“I didn't mean to beat him up he provoked me father.”

“That gave you a right to beat him up?” Dad

“Yes Baba no boy should talk however he wants to my girl and expect me to keep quiet.”

“Oh this is about that Qwabe girl. I should’ve known

” Dad says and looks at Siyabonga who’s blue and swollen on his face.

Such a weakling swine I only gave him one fist but look at him now he’s barely recognizable and can’t even talk.

“Siyabonga acknowledges his mistake hence we are here to ask for an apology, ” says Msizi, the cousin. I look at Siyabonga and his look says the opposite.

“Apology accepted you can go.” I say and Msizi looks at me pleading. I know very well why they’re here but Siyabonga’s facial expression doesn’t show that he’s sorry.

“Please Muzi do what you have to do man.”

“I accept your cousin’s apology Msizi kanti what more do you want from me?”

“You know what you have to do.”

“No I don’t please leave my father’s house.”

“Muzikayise” Dad.

I look at him and sigh.

“He must go apologize to Mbewenhle first.”

“How would he apologize to her while he’s mute?”

“Akufuni mina lokho.” (That doesn’t concern me.) I get up and walk out. I can’t believe that I cancelled my plans for this nonsense.

.....

I can hear the sound of the maidens singing from the other side of the mountain and that makes my heart pick up its beat. The day or should I say the night I have been waiting for has finally come. The yard is buzzing and almost everyone is drunk already.

“Yiwo amatshitshi lawa aculayo?” (Are those maidens who are singing?) Asks Ntokozo excitedly you’d swear they’re coming here for him.

“Yes.”

I need some smoke to calm myself a bit I’m over excited one would swear that we are getting married but either way this means a lot to me. It means she’s accepting my love openly and committing herself to me. It’s the first step of our relationship and I can’t wait for her umemulo. I want to change her surname already and make her the mother of my children. The second I

slide my phone out of my pocket my fingers are involuntarily typing her digits.

“S’dwaba Siluthuli.” Her mellifluous voice comes through and inhliziyo yami yavele yagiya. I wonder if she knows when she calls me by my clan name she makes me want to sign up everything I own to her.

“How are you Yeyeye.”

“I’m fine and yourself.”

“I’m so happy that by tomorrow morning everyone would know that you are mine. Lizobeliphephezela iduku elimhlophe qwa egcekeni lako Ngcamane.”

“The maidens are about to leave is everything set that side?”

“Yes my love we are waiting for them.”

“Alright I have to go.”

“Yeyeye”

“S’dwaba Siluthuli”

“Ngiyakuthanda.” (I love you)

“Ngiyakuthanda nami.” (I love you too) Did I hear that right? MaQwabe finally told me that she loves me! She hangs up on me before I even let it sink in that she said loves me. Uthi uyangithanda!

The door burst open and Thuthuka stumbles in. He’s pap drunk and he can’t even walk properly.

“Malumes!”

He burps while flumping on the couch next to me.

“I’m sorry that I have been disrespectful malumes. It was never intentional I was engulfed by myriad of emotions which is no excuse at all. Ayidle izishiyele Ngcamane,” he says with his slurred speech and burps once again.

“It’s okay boy I’m just glad you acknowledge your mistake.”

“Thank you for forgiving me.”

“Don’t mention it. What myriad of emotions you are talking about?”

“It doesn’t matter anymore.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes I’m sure.”

“Your girl is the next to send the flag.”

He chuckles and shakes his head.

“Ah forget about that one. I’m still young for a serious relationship. Congratulations on winning Mbewenhle’s heart you’re truly the luckiest man.”

“Thank you boy.”

“Take care of her malume because if you dare hurt her I swear on my father’s grave you’re going to see another side of me that you don’t know.” With that said he staggers outside leaving me stunned. Was that a threat? Of course not Thuthuka talks too much when he’s drunk and by tomorrow everything he said would be long forgotten.

I squash the cigarette butt into my ashtray and place it on the coffee table before walking out. The maidens are by the gate singing and my father’s young brother is welcoming them.

♪♪Ake ningibizeleni isoka lami

(Isoka lami)

Ake ningibizeleni isoka lami

Ubani ozolala nami

(Isoka lami)

Ubani ozalala nami

(Isoka lami) ♪♪

They parade inside the yard singing and throwing sweets. Kids are running around trying to catch and pick up the sweets. After the maidens are shown a room they start giving gifts they've brought.

Dad is the first to be called out to get his mat, blanket and pillow. My mother receives the same as well but with a dish washing basin that is filled with tea and dining set. I'm the last person to be called and they give me a bath basin of which inside has toiletries and ucu which is decorated nicely. There's a note attached to ucu. I can't wait to read it.

Once they are done one of amaqhikiza tells Isisa to go outside and insert the white flag. I sing a song while doing my victory Zulu dance as everyone clap hands for me and ululate.

♪♪ Bangiphatha kahle ekhweni lami

(Ngizobalobelela, ngizobalobelela)

Bangiphatha kahle ekhweni lami

(Ngizobalobelela, ngizobalobelela)

Mina ngizobalobelela

(Ngizobalobelela, ngizobalobelela)

Ngithi ngizobalobelela

(Ngizobalobelela, ngizobalobelela)

Bangiphatha kahle ekhweni lami ♪♪

Oh sukanini madoda ukuba ngangemZulu ngangiyoba yini!

When my sisters start serving food I excuse myself and call suka sambe wami but her phone rings unanswered. I know she will call me back once she finds my missed call. Everything goes well I couldn't be happier at 4am the maidens leave accompanied by guys who are obviously trying their luck as well.

.....

“S’dwaba Siluthuli

There’s no way better than to express my love for you through ucu.

White Beads: Symbolize the authenticity of my love for you.

Red Beads: I’m over heels in love with you to the point of no return.

Blue Beads: I will stay committed to you and never cheat on you.

Black Beads: You are my eternal and my forever.

Green Beads: I have found my permanent home in your heart.

Thank you so much for choosing me among girls in this village  
I'm so lucky to be at the receiving end of your love.

Mbewenhle Qwabe.”

I melt like ice right after reading the note. The smell of it makes me miss her so much. How does the note smells just like her it's a mystery to me. I haven't seen her for 3 days after we made our relationship official but she's spending the night with me tonight. I kiss the note before placing it with my most treasured things then drive to her home.

I park a bit far from the gate and wait for her but instead her little brother comes to me. I lower the window.

“Maseko,” he says

“Qwabe.”

“You are good?”

“Yes I’m good. I hope you will take care of my sister otherwise you and I won’t get along siyezwana?” (...are we clear?)

“Of course Qwabe I love your sister so much I will never hurt her intentionally.”

“I’m glad to hear that.”

Mbewenhle appears with a duffle bag and looks at her brother.

“Mvelonhle what are you doing here?”

“Hawu I was just greeting my brother in law right Maseko”

“Yes Yeyeye he was just greeting me.”

She stares both of us suspiciously and walks to the other side of the car then gets in.

“Ukhumbule ke ndoda ukuthi awakakhiphi icent elimnyama ungalinge nje ufohle esibayeni sikababa.” (Don’t forget man that you haven’t paid a cent so don’t you dare have sex with her.)

“Jizas Mvelonhle!” Mbewenhle yells with annoyance.

I chuckle and nod my head then drive off.

“I’m sorry about that.”

“Don’t worry I’m a brother as well I know that he means no harm.”

“Mvelonhle thinks he’s our elder brother he can be too much at times.”

“I like him because we are the same. I’m the only brother among girls just like him and it’s our job to protect our sisters it doesn’t matter if they’re older than us.”

We arrive at home. I take her bag and lead her to my house.

“Let me put the bag in the bedroom then we will go greet my parents.”

She widens her eyes as if she’s seeing a ghost.

“I’m not ready Kayise to meet your parents can I see them tomorrow morning.”

“But baby...”

“Ngiyakucela Sidwaba Siluthuli” (Please..) Of course once she calls me that I give in to everything she asks.

“Okay tomorrow. My mother is looking forward to meet you.”

“Oh God really?” She says and releases a shaky breath.

“Yes stop stressing she likes you already.” I pull her closer to myself and devour her lips. Oh she’s the best thing I have ever tasted in my life.

“I miss you.” I whisper and she whispers back

“I miss you too.”

I take her bag to my bedroom then join her as she’s seated on the couch watching Scandal. The way she’s concentrating on this soapie I’m so jealous she can’t even hear me.

“Baby come on are you here for me and for TV? I haven’t seen you for days can I have your full attention please.” I sulk

“Okay I’m sorry. You don’t have to cry I’m here bhonono,” she says pinching my cheeks like I’m a baby. I can’t help but laugh.

“What is bhonono?”

“I don’t know but you are my bhonono

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” she says laughing and I join her.

“Hayi baby you’re so unromantic! Bhonono ngathi igama lomdlwane.”(...Bhonono is like a name of a puppy)

I watch her as she laughs even harder. It warms my heart to see her laughing carefree and what makes me happy is that I’m the reason for that.

“Then you’re my puppy.”

“Uyahlanya angisiye umdlwane mina!” (You’re crazy I’m not a puppy!) I say tickling her. She’s giggling and wiggling herself but I’m not having mercy on her ribs.

“Okay Ka..yi..se you are not a pu..ppy! Gosh I’m going to fart stop it please!” She screams between her giggles. I let go of her and look at her as she wipes her tears.

“You want to kill me wena!”

“I love you!”

I don't know how does she trick me but I end up watching soapies one after the other with her. She has me wrapped around her little finger. Before she left her home she ate that what she said, I'm also full so we eat the chocolate I bought for her. After Imbewu we retire to my bedroom to sleep.

“Can I change?”

“Yes you can.”

“Then leave the bedroom.”

“Do I have to?”

“Yes!”

I huff and drag myself out of my bedroom. I'm tempted to peek on the keyhole but I decide to give her the space and privacy she needs. Once she's done she calls me. I walk back and find her in a long sleeves pj top and matching long pj pants. I can barely see her skin! She takes the pillow and opens the covers on the foot of the bed.

"And then?"

"Wena uzolala enhla mina ngizolala ezinyaweni." I laugh thinking she's joking but the moment she slides into bed I realize how damn serious she is!

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I don't understand what is rib-tickling but the moment I slide into bed his laughter comes to a halt. I can feel his presence above my head and when I look at him he's rooted on his spot, the look on his face is comical.

"Get into bed." It's only now that he moves from the spot he was above my head and doffs his clothes leaving his briefs.

My eyes can't help themselves but gawp at his visible bugle on the front of his undies and travel down to his beautifully muscular thighs. Jizas I never thought men also have sexy thighs let alone him. I mean come on this man is light skinned, the imagination of yellow thighs in a man is not appealing. I guess me and my imagination were wrong. The hair on them makes them even more sexier. This man is making me feel everything foreign to me. Never in my wildest dreams have I thought that I will ever find man's thighs so damn sexy.

"I'm switching off the light."

“Okay.”

He switches off the light then I feel him getting next to me on my behind, pulling me closer to his body. This man is not listening to me!

“Kayise...”

“Shhh let’s sleep sthandwa sami.”

“I said...” Once again he shuts me up before I say anything further.

“I know what you said but I want to sleep next to you Yeyeye. Don’t worry angeke ngifohle esibayeni sikababakho. I know what I have to do first before I get the privilege of fucking you trust me the wait is worth it. ” (...I won’t have sex with you...) As always I relent.

His soft lips together with his warm breath on my nape sends goosebumps through my body. The things he makes me feel are out of this world. He pulls me even closer to his body like I'm not close enough already. I swear our bodies have become one. I thought it would be difficult to fall sleep since I have never slept with a man holding me this close in his arms but it doesn't even take a second for me to doze off.

.....

The feel of something poking my butt wakes me up and for a brief moment I'm confused by my surroundings until Kayise's soft snore snaps me out of my sleepy stupor. He's clinging on me I can't even move. The pain on my left side tells me that I slept with one side the whole night that's how peaceful my sleep was.

The hair stands on my back when I feel what's poking my butt. It's covered by a soft fabric but I can't miss how hard is it. I hold it tightly it's his arm, no maan it's can't be his arm this thing doesn't have a bone. It's hard yet it's soft. One more squeeze and his gruff whisper startles me.

“Udlala ngengozi Yeyeye.” (You’re playing with danger.) Playing huh? I’m not playing how can I play with something that is the reason I’m awake. He turns me around and looks at me with a smile on his face.

“I’m not playing I wanted to see this thing that woke me up.”

He looks at me with a raised a brow, confusion written all over his face.

“It was poking me in my sleep.” He chuckles softly.

“Oh I’m sorry it woke you up.”

“What is it?” I fling the blankets away from us and the bugle I saw yesterday is nothing compared to what I’m seeing right now. The beat of my heart is jack hammering when the realization hit me that I touched and felt his..uhm Jizas is it supposed to be this big? I’m perturbed and mortified but guess what he finds this waggish. He’s laughing his yellow ass out.

“You don’t have be scared and embarrassed Yeyeye this is yours.” Is he trying to make me feel better? Because if so he’s not instead he’s fueling my mortification and shock.

“I want to go home.” I can’t look at him in the eyes after this. I attempt to slide out of bed but he holds me tightly.

“Baby come on.”

I hide my face with my hands. This is embarrassing!

“Yeyeye look at me.”

I shake my head no but he removes my hands and locks his laughing eyes on me.

“Your innocence is such a huge turn on to me and it’s refreshing. Don’t worry you will get used to Khabangobe and the day you taste him I swear you would be asking for more. You don’t have to be embarrassed or shocked and by the way it was nice when you were squeezing him. He really enjoyed that

and if it was for him you'd do that often but we don't want to scare you. We know you are good at running away from us," he says and I can't help but laugh.

"Argh whatever!"

"Why did you run away that day in the river?"

"I was embarrassed Kayise."

"About what?" He's asking me really now.

"You know about what and I don't want to talk about it."

"Okay I'm sorry I didn't mean to upset you but can I tell you a story?"

I nod then he begins narrating his story of how he pooped himself on his first day at school. He was scared to ask his teacher to go to the toilet. The learners laughed at him

obviously and the teacher went ballistic on him to the point of beating him up with a chalkboard duster on his head.

I feel my armpits sweat as rage attacks every sense of my being. What kind of a teacher does that to a six year old! I want to fly to that teacher right in this moment and sort her out rhaaaa!

“Where does that woman live?”

“Why are you asking.”

“Ngifuna ukuya kuye ngimlume ikhala!” (I want to go to her and bite off her nose!) I say and click my tongue. He laughs out loudly and I don’t know what’s funny while I’m boiling with anger.

“Ahh that’s cute baby but don’t worry karma will visit her.”

“I don’t believe in karma.”

“Neither do I but she’s not worth it.”

“I’m sorry you went through that sthandwa sami but at least you were a child unlike me...” he interjects

“You were scared Yeyeye stop being hard on yourself. I don’t ever want to see you embarrassed about anything in front of me do you hear me?”

I nod my head.

“I don’t hear you Yeyeye.”

“I hear you Kayise.”

“Good.”

He pulls my head to his chest and I snuggle closer to him as I wrap my arm around his waist. We stay like that in sweet silence. I could get use to morning like this. Me wrapped in his

arms and listening to his heart that is beating in sync with mine. Umjolo is nice nina I don't understand where does "uyasinyisa umjolo or it will end in tears is coming from" Or I'm the lucky one I mean kuzozonke izimbewu emhlabeni ngiyile enhle. (out of all the seeds in this world I'm the beautiful one) That's what my dad always say. We eventually get out of bed and do the bed together.

"Yhoo my neck is painful

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the pillow kept falling the whole night. We are not sleeping on the foot of the bed tonight Yeyeye," he says stretching his neck and I hear it making a popping sound.

"Nxense" (Sorry) I say laughing.

"You're abusing me wena!"

"If you slept where I told you to sleep you wouldn't be complaining right now."

“And miss the opportunity of sleeping next to you? Never! Regardless of the pillow falling I had a wonderful night it was evident that I was sleeping with you in my arms.”

“I also had a wonderful sleep I didn’t even turn.”

He smiles and sits on the bed. I walk to the lounge to prepare for his bathing water. His house is a beautiful two rooms house that needs a touch of a woman to make it clean and spotless. The glass TV stand in the lounge has dust all over it and there’s gibberish writing on it probably his sisters kids did that. I don’t want to mention the TV screen it has sticky juicy maps and lines all over it and the radio is covered in dirt. At least the grey rug on the floor is clean. I love the deep grey color on the walls it creates that theatre feel and makes it easy for one to concentrate on the TV.

At least the 20l bucket of water next to the bar grey fridge is still white and clean. I pour water into the electric kettle and plug it. The Masekos are not using solar power the government installed for us they installed their solar panels that are enough to fulfill their house power needs. Once the water has boiled I prepare for his bath water.

“Here’s your water.” I say placing the vaskom on the floor.

“Thank you so much sthandwa sami,” he responds with his with ugly smile plastered on his face. I fetch the cold water in the lounge after boiling mine into an electric kettle. The bigger the size of solar panels the bigger the cost so they’re obviously the only people in this village who uses appliances.

Dad can afford though if only he wasn’t stingy. It’s not him who wakes up early in the morning and make fire so that when he wakes up he’d have warm water to bath and food to eat. It’s not him who has to go to the forest and collect woods. It’s not him who has to make amalongwe from the cows dung. It’s not him okumele enze umpusheni wokubasa. Since my sister got married that meant I’m the one who has to do all of that. No I’m not complaining those are my duties but why make our lives hard when there’s a way to make them easy? The only thing he did which is great was to buy Jojo tank so at least I don’t have to go to the water pit to fetch water.

They say when you give you shall receive more from God. To add on that I say when you appreciate what you have you shall

have more but when you don't you would end up losing what you have. The thing with my father is that it doesn't feel like he's a successful man who has businesses because he's always complaining about not having money when he has to spend. The man would be complaining the whole week when he has to buy us clothes. "Anginayo imali yezidwedwe mina" yet he's scared of ignominy.

This one day his brother who lives in Ladysmith wayebika inxiwa (a ceremony to introduce/ inform a new home to the ancestors) I don't know if housewarming is the right word to use but in a traditional way. Mom always makes sure that we buy new clothes and look presentable when we are going to meet her husband's family because, wow my dad's family go for shopping even for a funeral I tell you.

Dad as always was complaining and that time he wasn't prepared to buy us clothes. I decided to wear an old dress that was washed out. "What are you wearing Mbewenhle? Don't you have another dress? You want to embarrass me in front of my family?" I saw my mom smiling alone when I told him it's the only dress I have. Of course we had to start in town to buy clothes first and changed in the restrooms then left for Ladysmith.

I decide to clean the lounge while Kayise is bathing. He has all the cleaning equipment but he's not using it. By the time I finish I'm sneezing none stop. The dust got into my nose. He's also done and looks hot in a denim bib overall only with white sneakers. His lovely scent is permeating the house.

"Are we going somewhere?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"Let's me just call it quality time together."

"Okay let me bath."

I clean the bedroom as well first then take a bath. It wouldn't be so bad to matchup with him so I opt for a denim bib dress

with white short sleeves t-shirt and sandals. My cornrows hairstyle is starting to get old now but I look cute.

Here comes the difficult part now which is meeting his family. The Masekos are a huge family. I can imagine those eyes that would be looking at me and some would be sizing me up from head to the toe. The fact that Ndongoloza is also part of this family is enough to kill every positive thought right now.

“Do I have to meet them? I mean we are not married...” He shuts me up with a knees wobbling kiss that leaves me breathless.

“You worry too much come,” he says intertwining our hands together then we head to the main house. We can hear commotion as we get nearer to the kitchen. The cold rush engulf my stomach and the voice says “run” it’s as if Kayise can hear it the way he tightens his grip on my hand.

The moment we walk in the whole room goes silence you’d swear there wasn’t a commotion just now. Jizas the eyes are on me. He greets his family and introduces me.

“Yuuu akamuhle uMaQwabe maan,” (You’re so beautiful MaQwabe) says his mother with a huge smile. It seems genuine that makes me a bit calm.

“Ngiyabonga mama nawe umuhle.” (Thank you mama you’re also beautiful)

“Ah shame that’s so cute but you shouldn’t take what mom says seriously she jokes a lot.” Ndongoloza

“Kahle ukuphapha Ndondo. Sondela MaQwabe.” (Stop being forward Ndondo. Come closer MaQwabe) I reluctantly walk to her and stand before her. She takes my hands into hers and kisses them.

“You’re welcome sis and thank you so much for your presence in my son’s life I have no doubt that there’s something he saw in you which is unique and special hence you are the first one to be introduced to us.”

“Don’t lie to her mama tell her about Lisakhanya.” Ndondoloza chirps in. I look at her and the smug on her face is grating my tits but the bitch is not done.

“Don’t mind me and my big mouth of course my brother wouldn’t hide it to you that you’re about to be a step mom.”

I look at Kayise and the guilt written all over his face tears my heart into pieces, “run” the voice says once again but this time I listen to it.

## ☆ Muzikayise ☆

The rage surges through my body like a venom, challenging me to release it in an undesirable way but my main concern at this moment is suka sambe wami who is out of this house in a split second. I run after her but the more I pick up my pace is the more she's getting further. This girl makes me feel self conscious about my stamina. I can't keep up with her, she's so damn fast.

I decided to go back home and take my car then drive to her home. It's better she finds me waiting for her at her home. The hours keep moving by while I'm waiting in our spot but I haven't seen her running by. It's clear that she wasn't running home because even if she used the other road I would've seen her. I know I was supposed to tell her but I didn't want to overwhelm her with this. I mean we just started dating and everything is still new.

The thought of losing her over this is the one I don't want to entertain. I have to find her and she has to give me a chance to

explain. I drive to Isisa's home and ask a kid to call his sister for me. In a few minutes I see Isisa coming out of the house and walking towards me as I'm parked a bit far from the gate. I step out of the car when she gets nearer.

"Hello Muzi."

"Hi Isisa, how are you?"

"I'm okay and yourself?"

"I'm not okay, can I talk to Mbewenhle please."

"She's not here but I can call her for you."

I study her and I can see that she's not hiding her. I know girls have an attitude when they think you've done something to hurt their friends.

"She's not at home."

“Wait wasn’t she supposed to be at your home?”

“Uhm thank you for your time please when you see her tell her that I need to talk to her.”

Just as I’m about to walk to my car she grabs my wrist and I turn looking at her firm grip on my hand.

“There’s something you are not telling me Muzi. What happened?”

“It’s between me and your friend Isisa.”

She looks at me intently.

“If it involves my best friend then it’s my business Muzikayise!”

“Hey don’t raise your voice at me!” I wrest my wrist from her grip and walk to my car then drive to the store.

Myriad of emotions attack me when I don’t find her there as well. This time I can see that Mngqobi is not hiding her. Knowing Mbewenhle she could be looking at me wherever she’s hiding while I’m going crazy looking for her.

“Did you talk to her?” Mama is the first thing she says when I step out of my car.

“No, I can’t find her. Where’s Ndondoloza?” I walk to the main house heading straight to the lounge where I find my sisters making noise.

“Who the hell gave you the right to say that to Mbewenhle?” I’m fuming with anger and pointing my finger at her.

“I didn’t know bhuti you didn’t...”

“Shut the hell up! You are lying maan! I’m not a fool, you did this on purpose to hurt her and I want to know why?”

“Calm down my son.” I don’t know when mom walked in but calming down right now is not going to happen.

“Ndondoloza why did you say that? I have been seeing you throwing snide comments every mention of Mbewenhle. What is your problem with her?”

“I was just making a conversation bhu....”

“Hhey!!! Stop lying to me!!!” She jumps up in fright and burst into tears, hiding behind mama.

“I’m sure she meant no harm my boy please calm down.”

“This is the reason Ndondoloza is behaving like this mama because you and dad spoil her just because she’s the “baby”. No matter how wrong she is her actions are overlooked and

that is unfair.” Nomathamsanqa, the second last born of my parents says.

“Mina ngizomshaya nje akahlukane no Mbewenhle futhi aphume ezindabeni zami nx!” (I would spank her she must stay away from Mbewenhle and out of my business nx!)

I storm out and head to my house. I can't believe that I didn't realize my house was dirty until she cleaned it now it's immaculate and spotless. I throw myself on the bed and take my phone trying to call her but it rings right next to me. Sigh! She left it here with her bag, maybe this means she will come back to fetch her things.

“You didn't tell her did you?” Thuthuka says standing by the door of my bedroom with his hands tucked into his pants.

“I was planning to tell her today but your brat little aunt ruined everything. Now I don't know where she is and what's going on in her mind.”

“See your way of doing things is about to backfire? Imagine how embarrassing it would be for you if she were to end this relationship just after 3 days she sent the flag. You were supposed to be up front with her about this malumes before she sent the flag.”

“Would you stop reminding me every chance you get about the way I approached Mbewenhle! I have my own way of courting girls as much as you have yours. She won't end this relationship, I won't let her do that. I would fight for her with everything that I've got.”

“I see you underestimate the competition you have out there and everyone is looking forward to seeing your relationship with her failing. If you are going to keep things from her that she's supposed to know you are going to lose her!”

“You are raising your voice now have you forgotten that you are speaking to me?”

“I warned you malumes that if you dare hurt her I will show you the other side of me that you don't know. You better fix this!”

I chuckle in disbelief and get up from the bed then walk towards him.

“Why Thuthuka? Why do you care so much about her that you have an audacity to warn me? The same man ekuqinise isende!” I ask, staring deep in his eyes but he shifts his eyes from my gaze and looks down.

“She’s a good girl malumes and you two are good together. I don’t want you to lose her,” he says and looks up at me. I heave a sigh and move back to my bed where I sit down and bury my head in my hands. The fear of losing her is gripping me hard.

“I can’t lose her, Thuthuka I love her so much. I know it sounds crazy considering that we’ve just started dating but boy I can’t live without her because she's my source of oxygen.”

I hear his footsteps getting closer then feel the bed sinking next to me.

“Then you have to do whatever it takes to keep her malumes. I think she loves you though and she’s going to forgive you.”

“You think so?”

“Yes.”

“Thank you boy I really needed to hear that.”

“Sisonke malumes,” he says squeezing my shoulder.

This boy knows how to make me feel better without trying hard. As young as he is and as much as he’s my nephew uyindoda ewumfethu.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I stand on top of the mountain panting like a dog with my hands on the knees for balance. I don't know when he disappeared but I do remember seeing him running after me and calling out my name. That compelled me to run even faster. Running has always been my strength and my weakness at the same time. Once I have regained my normal breathing I get up and wipe the perspiration on my face and on the back of my neck with my palms. The view of the village on the top of this side of the mountain is so beautiful.

I'm trying my level best to not think about what that bitch said but the guilt on his face keeps flashing before my eyes. What did she mean? Did he cheat on me? That could be the only reason he didn't tell me about this. I'm not ready nor strong enough to deal with these myriad of questions right now so I keep on running. It always feels like I'm floating in the sky when I'm running and it's a very good feeling I tell you.

One more time I pause my run

puffing and wiping the sweat on my face. Maybe he has reasons why he didn't tell me this sooner but I deserved to know or maybe his sister spiced up the story, she was trying to hurt my feelings as always. I don't understand why she hates

me this much. I thought she would stop hating me once she knew that I'm with her brother, not her ex boyfriend, Siyabonga.

I find myself at Isisa's home, she's the only one I can confide in and who understands me more than I understand myself at times. When she sees me she runs to me and gives me a tight squeeze. That moment I knew that Kayise was here looking for me. She asks me if I'm okay, I nod my head then she leads me to her bedroom not before I greet her mom though. We lie on her bed skyward and she's stroking my back as I'm nestled on her chest.

"Muzi was here." She eventually breaks the comfortable silence.

"I knew that he would come here."

"What happened friend?" I tell her everything that happened and she's cursing non stop. Sometimes it's funny how she hates Ndondoloza more than I do.

“That bloody slut! Don’t allow her to get to you friend, she did this on purpose because she wanted to hurt you. I don’t believe that Muzi was going to hide the fact that he has a child.”

“But what about the guilt I saw on his face Isisa.”

“Or maybe he was still going to tell you Mbewu I mean the relationship between you two is still new.”

“It’s the first thing he should’ve told me though. He was supposed to prepare me for whatever baggage he comes with in this relationship. I’m barely 21 Isisa and baby mama drama is the last thing I need in my life. If Lisakhanya is the one that you and I know then our relationship is doomed to failure because the korebela those ladies use on men is on another level.”

Mpilenhle used to be friends with one of Lisa’s sisters and she witnessed it all, the men of the sisters being turned into maids. They had a fallout after the friend suggested that my sister should give her husband who was a boyfriend that time korebela also.

“I hope Muzi is strong enough and the korebela won’t work. That man is yours bitches must leave you two alone.”

I chuckle

“What am I going to do friend? If he really does have a child with Lisa? I thought I was going to be the one to bear his children.”

“Nothing except accepting the child friend and loving him or her like your own. I mean it won’t be like he cheated on you right?”

“I guess you’re right.”

“We need to find a new way of dealing with overwhelming and bad news. You can’t keep on running away it gives people like Ndondoloza that satisfaction,” she says and I heave a sigh.

I know that she’s right but I don’t know if that is ever going to be possible. Running has always been my escape from dealing

with overwhelming and bad news at that certain moment. It's my weakness because it's the first thing I do when I'm attacked by a myriad of emotions but it's also my strength because that's one thing I know that I'm good at in sport and it's one thing that calms me down. I find my strength through my weakness, it's a kinda double edged sword thing.

.....

"Call me if you need anything," Isisa says as we share a hug.

"I will friend and thank you so much for always being there when I need you."

"It's what friends are for." I pull away from her warm embrace and walk to the Kayise's car.

After spending a few hours with my best friend I called him using her phone to come and fetch me because I was afraid and embarrassed to just show my face at his home after I ran off like that. I knew that if I stayed any second longer that bitch

was going to have something to laugh about even more. No one understands except Isisa.

That girl got me through and through. Can you believe that when my father ruined every chance of me going to further my studies she also canceled her dreams? I was so angry at her, like I couldn't believe how she could just take such a huge decision just because my father doesn't think education is important. One of us had to fulfill our dreams but hey Isisa is stubborn.

He opens his arms for me but I just glare at him and walk to my seat leaving him standing there. It's been confirmed that there's no place I enjoy rather than his arms but I'm not just going to walk into his embrace when I'm mad at him. He finally joins me and drives to his home. The silence is so awkward and he can't stop stealing glances at me.

Thank God there's no one in the yard when he arrives at his home. I allow him to hold my hand as we walk to his house where we settle down on the couch. We sit in silence for about 2 minutes then he gets up from the couch and he kneels before

me setting his body between my thighs while his hands strokes my hips.

“Yeyeye I’m sorry about what happened this morning..” I cut him short. I want the truth already.

“Is it true?”

He clears his throat and looks at me right at the moment when I’m looking at him.

“Uhm yes...”

“Why didn't you tell me?”

“Yeyeye don’t disturb me when I’m speaking, there's nothing I hate than that, never ever do that again do you hear me?” His voice is dripping with authority and I can’t help but nod.

“I won’t lie to you Mbewenhle I had life before you and yes what Ndondo said is true however I’m waiting for Lisakhanya to give birth first for the confirmation of the baby’s paternity. The reason why I’m not so sure if the baby is mine is that we haven’t been together for quite some time now and the next minute she heard that you are sending the flag she told me she’s pregnant. You know what's alarming is that she’s heavily pregnant but she didn’t tell me that she’s pregnant until now. I’m sorry about the way you found out about this and I’m sorry I didn’t tell you this I didn’t want to overwhelm you but eventually I was going to tell you.”

“I hear you but I wish this is the first thing you told me. I feel like you robbed me a chance to make a decision for myself if I do want to enter this kind of a relationship where there’s also a baby mama in the picture. I know the drama that comes with baby mamas, my sister woke up in ICU because of that drama. Since you say you haven’t seen each other for some time does this mean you two are still an item?”

“Not really we both lost interest in the relationship but we didn’t tell each other. I guess both of us were scared to hurt each other hence we just left it hanging like that. I’m over her sthandwa sami I love only you and I promise you no drama. If

ever the baby she's carrying turns out to be mine I will make sure she knows her place. I'm really sorry."

"It's okay but it doesn't hurt any less that I'm the one and only who's supposed to carry your children." I whisper and a lone tear runs down my cheek but he catches with his thumb and caresses my cheek while staring me deeply in the eyes with a sad smile on his face.

"Ngiyaxolisa Yeyeye." (I'm sorry Yeyeye). I inhale deeply as I close my eyes reveling in the warmth of his palm against the side of my face.

I will hold on to the possibility of the baby to turn out to be not his. I'm madly in love with him that I don't want another girl to carry his seed even if I wasn't in the picture when it happened I don't care! I feel his lips brushing against mine then we share an intense kiss. The only thing I can hear is our ragged breathing and the kissing sounds. I don't know when and how does he end up on top of me. His hands are stroking my bare thighs which are now exposed as the dress is bunched up on my waist. The feel of hard Khabangobe against my mound is an undeniable frisson. I'm getting moist in the wrong places as he

grinds on me hard. The door cracks open and in comes this guy. What is he doing here?

“Dammit Thuthuka why don’t you knock!” He curses as he gets up from me. I frantically fix myself gripped with embarrassment.

“I’m sorry malumes but there’s a little boy here who’s looking for Mbewenhle and it’s seems urgent.” Malumes huh?

“Tell the boy to get in.” Kayise.

The guy calls the boy in. It’s one of the little boys Mvelonhle teaches them indlamu. (Zulu dance) I have forgotten his name. They’re 20 of them and it’s not easy to recall all of their names. The boy greets and tells me that Lonhle needs me now it’s very urgent. I don’t waste time but leave with the boy and I’m bewildered when the boy leads the way to the river. I didn’t prepare myself for what I see when we get to the river.

“Mvelonhle what’s going on?”

“Please help me sis she doesn’t want to wake up” he cries cradling Zimiphi who’s covered in blood. I crouch before them and feel her pulse but it’s not there.

“What happened Mvelonhle?”

“I...we..” He burst into tears.

I tell the boy to go call Kayise and tell him to come with his car. He scurries off to the Maseko homestead. I have never seen so much blood in my life. The whole lower part of her body is covered in blood.

“Mvelonhle nenzeni?” (Mvelonhle what did you two do) The tremor in my voice is the evident of how terrified I am right now.

“That woman said she’s going to bleed just a little bit not this much but....” I slap him hard on his face before he says anything

further. He promised me that they are not going to abort the baby.

“How could you Mvelonhle!”

“I’m sorry sis there’s nothing we could’ve done both of us agreed that this is the best way to do.”

“There’s nothing you could’ve done? That’s rubbish you should’ve come clean dammit and face the consequences now you killed an innocent child!”

“It’s easy for you to say that Mbewenhle because you are not the one who was going to be beaten up and disowned by ubaba! You’re not the one who was going to be a disappointment to your parents especially to your father! Zimiphi is an apple of her father’s eye. It’s not easy as you say okay? We did what we thought was best and right now it’s not the time to play judge judy!”

I wipe my tears that keep falling and we wait for Kayise. It doesn't take that long for him to arrive.

"Oh shit! What happened to her?" Kayise

"Please help us take her to the hospital Sidwaba siluthuli ." I say.

He feels her pulse on her neck then her wrist, he does that for a moment alternating between the neck and the wrist.

"Stop wasting time Kayise and let's take her to the hospital now please." I look at him but he's avoiding my eyes.

"Muzikayise!"

"I'm sorry Yeyeye but it's too late."

## ☆ Muzikayise ☆

“Nooo! What do you mean it’s too late? Zimi wake up sthandwa sami please. You can’t leave me MaGwala please I’m begging you,” cries Mvelo, frantically shaking Zimiphi’s exanimate body.

Tears stings in my eyes as I stare at him trying to resuscitate her but it’s already too late. I shift my gaze from him and my eyes catch Mbewenhle who’s having difficulty breathing.

“Baby breathe okay...just breathe.” I say cradling her in my arms.

“Yeyeye breathe don’t close your eyes!” I slap her cheek as she’s trying to breathe but it’s inefficacious.

“Mbewenhle!” Oh shit! I slide out my phone and call Thuthuka.

“Malumes.”

“Come to the river right now!” I hang up and feel my woman’s pulse, it’s there but it’s so faint. The thought of losing her is the one I refuse to entertain.

Mvelo is crying hysterically, the poor boy is trying to revive his sister and his girlfriend simultaneously. It's such a mess. I’m dazed I don’t know what to do. I so wish to be the little boy right now who’s staring at us oblivious to the situation at hand.

“I killed them both! Mbewenhle! Zimiphi! God I’m sorry please don’t punish me like this I’m begging you father God.”  
Mvelonhle.

The moment Thuthuka arrives and observes the situation, panic flashes across his face. He flumps on the ground with his knees and fusses over Mbewenhle.

“What have you done malumes? Why is she not waking up! Mbewenhle? MaQwabe? Wenzeni malume!” I don’t

understand why this boy thinks I'm the one who did something. I push him away when he tries to do mouth to mouth resuscitation on my woman.

"Boy you are out of line now!"

"What have you done to her?"

"Why would I hurt her? I'm the one who called you here. You have to listen to me first and stop these crazy assumptions of yours!"

He heaves and looks at me expectantly.

"You have to stay here with Mvelonhle and the deceased I will go inform his parents..."

"Deceased? Malume please tell me you are joking Mbewenhle can't be dead," he says shaking his head vigorously as tears make their way down his face.

“Thuthuka focus man! I’m talking about Zimiphi not Mbewenhle.”

“Oh what happened to Zimiphi?”

I look at Mvelo who’s weeping, tears and mucus all over his face.

“I killed her.” Mvelonhle

“Tell me what happened boy so that I can handle this situation.”

“Handle this situation how? She’s dead, I killed her!”

“I need to inform your parents and her parents as well. Let me in on what happened.”

“We were scared to tell our parents that she was pregnant. It didn't help that there's bad blood between our fathers. We decided that aborting the baby it's the only way. I don't know where she got the number of the woman whom we met up with in Pomeroy. She's the one that gave her something to drink. She said she would bleed just a little but...” he howls in agony and I can't help but feel his pain deep in my heart.

“It's okay boy don't cry and I'm very sorry for your loss. Thuthuka, look after him I will come back just now.”

I get up and pick up Mbewenhle then walk with her to my car where I gently place her on the back seat before speeding off to the Qwabe homestead.

The fear of their parents is the reason they made this decision but look now it has backfired drastically. I don't want my children to fear me this much. It's not right, in fact I don't want them to fear me at all but to respect me. It's saddening that Mvelo is the one that has to face the consequences of their actions alone.

“Hayi, hayi, hayi Muzikayise umtanami uze kuwe ehamba ngezinyawo wena usumbuyisa umphethe kwenzenjani?” (No, no, no Muzikayise my baby came to you walking with her feet now you are bringing her back carrying her in your arms what happened?)

Mam Qwabe screams with panic when I walk inside of the house.

“I’m sorry mama.” I say placing Mbewenhle on the couch just as Mpilenhle barges in.

“What happened to her? What have you done to my child?”

“Khuluma Muzikayise umenzi usisi wami!” (Talk Muzikayise what have you done to my sister!)

“Don’t shout at me Mpilenhle okay! I did nothing to her.” I explain further what has happened.

“Oh Jehova kodwa usenzani uMvelonhle!” Mam Qwabe exclaims with her hands on her head. Mpilenhle is shocked and

can't utter a word but tears are glistening in her eyes. When they fall she wipes them with the back of her palms and disappears.

"Where is he now?"

"I left him with my nephew by the river and the body."

"Oh smakade what have we done to you?" It comes out as whisper as she stumbles a bit but I'm quick to catch her before she falls.

"Do you want to sit down mama?"

"There's no time to sit my boy. I have to go inform the Gwalas about their daughter."

"I will drive you to the Gwala homestead mama."

Mpilenhle walks in with a basin and face cloth of which she dips into the water in the basin then places it on top of Mbewenhle's forehead.

"You can go I will take care of Mbewenhle." Mpilenhle

"Is she going to be okay or I should take her to the hospital?"  
The worry in my voice is so thick and intense.

"Don't worry she will be okay just go with mama and please Muzi I'm begging you to protect my mother from those people."

"Okay I will make sure that she's safe." I look at suka sambe wami and heave a sigh. I don't want to leave her sight, can she at least wake up.

"Go she will be okay trust me."

Mam Qwabe and I make our way out. I open the door for her, once she's inside the car I close the door and go to my side. The

drive is silent until we arrive at the Gwala homestead. A little boy opens the gate for us and I maneuver my car inside the yard and pull over. We step out of the car and ask the boy to lead us where the elders are.

The boy leaves us at the door of the rondoval and runs away. I knock on the opened door and Mr Gwala raises up his head from the newspaper that he's reading and looks at us before shouting "come in". The wife brings us a wooden bench and goes back to her mat where she was seated and peeling butternut. We greet them and I can see that they are both surprised to see us. After pleasantries have been exchanged between the women, Mam Qwabe tells them the reason we are here.

"What game are you playing MaQwabe huh? Your husband sent you here to provoke me in my house and wish death upon my daughter?" The indignation in Gwala's voice cannot be missed.

"Unfortunately Mr Gwala it's the truth." I say.

“I don’t understand Zimiphi said she’s going to study with her friend. Are you sure it’s her?” Asks Mam Gwala but you can’t miss the tremor in her voice.

“Yes mama it’s her.” She shakes her head still in denial and asks us to show her where her daughter is.

We don’t waste time but get up and get inside my car then we drive to the river. Bab Gwala is the first to get out of the car and rushes into the river.

We also follow behind him and find him cradling his daughter in his arms as he cries in anguish. It’s heartbreaking to see an old strong man tearing like a child. His wife falls on her knees right next to them and lets out a heart wrenching sob.

“Boy what did you do to my daughter!!” Gwala roars, his shrill voice is threatening to break the river apart.

“I’m sorry Bab’Gwala”

Gwala stands up and charges for Mvelonhle but I stand in front of him, shielding him from this man who's spitting fire and ready to eat him alive.

"Please calm down Mr Gwala..." I say but he's hearing none and seeing red.

"Heey boy will calming down bring my daughter back? Get away from him I want to kill him with my bare hands!"

"I can imagine your anguish sir but you are not thinking rationally. What you want to do now you will regret it later."

"I won't regret killing this boy! Is it not enough that he impregnated my daughter now he thought it's better to end her life!"

"I'm sorry Bab'Gwala it was never my intention to kill her I swear. I love her so much and..." Mvelonhle

“Love? What do you know about love? You call this love? Did your father set you up to do this huh?”

“My husband has nothing to do with this Gwala. I can’t begin to imagine how you are feeling right now but the naked truth is that our children were in a relationship and unfortunately when they found out that they’re expecting they decided to abort their baby because they were both scared of our reactions. If you want to blame someone please don’t forget to include yourself as well because these kids wouldn’t have decided to abort the baby if there isn’t bad blood between you and my husband. I fail to understand how a mere garden and the three dead cows can cause such a huge rift between two best friends.” Mam Qwabe.

It baffles me as well how can their fallout ruin their friendship to the point of no return. I thought dad solved their feud but it’s clear that it was just a facade.

“Heey shut up woman! You’re spitting nonsense! Get out of my sight all of you nx!!!”

I try to placate him but I end up being the one who gets a punch on my face so we let him be and leave. Thuthuka goes home while I drive Mbewenhle's mom and brother to their home.

“Uyawabona amanyala osifake kuwe!” (Do you see what you got us into!) Mam Qwabe shrieks with anger.

“I'm sorry mama.” Mvelonhle

“Nkory is that the only thing you are going to say? A girl just died because you are old enough to fuck girls and impregnate them right? I don't understand out of all the girls in the world you had to choose Zimiphi while knowing very well that there's bad blood between your father and her father. I hope her soul will haunt you for as long as you live!” She steps out of the car and flounces into the main house.

If Mam Qwabe is this angry I don't want to imagine how angry Qwabe would be. I feel sorry for Mvelonhle

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the poor boy just lost his girlfriend and unborn baby. The only thing he needs right now is support but I trust Mbewenhle to be there for her brother.

“Be strong boy and if ever you need anything don’t hesitate to call me okay.”

“Thank you Maseko,” he says and gets out of the car.

I step out of the car as well and follow him. My heart smiles a little when I find suka sambe wami watching TV alone, actually it’s the other way around. I settle down on the couch and she jumps up with fright.

“Hey I’m sorry to startle you.” I say and envelope her in my arms. I’m so happy that she’s awake for a moment there, I thought she’s going to die on me as well. I pull her back and check the coast first before stealing a kiss.

“Are you okay? You had me worried, Yeyeye.” I caress her cheek.

“I’m sorry I didn’t mean to worry you,” she says with a faint smile on her face. She looks lost and drained and that’s worrying me.

“I thought you would die on me.” She tilts her head aside and kisses my palm before leaning her face against it.

“I’m sorry next time I will try harder.”

“Try harder to do what?”

“To get up and run. It always does the trick.” I look at her bewildered and when she notices the confusion on my face she says.

“Running is my coping mechanism. It always calms me down when I’m attacked by a myriad of emotions that I can’t control but today I couldn’t. The more I tried to get up and run it felt like someone was pressing me down and squeezing my chest with the intention of taking my life. It was so intense and I

thought I was going to die baby.” Tears stroll down her cheeks. I catch them with my thumbs and plant a kiss on her forehead before pulling her to my chest.

These running stunts were starting to irk the hell out of me but now that I know the reason behind them I feel bad.

“Ngiyaxolisa sthandwa sami.” (I’m sorry my love.)

“It’s not your fault Kayise.”

I kiss her head and hold her tightly in my arms as an assurance that as long as I live I will always be here for her no matter what and I will do everything in my power to protect her.

“Siyabonga’s sister was here to give me a letter of an apology from Siyabonga.”

“Oh really?”

“Yes.”

“Do you forgive him?”

“I wasn’t angry at him but yes I forgive him.”

“You’re too sweet sthandwa sami you don’t deserve to be in this world because there’s no room for people like you in this world. People take advantage of your kind but don’t worry I will make sure that no one takes advantage of you.”

“You’re the sweet one. Thank you for accompanying mom to the Gwala homestead. How did it go? Mom walked in here fuming and my brother looked lost,” she says pulling away from my arms.

“It’s bad baby please be there for your brother.”

“This is all my fault I should’ve told mama the sooner I found out about this.”

“No baby I won’t allow you to blame yourself for something you had no control over. Mvelo and Zimiphi are the ones who made this decision on their own and they both didn’t know this would be the outcome.”

“But...”

“There’s no but don’t be hard on yourself please.”

She heaves a sigh and nods her head.

“I have to go now if ever you guys need anything don’t hesitate to call me. I will bring your phone later.”

“Thank you.” I check if there’s no one coming and kiss her deeply. How I love it when she moans in my mouth. It sends a twinge down south. We cut our kiss short when we hear someone clearing their voices. Shit!

“Uhm I have to go.” I say getting up. I heave a sigh of relief when I see that it’s not one of her parents but Mpilenhle.

“Thank you Muzi for what you did. It really means a lot to us.”  
Mpilenhle

“We are family.” I bid them goodbye and leave. Thuthuka meets me halfway as I make my way to the main house.

“How is she? Did she wake up? Is she going to be okay?”

“So many questions Thuthuka. Yes she woke up and she’s okay considering.”

“Thank Goodness!”

“I have never seen you caring so much for someone else except our family.” I say as I look at him. He clears his throat and smiles faintly

“Am I wrong to care so much for umalumekezazi wami?”

“Of course not boy.”

I foresee a war coming between the Gwalas and Qwabes. I need to discuss this with my father, maybe there's something he can do to help. I hope he's back from the meeting he was attending today and his car is parked in the garage because I can't see it right now in the yard.

“Is dad back?”

“Yes he's in his hut with gogo.” I make my way to the hut and when I hear my name I stop on my tracks and eavesdrop.

“I don't think it's wise to let Muzi date this girl MaXaba.” Dad

“You are overthinking this Maseko, our boy loves this girl. We should give him the support he needs plus she's a good girl.”

Mom

“There are so many girls in this world maan not this one.”

“Unfortunately our son loves this one and I don’t see him breaking up with her.”

“We don’t have to tell him to break up with her but we can....”

“Hayi sokhaya let the kids be please. I love this girl for Muzi.”

I decide against going inside and go to my bedroom where I lie on my bed skyward and look at my woman’s pictures on my phone. I don’t understand why dad doesn’t like her, there’s absolutely nothing to dislike in her bakithi. He better listen to Mama because I don’t want to find myself in a situation where I have to choose between him and my woman. There’s a knock on my door I shout come in then mom walks in.

“Son you are back, how did everything go? Thuthuka told me what happened,” mom says after sitting down on the corner of the bed.

“It’s bad mama there’s going to be a war and this time it’s going to be worse than the last time.”

“Your father has to intervene once again.”

“Mama why baba is against my relationship with Mbewenhle? What problem does he have with her?”

She swallows hard and looks at me.

“Where did you get that Muzikayise.”

“I heard you and him talking in his hut. What’s going on? Is this still about his skepticism about her loving me for who I am?”

“No son, he's just concerned, that's all.”

“He wants to break us up mama! If he’s concerned he should give Mbewenhle a chance not this! I don’t want to find myself having to choose because that would be so easy!”

“Please calm down my boy. Your father has no intention of breaking you up with your girlfriend...”

“Mama I’m not stupid I heard him very well he’s up to something!”

“I reasoned with him, khehla don’t worry. The Ndaba boy is here to see you.”

Oh that asswipe! He couldn’t stay another day eyisimumu.

“Please tell him to come in.”

She gets up and walks out just as I roll out of bed. I walk to the lounge and find him sitting on my couch.

“Who said sit down?”

He just looks at me and hands me a piece of paper of which he’s apologizing for what he did and tells me that he apologized to Mbewenhle as well. I throw the paper on the coffee table and hold his head stretching it before stretching his limbs.

“How was it to be mute boy? You are really stubborn. It took you almost a week to come to your senses.”

He chuckles and gets up from the couch.

“Thanks for keeping your end of the bargain kodwa uhlale wazi ukuthi eyami neyakho isukile.” (...just know that a war between you and I has started.) He walks out whistling loudly. The audacity of this boy! I run after him to kick his ass but Thuthuka stops me and tells me to let him go, he’s not worth it.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

“Your man is sweet,” she says as she settles next to me on the couch. I can’t bring myself to look at her, in actual fact I want to disappear out of her sight but I don’t have energy to get up from this couch. Not only my heart is sore but my body as well.

I had a chance to avert this but I chose to keep it a secret as if a baby can ever remain concealed. Look what happened now? Zimiphi didn’t deserve to die nor did the baby.

“Don’t tell me you’re embarrassed because I saw you and Muzi kissing.”

I look down, twiddling with my fingers. She giggles and makes me look at her.

“Aww you are so cute. I know that you and Muzi kiss and you would probably do more than kissing after umemulo.”

“But it doesn't mean I should do that in front of you. I respect you as my elder sister. I’m sorry that you had to see that.”

“No I’m the one who’s sorry Mbewenhle I haven’t been a good sister to you please forgive me for that.” Her voice is laced with sadness and I can’t fathom out where all of this is coming from.

“Mpilenhle you have been the best sister to me. I couldn’t ask any elder sister then you.”

“That’s the thing Mbewenhle I have been nothing but an elder sister to you whom you respect so much that you find it hard to confide in. It’s my duty as an elder sister here to make you free around me. I’m sorry that there are things you face in your life that I know nothing about, things you should be discussing with me first before anyone else.”

“You eavesdropped my conversation with Kayise?”

“I’m sorry but if I didn’t eavesdrop I wouldn’t have known I’m failing you as your sister. I don’t want to be just your elder sister but I want to be your friend as well. I want you to find it easy to confide in me little sis.” Tears spill down her face and they’re triggering mine.

I always envied the relationship Isisa has with her elder sister, Bajabulile. They talk about anything and everything, you wouldn't think the age difference between them is 8 years. I on the other hand I have to watch what I say to Mpilenhle as my elder sister and her marriage is a deterrent to our communication since she's not always here. She's been married for 7 years now but I have visited her twice in her house in Newcastle.

I made a vow to myself that Lonhle will never envy the relationship his friends have with their sisters. He will rather wish he had a brother not a sister that is always there for him because I'm always there for him. That's why sometimes he forgets that I'm older than him. I always got his back but this time I failed him. I can't begin to imagine how he's feeling right now.

I reach for her hand but she pulls me to her chest and engulfs me in a bone crushing hug. I revel in her embrace as I take in her fruity scent. I have never doubted her love for me though and I hope she doesn't doubt mine as well.

“When did all of this start?”

“What?”

“Having difficulties to deal with bad news and running becoming your coping mechanism?.”

“I don’t know but all I can say that after Ndwalenhle’s disappearance my life changed immensely. It’s all started by fearing the rain or storm to having difficulties to deal with bad or overwhelming news. I remember the first time I blacked out I was doing grade 10 and we were writing exams. I thought we were going to write Mathematics only to find out we were writing Life Sciences. I don’t know how I made that mistake on my examinations time table. At school I was called a dramatic queen and all those mean words, some even said I was faking it. Being an A students had its perks though because they sent me back home and told me I will write the following day since we weren’t writing the next day. This gradually grew, even smallest things used to get to me that’s when I discovered that running alleviates the intensity of these emotions. That how I managed to cope throughout the years until this time you were stabbed by sbali’s baby mama and when I heard the news I was with Isisa whom have always been aware of the change that

was happening in my life. It was like someone dumped a bucket of ice on my chest and I felt it spilling on every part of my body. It was like my chest was closing in on me I couldn't breathe. It was so intense." I wipe my tears but they've already fallen on her chest and wetting her dress.

"Oh sis I'm really sorry you have been through this alone. I feel so horrible, Mbewu, why have you never told us though?"

"How sis? How can I begin to explain that I'm having difficulties dealing with bad and overwhelming news as if they aren't part of life? Life won't be easy on me just because I lost my twin sister whom I never buried and it doesn't owe me anything. I have no choice but to face this life thing no matter what."

"I understand that sweetheart but you do know that when life throws stones at us that messes up with our mental health. I'm not sure if you suffer from anxiety attacks or panic attacks but I will ask my sister in law. The one who's a psychologist, she really helped me deal with Ndwalenhle's disappearance. She's the one who suggested that every year on the day she disappeared we should honour her by spending time as family over a nice meal."

Now I get why she always prepares a feast on the day my twin sister disappeared but it still doesn't feel right to me.

"How does it help the situation?"

"We can't cry for the rest of our lives. Somehow we need to find a way to move forward but that doesn't mean we should forget her. I mean she will always remain in our hearts."

"Until I know what happened to her I won't find a way forward sis."

"What if we never find out what happened to her I mean it's been 11 years already. Are you going to be stuck in misery for the rest of your life?"

"My life has been nothing but misery ever since she disappeared and I no longer feel like I know any other life other than this one."

“No Mbewenhle you can’t be miserable for the rest of your life. I know it’s unfair and heart-rending but life has to go on. I’m sure even if Ndwalenhle is no more she wouldn’t want you to be wretched for the rest of your life. Let me talk to my sister in law, you have to meet her and talk to her.” I pull back from her chest and look at her.

“With all due respect Mpilenhle I don’t want to talk to your sister in law. If you want to move on with life and cook a feast celebrating my twin sister’s disappearance it’s fine but don’t include me in that hogwash!” I leave her sitting on the couch

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looking shocked and crestfallen and head to my brother's bedroom.

He doesn’t respond when I knock but I can hear snuffles on the other side of the room. I push the door open and walk in then close it before making my way towards his bed. He’s curled up like a ball on his bed and he’s still wearing the t-shirt that is stained with blood.

“Lonhle.”

“I’m fine Mbewenhle,” he says, wiping his tears with his hands that are covered with dry blood.

I take his basin and walk to the rondoal where I pour hot water into it. There’s always a kettle of water on top of the brazier just in case dad asks for a tea and besides the fire can’t go into waste at least it must boil water. I add cold water and head back to Lonhle’s bedroom.

“Lonhle.”

“Leave me alone Mbewenhle!”

“Okay I will leave you alone but can you please get up and wash the blood on your hands. Please Khondlo.”

He looks at me and gives me a faint smile that makes my heart do a mini dance, then he sits up on his butt. I place the basin on his thighs and take out a clean t-shirt for him in the closet while

he washes his hands. Once he's done I go outside to dispose of the water then come back.

"Call me if you need me."

"Don't go please." I smile a little and settle on his bed leaning on the headboard and allow him to rest his head on my chest. Silence lingers in the room as I run my fingers through his hair.

"I'm sorry I failed you." I eventually break the silence.

"You didn't fail me sis."

"I was supposed to do something when you told me Lonhle."

"Something like what? Telling the parents? You know very well why you didn't tell them so please don't blame yourself for my stupidity and cowardice. I was supposed to man up and face my shit. Now she's gone sis and it's all my fault. You know when she took her last breath she told me that she loves me and made me promise her that I won't blame myself for anything

that would happen to her. I guess she felt that she was dying. I wonder how she felt. It must have been very terrifying to be on the brink of meeting your ancestors but on the other side she had to pretend to be strong for me.” The pain in his voice shatters my heart into million pieces and I can feel my chest getting wet with his tears.

I can also imagine how she must have felt and it’s so saddening that such a young sweet soul had to die because of the fear to disappoint her father.

“I’m sorry Khondlo I so wish there was something I can do to change everything and make all of this a horrible nightmare that you are going to wake up from.” I wipe away tears on my face with my other hand. It must have been hard for both of them to make this decision.

“She was beautiful. I wonder what she saw in your ugly self.” I redirect the mood into the lighter one and it works as I hear him laughing.

“Says someone who’s dating a strabismus eyed man.” I giggle

“You forgot to mention handsome unlike you phela wena you look like a baboon I wouldn’t date you even if you weren’t my brother.”

He cracks up in laughter and it warms my heart a bit to hear him laughing. We hear a knock on the door then it’s cracks open. Mpilenhle gets in.

“Ubaba is calling you Mvelo.”

“I’m coming.”

Mpilenhle disappears then the door closes.

“It’s time to face the monster.”

“Don’t call him that Lonhle.”

“Only a monster can be feared by his children the way we do to him.”

“Wear triple layers of clothing so that when he beats you up it won’t hurt that much.”

He laughs and shakes his head.

“Don’t worry he can beat me until I die. I don’t care,” he says getting up from me.

“You don’t mean that Lonhle.” I get up as well and look for his tracksuits and his coat.

“Wear this.”

“I’m not going to wear this, in fact I might as well go to him nakedly. Maybe the physical pain will numb the emotional pain.” With that said he walks out. I sigh and follow him.

Mom is with dad as well and they are both sitting on one couch staring at Mvelonhle who's sitting on the other couch opposite them. I greet baba and sit down next to Lonhle.

"We called your brother Mbewenhle not you," says mama.

"I know mama but I'm going to be here for my brother no matter what and if he gets beat up then the both of us should get beaten up."

"Are you challenging us Mbewenhle?" Mama.

I don't reply but squeeze Lonhle's hands who gives me a side smile.

"What's going on? What are you talking about?" Dad asks not masking the confusion in his voice.

"Baba I messed up and I'm very sorry from the deepest of my heart. I never meant to disappoint you and disrespect you. I'm just a teenage boy who's going to make a lot of mistakes as I

navigate through this life thing but believe me I don't think there would ever be a mistake greater than...."

"Mvelonhle stop beating around the bush and tell your father what you got us into," mom says sternly.

I didn't expect her to be this angry. She's the pacifier of this family. Lonhle clears his throat and I squeeze his hand tighter to encourage him to go on.

"I made a girl pregnant and I was scared to disappoint you and mama as much as she was scared to disappoint her parents. It didn't help that you and her father did not get along. We both decided that aborting the baby would be the best but that turns out drastically...she..unfortunately she lost her life. Her name is Zimiphi Gwala. Ngiyaxolisa baba." (...I'm sorry dad.) Lonhle says tears flowing down his cheeks

"Gwala's last born?" Baba asks as I try to read his facial expression but it's just blank. Mvelonhle nods his head as we both get ready for what is about to come. The sound of my

heart is the only thing I can hear at this moment and I'm sure everyone can hear it.

"Ngiyaxolisa baba." Lonhle let out a loud sob.

"You know Mvelonhle sometimes the dead use us who are in the land of the living to fight their battles. I'm sorry my boy that it had to be you but I want you to know that this has nothing to do with you. It's not your fault don't be hard on yourself my boy do you hear me. This was bound to happen."

He gets up and walks to the couch Mvelonhle and I are sitting on then sits down next to his son.

"Qina ndodana kuzondlula," (Be strong my boy it shall pass) Baba says patting Lonhle's shoulder. The three of us look at each other stunned.

"What do you mean Qwabe when you say this was bound to happen?" Mama asks

“Ngoba ngithi isizulu asitolikwa nje MaNdwandwe” (You can’t translate Zulu language MaNdwandwe.)

I look around hoping to see cameras and hear the director shouting ‘cut’ but none of that is happening. It’s a reality that leaves me confused.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I'm not sure about this but it's what we usually do as a community when a tragedy happens in a family we go and assist with whatever the family might need. I won't lie and say I'm not scared of how will the Gwalas receive our presence.

"Stop popping your fingers you're frustrating me," Isisa says. Mom insisted that we go and assist but Mpilenhle refused so I had to ask Isisa to accompany me.

"Sorry." I wasn't even aware that I'm popping my fingers. I hope they will welcome us and appreciate our assistance.

"You are doing it again Mbewu!"

"Gee Isisa you know I'm not even aware of this!"

"Stop it please!"

“Are you nervous?” I ask her when I notice that she’s really frustrated.

“No I’m not.”

I chuckle. I can see right through her. She’s not the only one who knows me more than I know myself at times I also know her as well.

“I’m sorry to put you through this we can go back home and tell mom that we are terrified.”

“You are the one who’s scared not me.”

I laugh at this girl trying to act brave. We are now approaching the gate and we can see ladies going up and down. Bonggi looks at us then others turn to look at us. I feel a cold rush in the pit of my stomach. They’re probably talking about us. We make our way in and walk towards them just then Mr Gwala walks out of the house. My heart skips a beat as he charges for us.

“Nifunani la?” (What are you doing here?)

“Greetings Bab Gwala we are here to assist with anything...” he interjects

“Assist? Did we tell you that we need your help! You have an audacity to set your paralyzed feet in my house after what your brother did to my daughter! Nizongazi kahle namhlanje!” (You will know who am I today!) He whistles calling his three dogs.

“Tshisaaaa!” Gwala says to his dogs pointing his finger at us.

Isisa and I don't need to be told what's happening. I grab her hand and run. The dogs are barking and running after us. The ladies burst into laughter. Isisa is scared of dogs she's crying like someone is killing her while I'm cursing the dogs.

“Fuseg! Fuseg!!!!”

I tell her to run as I pick up stones and launch them at the dogs. Lonhle once told me when dogs are chasing you don't run but threaten to hit them. I throw huge stones at them and the golden retriever howls in agony as it goes down on the ground. The other dogs have stopped chasing after me but they're still barking.

I follow Isisa who's already far now and still running she's not even looking at the back. See Isisa is the one who's always brave between us so it's so funny to see her scared of dogs like this. I understand though she was once bitten by a dog, we were 13 years old if I'm not mistaken and she still has that scar on her thigh. I look back and see the dogs going back to the Gwala homestead. I heave a sigh as I stop running and continue to walk.

There's a van that is coming and it stops before Isisa then I see her jumping on the back. As the van gets closer I see who's sitting before the steering wheel and I can't help the smile that breaks across my face. Then my eyes move to the passenger seat and the smile dissolves on my face. It pulls over next to me then the driver door opens. I melt at the sight of him as he steps out of the car.

“Yeyeye.”

“Sidwaba Siluthuli.” I say and as always he melts. I have noticed that he loves it when I call him by his clan name. Typical Zulu man! He envelopes me in his arms and I revel in his bear hug.

“Kunjani suka sambe wami,” (How are you suka sambe wami) he says pulling me back but I don’t let go of him instead I cling on him. I missed him so much it feels like it’s been a year since I haven’t seen him kanti it’s only 3 days.

“I’m okay considering, what about yourself.”

“I’m okay just missed you.”

“I missed you too sthandwa sami.” I finally free myself from his warm embrace and look at him.

“Isisa told me that Mr Gwala set the dogs on you two. Are you hurt?”

“No I’m fine baby.”

“I understand what he’s going through but what he did is way extreme! Yaz kuthi angijike nazo lezinkuni” (...I’m tempted to go back with these woods!) his voice is laced with anger.

“You bought them woods?”

“Yes.”

“That’s thoughtful of you Ngcamane. Please do give them, they really going to need plenty of woods during this difficult time.”

“You’re too sweet. Can I get my kiss please.”

“Not here baby people can see us.”

“It’s not like they don’t know we are dating.”

“Of course they know but that doesn’t mean we should flaunt our relationship...” I don’t get to finish that as he captures my lips in his. Damn him because he knows that I can’t resist his kisses. They’re like a drug that I can’t live without. We cut the kiss short when we hear Isisa squealing. Girl has stop crying now and she’s phapharing.

“Come out Thuthuka so that my woman can get in.”

“Ngihlalephi mina malumes.” (Where should I sit malumes?) This is the second time now hearing him calling Kayise ‘malumes’ and I hope he’s doing it out of respect not that they’re related somehow.

“At the back.” Kayise

“Babe since you are going to the Gwala homestead you can leave me and Isisa here. You will take us when you come back.”

“Angifuni nishiswe ilanga la.” (I don’t want you to be burned by the sun)

“Aww you are so sweet but don’t worry sthandwa sami. We don’t want to antagonize Bab Gwala even more. Isisa and I will be alright right girl?” I say and look at her at back of the van.

“Yes, that man is breathing fire. You would find us here.”

Kayise nods and says he will warn Mr Gwala for what he did. I know he means that and I wish he could let this go but he won’t listen to me even if I can try to talk him out of this. Isisa jumps down from the back of the van then Kayise gets in his car. They leave us sitting by the gravel road.

“Are you okay? Did the dogs bite you?”

I laugh and shake my head no

“No nawe usubaleka uyangishiya”

“I was going to call help for you,” she says and we both laugh.

“I’m sorry that you got dragged into this.”

“Argh don’t worry friend we are in this together. You will sit with me at the back when they come back right?”

“You know Kayise will want me in front with him.”

“Come on Mbewu not unless if you tell him you don’t want to. I don’t want to sit with that guy.”

“Why not.”

“Just,” she says dismissively and I just knew there’s something going on.

“Talk ntombi I’m listening.” (...girl..)

“What are you on about?” She asks feigning confusion and I can’t help but laugh.

“If you don’t tell me then I will ask him myself.”

“Geee I will tell you okay you don’t have to ask him.”

I look at her expectantly

“So that day we were sending the flag to the Maseko homestead on your behalf we kissed and he took my numbers but since then he hasn’t called me friend,” she says and shrugs her shoulders.

“Heee mngani uthule nendaba engaka!”

“I feel used friend why he hasn’t called me?”

“I don’t know friend but it’s not like you slept with him.”

“He was drunk maybe he doesn’t even remember what happened.”

“But you really want him to remember that night right?”

She bites her lower lip and nods her head shyly. I wonder what game is this guy playing and I hope my best friend won’t be caught up in his stupid game.

“Maybe sitting with him will make him remember that night and you guys will get a chance to talk.”

“Maybe but I’m nervous what if he tells me he was drunk and what happened meant nothing? That would break my heart I haven’t be able to sleep thinking about the way he rolled his tongue in my mouth,” she says and we both giggle naughtily.

“You got it bad girl!”

“Tell me about it! You never told me this is how good it is to kiss a boy.”

“And who would’ve thought that I would experience kissing a boy first? Well in my case it’s a man not a boy.” I say giggling and she sticks out her tongue at me.

“Okusalayo when he breaks your virginity you will feel it that he is a man and wish he was a boy. I’m sure his dick is huge.”

I feel flushes on my face when I think of that morning I felt his joystick. Damn it’s really huge I’m already scared but at least I still have 9 months to prepare myself.

“He’s really huge.”

“You saw him?”

I nod my head as I bite my lower lip

“Oh my God how big is he? How does it look like?”

“Jizas Isisa!”

We giggle salaciously

“I didn’t see it naked but I felt it and saw how huge it is.”

She squeals making me to laugh harder. Just then the van pulls over next to us. We get up and dust each other on the buttocks. Thuthuka steps out of the car and tells me that I must sit on the front passenger seat. I look at Isisa who’s nervous.

“You would be fine.” I mouth to her and jump in on the passenger seat before closing the door. He pouts his lips and I don’t need to be told so I lean over and kiss him. He grunts in my mouth, yes I have mastered this kissing thing.

“I love you

” he whispers staring deeply in my eyes. I have noticed that when he’s going through certain emotions he can’t conceal his hypertropia just like now.

It’s funny how these three simple words can touches the deepest parts of one’s being and soothe every aching part but only if they’re coming from someone who means them. Someone who can turn the mountains upside down for you and who leaves no stone unturned just to show you how much you mean to him. Umjolo is nice nina!

“I love you too.” The sound of my voice is thick and filled with intense emotions. He pecks my forehead before driving off.

“I’m going to drop off Isisa then drive home.”

“What about me?”

“You are coming with me. I just want to freshen up then we will go to my farms. I have been meaning to go there and check on how everything is but something always comes up.”

“You know asking me to go with you to your farms doesn’t mean I have you by the balls Sidwaba Siluthuli.”

He laughs out loudly, throwing his head on the back.

“Okay Yeyeye can you please come with me to my farms?”

“I will think about it.”

“Hawu baby”

Now it’s my turn to laugh.

“What?”

“See that’s the reason why I didn’t ask you but told you.”

“Don’t I deserve to have a say in whatever you decide?”

“Of course you do but the truth is I’m the one who takes the final decision as the head.”

“It’s 2020 baby and women have a say in everything including relationships. 50/50.”

“True but I think this 50/50 is shit. It’s the reason why women have lost respect for men now. Power is not for women because it makes them proud and very disrespectful. Senisigibela emakhanda nje.” (...you are disrespecting us)

“I don’t agree Ngcamane the thing is men are used to women bowing down for them even when they’re not great leaders. There’s no such thing as power is not for women, men are just intimidated by the strength and resilience women possess. Of course there are those women who abuse their power just like men. You find a man beating a woman then calls himself a man

and head of the family. That's hogwash, a head of the family is a great leader who respects his woman in every aspect and trust me baby it would be easy for me to reciprocate naturally."

"Mmh ngiyakuzwa," (Mhmm I hear you.) he says but his face says the opposite. Oh well! We drop Isisa first and drive to his home. I can't wait to hear what did the two talked about.

"Baby can you please iron this t-shirt for me." Kayise

"Okay."

He throws the t-shirt at me and I catch it then go to his bedroom to take the iron board as well as the iron. I walk back to the lounge and iron it while he freshens up in his bedroom. As I'm busy with the task at hand I feel a presence behind me and the old spicy scent hits my nostrils. I'm tempted to turn but I decide against it then I hear his footsteps getting nearer.

I almost burn myself with an iron when I feel him close on my behind and his warm breathing fanning the back of my neck.

What is he doing? Hell will break loose when Kayise walk out of his bedroom.

“You smell lovely,” he says and literally sniffs me like a police dog sniffing anything sinister.

“What the hell are you doing Thuthuka!” I whisper

“I’m glad you remember my name this time,” he whispers on my ear. I always forgot his name and addressed him as the Ngema guy.

“You are standing too close move!” I say pushing him with my butt but he holds on my waist and grunts against my neck. I can feel something stirring against my butt and growing hard.

“Don’t do that you are provoking Muji.”

“Thuthuka maan! Kayise will walk in and uzoyikhotha imbenge eyomile!”

He finally moves and comes around the iron board looking at me. I catch his visible bulge on his pants.

“I can’t believe 1 year and 6 months I spent courting you only to call you malumekazi.”

“Kayise is really your uncle?”

“Yes.”

“You never told me that Thuthuka you said wakwa Ngema.”

“Yes I’m a Ngema but my mom is a Maseko. Muzikayise’s elder sister.”

Jizas! I didn’t know the Maseko sisters have a son who’s one year older than me.

“I didn’t know.”

“It’s fine. So it took him for a week to win your heart while others have been on this road for more than a year.”

So all of these guys are going to say this vele?

“I needed a man who can handle me not a boy so time doesn’t really matter.” I look at him and my heart does a mini dance. Yess! I bruised his ego. Serve him right for trying to make me feel cheap and easy. Just then my man walks out of his bedroom half naked.

“Oh just on time daddy.” I say walking towards to him with the t-shirt and give him a kiss of which he reciprocates with the same fevor. I break the kiss when I hear Thuthuka walking out.

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I fix his tie as per norm, he looks handsome in a black suit and white crisp shirt. However he doesn’t feel as good as he looks.

It's finally the day of Zimiphi's burial. Dad said we are going to support the Gwalas even though I told him what Mr Gwala did to me and Isisa.

"You look debonair buti wami."

"Debonair? I'm not a pizza Mbewenhle," he says and I can't help but laugh.

"Debonair means stylish and charming little bro."

"Wena futhi awushongo ukuthi ngifana nenkawu." (You again, didn't you say I look like a baboon) I giggle

"Well only for today but tomorrow you would still look like a baboon." We both laugh and once our laughter has come to a halt melancholic silence lingers in the room. I give him a tight hug. It has been a distressing week for him and today it's going to be worse.

"We going to be okay I don't know when but we will be okay."

He nods his head and wipes his lone tear.

“Kids we are going!” Mama shouts on the door.

“We are coming mom.” I shout back.

“Let’s go,” he says and takes my hand then we head out.

Dad wants us to use his 14 hundred but we all are against that so we end up taking Mpilenhle’s car but dad insist to be the one driving of course. “Angeke mina ngishayeelwe ingane” (I won’t be driven by a child) Dad has million terms and conditions I tell you. He should say it that he wouldn’t miss an opportunity to drive a BMW X6. This one I know it very well because I also want to own one day but that seems far-fetched for a village girl like me who has a man that doesn’t believe women should have a say. Sigh!

It’s not far it’s just that it looks nice to go as a family in a car. As usual it’s packed, the whole community is here. All eyes are on

us when we step out of the car and walk close to the tent. I feel Lonhle's hand in mine and squeeze it. Out of nowhere Gwala charges for us and dad stands in front of us.

"Nifunani la!" (What are you all doing here!) Gwala

"Alwehlanga lungehlanga ndoda yamadoda..." (My condolences man..) Dad doesn't finish that as a punch lands on his face and everyone screams in shock. Lonhle let's go of my hand and pushes Gwala. It took him by surprise as he reels back and almost fall.

"I'm the one you have to face not my father. If it will make you feel better then kill me Bab Gwala," Lonhle says pulling out a gun and giving it to Bab Gwala.

"Mvelonhle Nooo!" Mpilenhle

"If it's the only way to make him feel better he must kill me." Lonhle walks closer to Bab Gwala who's shaking and pointing

the gun at him. We are all looking with our hearts in our throats.

Mthuthuzeli is encouraging his father to shoot my brother while the aunts and women of the village are trying to placate him. Mama is crying begging dad to intervene but he's pouring oil on the fire by saying.

"Gwala it's 50/50 now I lost a child and you lost a child as well. Let's burry the hatchet ndoda." This man has been confusing as hell since this ordeal has happened.

"I knew it that this is revenge! Oh well say goodbye to your son Qwabe. A child for a child to a wife for a wife until one man is standing and that won't be you!"

The moment he pulls the trigger I jump on Lonhle and the screams fills the whole Gwala homestead. I hear mom's piercing cry as Lonhle holds me in his arms his tears falling on my face.

“Sis stay with me please!” Cries Lonhle. I touch his cheek and smile at him.

“I love you Khondlo.”

“Move! Move out of the way! Yeyeye!” That voice I can barely hear it as the darkness consumes me.

☆ Mpilenhle ☆

The sound of a gunshot paralyzes every sense of my being and I stand there like a statue until Muzikayise screams loudly calling out for his Yeyeye as he pushes through the crowd. I force my heavy feet to carry me to where mom and Mvelo are with Mbewu in their arms, who's losing too much of blood and has lost her consciousnesses. They're both crying and Induna is trying to stop the brawl between baba and Gwala.

Argh of course this man is going to try to act like a pacifier when the damage has already been done! I don't like him there's nothing he has ever done for this community. The lack of development in this village is depressing. Our complaints are not heard. Bab Maseko is neglecting his duties as Induna and all he knows is hosting big ceremonies every year. He's monied so slaughtering two cows every year is nothing to him.

I don't know who called the police and the ambulance but they are here now. My little sister is attended by the paramedics

while the police are asking questions. Luckily baba's gun which Mvelo stole is licensed. The turn out of events is something he didn't plan at all he only brought the gun for his own protection, his words not mine. There's more to what's going on between my father and Gwala but none of them is willing to tell the police.

Baba's words are still ringing in my ears "Gwala it's 50/50 now I lost a child and you lost a child as well. Let's burry the hatchet ndoda." Is Gwala involved in Ndwalenhle's disappearance and dad knows about that? Induna asks the police to let Gwala bury his daughter first before they take him. I'm perturbed about the interaction between Induna and the police. He seems to know them on a personal level.

Once the paramedics are done with Mbewenhle, Muzi and I follow behind the ambulance with our cars. Dad is next to me on the front passenger seat and distressed to even care that I'm driving. Mom is weeping at the back seat while cradling a crying Mvelonhle. I have to be strong for all of them at this moment.

“Qwabe what’s going on? What did you mean when you said it’s 50/50. You lost a child and Gwala also lost a child. Is there something that you are not telling me?” Mom asks something I want to know as well.

“Are we seriously going to talk about this now Thembeke?” Dad says to mom not hiding the ire in his voice and as always mom doesn’t challenge him. Like a good wife that she is, she keeps quiet.

When we arrive at the hospital my sister is rushed to the ER as we wait impatiently at the waiting area. I’m not surprised Mbewu took a bullet for our little brother. They’re so close I used to be a little jealous about their relationship until few days back I realized that I’m the one who hasn’t been a good sister to these two.

I would be lying if I say they have ever treated me somehow. I’m the one who hasn’t been as welcoming as a sister should be to her siblings. My relationship with them is almost as the relationship they have with our father. They fear him more than they respect him. I am my father’s daughter, I have that intimidating personality but I don’t want that to come between

my siblings and I. I don't know if it would be a success to turn around the relationship I have with them but I'm not going to give up without a try.

"Stop moving around you are making me dizzy." I say to Muzi who stops pacing up and down only for a minute and start all over again.

"Muzi."

"Ay awume Mpilenhle!" (Ay stop it Mpilenhle!)

"Don't shout at me I'm not your child!"

"You are also not going to tell me what should I do and not to do!"

We have always been at each other's throats since high school. Our friends used to say we have feelings for each other but we are afraid to admit. I don't know where did they got that nonsense. Muzi is such a good looking guy and I'm not

attracted to good looking guys let alone yellow bones. I love my men ugly, weird? I know hey.

“Your father is friends with those police?”

“Not really why?”

“Just the way they were talking it seems like they are friends.”

“My dad is a people’s person.”

“Of course he is and I hope you would do whatever it takes for my sister to get justice.”

He stops on his tracks and looks at me.

“What are you insinuating Mpilenhle?”

“Nothing.” I leave him standing there and go to the restroom. Once I’m done with my business I go back to where others are.

At long last the doctor comes and addresses us about my sister’s condition. She’s in a critical but stable condition. They’ve stopped the bleeding however they haven’t remove the bullet because it’s too close to the spine and removing it will cause greater harm.

“So you are saying she will live with a bullet inside?” Muzi

“Yes.”

“No my daughter won’t live with a bullet inside of her, never!”  
Dad

“Removing the bullet is a risk Qwabe that what the doctor is saying,” mom says trying to make her husband understand but he’s hearing none.

“Yheyi ngithi ikhipheni inhlavu niyangizwa!” (Yhey I said remove that bullet do you hear me!)

“A lot could go wrong and she might never walk again or worse we can lose her.” The doctor says warning dad but the man is stubborn for no reason.

“Bab Qwabe please listen to the doctor I’m begging you.” Muzi

“This is a big decision so I will give you family a chance to think about this through,” says the doctor and leaves us.

“Baba first you refused to let Mbewenhle further her studies and be a dentist now you want to take away her talent?”  
Mvelonhle

“What talent?”

“She’s a very good runner baba. Do you know Caster Semenya? She’s fast as her if not faster,” Mvelonhle says

“Ungazongitshela ngaloyomfana ntombazana yingakho enje vele. UMbewenhle umsebenzi wakhe ukukhulisa umuzi wakaMaseko hayi indaba zama gijima zombhedo ungazi ukuthi kusuke kujahwa ini.” (Don’t tell me about that sissy boy that’s why she’s like that. Mbewenhle’s duty is to grow the Maseko surname not this running nonsense. I don’t even know what are they chasing after)

.....

I glance at mom as I’m chopping the cabbage, I’m preparing to cook for supper. Dad is stubborn as a mule but what irks me the most is mom who never stand up to dad even for her children. We’re now home and the surgery is set up for tomorrow as dad wants to talk to his ancestors first before they remove the bullet.

“Are you going to watch dad kill Mbewenhle?”

“Killing is a big word to say Mpilenhle

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” she responds calmly as if this is not worrying her.

“That is the right word to say! Why can’t you stand up for us for once mama?”

“Hey don’t raise your voice at me! Why don’t you try to understand where your father is coming from huh? He is also scared like us but he’s a man and he’s not supposed to show that to us!”

“If he’s scared then he shouldn’t let the doctor remove the bullet mama!”

“It’s not easy to just accept that your daughter will live with a bullet inside of her body. That’s scary Mpilenhle!”

“But it’s for his daughter’s beneficial why can’t he understand that? His ignorance is sickening!”

“Hey don’t talk like that about your father.”

“Tell me are you happy about his decision?”

“Of course not.”

“Then why are you not standing up for Mbewenhle? In fact why are you not asking him the reason we are in this situation from the first place?”

“Mpilenhle phuma ezindabeni zomuzi wami!” (Mpilenhle stay out of my household issues!)

“The same issues that affect us mama?” Says Mvelonhle as he walks in the rondoal.

“You should shut up because you are the cause of this!”

“Oh please mama stop shying away from the truth your husband is the cause of this! He’s the one who should tell us what’s going on here.”

“We are no longer kids now and we want to know what’s going on. Is this feud about Ndwalenhle? Which child baba lost except Ndwalenhle?” Mvelonhle adds on what I’ve just said.

“Hheyi nina aniyeke ukukhuluma nonyoko ngathi nehla entabeni!” (Hey you two stop talking to your mother disrespectfully!)

Mvelo and I look at each other and say nothing. Of course we know better to backchat. My father wouldn’t hesitate to beat me up as 28 years old and married as I am.

“MaNdwandwe can we talk.”

“Okay Qwabe.” Mom says meekly and they both walk out heading to the main house.

“Are you thinking of what I’m thinking?” Mvelo

We both giggle then follow them. They’re in their bedroom, we stand on their closed door and eavesdrop.

“First of all I want to apologize to you sthandwa sami for what I’m about to say to you. I know I should’ve come clean to you but I was a coward and scared to hurt you.” Dad

“Talk to me my darling I’m listening.” The tremor in my mom’s voice is loud to be missed.

“Uhm I haven’t been honest with you. I betrayed my best friend and slept with his wife. Asimbonge was my daughter and we found out after she committed suicide that Gwala knew about this all along. He avenged himself by sexually abusing my daughter for years up until she couldn’t take it anymore and ended her life. He confessed to me and his wife, no in fact he wasn’t confessing but bragging about it. I wanted to kill him with my bare hands!”

To say I'm shocked would be an understatement. I can't believe this man! Asi was our elder sister and he never told us this? She was my best friend and a year older than me. When she passed on I was broken beyond and at times I'd blame myself for not being there for her as a friend that she ended up taking her life. I feel my face getting wet with my tears and wipe them but they're relentless.

"Say something sthandwa sami."

"What do you want me to say Musawenkosi?"

"Anything MaNdwandwe, say you forgive me and still love me."

"You have never care about my opinion so it's not like it would make any difference," Mom says with a crying voice then we hear footsteps shuffling towards the door and runway.

I curl myself on top of my bed and cry my lungs out. I thought I have moved on from her passing until now. I must have been a not good enough friend to confide in and that hit to the core.

.....

I'm woken up by my ringing phone on the bedside table. I stretch my hand to take it when I see it's a video call from my husband I sit up on my butt and answer it. No I'm not going to beautify myself and pretend I wasn't sleeping I don't care how do I look, the man is even uglier in the mornings when he wakes up.

"Baby" my voice is groggy.

"Hey baby how are you?"

"I'm okay and yourself." I say and yawn covering my mouth with my hand.

"You are not okay sthandwa sami your eyes are swollen you were crying."

“I will tell you all about it when I come back how are the kids?”

“They are okay they want to talk to you”

“Okay”

My two rascals appear on the screen and the shock that attacks me when I see their bald heads.

“Hey mommy!”

“Hayi nina nigundeleni?” (No why did you cut your hair?)

“It’s grandma.” That’s bitc...God! I end the video call and call my husband.

“Lov...”

“Why did your mom cut my daughters hair?”

“I don’t know baby.”

“You don’t know know? How can you not know I left you with my kids which means whatever that happens to them it’s your concern!”

“Come on Mpilo it’s just hair and they look cute with their bald heads.”

Stupid man! He doesn’t get it how long it took me to grow their hair. These two have stubborn hair. Gosh I can’t believe that my hard work all gone.

“You don’t get it do you?”

“Get what?”

I’m shaking with anger. I’m going to kill that woman!

“Who gave your mom a permission to cut their hair! I’m their mom not her and I decide what to do with my kids’ hair!”

“She’s their grandmother, you are being dramatic baby.”

“There you go! You never see anything wrong your mom does Sbusiso!”

“Uyangithethisa manje Mpilenhle!” (You’re shouting at me Mpilenhle!)

I hang up and when he calls me back I switch off my phone. Most of our fights involves his mother and that woman is very sly. In front of her son she pretends to love me and care about me but when her son is out of her sight I’m not good enough for her son because “I’m an uneducated village girl” Argh! I groan in frustration.

“Is it safe to get in?”

“Enter at your own risk!”

I hear him chuckling as he gets inside my bedroom.

“Good morning sis.”

“What is good about this morning Mvelonhle.”

“Yoooh who made you this angry in the morning?”

“Isn’t that mother in law of mine I swear Mvelonhle ngizomfakeka umuthi wamagundwane!” (...I will poison her with rats’ poison)

“We should use it on dad too,” he says giggling

“Hayi Mvelonhle.” (No Mvelonhle)

“Okay I’m kidding sis. Mom asked me to wake you up and tell you to prepare to go to the hospital.”

“I’m not going I won’t be there to witness my father paralyzing my sister or even worse killing her.”

“Mom needs us sis.”

“That woman doesn’t need us she should stand up to her husband once and for all.”

“She just found out that her husband cheated on her and had a child out of wedlock. It’s too much for her right now she doesn’t need us to judge her but to support her,” he says and walks out.

I sigh. He spoke like a true man. Once I’m done freshening up I go to eyisini where we usually communicate with our ancestors. I join mom and Mvelo on the mat. Dad burns an incense and makes us to inhale it then puts it emsamo.

“Bo Gumude nina baka Malandela kaluzumana yimina umtwana wenu Musawenkosi, indodana kaMzwempi. Ngithi

ngizonibikela bantu abadala ngesimo esenzekayo layikhaya. Umzukulu wenu uMbwenhle lo oyiwele usesibhedlela njengoba elimele phela ngesikhali.” (Gumede nina baka Malandela kaluzumana it’s me your child. The son of Mzwempi. I’m here to let you all know about the situation that is happening in this home. Your grandkid Mbwenhle, the one who is a twin is at the hospital since she got hurt with a weapon.) He pauses as he sprinkles the snuff emsamo then continues to communicate with the ancestors.

“Ngicela nimvikele bo Phakathwayo bathi odokotela angeke bakwazi ukukhipha inhlamvu emzimbeni ngoba ihlezi eduze komgogodla uma beyikhipha kungahle angaphinde ahambe noma endeke ngapho ngakunina. Mina ngiyala mathonga mahle ayikwazi ingane ukuphila nenhlamvu emzimbeni nikhona nina. Anginilingi kepha ngiyazi anehlulwa lutho ngiyanicela bo Mnguni ka Yeyeye ukuthi njengoba ezohlinzwa nje kungabi bikho ubungozi futhi aphinde akwazi ukuhamba. Ngiyaninxenxa bo Khondlo. Sizohamba ke manje sibangise esibhedlela cela nihambe nathi nisikhanyisele indlela. Mkhayiphe kaGodolozisi.” (I’m asking you all to protect her bo Phakathwayo. The doctors said they can’t remove the bullet as it is too close to her spine and if they remove it she will be paralyzed or she can come to that side. I refuse to accept this beautiful ancestors the child

can't live with a bullet in her body while you are here. I'm not testing y'all but I know that y'all never fail. I'm begging you bo Mnguni ka Yeyeye to protect her and let no harm to happen to her as she's going to undergo a bullet removal surgery. May she never lose the ability to use her legs I'm pleading with you Khondlos. We are about to leave now and go to the hospital please go with us and guide us. Mkhayiphe kaGodolozzi.)

"Mkhayiphe ka Godolozzi," the three of us say after him.

With that being done we leave for the hospital. Thuthuka and Muzi are waiting for us at the waiting area. Muzi looks like he didn't sleep nor did he bath. He's still wearing yesterday's clothes after all. Thuthuka on the other side has bloodshot red eyes if I knew it better I'd say he has been crying.

"You're selfish Mr Qwabe..." Muzi nudges Thuthuka who clicks his tongue and walks out. The folks sign the document which allows the doctors to remove the bullet on my sister. I look at mom as she signs everything and I can't believe that she's really signing up a death warrant for her daughter. The only reminder of Ndwalenhle. I sit down next to Mvelonhle and envelope him in my arms as he weeps silently.

The atmosphere is somber no one is talking or saying anything to the other. Muzi has been walking out of the hospital and coming back smelling cigarette. I don't know where did Thuthuka disappeared to but when he comes back she's with Isisa, who looks like a mess with tears and mucus on her face. The hours are moving slowly and if it was for me they'd just stop.

11am on the dot the doctor in scrubs comes out and approaches us. The look on his face says it all and I steel myself for the worst. We all stand up and look at him in anticipation.

“Qwabe family I'm sorry.”

## ☆ Muzikayise ☆

The moment I have been dreading is here now but if it was possible I'd reserve it for later just to steel myself for the news I'm about to receive. I stare at the doctor who's bearing news that are going to change my life forever. It's either they're going to leave me despair for the rest of my life or for the short period of time. I'm praying for the latter, it's better to have her in my life paralyzed then losing her to death. It won't be easy I know that but we will get through this together if ever she turns out to be paralyzed.

"Qwabe family I'm sorry...." Isisa is the first to burst into tears before the doctor finish talking. In this moment I realize that I actually do have a worst fear and that is losing Yeyeye. The way my heart is drumming at this moment I doubt I would hear anything and Isisa's loud cry is not helping at all.

"Isisa please calm down and let the doctor finish." I say harshly then I intended to.

“I’m sorry we took longer than we expected it was quite a very risky surgery and we had to be as heedful as we could. The surgery went well however we can’t celebrate as yet until she’s awake.”

“Are you saying she will not wake up?” Mam Qwabe asks with a shaky voice and tears are already swimming in her beautiful dark sparkling eyes. Yeyeye is her mom’s replica so beautiful just like her.

“I’m not saying she won’t wake up nor would she wake up Mrs Qwabe but I did prepare your family for what might happen after this surgery.”

“But you said the surgery went well doesn’t that mean she’s out of danger?” Says Bab Qwabe trying to conceal the tremor in his voice but it’s so loud for one to miss it. Is that regret what I see in his eyes?

“Yes the surgery went well but let’s wait for her to wake up Mr Qwabe at this moment we can’t really tell what’s going to happen.”

“Oh ngambulala umtanami,” (Oh I killed my baby) whispers Mam Qwabe rather to herself and teardrops slide down her cheeks.

“It’s not like you didn’t know mama. You should be happy!”  
Mpilenhle

“Don’t you dare talk to your mother like that wena unyoko lo uyakuzala!” (...this is your mother she gave birth to you!)  
Qwabe

“If something happens to my sister I won’t forgive you, both of you!” Mpilenhle storms out and her mom bursts into a loud sob.

“Don’t cry my dearest wife our daughter is going to be okay. oQwabe won’t let us down they’re always with us and they will protect her,” he says pulling his wife into his arms.

“Can we see her doctor.” Isisa.

“I will give you guys two minutes per pair.”

“Thank you so much.” Mvelonhle.

The parents are the first to see their daughter followed by Isisa and Mvelonhle. Thuthuka allows me to go alone when it's our turn. I could feel every pound of my heartbeat in my chest as I shuffle closer to the bed. Melancholy hangs over me like a black cloud when I see her hooked up in a number of machines. Not being able to do something is the most excruciating part.

I sit on the little space next to her and rest my upper body next to her draping my arm around her waist. I just want to feel her close to me but there's this cold wall between us which is created by the fear of the fact that she might die on me.

“Yeyeye please fight, you can't die now. We still have a lot to live for sthandwa sami, you and I together. Our journey just begun you can't leave now. We are still on the first few pages of our love story and we still have thousands of pages to complete. This can't be our ending, it's definitely not our

ending. Please fight for me, fight for our love. I need you so much in my life and losing you is one thing that I refuse to entertain. Come back to me.”

A lone tear fall on her forehead. I wipe it with my thumb before kissing her forehead.

“I love you so much Yeyeye come back to me please.” I swallow spit trying to block my tears but they fall like a waterfall. Damn when was the last time I shed tears? I was a teenage boy if I remember it correctly. I can feel presence and when I look up I see Mpilenhle by the door.

“I’m sorry I didn’t mean to interrupt you it’s just that two minutes is over but I can give you my two minutes,” she says as I surreptitiously wipe my tears.

“No it’s fine I’m done.” I get up from the bed and tuck my hands into my jean as I walk out.

I find Thuthuka and Isisa cuddling in my car. I don't even ask questions nor say anything but bring the engine to life and drive back. She can't die on me, what it will become of me? Longimkhethelwe abaphansi uqobo lwabo she cant leave me when I've just met her. I drop Isisa first and drive home.

"How is the Qwabe girl." It's the first thing dad says when I walk into the lounge. He's alone watching TV.

"Her name is Mbewenhle baba stop addressing her as Qwabe girl."

"How is she?"

I sigh and explain to him what the doctor said and everything.

"Qwabe is such a hard headed man ay nokungafundi kunomthelela nje angazi uThembeka wayebonani kuleyandoda." (...illiteracy is a factor in his behavior. I don't know what did Thembeka saw in that man)

“It’s not like you’re educated Dad.”

“But I do have grade 12 and I’m very smart compared to that man.”

“Dad is this why you are against my relationship with Mbewenhle? It is because you’re still sore that her mom didn’t choose you?”

“Of course not son that was many years ago and I’m not against your relationship with that girl.”

“Then what’s wrong.”

“Nothing son I support you 100% I was just being a concerned father that’s all. You love her I see that and I’m behind you every step of the way. Don’t stress too much at least the surgery was successful that’s good news.”

I heave a sigh and bury my head on my hands

“I guess but I wish we were married because I would’ve been the one to make this decision as her husband.”

“Just be strong son and I think it’s a good idea that you still have months to know each other before you get married. You might find out that she’s not the one for you.”

“Trust me she’s definitely the one I can feel it in my bones. I want Gwala to rot in the cell!”

“I went to see him today.”

I remove my hands from my head and look at him.

“For what?”

“He asked me to come and the news I heard from him are very sad. This feud between him and Qwabe wasn’t just about the

garden and cows.” He continues to narrate the story that leaves me gobsmacked

“This man is where he belongs!”

“Oh come on son Qwabe betrayed him first.”

“I’m not disputing that dad but sexually abusing Asimbonge was monstrous and evil! He’s so cruel! He was supposed to deal with Qwabe and leave Asi she didn’t choose to be born under this circumstances!”

“Ah well the sins of the father are to be laid upon the children.”

Gwala is so sick, he definitely deserves jail sies what kind of a man is he?

The next day I’m woken up by Mpilenhle’s call. The hospital called and said we must come but she doesn’t tell me what’s going on. I don’t even freshen up but leave right at the moment. I jog along the corridors heading straight to her ward.

Mathonga ami amahle don't turn your back on me please let it be not something horrible. I push the door and barge inside breathing heavily. They all turn to look at me and my heart skips a beat when my eyes meet those beautiful dark sparkling eyes.

"Yeyeye!" I scream like a little boy seeing his mom for the first time in months. Mpilenhle laughs and I compose myself as I walk close to her bed.

"Greetings." They all greet me back and my eyes are are stuck on my baby who look like she's on a verge of crying.

"You're on time son we just arrived and the doctor was just letting us in about her recovery," says Bab Qwabe.

"Qwabe family we are glad that our patient is awake however she lost the ability to move her legs." The doctor's words break my heart into pieces but at least she's alive.

“I don’t understand doctor how can she lose the ability to use her legs when the operation went well? Or you told us lies there’s something wrong that you did to my baby!” Bab Qwabe

“Mr Qwabe we did nothing wrong we removed the bullet as you requested which was very risky what happens after that is beyond our control...” Qwabe interjects

“Don’t tell me it’s beyond your control when you are the one that caused a damage! Is this what you spend years studying to cause more damage huh!” He charges for the doctor but I hold him before he punches him.

“Calm down Bab Qwabe please. What important is that she’s alive.”

He roughly frees himself from my grip and walks out. His wife’s follows behind him to calm him down I think even though I doubt that it’s going to be possible.

“I’m sorry doctor about my dad’s behavior he’s being difficult because he was told about this but he chose to do what he wants.” Mpilenhle

“I understand. Excuse me

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” says the doctor and walks out.

“Why did you save me from the first place huh? You should’ve let me die.” Teardrops spill down her cheeks as she says this. I won’t lie her words hit home.

“Hey baby don’t say that.” I sit next to her and envelope her in my arms as she wails loudly.

“It’s better then this!”

“Don’t be selfish Mbewenhle how we could’ve left you to die huh? We had to save you! Being responsible for what happened to Zimiphi is already tearing me apart you want to add more guilt?”

“It was my choice not yours and it’s definitely better than not being able to walk!”

“I can’t imagine how you are feeling sis but we are going to be okay I promise please don’t cry. We are so happy that you are alive and we missed you so much,” Mpilenhle says and holds her little sister’s hand.

Once she’s calm the two siblings decide to go out giving us space. I pull her back and look at her tear stained face.

“I love you so much.”

“Really?”

“Yes baby I thought we are over you doubting my love for you but it’s okay we’ve got our whole lives together and I’m going to prove you.”

“No baby I mean you still love me without legs?”

“You do have legs Yeyeye.”

“I’m good as someone who don’t have them Muzikayise.”

“Nothing will ever change my love for you baby or make me love you less. I don’t want anything in this world except a life with you and I have no doubt that it’s going to be a beautiful one.”

For the first time since I have seen her today she smiles and that beautiful smile of hers does things to me. It makes my hair on the back stand and my heart beat to its unknown tune.

“Uthando olungaka, uthando olungaka angikaze ngalibona uthando olungaka. Wena ukhethiwe ngabaphansi.” she sings making me to blush like a teenage boy. I can’t help myself but steal a kiss.

“Tell me when was the last you had a bath?” I laugh at her question.

“Bathing was the last thing on my mind.”

“Akusho wena awumubi!” (It shows the way you are so ugly) I burst into laughter

“Leave me alone wena!”

I lean over to kiss her lips but her parents make their way in.

.....

“Khamisa?” (Open your mouth) she opens her mouth and I shove a mouthful spoon of yogurt into her mouth. Jesus can't she stop moaning? The black forest bliss yogurt is her favorite and she's been moaning since the first spoon. It's half full now if only she knew that her moans are sending a wrong message to my groin.

“Stop moaning baby.”

“I can’t help it baby.”

I lean over to lick the smudge of yogurt on the corner of her mouth. It’s even taste better when I lick it from her.

“Sies you are disgusting!”

I giggle

“Oh this is nothing my love wait until the day I break your virginity. I will start by licking every inch of your body I don’t even want to mention every part of you where there’s a hole. I’d be dipping my tongue and you’d feel like you are losing your mind.”

She gasps and her eyes are bulging out. I can’t help but laugh at her comical face.

“You’re so cute you know that.” I say and kiss her forehead.

It’s been 3 days since she woke up and right now we are sitting under the shade of the tree at the hospital. She wanted some fresh air and I was happy to give her what she wants.

“You wants to kill me with your dirty talk.”

I laugh

“I could never kill you sthandwa sami you do know that you made me discover my worst fear.”

She looks up at me with furrowed brows.

“And that is?”

“Losing you baby it’s my worst fear.”

“Oh babe are you telling me that you didn’t have a worst fear before?”

“Not I didn’t.”

“Wow are you human?”

I chuckle

“Of course, what yours? Your worst fear of course.”

“Storm.”

“Understandable.”

The picture of how scared she was that day is still imprinted in my mind.

“What’s your biggest dream?”

“Making you my wife and the mother of my children. Yours?”

“Sweet. Finding out what happened to Ndwalenhle even if finding her bones that would bring me closure.”

I put the tub of yogurt on the ground and take her hands in mine.

“I wish there is something I can do to make your wish come true. I don’t even know if we were to look for her where will we begin. I’m sorry this is one thing that I can’t give you baby.”

“It’s okay my love I understand. Trust me we did look for her my father even went to traditional healers to find out if she’s still alive or not but no one was clear. I might never find out what happened to her I see that but the difficult part is moving on. Anyway let’s not talk about depressing things well my other biggest dream is to be a dentist. I guess I have far fetched dreams because even that one it won’t come true. My father

doesn't believe education is important even when the opportunity presented itself to me without him having to pay a cent he denied."

"I can imagine baby, how can you move on without knowing what really happened to her but let's be hopeful that one day all of this will make sense and you will be able to move on. Your father denied how?"

She tells me what happened and I have to say that was a blessing in disguise honestly. I share the same sentiments with her father. The city might not ruin her as her father says but some bastard will snatch her away from me. I can give her the world but this is another thing that I cannot give her. If it was for me I'd make her invisible in front of other men so that they won't lust over her. That's crazy I know but my heart is so possessive of her and sometimes it's even scary.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

See when I took that bullet for my brother I never thought this would be the outcome. I thought I was going to be at peace and happy with my ancestors maybe reunite with my twin sister if she's already gone from this world. Life has another plan for me as always. I don't understand how can surgery be successful and results of the tests done at the hospital come back showing nothing wrong yet still be paralyzed.

I'm grateful for the support I get from my family though and I have seen another side of my father that I never knew existed. I don't know if it's guilt or what but he's fussing over me and it's so surreal. I like it though and I wish he stays like this forever. The traditional, uptight and strict kind of man that he is sometimes makes one question a lot of things about him.

It's been few days since I have been out of the hospital and the tension at home is not nice. Mpilenhle is angry at my parents and blames them for my paralysis. Mvelonhle told me the real reason why Gwala and baba were at loggerheads. The tension between mom and dad can't be missed. This is actually my first time witnessing a tension between the two. Mom is even sleeping with me even though she claims to want to make sure that I'm okay and help me when I need to pee in the middle of the night.

Can I not go into what a vicious man Bab Gwala is? Sis Asi was a humble sweet soul and one wouldn't have noticed that she was going through the most the way she was always smiling and sweet. I'm so disappointed at my father and my heart aches for my mother. Dad is everything but I never thought cheating is one of them.

"You two are dating now?" I ask and she blushes as she nods her head. The way she's so happy I'm afraid to burst her bubble. Thuthuka is on some kind of game here and I don't like that my best friend is going to be caught up in this stupid game.

"When are you sending the flag to the Ngema homestead?"

"Well we decided to just get to know one another first before we let the world know about our relationship."

"That's nice." I say faking a smile.

"You don't sound happy for me Mbewu."

“Of course I’m happy for you friend. I’m sorry for allowing my problems to make it seem like I’m not happy for you.”

“Argh no friend I’m the one who’s wrong I shouldn’t be talking about my new relationship while you’re going through a lot. How are you holding up?”

“No friend you also matter in this friendship and me going through the worse doesn’t mean we should shut down everything happening in your life and talk about my depressing life. My family is falling apart Isisa.” I heave a sigh and suck on my ice block.

There’s no day that passes without her coming to see me at home and I really appreciate that. Our conversations and gossip flow well with something nice to eat so today she came with ice blocks and ogqwe (20cent biscuits).

“I’m sorry friend it’s still early days I believe as time goes on you guys are going to work it out. I’m glad that man is in jail, he deserves it!”

“My father was also wrong though.”

“True but Asimbonge didn’t do anything wrong friend. I can’t imagine how she must have...” she’s disturbed by her phone ringing. When she looks at her phone her cheeks reach her ears.

“Madlokovu,” she says and they talk for a minute. God I have never seen my best friend like this. She really got it bad! I need to talk to Thuthuka, I want to know what are his intentions with my friend.

“Friend I have to see my man. I will see you tomorrow okay.”

“Thanks for coming by.”

“Don’t mention it. Don’t stress too much okay everything will be okay.”

“I will try.”

She kisses my cheek and leaves me at the veranda eating the biscuits and sucking on the ice block. Once I'm done I push myself inside the house. I need some shut eye I hardly sleep these days. At night it's when my life plays before my eyes and it keeps me at night. I hear my mom crying on the other side of their bedroom and wheel myself towards her closed door. She's crying while talking to someone on the phone.

“I'm trying Nomsa but I just can't stand his sight. Every time I look at him I see him with that woman having sex.... I know it happened years ago but to me it's new and it's hurt so bad.” She sniffs and keeps quiet for a while. Nomsa is her best friend who lives in Durban. When she got married, she and her husband bought a house in Durban. I can say that she's my second mother that's how close they are.

“Infidelity has never been one of the things I have to deal with in this marriage. I just want a break a bit you know. I want a valid reason to leave this village so that he can let me go and not run to my mother. You know how mama is “kuyabekezwela emshadweni mtanami” as if I haven't been doing that

throughout this marriage. Is it not enough that I'm tolerating his family that doesn't love me and his stubborn, difficult, traditional self now I have to deal with his infidelity that brought a child. It doesn't matter that she's dead because this ended up affecting my children. I doubt Mvelonhle will pass his grade 12. The passing of that girl left him torn apart. Mpilenhle hates me and Mbewenhle could never walk again. It's such a mess Nomsa." She lets out a sob.

"I want to come that side with Mbewenhle even for a week or two. I can't leave her she needs me and I think some fresh air would do her good. This place is not wheelchair friendly even our yard is not straight. My baby was starting to smile again, the boy she's in a relationship with brought a genuine smile on her face that I haven't seen since we lost her twin now this happens. How about you find me a specialist or whatever to help her improve her recovery that would be the only reason Qwabe can let me leave this house."

Jizas this woman how can she use me to leave this house without asking me first. I also have a man who I don't want to get away from unlike her. Impilo yami inswampe!

.....

I have been meaning to tell Kayise that I'm leaving with mama but I'm scared he will flip. The way he's holding me right now it's like he knows that in two days I'm leaving.

"Baby it's getting late now take me back home."

We have been together the whole day in his house. After I heard mom talking with her friend yesterday I was planning to tell him today but I haven't found a right way to tell him.

"Just a minute baby." That's what he said an hour ago.

"Kayise..." he shuts me up with a kiss that leaves me feeling funny and wet down there. If I knew better I'd say today he's on a mission to sex me. The dampness on my panties is the evidence of the heavy petting we have been doing today. Even now his hand is tucked into my leggings underneath my panties cupping my lady part. It baffles me how comfortable I am with this yet it's my first time having a man touching me there.

"Tell me when will be your umemulo ceremony."

“December on my birthday.”

“That’s 9 months away baby. I can’t wait any longer now.”

“You can’t wait to have sex with me?”

“No I can wait, what I can’t wait is to make you mine baby not as my girlfriend but as my fiancé at least. I want everyone to know that you are mine.”

“But they do know baby.”

“I won’t feel like you are not mine completely until I do right by you baby.”

“Well my father want to do umemulo for me first before accepting your lobola which is understandable. To him I’m not old enough for marriage until I’m 21 years old.”

“I hear you.”

“Ha.ah baby you and him agreed on this together behind my back musa ukungitefela.” (...stop sulking.)

“You say as if I had a choice.”

“Oh well be strong Mr. Baby can I ask you something.”

“Sure sthandwa sami.”

“What if I won’t be able to give you children.”

“That’s not going to happen baby.”

“But what if it happens Kayise anything is possible.”

“Hayi ngeke.” (No it’s won’t)

“Kayise I’m saying if it does happen what’s going to happen to us?”

To tell the truth I’m not ready to hear the answer to this but better now than later.

“What do you want me to say Mbewenhle?”

“To tell me what will happen to us.”

“Well I don’t know.”

Oh

“You don’t know to who?”

“I don’t know to who but I don’t know.”

I swallow a thick saliva in my mouth as my heart shatters in pieces.

“Are you going to be with me or not Muzikayise this is simple.”

“Ay ngithe angazi ufuna ngithini!” (Ay I said I don’t know what do you want me to say!) He pushes me away and slides out of bed.

“Where are you going?” I ask but he doesn’t reply me as he walks out.

What happened to “nothing will ever change my love for you or make me love you less?” I sit on my butt and try to reach for my wheelchair but it’s a bit far. If my feet were walking I’d be going home but now I’m stuck on this bed. One more time I try to reach for my wheelchair but I lose balance and just as I’m about to fall someone catches me.

“What the fuck are you doing you want to hurt yourself.”

“Leave me alone Thuthuka I can take care of myself!”

He gently puts me on the bed and sits next to me. I try to hold my tears but they fall effortlessly.

“MaQwabe

” he says softly pulling my head up so that I look at him.

“Tell me what has he done to you I’m going to sort him right now!!”

“That’s your uncle Thuthuka.”

“When it comes to you that doesn’t matter. Wenzeni?” (What has he done?)

“It’s between me and him don’t involve yourself in our business.” I wipe my tears

“I don’t want anything to hurt you MaQwabe.”

“Thuthuka what are your intentions with my best friend?”

“I like her she’s a good girl.”

“And me?”

“What about you?”

“Oh come on not so long ago you were crying to me that I chose your uncle over you now you are moving on to my friend.”

“You’re not the only beautiful girl in this world sis get over yourself.”

“If you dare hurt my best friend you will deal with me!”

He laughs out loudly.

“You think there’s anything that you can do to me?”

“I will tell your uncle that you kissed me while I was on my death bed at the hospital.”

He swallows hard and I smirk.

“What? You thought I was still unconscious right oh well I saw you and heard you crying like a little boy!”

“Fuck you Mbewenhle!”

“Fuck you too Thuthuka!”

He does the unthinkable before I could digest what is happening, my face is framed in his palms and he’s kissing me. Right in that moment we hear a voice.

“What’s going on here!”

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

My adrenaline is pumping and beating like it's trying to abscond and my heart beat is so erratic. I swear it's going to explode. The only way to ease these intense emotions threatening to engulf me is to run but the inability of my mobility is a hindrance. I start hyperventilating and gasping for air. Dear Lord please give me strength!

"MaQwabe breathe...breathe sis...slowly and deep," she says brushing my back. I don't even know when did she sit next to me.

"Yes you are doing good just like that." Her voice is so sweet and mollifying my myriad of emotions. I take deep breaths in and out.

"Get water Thuthuka!"

He scurries out and comes back with the jug of water. She holds the jug for me and helps me drink the water. Why does she care? Isn't she supposed to curse at me?

"Are you okay now," she asks and her voice is buttered with concern which baffles me. The moment I nod my head tears flow down my face like a river.

"I'm sorry mama from the deepest of my heart. It's not my intention at all to cause a fight between your son and your grandson. I didn't know Thuthuka's mother is Kayise's sister. The truth is he's the one who courted me first it's been a year and months now and I have always been clear to him about my feelings. What you just saw right now I wasn't a willing participant. My main concern is that he's been flirting with me knowing very well that I'm with his uncle and he just started dating my best friend. I was only trying to find out what's his intention honestly because I don't want my best friend to be hurt nor do I want to fight with my best friend." I say choking between my sobs.

"Thuthuka is this true?"

He heaves a sigh and nods as he look down with shame.

“It’s true gogo I’m very sorry. I didn’t mean any disrespect the truth is I can’t help it when I see her.”

“She’s your uncle’s woman Thuthuka! That’s make her your aunt why don’t you respect that huh? Tell me does Muzikayise knows about this?”

“I know gogo and I’m sorry. No he doesn’t know”

“How is possible that both of you have been courting one girl but you didn’t know about that,” Mam Maseko asks the very same thing I have been wondering about.

“Malumes knew that there’s this girl I have been courting but he didn’t know who is she. Then weeks back he also told me about this girl he met. We made a bet that who’s going to get his girl first in a week. He refused to tell me the name of the girl after we made a bet because he thought I would do him dirty.”

I chuckle in disbelief so all of this was a bet? Him going behind my back to my parents and ask for my hand in marriage was because he wanted to win a stupid bet!

“No it’s not like that MaQwabe, malumes was already interested in you the first day he met you the bet was just a game that meant nothing.”

I nod my head but deep inside I’m burning with anger and I’m hurt deeply. I can’t believe that he included my parents in his sick game. Who plays with such a huge thing as marriage?

“You didn’t tell him that this is the same girl you have been courting?” Mam Maseko

“No I didn’t it’s not like it was going to make any difference. He loves her gogo and she loves him as well I’m the one who has to accept the defeat as a man that he groomed me to be. It’s just that my love for her overpowers me and I lose control of what I do around her. I promise to keep my distance from her. MaQwabe I’m sorry about my behavior please forgive me.

Gogo please don't tell malumes and don't hold anything against Mbewenhle it's me not her."

"Of course I won't tell him my grandson and I'm glad that you are taking ownership of your mistakes. This should stay between the three of us. See if there's one thing that can break a tight bond between brothers is a woman. Thuthuka please respect your uncle's woman and stay away from her. MaQwabe as the future daughter in law of this family, your job is to build the Maseko clan not to destroy it."

Of course I know that hence I didn't want to tell Kayise about Thuthuka's behavior until I talk to him. I didn't know this would be the outcome. At the virginity testing we are taught about many things and groomed to be abafazi abaqotho.

"Eh mama and I'm very sorry if my intentions came across as such but it wasn't at all."

"I understand sis and I'm glad we talked about this. Thuthuka I also want to know what are your intentions with her best

friend. Are you really interested in her or you are using her for your selfish reasons.”

“I like her gogo,” he says and Mama looks at me.

“Are you satisfied with his answer MaQwabe?”

“Yes mama I am.”

“Good.”

My phone rings on the bedside table and Thuthuka passes it to me.

“Mama”

“Asivumelananga ukuthi uzolala Mbewu.” (We didn’t agree that you are sleeping over Mbewu)

“I’m coming mama.”

She hangs up. I don’t even know where that man is and mama wants me home now.

“Your mother wants you home?”

“Yes mama.”

“Thuthuka take her home.”

“Where is Kayise?”

“Uhm he went out sis.”

Mmmh...with that said Thuthuka drives me home. The smile on my father’s face when I wheel myself inside the lounge.

“Ntombi yami kunjani namuhla.” (My girl how are you today?)

“I’m fine and yourself father.”

“I’m also fine. Ngikuphathele umqwebu ntombi yami. Mpilenhle hamba uyexhibeni uyomlandela.” (...I brought you biltong my girl. Mpilenhle go to the rondoal and fetch it.)

See what I said

the man is so sweet and loving these days. I love biltong and I haven’t ate it for months. Mpilenhle drags herself out to fetch my biltong.

“Ngiyabonga baba.” (Thank you father)

“Kubonga mina ntombi yami.” (I’m the one who’s thankful my girl )

Mpilenhle comes back with my biltong and give it to me. I don’t waste time but chow it. The tension is less tense today, we are even seated together watching Rhythm City.

“I found a physiotherapist that is going to help Mbewu.” Mama

“What’s that,” ask Baba

“It’s a doctor who’s trained to treat people who are injured or disabled with massages and exercises.”

“You still believe in doctors? These people know nothing all they do is to cause damage.”

“There’s no damage that was caused here the doctor told us what would happen and you insisted that the bullet must be removed.”

“I was talking to my sister and there’s a sangoma that can help Mbewenhle to walk again. She lives in Ladysmith as well.”

“Baba this is not traditional or spiritual related it needs nothing but western aid.” Mpilenhle

“Thula Mpilenhle angikhulumi nawe ngikhuluma nonyoko.”  
(Shut up Mpilenhle I’m not talking to you but to your mother.)

“Qwabe we are not taking Mbewenhle to that sangoma of your sister’s.”

“My sister said she’s a good sangoma...” Mama interjects

“Hayibo Qwabe why do you think I can trust your sister with my daughter’s life?”

“Aww MaNdwandwe don’t tell me that you are still holding a grudge it was an honest mistake.”

“Well that honest mistake costed me our unborn son.”

“What son?” Dad asks confused as much as we are.

“Where did you think the blood was coming from kanti wena? I had a miscarriage!” I have never heard my mother raising her voice at my father. To say I’m shocked will be an understatement. She stands up and walks away then stops on her tracks.

“Tomorrow I’m leaving with Mbewenhle we are going to Durban, where the physiotherapist is based.” With that said she flounces to their bedroom.

☆ Muzikayise ☆

Yeyeye’s question caught me off guard. Throughout this ordeal this is one thing I didn’t think about. Now that it has been brought to my attention I don’t know what to say nor how do I feel about it. I’m an heir and the only son. I’m the one who’s responsible for expanding the Maseko clan.

I find myself parked a bit far from the Ngidi’s gate. There’s a red polo parked where I used to park when I want to see her. She steps out of it carrying a baby’s basin and baby diapers. Some

tall guy steps out of the driver door and goes to the boot where he offloads a lot of jet plastic bags. The kids run to the car to take the plastics and go straight to their house with them.

I observe as he holds her and kisses her before kissing her big tummy. This is absolutely clear but there's this part of me that is refusing to believe. The tall guy gets in the car and leaves. I heave a sigh and drive to the gate. The second she sees my car she stands at the gate and wait for me. I roll down my window and call her to get in.

"I can't I have...."

"Lisakhanya ungangidini!" (Lisakhanya don't make me angry!)

She doesn't need me to tell her twice. I look at her glowing huge self once she's inside my car. Damn pregnancy loves her ubindilishi kamnandi I could bite her chubby cheeks.

"Who's that tall guy?"

“It’s my cousin.”

“You kiss your cousins?”

She gasps with shock, her eyes bulging out.

“No.”

“I’m going to ask you one last time Lisakhanya. Who’s that guy?”

“It’s my baby’s father.”

I chuckle and shake my head.

“Didn’t you say the baby is mine.”

“I did.”

“Then what nonsense is this?”

“I’m sorry I lied to you Muzi the truth is I was forced to lie to you and say the baby is yours.”

“Forced by who?”

She looks down twiddling her fingers.

“I’m asking a damn question!” I hit the dashboard and she jumps up with shock.

“Ndondoloza.”

I laugh really hard and give her a look that impels her to sing like a canary.

“There’s something she knows about me which I can’t reveal to you Muzi please don’t let me do it. She blackmailed me to lie to you.”

I can't believe how sick my little sister is!

"Why would she do this?"

"She wants to break your relationship with Mbewenhle."

"I know that but why?"

"She's obsessed with Siyabonga and believes that he lost interest in her because of her. Funny enough Siyabonga is the one that went for Mbewu not the other way around."

I feel anger radiating through my body and demanding a release.

"Get out of my car!"

She gets out of my car and I speed off to home, burning with anger. As much as there was this doubt but I was looking forward to be a father. I find her washing dishes and slides out my belt from my pants. This way I won't hurt her.

“Ukhohlakaliswa yini umncane kangaka?”

“Bhuti...”

“Nyuti? Woza la!” (...Come here!)

I grab her wrist and beat the shit out of her, she's wiggling and screaming.

“Haibo Muzikayise why are you beating the child!” Mama shouts as they all run inside the kitchen.

“This child of yours is a little devil! I'm beating the evilness and whore tendencies out of her!”

“Muzi stop it!” Baba holds the belt and pushes me against the wall breathing heavily on me.

“Stop beating up my child and make yours.”

“Your child you say.” I say chuckling

“What did you say?”

“Let’s all calm down please.” Mama says pulling dad away from me. I click my tongue and walk out.

.....

I take a huge breathe and knock on the opened door. Mpilenhle appears and smiles when she sees me.

“Muzi come on in.”

I walk inside and sit on the couch.

“How are you Mpilenhle.”

“I’m okay and yourself?”

“I’m fine.”

“What brings you here?”

“To see Mbewenhle.”

She looks at me shocked

“She’s not here.”

“Where is she?”

“Haibo Muzi she’s in Durban it’s been a week now. She left with mama.”

“Oh.”

“She didn’t tell you?”

“She did I must have forgot. Thank you.”

I don’t wait for her to say anything but leave. Durban? Doing what in Durban? I heave a sigh to gather my strength to call her but it sends me straight to voicemail. I send Mpilenhle an sms to send me the address while I wait for her response I pack up some clothes. The sms comes through. I take my bag and go tell the parents I’m leaving to Durban. They are asking a lot of questions but I don’t have time I need to get to my woman.

Mam Nomsa welcomes me and gives me their address. They had to rent a house that is wheelchair friendly as hers is a double story and not wheelchair friendly. I don’t waste anytime but leave. The single story house is beautiful and huge luckily

the gate is open. I park on the driveway next to Mpilenhle's car and step out of the car.

No one is answering me at the door but I can hear giggles on the other side of the house. I follow the giggles where they're coming from and see her wheelchair first before seeing her inside the pool with some bald guy who's holding her close to himself. I can't help but feel a sharp pain of jealousy.

"Don't make me fall!" Mbewenhle

"I won't I've got you."

I clear my throat and they both look at me. The shock is visible on her face.

"Kayise."

"Hello Yeyeye."

“What are you doing here?”

I look at the guy but he's not willing to give us space.

“Can we talk?”

“About what?”

“Mbewenhle please....”

“No tell me what do you want us to talk about? You want us talk about how our relationship has been nothing but a bet? You want us to talk about how you played with something huge as marriage just to win a bet? You want us to talk about how you played with my feelings and made me love you when all of this is just a game to you? You want us to talk about how you left me in your bed knowing very well that I can't walk? You want us to talk about kids that I could never give you? If that's so ah well this conversation is overdue baba I waited for you to return my calls for the whole week but you didn't.”

I swallow a thick lump clogging in my throat. I know I messed up I wasn't ready I needed some time to digest this.

"Baby please..."

"Muzikayise go please and leave me alone!"

"Yeye..."

"Eh ndoda umzwile hamba." (Eh man you heard her, leave)

"Ay wena fuseg! Sthandwa sami..."

"Kayise go to Lisakhanya you left me and went to her. She's carrying your child after all."

I heave a sigh and walk away but my heart doesn't want to let me go. I turn around and see her crying against his chest. Fuck Gwala we wouldn't be here right now!

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

“I’m sorry.” I say pulling away from his chest as the seed of mortification gets wedged inside of me but he pulls me closer to himself. His chest is buff yet soft, you can’t help but enjoy lying there and his lovely masculine scent is not helping.

“No, don't be sorry, let it all out,” he whispers in my ear and I let out the tears I have been holding for the whole week.

The day I came to Durban I called to let him know that I’m leaving but he wasn’t answering my calls. I knew that I was leaving my heart behind but I was hopeful that he’d call me. A day would pass without hearing from him and I’d hope that the following day he would call but he didn’t up until now.

You know what pains the most is that when he left me on his bed while we were having a serious conversation as a couple he went to Lisakhanya. The girl who’s carrying his child. One obstacle in our relationship and he’s ready to ditch me with my barrenness that hasn’t been proven. I wouldn’t have known

about this if it didn't slip out of Isisa's mouth. Yes she saw them and wasn't planning to tell me.

The audacity to show his handsome ass here and make me realize how much I miss him. I swear if I didn't lose the ability to move my legs I would've launched myself in his arms and sink in his embrace before remembering that I'm mad at him. I guess I should thank my paralysis *cishe ngadlisa iteam*.

"Okay let's call it a day."

He gently puts me on the concrete wall of the pool and gets out of the pool. After placing the towel on the wheelchair chair he picks me up and makes me sit on it.

"You good?"

"Yes thank you." I say taking the towel from him and wipe my face. He pulls the pool chair and sits in front of me.

"You are a beautiful girl, you know that?"

“Yes I do thank you.”

“I love that you know that. See this beautiful face of yours doesn't deserve to be stained with tears because of a boy do you hear me.”

I chuckle, he can't call Kayise a boy as if he's older than him. I'm mad at him but it doesn't sound nice in my ears that he's calling him a 'boy'. He's a man, my stupid strabismus eyed man.

“Why are you laughing I'm serious here Mbewenhle.”

“You called him a boy”

He looks at me with his brows creased and asks a funny question.

“Is he gay?”

The picture of a gay Kayise in my mind is comical.

“No he’s not gay but you called him a boy. I’m sure you are few years older than him.”

Now it is his turn to laugh.

“Baby girl I’m 38 years old and I’m sure that boy of yours is in his late twenties”

Lies!

“I’m not lying, I will show you my driver’s license.”

“You look young though uncle G”

To think the first time Mam Nomsa introduced him to us he wanted me to call him with his first name, Gcobelwakhe but I refused. My parents didn’t teach me to call elders by their first names let alone strangers. I insisted on calling him Dr but he

doesn't like that title. The whole Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Physiotherapy. Modesty! I'd personalize everything I own with 'Dr' title, even my panties. I settled for uncle G then and he loves it.

I can say the sessions are good I guess. I mean it's too early to tell and besides I don't have that faith in this. I only agreed because mama needed a break away from her stubborn husband and I was her only option. Us girls should stick together. The only thing I enjoy during these sessions is his company. He's such a witty man.

"Well I get that a lot and I'm not surprised I mean look at me. High school students are sbwling me. They think I'm their peer."

I laugh. Cha yena he's really a good looking man. Maybe if I don't have my strabismus eyed man I'd sbwl him.

"Don't ever let these boys make you cry."

It's not that easy. The man is the one that came to me and promised me heaven and earth. He promised my parents that he is going to marry me kanti he wanted to win a bet.

"I hear you uncle G."

"I don't want you to hear me only I want you to understand me as well. Do you understand?"

"I understand."

"I know that you are not immune to pain but you shouldn't allow boys to get to you. Many girls lose themselves because of these boys who never deserved them in the first place. Never settle for less and remember to always keep your heart guarded and safe."

"Thank you so much uncle G."

“You are welcome baby girl. We are done for today and tomorrow it’s Saturday we don’t have a session. You need some rest.”

Yay! That’s music to my ears plus Zipho promised me a date tomorrow. We are going to explore Durban and I’m looking forward to it. In fact I can’t wait for tomorrow phela I have never been to Durban before, in fact I have never been to any City or any place except Ladysmith, Dundee and Newcastle. I've always been cooped up in the village of Mozane with its lack of development.

Uncle G gets up from the pool chair and pushes me inside the house. Mom is relaxing on the couch, the TV is playing without a volume. She’s reading a drum magazine and on top of the coffee table which is close to her there’s a glass of wine. I never thought my mom drinks alcohol. Heee akazincishi ubumnandi untomboo! When she feels our presence she looks up from the magazine and smiles at us.

“Sorry for wetting the floor,” says uncle G

“Don’t worry I will sort it out. You are done?” Mom

“Yes we are.”

“Is it me or is today's session short?”

“Yes it was short. I have something to ask you and your daughter MaQwabe.”

Mom removes her legs from the couch and sits up straight looking at uncle G curiously.

“There’s Solly Mahlangu’s Concert at Durban ICC Arena. I have three tickets and I would like us to go together, the three of us.”

Mom’s face lit up but she tried to hide her excitement with a straight face. She’s Solly Mahlangu’s big fan.

“But why are you asking us? Don’t you have people to go with.”

“Ngiyaxolisa ukuphapha it's just that I thought it would be nice to get out of the house and get some fresh air.” (I’m sorry for being forward...)

“What time does the concert start?” Asks mama enthusiastically

“At 18:00.”

“Okay we can go together.”

“Thank you MaQwabe let me go freshen up and I will come back to fetch you guys.”

“No problem.”

Uncle G says his goodbye and walks out.

“Since you agreed do you have something to wear because I’m not going with you to Solly’s concert wearing a pinafore and a head wrap”

“Ungithatha kancane wena ngane,” (You undermine me child ) she says giggling and takes her glass of wine on the coffee table gulping it down.

“Hawu awusangi shiyeli.” (You didn’t leave some for me)

“This is an adult's drink

my girl. Let’s get you cleaned up first before we go to Solly’s concert.” The excitement in her voice warms my heart.

“I will tell dad.” I joke

“Umtshele nje ngizokubuyisela kuye emasendeni ngiyakutshela” (Dare tell him I will shove you back to his balls I tell you)

I crack into laughter. Trust mom to say that! She gets up from the couch and pushes me to the bathroom. Mam Nomsa's house is a double story and it's not wheelchair friendly. So we had to rent a house that was going to be easy for me to move around. It's a two bedroom single story, of course we use one bedroom. There's a pool outside and a beautiful garden. It's really nice but definitely not what I can buy. See Mam Nomsa's house? It's a deluxe mansion and I'd definitely buy that one. It's in Ballito after all so yeah. Her hubby is monied and he knows that imali iyaspendwa unlike my father. \*eyes roll\*

I don't know what mom said or did to him to allow us to come here and give her money to maintain our stay here as well as paying uncle G. There's no day that passes without him calling mom though. My sister says he's miserable without mama. I can imagine, the man has never been without mom for days. He is lucky that Mpilenhle is there to look after them because by the time we come back Dad and Lonhle would be dead due to starvation.

Mom thinks I lost the inability to move my arms as well. She does everything for me even bathing me. I have complained until I decided to let her be. I feel like a 5 year old right now.

The sponge is working wonders on my skin and soothing. I swear I'm going to doze off.

"Mama."

"Mmh."

"I love you."

She looks at me with a wide smile on her face.

"I love you too sweetheart."

"Mama."

"Mmh."

"Are you happily married?"

She pauses and looks at me once again. I see that I caught her off guard.

“What's that supposed to mean?”

“Does dad make you happy?”

“Yes he does.”

“Are you sure you are happy in your marriage.”

“Of course I'm happy Mbewenhle why do you think I'm not happy?”

“Nothing I'm just asking.”

“Mmh,” she says, soaping my breast going down to my tummy and my nana.

“Mama”

“Hayi Mbewu wase’phenduka umtwana manje.” (No Mbewu why are you acting like a baby now)

I giggle

“You are the one who’s babying me njena.”

“Haisuka uthini?” (What are you saying?)

“What happened when you miscarried?”

She takes a deep breath and lets it all out in one heavy sigh. Pain is visible in her eyes.

“It’s a long story Mbewu.”

“Make it short mama please.”

“Your aunt Nomzamo swapped isihlambezo sami with her muti she was drinking for the wounds that were all over her body and claimed it was a mistake. I don’t understand how it was a mistake we both knew that though the bottles were the same but caps were different. How did her bottle cap end up on my bottle and mine on hers?”

“Didn’t you taste the difference?”

“I did but the difference was slightly which is the reason I didn’t pay much attention until I started getting ill.”

“So you think she literally swapped the bottle caps on purpose.”

“Yes I don’t think so but I know.”

“Why would she do that mama. I mean you say that muti was to heal the wounds all over her body.”

“She might have heard me talking to Nomsa on the phone that I was pregnant because your father didn’t know as well. That man never shut his mouth. I wanted to keep my pregnancy a secret for a few more months.”

“I’m sorry mama I can’t imagine what it must have been like.”

“It’s okay sweetheart.”

.....

This place is beyond beautiful and I like that we are in the VIP section. The view of Bab Mahlangu is clear and damn he’s doing them things. The way he has us glued to his performance and singing along with him it’s beautiful. Honestly I didn’t think I would enjoy this concert. I’m not a gospel person. I can’t remember when was the last time I saw my mom this happy. She was right when she said I’m undermining her. I have never seen the dress she’s wearing tonight. She’s stunningly gorgeous in a navy blue yellow polka dots bodycon dress with a slit on the front and sandals. It’s moulds her every curve and her ass is popping.

I even forgot that she has a rich afro the way she always has a head wrap on her head. She styled it nicely. After the concert Uncle G asked Bab Mahlangu to take a picture with mom and my mom is a blushing mess. I can't help but laugh. Of course I wouldn't miss the opportunity of taking a picture with a celebrity so I take pictures as well and post on WhatsApp and Facebook.

Uncle G insisted on taking us to the restaurant so here we are and waiting for our order. This restaurant is fancy and beautiful. The village girl in me is roaming her eyes around and admiring every single thing. Mom and Uncle G are having their own conversation which I'm not even interested in. Our food finally comes, we dine and wine well in my case should I say dine and juice? Uncle G failed to convince mom to let me have a taste of wine. I'm sure one glass wouldn't have hurt.

"Thank you so much Gcobolwakhe for this amazing night."

Mama

We are now back to the house and I'm so sleepy all I want is to sleep. I must say that we had a wonderful night ever.

“Don’t mention it MaQwabe. I had wonderful time with you and your daughter as well and I hope we would do it again.”

“Of course.”

“I should get going now. Baby girl goodnight.”

“Goodnight uncle G and thanks once again.”

He winks at me, says goodbye to my mom, then walks out. Mom switches off the light then we retire to sleep.

The next day Zipho fetches me as promised and after eating brunch at McDonald’s we start at the beach. I insist that we chill here and reserve other places she has in mind for other days because we are still this side. Under the shade of the tree we are lying on the beach blanket in shorts and sport bras. Next to us there’s a cooler box of soft drinks and all the other goodies.

“It’s him again?” She asks and shoves a chunk of lays in her mouth.

“Yes.”

Kayise is blowing my phone. It's annoying honestly.

“What really happened between the two of you?”

Zipho is aunt Nomsa’s second born. A year older than me and studying LLB at UKZN. I tell her what happened.

“You say he’s the only son, it is his responsibility to expand his clan. You caught him off guard don't be too harsh on him. As for the bet I don’t think if it was just a silly game he would have gone that far to ask your hand in marriage from your parents. Marriage is a lifetime commitment and it’s sacred, people who live in villages still value and respect marriage unlike here in the City marriage is to just get a title or it can be a business arrangement.”

“You don’t know how far people in a village can go to get what they want. You know how men are with their egos. It's possible that he wanted to prove his masculinity. The way he is always on about wanting people to know that I’m his. I know it’s not just people but the guys that have been eying me.”

“How would knowing stop them from courting you though. You chose him out of all of the guys he should be happy and trust you.”

Zipho grew up here and she only comes to the village when there’s a ceremony in her mom’s home which is something that doesn’t happen often.

“Well once a girl sends a flag to the guy’s homestead it means they received blessings from their parents to be in a relationship. Everyone in a village will be aware of their relationship and guys who are courting the girl will have to respect their relationship and accept defeat.”

“Wow so guys literally stop courting the girl vele?”

“There are those who don't take rejection well and also those who believe that as long as he hasn't married her they still stand a chance. Obviously that never ends well because no one want to be disrespected like that. That's when bad blood and feuds starts to the point of blood spilling.”

“So what happens when you break up?”

“Lizodatshulwa phela iduku lilahlwe.” (They will tore the flag and discard it.)

“This flag thing is the same as dating. There's nothing special about it, moss. It doesn't guarantee that a person won't leave you.”

“No it's not the same thing Zipho. There is something special about it because it's done in a respectful way where the couple are committed to each other and parents give them blessings to be in a relationship. Should the girl fall pregnant the parents would be aware of the paternity of the baby. It's definitely not the same as how it's done nowadays. Girls date many boys and they don't feel an ounce of shame. Boys are fucking around like

nobody's business. This has diminished the meaning and beauty of dating. A relationship it's an union between two people who are committed and truthful to each other and who are willing to fight for their relationship, not people who are just dating for the sake of it. People who give their bodies to everyone. Tell me why do people catch feelings in their no strings attached relationships? Sex is spiritual, when people have sex two flesh become one and they connect in a deepest way."

"I hear you loud and clear Nhle but in my perspective this flag thing..."

"Stop calling it a thing!"

"Okay I'm sorry but in my perspective this is just a show off. No wonder guys take courtship and dating seriously in your village. It's like a competition every guy wants to show off and be praised for scoring a maiden especially that one beautiful maiden who's wanted by every guy in a village. Correct me if I'm wrong you're that maiden?"

I shrug my shoulders and sip on my soft drink. She giggles and nudges me.

“No wonder your boyfriend wants to marry you already, he's still scared that some guy might snatch you away from him if that's not love then I don't know, girl.”

“I hear you.”

“Give him a chance to talk to you.”

“He made me feel like shit for the whole week I'm going to double the weeks.”

“Awuzwake ntomboo!”

We both giggle as we high five. Zipho is an amazing soul, spoiled but she's amazing. I enjoy every single minute of her company and we take a lot of pictures which I send to my best friend.

“Yhooo friend I’m so jealous you’re having fun mos lapho why didn’t you put me in the boot?” Isisa.

I send her laughing emojis and tell her that I miss her so much. Of course she misses me too but since there’s Thuthuka in her life she’s not that bored. When the weather starts getting windy and iffy Zipho helps me sit on my wheelchair and picks up everything then places them on my thighs before pushing me.

I help myself inside the passenger seat while she puts the stuff in the boot then joins me in the car. She starts the engine then we drive off while singing along Bayabuza by Nomcebo. This woman’s music speaks to me.

By the time we arrive it’s drizzling. I have my own remote so after helping me out of the car I thank her profusely about a lovely day I had with her and she tells me that we have another date tomorrow. The weekends are usually time when she’s free so we have to make use of them.

She waits for me to wheel myself inside the house before driving off. I close the gate with a remote before pushing myself to the lounge. I'm greeted by izinga ezimnyama pumping hard on the couch and legs flying in the air, each on the side of the dark firm buttocks.

"Ohhh my goodness Gcobo...lwakhe."

"You want me to stop Thembeke."

"Yess...nooo...God why are you doing this to me!"

"Just say one word...your wish will be my command baby."

"You're so unfair Gco..." she stops mid sentence and screams as he pumps on her harder that their flesh makes clapping sounds.

"Should I stop, baby?"

"No don't stop!"

“Lucky is the man that eats this pussy. Ohhh fuck Them...beka!”

Shock numbs every sense of my being. I don't know if I should announce my presence or go back. I decide to go with the latter and once I'm out I dial Zipho with my terribly shaking hands.

“Babes.”

“Can you come back and pick me up please.”

“Are you okay?”

“Yes..no..I don't know...please come.”

“Okay I'm coming.”

I hang up and press the gate open before wheeling myself out of the gate. It doesn't take that long before Zipho's fancy car parks before me. She gets out of the car and helps me get in before putting my wheelchair in the boot. She gets in as well and we drive off.

“What's going on Nhle.” Zipho eventually breaks the silence.

“Nothing.”

“I can see that something happened, talk to me please.”

This is embarrassing. I can't begin to even share it. I mean how do I begin to say I just saw my mother having sex without my physiotherapist. This is more traumatic than the time I saw her having sex with my father, her husband!

“Did you fight with Mam Thembeke.”

I never fight with my mother, what is this girl saying? Mom doesn't fight me but reprimands me and I don't have anything to say even if I don't approve of what she's saying. I did say she's spoiled though.

“No, I didn't find her.”

“Oh maybe she's with mom at home.”

“Maybe.”

I don't understand why the images of them keep popping in my head in every second and their moans echoing in my ears. God can I have amnesia even just for today!

"Mbewenhle!"

I snap out of my reverie and look at her. It's only then I realized that we are at her home. She helps me sit on my wheelchair and pushes me inside the house. It's so quiet and seems like there's no one.

"Mama I'm back!" Zipho screams then she sees a note on the coffee table and reads.

"Oh well I'm home alone they will come back Tuesday." There's a naughty smile on her face and whatever she's going to say it's definitely wrong.

"How about we throw an impromptu house party."

I laugh

“A party needs planning, how are we going to organize that?”

“We have everything covered! Yes , a house party it is!”

“A house party with just the two of us?”

She takes her phone and types something on it then WhatsApp group messages start popping in. Jizas this girl just invited LLB students to the house party and more than 20 people have replied “siphakathi!”

“Zipho how are you going to afford so many people? You said at 6pm and that means we only have an hour to cook food that will accommodate more than 20 people.”

She giggles

“Relax girl when I say we have everything covered trust me. I just need to call my boyfriend and my best friend to bring finger food.”

“Have you done this before?”

“No but I have attended many of this before.”

She pushes my wheelchair and we head to this room where she punches a pin and the door opens. I get goosebumps immediately when we walk in. It’s so damn cold like a mortuary

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not that I've ever been there before. God this room is filled with nothing but alcohol.

“Ziphozinhle are your parents selling alcohol?”

“No lover, this is my dad’s and he’s not selling. I will replace everything on Monday.”

“Wow! Your father has a refrigerator of a room just to keep alcohol.”

“Yep there’s also a cellar where he keeps his imported expensive wine and whiskey.”

Shwele smakade kanti how did Mom ended up with my dad not Bab Mdlalose? I kid..I kid..I kid.

An hour later the 2nd year LLB students are filling Mam Nomsa’s house. There are also white students here and I’m stunned to speak. Zipho is welcoming her fellow students, isilungu wena basikhipha ngobhozo there are words that I don’t even understand and I suddenly feel out of place. Most of these guys and girls are my peers but I feel so little like an ant right now. The party gets started, did I mention that they even have their own DJ who brings her stuff and does her thing wherever they have a party.

I wheel myself to one of the rooms downstairs giving Zipho a space to welcome her fellow students. I stop myself when my

fingers tap on Kayise's contact number and call Isisa but she's not answering her phone. I heave a sigh and call mama.

"God finally I have been trying to call you but it sends me straight to voicemail!" Her voice is laced with worry

"Maybe it's network."

"Where are you girls? It's going for half past seven now."

"We are at Mam Nomsa's house. Can I spend a night here with Zipho? Her parents are away for the whole weekend."

"Hayi Mbewenhle you know very well that house is not wheelchair friendly and all the bedrooms are upstairs where are you going to sleep? Zipho won't be able to pick you up and climb the stairs with you. She's a child just like you, she won't be able to take care of you."

"Mama please..."

“Hayi Mbewenhle wozani!” (No Mbewenhle come back!)

I hang up and tears flow down my face. The door swings open and I quickly wipe my tears when this beautiful dark girl walks in carrying a phone in her hand.

“Hey I’m sorry I didn’t know there’s someone here. My mothers are calling me and it’s noisy there.

“It’s okay. I will get out of here.”

“No it’s fine. Are you okay?”

I nod my head but a lone tear trickles down my face.

“Hey what’s wrong,” she bends to my level and wipes my tears. Wait who said dark bones are ugly? Wayedakwe umuphi umsunu?

“I’m fine really.”

“Okay I know that I’m a stranger to you but let me unstranger myself if there’s such a word.” She giggles gosh muhle umtanabantu.

“I’m Uthandiwe Dlomo.”

“Beautiful name.”

“Thank you. When my daddy named me Uthandiwe he was on the brink of meeting his ancestors well at least that what he thought.”

“Why?”

“He was shot and losing too much blood hence he thought he was going to die.”

“That’s hectic hey I’m glad that he didn’t die.”

“Ah well that day he didn’t die but years later he died,” she says and lets out a sad sigh.

“I’m sorry to hear that.”

“What can we say such is life but one day kuzonuka umsinsila umhlaba wonke.” I giggle but she has a serious look plastered on her face which makes me stop giggling and when she notices that she smiles

“So what is your name brown skin girl. I swear Beyoncé had you in mind.”

“I’m Mbewenhle..Mbewenhle Qwabe.”

“Uyimbewu enhle ngempela.” (You are indeed a beautiful seed)

This girl is playing with me she’s the beautiful one here.

“My beauty can never measure yours thou...” I’m disturbed by  
mama’s call.

“Mama.”

“Senikuphi?”

“We are coming.”

God can’t she at least let me have fun like my peers. I’m  
deprived a lot already argh!

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

The thudding noise wakes me up from my slumber and when I open my eyes I see my mother taking out our clothes from the wall closet and packing them in our luggages. I sit on my butt and look at her doing her task aggressively.

“You are packing?”

“Yes we are going back home today.”

“But why?”

“What do you mean why?” She shoots me a “don’t start with me child!” look. I heave a sigh and say nothing to her.

I’m starting to get tired of these foul moods of hers. I’m the one who’s supposed to be moody for depriving me some fun with my peers not her. It’s Wednesday today and she’s been like this

since Sunday. I don't know what is eating her but my bet is on the guilt of fucking another man while she's marriage. The man I haven't seen for two days now and we were supposed to have sessions in these past two days.

No one told me anything I don't know why he hasn't been pitching up. Their entanglement now is messing up with my recovery. Okay fine I did say I don't have faith in this but I hate how things transpired. I thought mom wanted to be away from her husband a bit to clear her head not to cheat on him. Two wrongs don't make it right and the trauma they left me with God, 3 days later I'm still distracted. I can't even look at her face without thinking of her legs on the air and those ungodly sounds she was making.

I don't think our parents know that to us as their children they are our role models. We put them on a pedestal and they're beyond the word perfection so when we see them doing things that are deemed immoral or wrong that gives us another picture of them which is very disturbing. Who do we blame? Us for expecting them to be perfect always and ignore the fact that they're also humans so they can't be perfect. Or them for not leading by example.

“I need to fold the blankets and put them in their bags. Nomsa is coming with a truck to fetch her furniture but I need the bathroom first,” she says and walks out

There’s a cottage in Mam Nomsa’s back yard but it’s not in a good state so all the furniture that was in there she gave it to us to use so long. The only things that we found here already are the built in cupboards in the kitchen and the wardrobe. The lounge and bedroom furniture is hers. Mom only bought blankets, dishes and some kitchen appliances.

I reach for my phone on the bedside table as always there are tons of Kayise’s messages. Yesterday he was here to see me. Luckily mom was sleeping so she didn’t hear when I chased him out. She was going to ask questions and I don’t know what I would’ve said to her. My parents love him and they say he’s a good man for me. They would be really disappointed to learn that he fooled us.

He’s asking me for a chance to hear him out. I delete all the messages after reading them then text Zipho. She could be in a class right now but I can’t leave without sending her a goodbye

text. Mama's phone is ringing but I can't see it. I rummage through the bed searching for it then I find it under our clothes. It's an unknown number.

"Oh thank God! Please don't hang up just hear me out Thembeke. Can we not let this stand on Mbewenhle's recovery process? At least let me fetch her, you don't have to see me ke. Once we are done with our session I will bring her back." The voice on the other side says before I even say hello.

"Uncle G it's me. Mom is in the bathroom call after a few minutes."

"Oh baby girl. Are you okay."

"Yes I'm fine and you?"

"I'm fine I'm sorry for ghosting you."

"Mom paid you full amount of your service. I'm not happy about your service. What kind of physiotherapist you are that

leaves his patients hanging just like that without explaining to them?”

“Eish baby girl I’m sorry okay. I will make it up to you.”

“Oh well that’s too late because we are going back to eMsinga today.”

“What? No!”

“What do you mean no I’m telling you njena.”

“Fuck!”

I hear a beep sound and look at the phone. He hung up on me. Oh well! I toss her phone on the bed and reach for my wheelchair pulling it closer before sitting on it. I continue with packing and in the middle of packing I hear commotion and wheel myself to where the noise is coming from.

“You don’t listen now do you? I told you that I don’t want to see you.”

“I’m sorry okay but you’re being unreasonable right now think about Mbewenhle! She needs me right now, don't you want her to walk again?”

“There are many physiotherapist in the world Gcobolwakhe, she doesn’t need you leave!”

“MaQwabe come on we are both adults here and we know what we are doing there’s no need for all of this.”

“Well it’s easy for you to say that because you’re not married just leave me and my daughter alone please!”

“Baby come on...”

“Don’t baby me Gcobo...” She’s cut mid sentence and there’s silence. The curiosity in me forces me to peek and I see them kissing, his hands grabbing her butt. God why did I look! Just as

I'm about to go back to the bedroom before I see another live porn I heard the "mpaaa" sound. Once again I peek and Uncle G is holding his cheek. They're both staring at each other and their chests are heaving. Mom steps back as he moves closer to her until she's pressed against the wall. Oh Lord have mercy!

"Listen to me and listen to me very carefully. Don't you ever, I mean ever again lay your hand on me do you hear me!!!"

Mom nods her head vigorously and in that moment Mam Nomsa walks in.

"Is everything okay?"

They both look at her then he clicks his tongue as he walks out.

"Thembeke are you okay."

"Uhm yes I'm fine." Mama's voice is shaky.

“But you don’t look okay, you're shaking. What did he do to you? Did he hurt you?”

Instead of replying the dam just breaks. Mam Nomsa takes her to the sofa and embraces her.

“Talk to me sis please. You’re scaring me Thembeke kanti what happened? Where’s Mbewenhle?”

“She’s in the bedroom. I’m fine don’t worry nothing happened,” mom says freeing herself from her friend’s embrace and wipes her tears.

“Then why are you crying?”

“I just miss Ndwalenhle.”

“Hayi musa ungenza ingane Thembeke.” (No don’t make me a child Thembeke)

“I messed up big time Nomsa and I hate myself right now. I can't even look at myself in the mirror. One minute we were talking and laughing. I don't know how the topic switched to the children we lost. He lost his son in a car accident and he was driving and I also told him about Ndalwe and the miscarriage the next thing we were having se..x. God I feel so awful!”

“Tjo Thembeke...”

“I know okay I know and right now I don't want to hear something I know but something that will make me feel better because the guilt is eating me alive. I don't think I will ever be able to look at Qwabe and not confess.”

“No no no now that's a huge bad idea you can't confess! If you confess your marriage is over not unless you don't love your husband anymore and want to move on with life.”

“Of course I love him and I can't lose my marriage.”

“He will never forgive you for cheating Thembeke yet he cheated as well and wants you to forgive him. How ironic. Just forgive yourself, weaknesses got the better of you and it’s done there’s nothing you can do. Don’t make the mistake of letting him know about this. Is this the reason why are you leaving?”

“Yes.”

“What about Mbewenhle?”

“I don’t know but I can’t stand that man not after what we did. He’s not making this easy because he doesn’t want to understand that I’m married and this was not supposed to happen.”

“Leaving is not an option sis, we can get another physiotherapist for Mbewu but Gcobolwakhe is the best.”

“I want the best for my daughter. She has to get up from that chair. God this is messed up!”

“Don’t allow this to be a hindrance to Mbewenhle getting up from that chair. Be clear with that man I’m sure he will understand.”

“I hear you.”

“So how was it?”

“Jesus really Nomsa!”

They both giggle

“Come on the man is hot so I want to know his sex game is hot as well.”

“Shhuu sis angizazi mina lezazinto leyandoda ibingenza zona.”  
(Shhuu sis I don’t know what was that man doing to me)

“God he’s that good.”

“I don’t know if good is even the right word to say all I know is that the things he did to me were dirty and foreign. I didn’t know if I should cry or laugh or both at the same time. He licked every inch of my body and sucked my toes Jehova angiyazi leyanto mina!”

They both cackle like teens. Jizas these women!

“Shhuu your sin was worth it moss.”

Once again they giggle.

“I literally lost my mind when he tongued me down there”

“Oh how I love that part!”

“I didn’t even know I love it as well until Saturday”

“Are you telling me that Musa’s muff game is poor?”

Mom laughs

“Poor? Haibo he’s too traditional to do that.”

“Thembeke unamanga!” (Thembeke you are lying!) Exclaims  
Mama Nomsa

“I’m telling you.”

“Hawemah uyakurobha sis ngeke! That’s the best part ever and I’m scared now that you know what you are missing out you won’t enjoy having sex with him.” (He’s not satisfying you sis...)

“I hope it doesn’t get to that he is my first through everything and I have never felt unsatisfied.”

“Do you guys do all the positions or it’s missionary position all the way?”

“Cela uhluwane nami tu!” (Please leave me alone!) Mom

“Oh my goodness, 25 years of marriage! missionary right way!  
Kanti isikhanda kwabanjani ishwapha i-missionary position.”

Mam Nomsa

They burst into laughter. Let me go before they go to deeper stuff that my ears are not supposed to hear I have seen and heard enough.

.....

“You’re moody and not giving it your all today.”

Do I tell him that all I see when I look at him is his dark buttocks and it makes me feel uncomfortable. Mom agreed to let Uncle G continue with his work but we don’t do the sessions in our house. Everyday she drives me to and from his private practice.

“I have apologized baby girl countless times, what should I do now?”

Can you unfuck my mother? I don't think so!

“We have been doing these exercises for almost two weeks now is there anything else we can do? When will I learn to walk?”

“You're not ready.”

“Says who?”

“Me. It's still early you haven't developed enough strength and control in your legs to bear the weight.”

“Then why don't we just stop this once and for all.”

“See that attitude won’t get you anywhere. Quitting is never an option”

“What is the use? This shit is not working!”

“Mind your tone when you are talking to me,” he says calmly yet sternly. I swallow thick saliva in my mouth and look down. He picks me up from the mat and places me on top of the wheelchair before pushing me to the parallel walking bars.

“Get up from the chair and walk

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use these bars for balance.”

I try to get up from the wheelchair but it’s proving to be impossible.

“Get up you said you want to learn how to walk right? Sukuma ntombi uhambe.” (...Get up girl and walk)

One more try. I manage to stand but I can barely stand straight. My knees are knocked. I'm shaking and holding on the bars hard. Ilwa ntomboo you can do it! I coax myself but it's proving to be hard. I let go of the bars and before I fell down on the floor he caught me. He sits on the wheelchair pulling me to his laps and cradles me like a baby as I wail like one.

It's clear that I will never walk again, I will never feel that thrilling feeling of floating in the sky when I'm running. My emotions are going to swallow me alive as there will never be an escape from them. Ngeke ngiphinde ngisine namatshitshi. I don't want to begin to imagine my umemulo ceremony. How will I enjoy it while sitting on a wheelchair? Maybe we should cancel the ceremony once.

"Sshhh don't cry baby girl. It's going to be okay just take it easy okay. I know it's hard and I understand your frustration but be patient with yourself. You're going to walk again and no I'm not a prophet but I will make sure of that do you hear me?"

I nod my head and sniff away my mucus, taking in his scent.

“What’s going on here? Why is she crying?” Mama announces her presence. I pull away from Uncle G’s neck.

“Hello once again Thembeke.”

“Umenzani umtanami?” (What are you doing to my baby?)

“What can I do to her?”

“I don’t know, you tell me. She can’t just cry for fun. I told you to be easy on her.”

“You can’t tell me how should I do my job Thembeke”

Uncle G gets up with me and places me on my wheelchair. He wipes my tears with his big thumbs before kissing my forehead.

“Her father is still alive you know that?”

“What's that supposed to mean?” Uncle G

“Do you behave the way you behave around all your patients? Cradling, kissing them and wiping their tears?”

“What the fuck is your problem huh? You said I must stay away from you but here you are telling me how to behave around my patients and how to do my work just leave me the fuck alone!”

“Don't shout at me in front of my daughter!”

“What are you going to do? Slap me? I dare you try again I swear I'm going to fuc...” he stops mid sentence and they are having a staring competition. Few seconds passes, mom clears her throat and walks towards me.

“Are you okay sweetheart?.”

I nod my head then she pushes me out without even asking permission from Uncle G.

“What was that all about?” I ask as we are on our way to our house.

“Nothing.”

“Nothing how when you were shouting at each other?”

“I’m sorry my baby I just got angry when I saw you crying. Zipho begged me to allow her to take you out tonight and I agreed.”

She’s changing the topic but this is what I want to hear. Zipho was so sad when I had to leave at the house party but she promised to make it up to me so tonight it is baby!

“You agreed just like that?”

“Yes.”

“Wow but last Saturday you didn’t want me...”

“She’s going to bring you back Mbewenhle it’s not the same as sleeping over. I don’t feel comfortable when you are not around me since you have been seated on this chair. I wish you could be always on my side but you are young and you should have fun with your peers.”

“Awww you are sweet mother, maybe I should stay on this chair forever.”

“Hayi uyabheda!”

Once we are in our house I confirm with Zipho. We are going to her boyfriend’s brother’s club. I don’t know what to wear and nothing seems to be fitting in the closet. These clothes seem old. I can’t believe that I don’t own a jean, maybe it would’ve been better than these dresses and skirts I have.

“It’s just a concert Mbewu not a fashion show,” says mama when she looks at how frustrated I am. Zipho lied to mama and said we are going to Mlindo’s concert hence she agreed.

“Hawu you pulled a new dress that I have never seen when we went to Solly’s concert and you want me to wear these rags.”

She giggles and rummages through my clothes, taking out my short brown leather skirt and black front lace up top.

“These will work perfectly.”

“Thank you mama but you should consider buying me new clothes.”

“Uyajantshantsha!”

I burst into laughter.

“Mom, come on, your husband gave you money nje clothes are part of my recovery process.”

Now it's her turn to laugh.

“As you said MY HUSBAND not yours. I'm the one who should spend this money because I work very hard for it, my girl.”

“Oho.” I say and she laughs even harder then helps me get dressed. I must say I look gorgeous. Mom has taste. Once I'm done she combs my afro, Jizas this woman is combing my hair like she's raking grass.

“Ouch mama!”

“Yhuuu ay sis how can you have such frizzy hair while you have a man!”

I roll my eyes.

“He’s my man not my father.”

“Yaz ukuthi indoda uyibona manisathandana nje ukuthi iyokwazi yini ukuknakekela uma senishadile.” (You know usually you see a man while you are still dating that he’s going to be able to take care of you when you get married)

“Says the woman who married a stingy man.”

“Yey uyakhuluma ngalomonyana wakho ngane,” (You talk too much with that small mouth of yours child) She says laughing and I join her. Since we have been here and spending time together I realize that I haven’t felt this love from my mom in such a very long time and I would never trade this moment for anything in the world.

Seven on the dot Zipho arrives to fetch me. I don’t know how mom agreed to this because she’s having a difficult time to let me go. She emphasizes that we should behave ourselves and at this very moment I wish I can say. “Nawe uziphathe kahle angifuni ukubuya ngihlangabezane nezinga ezimnyama la”

(Behave yourself too I don't want to be welcomed by dark buttocks when I come back )

“Girl you are sizzling!”

We are now driving to the club and the music is loud enough for us to hear each other.

“Oh please Zipho look at me and you.” I feel underdressed. Untomboo is rocking a short jumpsuit with heels, she's so damn hot!

“You look hot baby to be honest bengikhathazekile ukuthi uzogqoka umthuphisi.” (... I was worried that you going to wear two piece)

I punch her playfully on her shoulder as we both laugh out loudly.

“Sihlala emakhaya impela kodwa nathi sithenga ko Mr Price and Truworths don’t undermine us.” (We live in a village but we also buy at Mr Price and Truworths...)

“Of course baby I was just kidding.”

The nerves start to kick in when we arrive. It’s packed and there’s a long line . I wonder if people who are in a wheelchair are allowed in this club. I’m expecting us to stand in a queue but the bouncers let us in and Zipho wheels me to the other side which is cozy and less noisy than the other. This must be the VIP. I spot some of the students from that night sitting around a circled table . We greet when we get to the table and they introduce themselves well except Uthandiwe since I know her. The table has a cooler box filled with ice, heinekens and flying fish.

“You’re so beautiful Nhle!” Uthandiwe screams, she seems tipsy already.

“Thank you so are you.”

Zipho takes the can of heineken and opens it before gulping it down. They’re not even surprised I guess they’re used to her drinking like a cow.

“Haibo Zipho you are drinking but your cousin is not.” Ndiwe

“Kade ngonyiwe yhoo.” Zipho says before sitting on top of her boyfriend.

“Makhandakhanda get my girl something to drink. She's too beautiful for heineken.” Ndiwe

“What does she drinks?” The boy I assume is makhandakhanda says.

I look at Zipho and she tells him to get me a pina colada cocktail. She knows that I have never drank alcohol. Now that the guy is walking away I can see why they call him makhandakhanda. He has those funny shaped heads. I've heard that people with heads like that are brainiacs. There are six of us three guys and three girls.

He comes back with my drink with an umbrella. Yes, the one drank by people in TV. It doesn't taste bad at all, in fact it's nice.

They're all drinking heineken well except Ndiwe and myself. The flying fish is hers. I have to admit that they are a bunch of cool kids yazin. The vibe is good, conversation is flowing and I feel left out here and there when they throw in these big words. It's must be the "law lingo"

Maheads keeps refilling my cocktail and damn it's tickling me very good. I take a few pics and post them on WhatsApp captioned 'situation right now'. Isisa is the first to view them and reply. Of course she wish she was here with me. We chat for a few minutes as I enlighten her about the situation at hand then log out. I don't know how did the topic changed to sex now and I wasn't paying attention until makhandakhanda says my name. I look up at him.

"How do you know that man?" Asks Zipho's friend. Their names are still hard to recall.

"Know what?" I ask

"That you have never had sex before?"

I clear my throat and sip on my drink.

“See I can spot a virgin marry when I see one.”

makhandakhanda

“Oh please you had the first taste of pussy for like what six seconds ago and now you claim to know it all?” Ndiwe says and they all burst into laughter.

The attention shifts from me. We are having fun and no one gives a damn about time between Zipho and I. She said to mom she will bring me back at 10pm. Others are on the dance floor now, Zipho and her boyfriend bayakopana la next to me and maheads who’s now sitting on my wheelchair and I’m sitting on the couch. He has my thighs locked between his legs and flirting with me but the mean, drunk, childish bitch in me is busy staring at his funny shaped head and giggling. Now that I’m drunk it looks more funnier and at that moment he thinks I’m laughing at his silly jokes.

☆ Muzikayise ☆

I can't believe that I spent the whole week in Durban. Yes it's another Friday and I have been trying to get Yeyeye to talk to me but man she's so angry at me. I can't go back home without her forgiving me. I'm prepared to even stay here the whole year until she gives me another chance. It's doesn't matter that I'm tired of takeaways and I miss my mom's home cooked meal.

I'm lying on the bed in my hotel room and Khabangobe is furious and wants to play. It's been a while and to think I still have 8 months to feed him the cravings. No, I'm not complaining, the wait is worth it. I have my whole life to fuck suka sambe wami so these months are nothing. That lady deserves every wait! I take a lubricant on the bedside table and smear it on my dick before giving it gentle strokes. The sound of my ringing phone disturbs me as I feel the heat radiating through my body.

"Thuthuka."

"Malumes are you good?"

“Yes I’m okay.”

“Clearly you haven’t seen Mbewu’s status on WhatsApp.”

“I can’t see them. I think she deleted my number.”

“Log into WhatsApp I will send you the pictures.”

I do as he says then he sends the pictures of Yeyeye in a club with some group. Six boys and six girls in a club? This never ends well. I'm a man

I know it very well. The thought of some bastard having thoughts of fucking my woman makes me angry. I tell Thuthuka to ask Isisa to ask her friend which club is that. As I wait for the response I quickly roll out of bed and get dressed then take my car keys and phone. The message comes through I don’t waste time but drive there.

The bastard is sitting on her wheelchair, her thighs are in between his legs and his hands are on her creamy thighs which

are out to play as she's wearing a short leather skirt. Zipho and this boy are sucking faces next to them. I jump on the idiot and pull him away from my woman's wheelchair before shoving him to the floor.

"What the fuck man!"

"Boy I will reshape your head with my fist nx! That's my woman, don't touch her!"

"Kayise," she slurs. Baba wethu osezulwini she's sloshed and this swine was taking advantage of her.

I pick her up and put her on the wheelchair before walking out with her. I gently place her on the front passenger seat and buckle her up before taking her wheelchair to my boot.

When I come back I find her singing while clapping hands. I don't know if she thinks usemhlolweni la or what. I'm mad at her of course but it's useless to be mad at someone who's drunk and not even aware of her surroundings. That boy

would've taken an advantage of her! Since when does she drink alcohol? I start my car and drive to the hotel.

“You need to stop singing now we are at the hotel baby.”

“Really? Why don't they join us sishaye ingoma.”

We are now at the hotel and getting her to sleep is a struggle.

“Mbewenhle!”

“Don't raise your voice I can hear you khehla.”

I crouch before her to take off her sneakers.

“How's the baby?”

“It's not mine.”

“Congratulations.” I look at her and she laughs out loudly.

“You’re not funny.”

“Baby.”

“Mhmm”

“Kuyaluma.” (It’s itching)

“Nwaya phela.” (Scratch the itch)

“Ngicela unginwaye tu.” (Please scratch it for me)

I huff as I get up from the squat position. Jehova ngifelani.

“Kulumaphi.” (Where does it itch.)

She takes my hand and brings it underneath her skirt.

“Here.”

I scratch her pussy over her panties.

“Hayi baby kuluma phakathi inside.” (No baby it’s itching inside)

I slide my hand between her thighs shit she’s wet wet wet! This is the reason alcohol is a BIG NO to women because it goes straight down there.

“Nwaya phela Kayise it’s itching very badly.” she whines desperately and the feel of her damp panties makes my rod to stir.

“I want you to experience your first orgasm sober.”

“I don’t want whatever that is baby I just want you to scratch the itch I can’t take it anymore.”

I look at her and the innocence on her face has me laughing.

“Why are you laughing at me?”

“Baby you do realize that itch down there can only be scratched by Khabangobe.” I take her hand and make her feel my hard dick.

The facial expression on her face makes me laugh even harder. So miss innocence here thought I’m going to shove my hand in her and scratch then voila! Awww my baby is cute yaz.

“But baby.....” she gags and throws up on the floor. I brush her back until she’s done throwing up and walk to the bathroom to take the towel then wipe her puke on the floor. When I come back from the bathroom to wash the towel I find her sleeping and snoring softly.

The sight of her is infuriating my boner, she’s half naked and I have noticed that she never wears a bra. The skirt is bunched

up on her waist exposing her ass tucked into her full panties and her flawless thighs.

I take off the skirt and peel the blankets before tucking her inside then skip to the bathroom. I need a cold shower to calm down my raging erection. I won't be able to sleep next to her while I'm like this. After showering I feel a bit better but the moment I slide in next to her warm body my dick expands once again. God it's going to be the longest night ever!

.....

The snuffles snap me out of my slumber and when I open my eyes I see Yeyeye crying. I get worried in an instant.

“Baby what's wrong?”

I sit up straight and envelope her in my arms but she pushes me away.

“Don't touch me!”

“Baby why?”

“Kwy don’t make me a fool! You promised me that you will wait for me Kayise! Oh God there won’t be umemulo anymore and my parents would be so disappointed in me!”

“Yeyeye you think...oh sweetheart no we didn’t I meant it when I said I will wait for you. I know how your parents are looking forward to your umemulo ceremony and I also know how much it means to you. I will never take advantage of you especially not when you are drunk. Don’t cry please.”

“Then why are we both naked?”

“You don’t remember what happened yesterday?”

“No but I remember that I’m still mad at you!”

I chuckle and pull her closer to my chest.

“I’m sorry about everything I did to you baby. I wasn’t prepared but now I am and I’m going to be with you all the way. I love you so much Mbewenhle and I really see a future with you, with or without children.”

“You hurt me Kayise by going to Lisa and left me on your bed knowing that I can’t walk.”

“I’m sorry Yeyeye I didn’t mean to hurt you. Lisa’s baby is not mine. It was just a trap to break us up. Please let’s not make our enemies happy. Forgive me MaMguni ngiyacela.”

“I will think about it.”

“Hawu baby haven’t you thought about it enough?”

“No, I was going to finish thinking after two weeks.”

“Come on.”

I tickle her and she giggles wiggling her body.

“Okay..okay I forgive you! But tell me how did I get here?”

“Thank you so much.” I lean over to kiss her but she scrunches her nose

“Morning breath Kayise.”

“You and I are going to be together for the rest of our lives baby so we might as well get used to each other’s morning breath.”

“You are something else wena yaz. Where are we?”

“At the hotel.” I go on and tell her about last night’s events. To say she’s embarrassed would be an understatement.

“You’re lying Kayise!”

“I’m telling you baby.”

“Oh my goodness,” she groans covering her face with her hands.

“Don’t be embarrassed such things happen especially when you are drunk so please I don’t want you to ever drink alcohol.”

“Hawu Kayise it was my first time and I really had fun.”

“You can have fun without alcohol. It was your first and last time. My woman can’t drink alcohol while I’m not.”

“You smoke Kayise but I don’t complain.”

“Why should you complain vele?”

“Nami ngizobhema isinefu ke.” (I will snort snuff then)

“Uke nje uzokhala.” (If you dare you will cry)

She removes herself from my embrace and lies down on the bed skyward and sulking. I peck her lips and settle myself on top of her, grinding my dick on her mound which causes her to release a gasp of pleasure. Morning breathe my paralyzed foot! I kiss her and when she pushes me I thrust my tongue in her mouth as an avid moan rumbles inside my chest

She gives in and welcomes me tangling and stroking her tongue with mine. I can feel my dick pulsing with need and the fabric of her panties is a barrier but I don't want to risk my sperms slipping through her and impregnating her. I kiss her neck, savoring the taste of her flawless skin before going to her breast. Damn she has beautiful boobs ever amile athe mpo as a virgin that she is. I take in her nipple in my mouth but she stops me.

“Don't suck on my breast.”

“Why not?”

“Azowa amabele ami.” (My boobs will be saggy)

“Haibo that’s not true.”

“How do you know it’s not true? You never had boobs”

“But at some point they will be saggy baby, when you breast feed our children.”

“Yes as you say when I breast feed our children not indoda engaka enetshebe isincela amabele ami.” (....not a grown ass man with a beard sucking my tits.)

“Kodwa Yeyeye uyayiwisa induku.” (But Yeyeye you’re a cockblocker.)

“Induku? Nduku yani?” (A stick? What stick?)

Jehova! Let me focus on my end goal and leave her alone. I reach for a lubricant oil on the bedside table and apply it on her thighs then put it back before sliding my hard dick between her thighs. Damn that warmth between her thighs is incredible. I buck my hips slowly but the pleasure impels me to pick up my pace. I haven't released in a while so it doesn't take that long for me to cum. My eyes are rolling in the back and I'm convulsing on top of her.

"Kayise! Baby what's going on!" She's slapping my cheek slightly and panicking.

"Oh my God he's having a seizure! Help!!!"

I open my mouth to say something but a groan escapes my lips as I nut between her thighs. Once I regain my breathing I burst into laughter.

"Kayise don't play like that!"

"I wasn't playing Yeyeye but reaching my high."

“High where?.”

“Bengichama Mbewenhle.” (I was cumming Mbewenhle)

She looks at me confused for a second when realization hits her she cracks up and I join her. Yaz mina ngiyagulelwa!

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☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I'm rolling in the aisles because wow...ukuhamba ukubona! So when he ejaculates he goes through a mini seizure. The man was convulsing on top of me like demons were exorcising out of his body and his eyes, hehehe let me not mention his eyes. You'd think I'm exaggerating.

"You're so clueless sthandwa sami," he says, still laughing with me.

"Do all men go through a mini seizure when they're ejaculating or it's just you?"

"I don't know I have never seen other men ejaculating."

"Wow the thought of you dying on top of me and hotel people seeing us naked scared the hell out of me. I'm sure we would be trending on social media right in this moment."

We laugh even harder, tears rolling on the sides of my face.

“There’s a lot you have to learn my baby but we are not in a hurry.”

“Don’t scare me like that though, rather prepare me.”

“There are other things that I can never prepare you enough for you to be ready for. You just have go with the flow and enjoy it.”

“Mmmh I hear you.” I say not sure if I’m satisfied with his answer. I want to prepare myself for anything because I don’t want to panic for nothing or flop like I did last night. If someone prepared me that alcohol would make me itch in the places I never knew can itch I would’ve limited my intake.

I must admit though that I enjoyed myself last night it’s a pity that I won’t drink anymore. The man has spoken and he doesn’t want me to drink alcohol ever again. I understand his reasoning

though so yeah but I don't promise to not drink surreptitiously should the chance present itself.

I have learned from my mother that you have to be meek to your man but when you are not with him you do you ungazincishi ubumnandi ntomboo. See what I meant when I said our parents our role models already I'm taking tips. It happens naturally we can't help it. He wipes my tears and kisses me then get off me. His phone rings on the bedside pedestal.

"You're calling me. Where's your phone?" He says taking his phone. Konje I have a phone!

"I don't know baby." I bite my lower lip shamefully. He answers the phone and taps loudspeaker.

"Hello." Zipho's voice comes through and relief surges through me. At least she's the one that got my phone.

"Hi" Kayise

“Am I talking to Muzikayise?”

“Ubani ofuna ukwazi?” (Who wants to know?)

“Ziphozinhle Mdlalose, Nhle’s friend.”

“Oh the one that hooked her up with some funny shaped head boy?”

I cringe on Zipho’s behalf. Did he have to say that? Zipho didn’t hook me up with anyone.

“I didn’t hook her up with Makhandakhanda, Muzi. Can I speak to her please it’s very urgent.”

“Speak she can hear you.”

I swallow spit and take his phone.

“Zipho.”

“Girl, your mom has been calling none stop I don’t know what to say to her and she’s breathing fire through her messages. What do I say to her because I promised her to bring you at 10pm last night but I didn’t. I slept at my boyfriend’s place as well.”

Oh God mom is going to kill me! How can I be so careless though?

“Muzikayise will call her don’t worry girl.”

“Habe musani ukungifaka ezindabeni zenu.” (No don’t involve me in your business.)

“Baby come on you are the only one who can calm mama down at this moment.”

“What would I say to her?”

“You spent the night with me Kayise that’s what you will tell her.”

“Okay fine but next time if you hook up my woman with boys I’m going to whip your ass do you hear me?”

“I didn’t....”

“Do you hear me?”

“Yes I hear you.” Zipho says with a shaky voice.

“Good.”

“I will bring your phone later Nhle.”

“Okay girl thanks.” I say then he hangs up.

“Uyayibona imisebenzi katshwala Yeyeye?” (Do you see the results of alcohol Yeyeye?)

“I’m sorry baby.”

“Now I...” I shut him up with a kiss, sucking on his lips gently. He releases a muffled groan as I intensify the kiss, tangling my tongue with his.

“Ngiyaxolisa Sidwaba Siluthuli.” (I’m sorry Sidwaba Siluthuli)

“I forgive you,” he says barely audible. I smile and peck his cheek.

“Thank you.”

He orders our breakfast first before preparing for our bath and once it’s ready we bath together. It’s no use to hide my nakedness from him anymore and it’s funny how I never feel

uncomfortable around him with my nakedness. He bathes me soaping on my skin sensually. I never thought a simple act as bathing could be so erotic. I can't stop myself from gasping with pleasure.

"You have a beautiful body ever."

"Thank you." It comes out as a whisper. After bathing and getting dressed our food arrives. We indulge in our breakfast over nothing but sweet love birds conversation and kissing in between.

"Don't worry I've got this

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" he says squeezing my hand. We are now driving to our house and I'm panicking.

"I trust you."

The moment the gate slides open I see mom and my heart skips a beat. She stands on the driveway with her hands on her waist.

Kayise gets out of the car to take out my wheelchair from the boot then helps me out of the car.

“Greetings Mama.”

“Hi Muzi.”

I can't read her facial expression but I know that she wouldn't have hid her anger if Muzikayise was not here. He pushes me as we all walk inside the house. Mom offers him a seat and we all settle down.

“Mama I want to apologize for how things transpired. I arrived last night and I couldn't spend more night without seeing her. I'm very much aware that Zipho was supposed to bring her at 10pm. It's all my fault and I'm really sorry.”

“Oh it's okay baba but you should've called because I was so worried about her. I couldn't sleep thinking that something bad happened to her.”

“That’s where the mistake was. I’m very sorry Mama.”

“It’s okay my son. I’m glad that you came all the way from Mozane to see her,” she says smiling.

“I would cross even oceans to see her mama.”

“Aww that’s beautiful my baby is the luckiest girl in the world. I will go make tea for you son.”

“Okay mama.”

I look at him and chuckle.

“He drinks rooibos tea only mama since we don’t have one juice is fine.”

“Oh okay.”

Mom gets up and disappears to the kitchen.

“You’re my rock.”

He winks at me leaning over and steals a kiss.

.....

I thought he was joking when he said he’s not going back to eMsinga without me. It’s been weeks, to be precise 7 weeks. Kayise is still here by my side and very supportive. Other days he’s the one who’s taking me to Uncle G’s private practice and fetches me.

The sessions are very intense especially since now we are doing gait training. At first it was hard but Uncle G pushed me hard to the point that I felt like he was abusing me. I’d cry until I have hiccups then Kayise would cheer me up with a gift. Now he has made it his duty, that whenever I make progress he buys me a gift. I couldn’t be more grateful for the support he’s giving me.

He's not the only one though, mom is my cheerleader. Zipho and Mam Nomsa have been supporting as well. Uncle G has been my psychotherapist and playing father figure. There's a friendship booming between Ndiwe and I much to Isisa's annoyance.

"How do you know this place baby? It's beautiful." I ask as we enter a typical fancy restaurant.

"I asked about it."

The waiter greets and ushers us to the table beautifully decorated with roses and a crystal bowl half filled with water in which beautiful floating candles are lighted.

"Oh my goodness Kayise this is beautiful."

"Not as as beautiful as you my love. Do you like it?"

"I love it baby! You're full of surprises!"

He pushes me close to the table and sits down before me on the chair. The waiter takes our order and walks away.

“You look amazing sthandwa sami.”

“Thank you Sidwaba Siluthuli.”

I managed to manipulate mom into buying me clothes and tonight I’m wearing the crisscross open back sequin navy blue dress. It’s short and beautiful, definitely made for me.

“You have put in so much effort over these weeks. Soon you will be walking. I’m so proud of you suka sambe wami.”

“Ah baby I wouldn’t have done it without you. Thank you so much for being by my side throughout this difficult journey.”

Our food comes and we eat our dinner while chatting, giggling and kissing in between. I’m having a beautiful moment of my

life until my eyes catch a kissing couple by the corner. I can't believe mom is kissing another man in public like she's not married. Didn't they end their entanglement kanti?

"Baby are you okay?"

"Yes I'm fine." I force a smile and drink my juice.

"You look like you just saw a ghost." He tilts his head and I cough hard feigning to be choked. He can't see this, what would he think of my mother.

"Baby what's going on"

"I'm...choking." I gasp for air holding on my chest. He immediately calls the waiter for water and helps me drink it.

"Thanks."

"You are fine now?"

“Yes, let’s go to your hotel room I want to lie down now.”

“Okay sthandwa sami.”

He pays the bill then we leave. I release a sigh of relief when we’re on our way to the hotel. It’s been a long day and the sun was scorching today funny we are already approaching winter. So we take a bath first before retiring to bed.

In the middle of the night I’m woken up by pain in my legs. I don’t wake Kayise though he is sleeping peacefully. When the pain becomes less intense I fall asleep.

The next day after brunch Kayise takes me back to the house. He exchange pleasantries with mama then he leaves. I can’t even look at her, why is she doing this? I heave a sigh just to gain the strength to ask her.

“Mama.”

“Ye...” She’s cut short by a gag then runs to the bathroom. I wheel myself behind her and find her throwing up in the toilet.

“Are you okay?”

“Yes I’m fine.”

“How can you be fine while you’re throwing up.”

“I think inyongo.”

She flushes and rinses her mouth. The pain shoots through my legs again, very intense this time that I scream.

“What’s wrong baby?”

“My legs are painful since last night.”

“Oh baby let me call Gcobolwakhe”

She pushes me to the lounge where she takes her phone and calls her side man who it doesn't take that long before he arrives. One would've thought he was around here.

"Baby girl what's wrong?"

I explain to him everything as he crouches before me. He takes out something like a needle and pokes me under my feet. I scream in pain.

"Do you know what does this means?"

"What does it means?" Mama

"She has regained her sensations, it's only a matter of time she completely gets her mobility."

I can't believe what I'm hearing and mom is screaming excitedly and planting kisses all over my face.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I take in a deep breath and gaze at them as they cheer for me, willing me on. I begin to take a step and another then pause a bit to get my balance. It's my first time trying to walk without anything for support or balance.

"Come baby girl you can do it!"

"Yes my baby go on!"

"We are rooting for you Yeyeye!"

The cheers lift up my spirits. I continue with my walk slowly but surely, with each step I'm taking I'm counting. The way is getting blurrier as tears are clouding my vision. I can't believe that I'm literally walking on my own without holding on something for balance. All those exercises and that training was worth it after all.

Their shouts of joy echoes when I make it to them. Kayise whisks me off the ground and swirls with me causing me to giggle through my tears that are pouring down my face. I can't believe that I've made 10 steps, the Qwabe ancestors haven't forgotten about me. He puts me down and my mom pulls me to her warm embrace.

"This calls for celebration!" Uncle G says and Kayise agrees with him.

"Let me make a call."

Uncle G goes to his desk and takes his phone. He tells whoever on the other side of the line to set up a dinner table for 4 at 7pm.

"I'm proud of you my baby," my mom says, wiping my tears.

"I wouldn't have done it without you. You always have my best interest at heart mama and thank you so much for that. I

promise one day I'm going to make you prouder than you are today."

"Argh you make me want to cry now."

Tears are streaming down her plump cheeks. She wipes her tears with her smooth hands. Durban loves her. She has that glow and she's almost my mom who was thick with chubby cheeks.

"Thank you uncle G for your incredible work."

"Don't mention it baby girl."

Kayise gets me my wheelchair when I complain about being tired and Uncle G emphasizes that it's normal as the time goes on my legs will get used to the adjustment. There's a dinner that we have to prepare ourselves for so after a little chat we all drive to our separate houses. The first thing mom does when we arrive in the house is throwing up.

“It’s been days now throwing up, don't you need to see a doctor?”

“Doctors can’t cure inyongo.”

“Chatha ke.” (Do an enema)

“Kwaze kwamnandi bo ukuthi usho lokho wena owawubaleka uyentabeni makumele uchathe.” (That’s nice coming from you who used to run to the mountain when you were supposed to do an enema)

I laugh and she joins me.

“I’m worried about you mama.”

“I’m okay baby. Don’t tell your brother and your sister about your improvement. I want to surprise them.”

“Okay I won’t. Durban is awesome but I can’t wait to go back. I miss Lonhle so much and I feel bad that I left him when he needed me the most.”

“You have a heart of gold my child. Don’t feel bad your brother understands that you had to come here to get back your mobility. If there’s one thing that he wants more than anything is to see you walking again. You took his bullet Mbewu that shows that you would do anything for him, the situation right now is beyond your control. You’re so brave and strong.”

“Thank you mama.”

“Now let’s get ready for the dinner.”

I haven’t got the guts to ask her about Uncle G. I have been contemplating how to go about it. Mama why are you cheating on my father with uncle G? If she tells me that it’s none of my business I should stay out of her business then what will I say?

Clearly they continued to sleep with each other. Maybe leaving this like it is it's the only way. She knows what she's doing. She's an adult but that doesn't mean all of this sits well with me.

It's an hour later, we are both done getting dressed and we look breathtakingly gorgeous. See right now we look like sisters. The burgundy surplice neck slit hem belted dress fits her like a glove and she paired it with black flat shoes. I'm in a black solid lace patchwork short sleeve dress and black laced up sandals. Our afros are almost styled the same.

"You look beautiful MaNdwandwe." I say mimicking dad's voice on the last word and she laughs.

"You also look stunning ntombi yami." Now it's my turn to laugh as she imitated dad's voice on the two last words.

"Don't you miss him?"

I can't make out of an emotion flashing through her eyes of which she masks it with a smile.

"Of course I do. Gcobolwakhe is waiting for us outside let's go."

She pushes me as we head out and lock the door then we go out of the gate. Uncle G steps out to help with putting my wheelchair in the boot while mom helps me step inside of the car carefully. They both get inside of the car and we drive off while listening to Solly Mahlangu's song. The man is really charming my mother and it's annoying. We start at Blue Waters hotel to take Kayise. I decided to ride with him because I really can't stand these two.

"Are you okay?"

I turn to look at him and nod my head with a forged smile on my face.

"You know you can talk to me baby."

“I’m really okay sthandwa sami just a bit homesick.”

“Aww don’t worry suka sambe wami soon we are going back home.”

He takes my hand and kisses it then focuses on the road. Once we arrive at our destination we are ushered to the boat. The three of us are wondering what’s going on as we all look at each other. Didn’t he say we are going to the dinner? Inside the boat there’s a table dinner set up for four as it was requested and beautifully decorated. If Kayise and I weren’t invited I’d definitely think it’s a dinner date for the two of them. Uncle G opens the chair for mom just as Kayise does the same for me. When we are all seated the waitress serves us the food. My mouth waters at the sight of the succulent steak and fries. I can’t wait to dig in already.

“This is beautiful, how did you organize this in such a short space of time?”

“My older brother owns this boat.”

“Really?” The awe in my mom’s voice can’t be missed.

“Yes.”

“How old is he?” Kayise

“He’s 46 years old.”

How ironic, his older brother is my mom’s age.

“He must have a lot of money hey. What does he do?” That’s my man once again

“He’s a politician.”

The waitress asks about drinks and Uncle G tells her to bring Dom Perignon Blanc Champagne because we are celebrating my recovery.

“Juice for me and Yeyeye,” Kayise says

“You don’t drink?” Uncle G

“Yes.”

“Aw indoda enjani engaphuzi?” (What kind of a man that doesn’t drink?)

“Who said men should drink?”

“Just kidding Maseko, don't take it personally. Bring juice for him Nana.”

“And her too,” Kayise says pointing at me.

“Mbewenhle didn’t say she wants juice I’m sure if she has a problem with champagne she would’ve voiced it out right baby girl?”

They're all looking at me now including the waitress but out of these stares Kayise's is so heavy on me. God how can Uncle G put me on the spot like this! It's my celebration, of course a champagne wouldn't be so bad but...

"I want juice as well Uncle G." I say and Uncle G looks at me intently and chuckles before telling the waitress to get me the juice as well.

By the time we dig in the boat is already floating in the sea and the view of the City is so beautiful. Oh my poor father

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look at what the man who is auditioning for his role in mama's life is doing? Even if he wasn't stingy his brother is a drunkard and doesn't own a boat. I don't even think he would understand all of this. "Aw size siyodlela emkhunjini nje yini kangaka umuzi ungaka. Pheka MaNdwandwe uphake sihlale phansi sidle." (What's the fuss about eating in a boat while we have a huge household. Cook MaNdwandwe and dish up then we will sit down and eat) That's what he would say.

“So what do you do Maseko?” Uncle G eventually breaks the silence.

“Farming.”

“That’s nice. Tell me more.”

“I own two farms. The cattle and poultry & sheeps and pigs.”

“That’s great! The youth of today don’t care about farming. I’m glad to hear there’s a young man who’s passionate about farming. I hope Mbewenhle gives you all the support you need as your special somebody in your life.”

Kayise looks at me and gives me that ugly smile of his.

“Of course she does.”

“What about you?”

“What about me?”

“Do you support her dreams?”

Kayise clears his throat and nods

“Yes I do.”

“What have you done nje to prove that you do?”

“I was here throughout her journey of gaining her mobility back, Bab Magagula, supporting her in her dream to walk again.”

“What about career wise?”

Kayise throws the fork on the plate and looks at uncle G

“Kanti why kwamele ngizichaze kuwe you’re not her father! Bab Qwabe knows that I want all the best for his daughter!” (Why should I explain myself to you..)

“I’m sorry if I overstepped any boundaries my boy,” Uncle G says and sips on his champagne. That was intense!

.....

“I’m going to miss you so much.” Zipho says squeezing me in her arms.

“I’m going to miss you too girl. Thank you so much for your kindness.”

“You’re the kind one.”

She lets go of me and passes me to Ndiwe who squeezes me in her arms as well.

“It’s going to be a recess soon and I will come over to visit you.”

Her hometown is Newcastle and it’s only 1 hr 43 min (132,6 km) away from Mozane.

“Oh I can’t wait.”

“You won’t survive a second in a village spoiled brat!” Zipho

“Can you hear this spoiled brat calling me a spoiled brat!”  
Ndiwe shoots back and we all laugh.

Ahh man I’m going to miss my girls so much. It’s been amazing hanging out with them. Yes we are going back home today. In these past two weeks after regaining my sensations on my legs I have made an exceptional recovery yes I can walk baby! To say I’m happy would be putting it lightly.

I will forever be grateful to Uncle G for helping me. We said our goodbyes yesterday and I gave him a gift to show my gratitude. It’s nothing considering that he’s filthy rich but he really

showed appreciation. I can't believe that he begged mama to not go. Like really now? He was clinging on her like a little boy imihlola kababa jesu!

"Girls it's time to go now." Mama.

I walk to Mam Nomsa who has her arms wide open for me and when I get to her she envelops me in her warmth.

"Uziphathe kahle sis, respect your boyfriend and your in laws but never forget who you are and lose yourself okay." (Behave yourself sis..)

"Thank you mama."

I free myself from her embrace and get in the car. Mom is already inside Mpilenhle's car. She hoots once and we wave our hands at them as she drives away. I buckle up and text Kayise, informing him that we are on our way. He had to leave last week because his father is preparing his usual big ceremony

which he does every year. No one knows what is the ceremony for but people love meat so they don't care.

Mama's phone rings, she takes it and answers. The speaker of her phone is so loud that I can hear that the voice belongs to Uncle G. He's wishing us a farewell and he's going to miss mama. I pretend to be glued on my phone when she looks at me. "Me too" that's my mom's response then after he drops a bombshell "I love you" that's when mama says her goodbye and drops the call. What? Sale sewubuya Jesu!

The rest of the drive she's moody. I don't know if it's the call or it's one of her moods that I have been subjected to over the past two weeks. Home Sweet home! Two rascals are playing in the yard and when they see the car they run towards it. Mom pulls over and we step out of the car. They both run to me and hug me.

"Aunty Mbewu mama said you can't walk nje!" Azanothe

"Now I can walk bunny."

“Mbewenhle!!!” Lonhle’s scream reverberates forcing the neighbors out of their houses and peek at what’s going on at the Qwabe household. I open my arms for him as he runs towards to me but he whisks me off the ground and spins with me.

“Don’t drop me Lonhle!” I say giggling

“You can walk!”

“Yes!”

“Mvelonhle don’t drop her!” Mama

He puts me down just as Dad and Mpilenhle walk to us.

“Why didn’t you tell us you are coming!” Mpilenhle says attacking me with a hug.

“Besifuna ukunisuprizer” (We wanted to surprise you guys)  
Mama

“Ubani manje usuprise?” (Who’s surprise?) Asks Dad and the two rascals laugh.

“Nooooo khulu surprise is not a person. It’s a surprise,”  
Azanothe explains to my father as if he would get that.

I watch as Mom and Dad exchange greetings. Mom is the only person who makes my dad smile this wild. She’s his smile keeper.

“Awusemuhle mkami ungikhumbuza mhla uzethwele uMvelonhle.” (You’re so beautiful my wife you remind me when you were pregnant with Mvelonhle.)

Mom chokes on her saliva and coughs. Dad rubs her back until she stops coughing then thanks her husband for the compliment.

“Ntombi yami.” (My girl.)

“Baba.” (Father.)

“Ubaba uyabonga futhi ujabule sewuyakwazi ukuhamba.” (Dad is grateful and happy that you can walk again)

He pulls me to his embrace and I revel in it. It’s only now I realize I missed my old man.

“Kuzomele sihlabe sibonge abaphansi.” (We have to slaughter an animal and thank the ancestors)

See my father’s way of celebrating, is to slaughter an animal and do a ceremony, thanking the ancestors for their greatness not eating dinner in a boat while it’s floating in the water.

☆ Muzikayise ☆

Every year my father slaughters two cows just to thank the ancestors for their greatness. I had to leave Yeyeye at Durban and come back to help my father with the preparations. It's been a crazy week and I haven't been able to see her since she came back last Saturday. Today it's Wednesday and on Saturday it's the day of the ceremony. Talking on the phone is not enough. I need to see her. I miss her so much.

My father is busy talking with the elders, this is the perfect time to steal a few minutes and go see my woman. I finish offloading the woods from my van and dust off my hands. The yard is buzzing already and more relatives are yet to come. Thuthuka walks to me with a plate.

“Malumes nayinyama yokosa.” (Malumes here's the braaied meat)

“Sure ntwana.”

I take the meat and take a bite but it's proving to be difficult.

“Hayi mfana ihlaza lenyama kanti nosa kanjani?” (No boy this meat is raw how do you guys braai it?)

I throw it and take the liver instead.

“Uyazi nawe wuwe umshayi wezoso.” (You know you are the king of braaing)

“Y’all have to learn. I can’t do everything around here. I also have a lot to do. I can’t split myself into half!” I say going to my car

“Where are you going?”

“To see my woman.”

“Please do maybe you will come back feeling better because you really have been snapping a lot these days.”

I chuckle and get into my car. I didn't notice that not seeing her for almost two weeks is affecting me this much. I call her as I drive to our usual spot.

"Baby."

"I'm driving to our spot. I need to see you."

"Ngiyaphila wena unjani?" (I'm okay and yourself?)

I chuckle and heave a sigh

"I'm also okay baby please come. I'm having withdrawal symptoms of not seeing you and it's really bad."

"Okay I'm coming."

I pull over and wait for her. It doesn't take that much for her to arrive. I open the door from the inside, then she steps in. I lean over and kiss her but she pushes me.

“Unuka inyama yokosa.” (You smells braaied meat)

“I just ate it.”

“It doesn't smell pleasant to me hence I don't even eat it.”

“There's something you don't eat that's the first.”

“What's that supposed to mean?” She's daring me I can tell by that look of her with brows furrowed

“You eat everything phela wena.” I say laughing and she punches me on my chest.

“How are you suka sambe wami?”

“I'm exhausted. I have nightmares lately and I don't sleep at all.”

“Oh baby I'm sorry.”

“Argh it's fine sthandwa sami. You look exhausted as well”

“I haven't had enough rest.”

“Shame my baby. Let me give you a massage.”

She jumps to the back seat and starts massaging me. Oh how I need that, she knows what I need and when I need it. I feel my body relaxing under her touch, just then my phone rings. I groan as I answer my phone.

“Mama.”

“Where are you?”

“I’m coming.”

I hang up and sigh. Can this ceremony be over already?

“I have to go baby. I know we haven’t been together for some time but I will make it up to you.”

“No problem baby I understand.”

We share a baby kiss then I drive back home. Mom is waiting for me in my bedroom.

“Mama.”

I settle down next to her and look at her.

“What’s wrong?”

“Yaz since what you said to your father about Ndondoloza, he had been suspicious.”

“When are you going to tell him the truth?”

“Haibo Muzikayise I can't tell your father about this.”

“Yaz mama you never told me how is dad's cousin Ndondoloza's father?”

“I love your father Muzikayise but he's not perfect. Like any man he wanted sons and I couldn't give him that. I remember when I was pregnant with you he thought you were going to be a girl as well. He started cheating...” she pauses and lets out a sad sigh.

“I couldn't believe that he was really cheating on me

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the same woman who loved him when he had nothing. The woman who didn't care that he was wearing rags and smelling due to the lack of toiletries. I was with him through it all but

just because I couldn't give him a son he cheated on me. This one night he left me in bed and went to see his mistress. Bhekisisa was here for a visit. I was pregnant and heartbroken, the weakness got the better of me. Then you were born he was so happy and because of the guilt I was feeling I forgave him. Bhekisisa got greedy and started blackmailing me. I kept on sleeping with him and unfortunately Ndongoloza turned out to be his." Tears spill down her face.

I envelope her in my arms as I clench my jaws. How could dad put mama through so much pain while she was pregnant? I'm not disregarding what she did but I can imagine how broken and lonely she must have felt.

"Are you telling me he's still forcing you to sleep with him?"

"Yes. Your father can't find out about this Muzi."

I'm going to kill that bastard!

"Shh it's okay mama don't cry. I will fix this okay."

“What are you going to do Muzi?”

“This has to stop mama and I’m the one who will stop him. Ungakhali.” (...Don’t cry) I kiss her forehead and stroke her back.

.....

The muffled sound of my phone wakes me up. I sweepingly search for my phone under the pillow and answer it without checking who’s calling.

“Ello.”

“Muzikayise.” Mpilenhle’s voice says on the other side

“Yes.”

“Is Mbewenhle with you?”

“No she’s not.”

“What do you mean she’s not there Muzikayise?”

“Did you ask Isisa?”

“Yes she’s also not there. Muzi please tell me she’s there with you.” The worry in her voice triggers mine and when I remove my phone from my ear and look at the time. It’s 3am. Where could she be at this time?

☆ Mpilenhle ☆

“This boy is starting to disrespect me now! He’s forgetting that he hasn’t paid a cent to me for Mbewenhle’s lobola!” My father bellows angrily. I sigh as I drop the call. This doesn’t make any sense.

“What does he say Mpilenhle?”

“He said she’s not with him mama.”

“Oh God what have I done why this village is snatching away my children from me like this!” Mama bursts into a cry as Mvelo envelopes her in his arms.

“Malume how did you know that Mbewenhle is not here?” I ask

“I told you mshana I had a dream.” (...nephew...)

At 3am we were woken up by malume's knock on the door. He's my mom's younger brother who's a stoner. We never take his dreams seriously because we all think it's the hallucinations of the weed. Sometimes he uses his dreams to manipulate us into giving him money hence we never listen to him.

I still finding it hard though to get over the fact that he had a dream about Ndawlenhle before the day she disappeared and he was high on his weed, as usual we didn't take him serious. Now he literally woke us up and the first thing he said when I opened the door was asking for Mbewenhle. I think as far as we are shying away from the truth uncle does have a gift.

"What should we do sbali? Does your dream shows where she is?" Father

"I don't know...I can't remember but all I know is she's in danger."

"Are you sure this is not one of your hallucinations sbali?"

“If it is then where is she?” The irritation in uncle’s voice cannot be missed.

Exactly where is she if she’s not with Muzi nor with Isisa? God I’m terror-stricken right now. Bad luck seems to be following my little sister, it’s one incident after the other. This is emotionally taxing and just when I’m thinking of going back to my house now this happens.

My husband is starting to complain now that I’m always this side and he misses me. I miss him too but my father and my brother needed me more, at least he knows how to take care of himself unlike them. They can’t even fry an egg to save their lives whereas he does everything a woman do.

There’s a knock on the door and I get up from the couch to attend it. It’s Muzikayise and his face is red as fuck. I make a space for him to walk in and once he’s inside I close the door. He greets everyone and asks what’s going on. I’d be lying if I say we truly know what happened because we all went to bed after watching imbewu and she was okay. I don’t know how and when did she disappeared. There’s no sign of force entry and that is very rare in this village.

“This doesn’t make sense at all where could she be?”

“If we know we would tell you Muzikayise!” Dad.

“That was a rhetorical question Bab Qwabe.” Muzi says to dad who gets up from the couch.

“I’m not going to sit here and wonder. I’m going to look for my daughter,” Dad spits out then heads out.

“I’m going with dad.” Mvelo says following our father.

“I’m going to look for her as well please Mpilenhle call me when she comes back.”

“Okay I will do.”

He gets up and says his goodbye then he leaves. Mama is wailing like a baby. I sit next to her and embrace her in my arms.

“I’m sorry mama I’m sure she’s okay wherever she is.”

“Maybe if I don’t have a daughter that disappeared 11 years ago I’d believe you my child but right now I’m so petrified. What’s happening in this village? Why my children are a target? Who’s next? You? Mvelonhle? They should take me and leave my children alone!”

“I’m so sorry mama.” It’s the only thing I say as my own tears run down my face.

“Mommy why is gogo crying?” Azanothe says emerging from the passage.

“Go back to sleep baby.”

“You are also crying.”

“Let me put her into bed mama I’m coming.”

I get up from the couch and pick up my daughter before going to my bedroom where I tuck her in and give her my phone to keep her busy. I have tons of games in my phone for them and it’s the reason my screen is cracked because they’re always fighting over it. Avumile is stubborn like her father, when she doesn’t want to give her elder sister the phone she angrily throws it on the floor.

“Stay here I’m coming okay.”

“Okay mommy.”

As I walk to the lounge I hear my mom arguing with her brother. They don’t get along and I don’t understand why except that malume has children all over the world that he can’t even take care of.

“You never loved me ThembeKa!”

“Look at yourself Thubelihle and tell me were you ever going love yourself if you were me?”

“Finally you said it! I always knew that you loved Thobani and hate me!”

Thobani is their brother who comes after mom. He was in grade 12 when he was bitten by a snake and died out of its poison.

“Thobani had a vision unlike you! You dropped out at school and now all you do is impregnate women left , right and center and smoke weed!”

“It was my choice I don’t understand why are you making it a big deal!”

Mom laughs in disbelief.

“Do you ever listen to yourself when you talk?”

“Vele what the hell is your problem huh? You also dropped out when you were pregnant with Mpilenhle so why it’s wrong when it’s me?”

“You know why? It’s because I made sacrifices for you guys so that you can have a better future. I sacrificed my education and my myself to ensure you have a great future so that you can take care of our mother. Now you can’t even take care of yourself let alone your children who are all over the world. I’m glad my daughters have found their partners because it used to unsettle me that one day they’re going to meet your children and fall in love with them but what about Mvelonhle? One of these days he’s going to bring me a daughter in law who’s actually your daughter. I didn’t want much from you Thubelihle just to better yourself not this hogwash! Is this what I sacrificed myself for? You smoke like a chimney and plant your seeds in every woman you meet!”

“No one asked you Thembeke, to sacrifice yourself for us! It was all on you! It’s not my fault that you chose to marry a rich man so that we can be taken care of. I didn’t ask you to be a gold digger mina!”

“I wish you are the one who was bitten by that snake! Get out of my house!!!”

“Ay vele ngiyahamba nx!” (Ay I’m going nx!)

Oh my goodness that escalated so fast! I walk into the lounge and sit next to her before pulling her to my arms. I feel my chest getting wet with tears as I stroke her back. Her cry is raw and intense, it’s triggering my own tears.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

In the wee hours of the morning, 2 am to be precise somewhere on top of the mountain in the Village of Mozane the man is chanting while waving his hands on top of the big three legged pot. Underneath the pot there’s a big fire which is boiling the mixture of herbs and muti liquid inside of it. The steam coming out of the pot is a huge cloud, menacing to

fill the hut. His chanting comes to a halt as it is replaced by a gibberish song yet so mellifluous.

Meanwhile in the Qwabe household Mbewenhle is sleeping peacefully in her bedroom and having a dream. It's a beautiful day, the skies are so clear and she's playing hide and seek in the garden with her twin sister. Now it's her turn to find her twin sister who is hiding in the beautiful flowers. Finding her is proving to be a hassle though she's following the sound of her twin sister's sweet melody but she's not giving up oblivious to the fact that she's actually getting up from her bed and sleep walking.

The sound of the door that it usually makes when she opens it doesn't wake up her mother

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who's naturally a light sleeper. Oddly today she's in a deep slumber, it must be the fatigue that she's been feeling lately for no apparent reason or the 3 rounds of intimacy with her husband and for the first time in 28 years of their relationship his weight on top of her was suddenly too much for her. Barefooted in her oversized sleep t-shirt she sleep walks up to the mountain. The cold breeze of the wee hours of the morning

doesn't wake her up nor does the thorns that keep prickling her little feet. Tall girls usually have long feet but not Mbewenhle. Her feet are almost as the size of a 12 year old. How is she a phenomenal runner with such little feet is a mystery.

"Open the door she's here." The man says but he couldn't believe it. They have been trying this for days now and it hasn't been working.

"Makhothwayinjwa...." he's cut short by a calmly yet stern command.

"I said open the door."

He reluctantly goes to the door and opens it, to his surprise here stands the girl who occupies his whole heart. The moment she walks in she collapses in his arms and God knows how long he has been yearning for this moment right now. To hold her in his arms and feel her warmth, that is.

"Bring her here."

He walks towards the donkey animal skin where he gently lays her down on it then sits down next to her. His heart beats louder than the crashing waves at the sight of her sleeping in her oversized t-shirt which is displaying her flawless thighs as it sits right below her butt cheeks. Oh she's indeed a beautiful seed, her father wasn't mistaken at all for naming her Mbewenhle.

"You did it!"

"I told you that using her twin sister will work."

"How did you know that?"

"It's easy to manipulate restless souls my boy."

"Now what's going to happen?"

Makhothwayinja takes the big calabash and retrieves muti wrapped in a newspaper inside of it.

“Here’s what you’re going to do when you get home. You’re going to steam with this muti. The more you sweat the more your body will itch. When you scratch the itch your body will produce grime. You have to dust it off your body and bring it to me.”

“Okay no problem.”

“Make sure that you don’t talk to anyone until you’re done is everything clear?”

“Crystal clear.”

“Now leave.”

“I will leave her here?”

“Yes what did you expect?”

Now that unsettles him, leaving his girl who seems deep in her sleep and wearing an oversized t-shirt only with this scary man.

“Why did you come here from the first place if you don’t trust me? Why don’t you go ask someone else who you trust then?”

“No no of course I trust you Makhothwayinja. Don’t you at least have a sponge and blanket.”

“Ow don’t worry she doesn’t feel anything.”

“But Makhotha....”

“Hamba mfana!” (Go boy!)

He huffs inwardly and gets up from the floor then walks out. After wearing his sneakers which were by the doorstep he leaves. It’s going for 4am and it’s still dark as the winter season

already started. When he gets home he doesn't waste time but get on with preparing the fire woods in a brazier.

"Dubazane," his mom says behind him and just as he's about responds he remembers that he's not supposed to talk.

"Why are you up so early?"

He doesn't say anything but gives her a little smile as if she could see it through the darkness then continues with making the fire wood.

"Dubazane kwenzenjani can't you talk now?" (...what's going on...)

The mother looks at her son bewildered by his behavior.

"Dubazane khuluma bo!" (Dubazane talk!)

Unlike everyone who calls him by his name his mom always calls him by his clan name whether she's angry, confused, happy or sad and he loves it. She waits for him to say something but when he still doesn't say anything she clucks and leaves him. He's tempted to laugh but he's not sure if that is allowed either. Once the fire is ready he takes the brazier to his two roomed house and go fetch the pot in the kitchen. He thanks his ancestors when he doesn't find anyone in the kitchen who will force him to talk. He goes back to his house and pours water inside the pot before sprinkling the muti inside.

A war is a war if you fight fair you will never win. You've got to do what you've got to do to get what you want. Mbewenhle Qwabe is his wife, she's the chosen one by his ancestors. Or could it be possible that the dream was after all just a dream? Phela nenyongo iyaphuphisana amanga. Ukuthwala was an ancient condoned abnormal path to marriage targeted at certain girls or women of marriageable age. Even his mom that how she married his father and not even once has he ever noticed forced love or lack of love in their marriage. Now his father is late and his mother still loves him.

To him this is normal and it worked for his father but now it's 2020 Ukuthwala is against the law as it is a form of abduction that involves kidnapping a girl or a young woman by a man and his friends or peers with the intention of compelling the girl or young woman's family to endorse marriage negotiations. He knew that he has to be smart about it by using an unknown witch doctor.

His muti is boiling on the braizer so he prepares himself and does his steaming session. He thought the itch was just going to be a usual itch but it's intense and he feels like there are fleas all over his body. Finding it hard to endure the itch he flings away the blankets and vigorously scratches his sweaty body like a lunatic. There's never a day that passes without him bathing how he has so much grime it baffles him. He stands on top of the big plastic and dust it off from his body. It falls on the plastic thereafter he takes a bath.

Half an hour later he's done, he discards his water and makes his way back to the top of the mountain. Makhothwayinja is already waiting for him when he gets there. At least now his woman is lying on the sponge and covered with a blanket.

“Here.” He passes the grime wrapped in a plastic and Makhothwayinja takes it before mixing it with a sticky black muti.

“See I’m mixing this muti with your grime. Ngizomgcaba ngawo, ukuvuka kwakhe la uyobe esekhohlwe nya ilomfana waka Maseko kozobe sekubusa wena enhlizweni yakhe.” (...I’m going to make two small razor cuts on each targeted part of her body and rub this muti directly into the cuts. When she wakes up her she will be long forgotten about that Maseko boy and you will be the only one who owns her heart.) Makhothwayinja

That is music in his ears and it is confirmed by a wild smile that spreads across his face.

“Mkhumule abenqunu cwe.” (Take off her clothes I want her in her birthday suit)

He doesn’t feel comfortable with undressing her in front of this scary man. He’s the only one who’s entitled to see her naked but he focuses on the end goal. Never he thought the first time he undresses her would be under such circumstances. He thought the first time undressing her it would be the first time he make love to her. The thought of him breaking that hymen and despoiling her impurity is sending a twinge down there as he slowly undresses her with terribly shaking hands.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

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“Aw mfana waqhakhazela kangaka nje uyasaba ukukhumula intombazane?” (Aw boy why are you shaking are you scared to undress a girl.)

Of course he's not scared of undressing a girl he has unclothed many girls in his life but none of them were her. This is not just any girl, she's the chosen one. He worships the grounds that she walks on so it doesn't feel right to undress her like this but this has to be done. The t-shirt now is out and she's lying on the sponge with her undies only. Why does he feel bad for having a

boner at the sight of her half naked exotic body? It must be the fact that she's oblivious to what is happening to her.

"Khipha idilosi mfana we don't have the whole day!" (Take out the panties boy...) Makhothwayinja says irritably.

His heart beat is drumming and he could hear every single pound against his chest as his tremulous hands clamps at her panties and sliding it down. No one prepared both of them for what they see.

"Hayi hayi libuyisele!" (No no pull it back!)

He doesn't need him to say it twice. They've just seen something that they're not supposed to see as men.

"We can't go on with this." Makhothwayinja

"What does that supposed to mean?"

“I can’t perform this work while she’s on her periods it won’t work. She’s not even supposed to be here in my hut uzophuphisa imithi yami!” (...she’s weakening the power of my muti!)

“No you can’t say that not after the money I paid you!”

“Mfana uguqe ngezindlebe yini? Ngithe angeke kwenzeke uma esezinsukwini zakhe mudedele ayekubo.” (Boy are you kneeling with your ears? I said it won’t work if she’s on her periods. Let her go back home!)

“No I can’t do that Makhothwayinja this is the only chance!”

“We will do it again when she’s done with her periods. Take her out already uphuphisa imithi yami!”

“Makhothwayinja I can’t let her go now that she’s here! Please, there have to be a way to do this please I’m begging you.”

“There’s no other way unfortunately my boy.”

“How about we keep her until she’s done with her periods.”

“Where will she stay? I don’t want her here!”

“We can keep her in one of your huts for days.”

“Mfana we can’t keep another woman’s child for days here that will raise suspicions. I don’t want to be in trouble because of you.”

“I will add R5000 on top of the one I’ve paid you.”

Makhothwayinja looks at the boy thoughtfully. Now he is speaking his language. Nothing tickles him good then money. He can risk it all for money.

“Okay we can keep her but you have to be aware that she will have to wake up which means she will be aware of what’s happening.”

“Can’t you keep her asleep for days until she’s done with her periods?”

“Usuyahlanya ke mfana it’s bad enough that you saw her menstrual blood now you want to bath her and keep changing those pampers thing they use for periods?” (You are crazy boy...)

He grimaces at that thought and a slow sigh escapes his lips as his brain process everything. This now is fucked up he didn’t want her to be aware of all this. He dresses her up then they take her to the other hut where she’s laid on the sponge and covered with the blanket.

Things keep getting complicated by the second and that frustrates him. There’s nothing he hates then not being in control. He doesn’t have sisters how is going to get pads? People will look at him suspiciously if he buys pads. The beat of his heart races up when he sees her eyelids fluttering. Not ready to face her he scurries out of the hut and locks her inside while she blinks her eyes opens. When her surroundings confuses her she rubs her eyes with the back of her palms

thinking that her brain is still befogged by her sleep but reality hit hard.

She jumps up on the sponge as her heart begins to beat hard threatening to come out of her mouth. Where is she? How did she get in this dark hut? The sun rays flickering through the small window tells her that it's the morning. Sweat trickles down her neck as fear overwhelms her body. She sprints to the door and screams hysterically.

“Help!!!”

The door is made out of an iron and it's hurting her knuckles as she keeps on banging on it. She goes to the window and peeks trying to see where she is but she's unfamiliar with her whereabouts. No one is responding to her, she sits on the sponge and bawl her eyes out. Harking back to the events that led her here is proving to be fruitless as nothing comes to her mind except the beautiful dream she had with her twin sister and it felt so real.

Maybe she's abducted by the people that took her twin sister and she will finally see her. There are so many theories about her twin sister's disappearance and she actually doesn't know which one to believe. Her theory is Mnumzane and it's seems logical to her as mysterious as it sounds. It seems like she never catches a break it's one incident after another. It's been less than a week since she came back from Durban this happens maybe she should've stayed there. Seeing her mother entertaining another man was better than this.

She wonders if she will ever be found and how her family feels right now about her disappearance. They must be terror-stricken as they have been through this road and it left deep scares that are bleeding up to this date. Will they ever heal? Now that's an enigma.

The fear of the unknown engulfs her and she starts hyperventilating and gasping for air. Just in that moments the door opens. He rushes to her when he sees her hyperventilating and rubs her back urging her to breathe. Seeing him sends an inkling of hope traveling through her body and that alleviates her fear and anxiety.

“Siyabonga please get me out of here, please.” It’s the first thing she says once she’s a bit calm. He looks at her teary eyes and wipes her tears with the back of his palm.

“You will get out of here soon just be patient my love.”

Patient? What is he on about? How can she be patient when she woke up in a hut that she doesn’t know still wearing her oversized t-shirt.

“I want to go home now Siyabonga please. Let’s get out of here before they come and harm us.”

“No one will harm you trust me on that. I will protect you with everything that I’ve got.”

She stares him and right there in his deep set of eyes she could see something sinister.

“How did you know I’m here?”

He looks down as he can't keep his gaze on her, it makes him weak. How she has so much effect on him is something that he also doesn't understand.

“I meant everything I said on that letter Mbewenhle. I'm really sorry that I insulted you. I was heartbroken but it doesn't matter anymore because you and I will grow old together.”

He kisses her forehead and gets up leaving her confused and when he locks the door it registers to her that Siyabonga is the one that kidnapped her. How sick this bastard is? How is locking her up going to make her love him?

The hours keep moving, she's getting hungrier by the minute and all she want is to bath now as she can feel that the pad is full and it needs to be changed while her family is looking for her and some people of the village have joined the search. The police are taking their sweet perfect time to come but they have been informed hours ago.

Muzikayise is losing his mind at this moment and he wants to turn this village upside down. The thought of something happening to his Yeyeye is the one that he doesn't want to entertain. The more hours keep moving fear is creeping in, what if she will never be found like her twin sister? His father has been calling none stop but he hasn't been able to answer his calls and when he calls for the 50th time he decides to go home.

"Where have you disappeared to Muzikayise you were supposed to fetch the goats in Newcastle hours ago and they should be slaughtered by now!" Maseko

"Baba I told Thuthuka to tell you that I won't be able to fetch the goats. Mbewenhle is missing."

"Haisuka I'm sure she's running away from everyone and she doesn't want to be found."

Muzikayise chuckles in disbelief at his father's comment.

“Dad you think this is a joke? She’s been missing for almost the whole day now and this is what you say?”

“Hey boy mind your tone when you are speaking to me! Go fetch the goats now the ceremony has to go on it can’t stop because of that dramatic girl of yours!”

“I’m not going to fetch the goats baba do you hear me? Now I’m going to search for her and until I find her I’m not coming back!” Muzi says and walks away.

“Muzikayise don’t walk away from me while I’m still talking to you!”

“I’m done talking with you baba.”

He hops in his car and drives off leaving his father fuming with anger. Does this girl have to disappear now when he needs his son more than ever. He’s the only one he trust to handle everything around here and ensures that the ceremony goes well as he always does.

.....

The Qwabe family is gathered in the room where they usually communicate with the ancestors and before them there's a sangoma which was brought by Musa's mom much to Thembeke's disapproval. There's nothing she could've said when her husband told her that his mom is coming with the sangoma. The very same sangoma that he wanted to take Mbewu to. She is too distraught to argue and she hasn't slept for two days since her daughter disappeared. The pain is more than her heart can take now she can't lose another child.

The sangoma is chanting and calling out her ancestors together with the Qwabe's ancestors to help her see where is Mbewenhle. She throws the bones on the mat and grunts louder, waving ishoba on the air before looking at the bones on the floor. She explains to them that she can't clearly see where Mbewenhle is but she's surrounded by evil spirit and the place she's at is tightly guarded.

"Do whatever you have to do to locate her makhosi." Qwabe

“But why did they take here makhosi and who are they?” Asks Mpilenhle

Makhosi enlightens them why Mbewenhle was taken what are they planning to do and why they couldn't go through with it.

“Oh thixo onofefe ubani loncole kangaka!” (God who's evil like this?) MaNdwandwe Senior, Thembeke's mom says. Yes she's also here for her daughter.

“We have to get her before they do their shit to her!” Mvelonhle

There's awkwardness after saying that then he remembers that he just swore in front of elders.

“Uhm I mean before they put her under their spell.”

Mpilenhle presses her lips tightly trying to stifle a laugh. The sangoma asks to be alone so that she can plead with the ancestors to reveal where Mbewenhle is. They leave her and go to the main house. Musa goes to his bedroom and kneels under the bed pulling out the big trunk. He opens it and takes out his late father's gun since his was taken by the police as proof of evidence regarding Gwala's case.

"Are the weapons necessary why don't we call the police if the sangoma tells us where she is." Thembeke

"Don't tell me about those useless bastards! We called them two days ago but they haven't arrived to look for our daughter. I'm going to deal with this."

"The sangoma said the place is guarded Qwabe and I don't want anything horrible to happen to you."

Musa smiles as he looks at his wife and gets up from the floor then walks to his wife who's standing by the door.

“Don’t worry sthandwa sami I will come back to you okay and even if I die I will make sure before I die Mbewenhle is safe.” He says brushing her plump cheeks. It’s seems like her beauty is appreciating every single day especially since she came back from Durban.

“Don’t talk like that I don’t want to lose you. I want both of you safe.” She leans against his palm and inhales deeply. God is her witness she loves this man with his imperfections and she has learned to embrace them. It’s not like she’s perfect either.

“How can I not come back to you my fohloza.”

She giggles, he used to call her that when they were young and he was still courting her.

“There’s no way that I can’t come back to you and this little one you are carrying.”

The smile on her face vanishes as she chokes on her saliva.

“What are you talking about?”

“You’re pregnant my love and thank you so much for this precious gift. I can feel it in my gut that it’s a boy.”

Thembeke’s heart thuds hard that her husband noticed. Not that she hasn’t been suspecting that she might be pregnant but there’s been a huge part of her that hopes she’s not. Who’s the father of the child she might be carrying that question leaves her head reeling.

As per norm Mpilenhle has updated Muzikayise about what the sangoma said. Tomorrow it’s the ceremony and the Maseko yard is buzzing. It’s been two difficult days of his life without knowing his Yeyeye’s whereabouts. He goes to his father and asks him to get amabutho (Zulu warriors) to accompany him to get his woman. Of course Maseko would do anything for his only son even though he cannot hide how annoyed he is about the way his son jumps at the mention of this Qwabe girl. Somehow he feels like he’s becoming weak because of that girl.

At 9pm on the dot finally the ancestors reveals where Mbewenhle is to the Sangoma. They don't waste time but leave. Mvelonhle is going with his father much to his mom's disapproval. They meet Muzikayise and the warriors by the gate and head to the top of the mountain carrying their weapons.

Meanwhile Makhothwayinja can feel it in his bones that they're coming for them. They haven't perform the ritual as Mbewenhle is still on her periods. He goes outside and tells his guards to be prepared they're about to be attacked before going to the hut where Mbewenhle is while calling Siyabonga and informing him about the situation at hand. She cried until tears couldn't come out anymore and tried to beg Siyabonga to let her go but he kept saying "soon". Mbewenhle didn't understand he is keeping her for what because he has been nice to her. He bought her clothes, panties, pads and nice food. Well until yesterday she heard them talking.

"Kanti uqeda nini ukuyesikhathini ntombazane?" (When are your periods over girl?)

"After 30 days"

Of course she's lying, now that she knows what is their plan she's planning to lie even when she's done she won't tell them. They won't force her to show them no man wants to see that.

Just in that moment they hear gunshots firing and the scary man heads out and locks the door. Mbewenhle knew that those gunshots are fired by people who are here to rescue her. She gets up and screams hitting the door so that they can hear her but the gunshots are deafening. Muzi, Lonhle and Qwabe are the only people who are firing gunshots while the warriors are fighting the guards with their weapons. Siyabonga grabs Muzi from behind and his gun fall on the ground.

“Forget about the gun let's fight man to man! I told you that eyami neyakho isukile!” (..the war between us has begun!)

Muzi chuckles

“You've got balls huh. I hope you didn't do anything to my woman.”

“We had a great time together she doesn’t even think about you and damn she tastes so good.”

Muzi loses it and throws a mean punch. They fight, kukhala iqupha nescathulo endodeni. Makhothwayinja realizes that his guards are all down on the ground, kulele uyaca he has no choice but to run. He’s outnumbered he can never win, he set the hut on fire to distract them.

“Fire!” One of warriors says and when Siyabonga sees that the burning hut it’s the one where Mbewenhle is fear attacks every sense of him.

“Mbewenhle is in there!” He screams trying to get Muzi off who’s on top him and punching him none stop.

“Get off me man Mbewenhle inside the burning hut!”

Now the attention is on the fire Makhothwayinka finds his way to escape. Muzi lets go of Siyabonga and runs towards the burning hut.

“Yeyeye!” He bangs on the door hard.

“Kayise there’s a smoke please get me out of here!” Cries Mbewenhle trembling with fear.

“Move away from the door.”

She moves away and Muzi kicks the door but it doesn’t open. The flames are getting bigger and the hut is now filled with smoke. Mbewenhle is coughing none stop and the warriors are trying to stop the fire but it proves to be impossible as they don’t have water with them. Musa and Muzi are taking turns in attempt to break the door.

“Where’s the key!” Mvelonhle screams at Siyabonga who immediately runs to Makhothwayinja’s hut where he usually perform his magical spells but he’s no where to be found.

Musa looks at huge flames tearfully thinking of his daughter inside the hut. He cannot fail her now when he finally found her and he promised his wife to bring their daughter back and safe. The smoke is all over the hut and Mbewenhle is suffocating and weak. Trying to run away from the burning grass that keeps on falling from the roof she trips and falls on the floor. When she sees the huge burning grass about to fall on her she surrenders her life to her creator.

## ☆ Mbewenhle ☆

The hut is bursting into flames and they are running out of hope to get Mbewenhle out of the hut. Qwabe being the man who watches TV a lot and have seen starrings in movies shooting locked doors to open them. He does exactly that but unfortunately his late father's gun has ran out of bullets so is the one Mvelonhle was using. The Qwabe ancestors can't forsake them now when they've found her. Muzi goes to search for his gun where it fell but finding it is proving to be a difficult task as it's dark and he doesn't have a phone with him.

Siyabonga realizes that Makhothwayinja escaped and left him in this situation alone after the money he paid him. He's going to get him for playing him like this but now it's not the time to think about how to avenge himself. Mbewenhle's life is in danger and he have to save her. He remembers the small window and takes a shovel before running to the back of the hut to break the window. An icy sensation surges through his stomach at the sight of her lying on floor. He squeezes himself through the small window.

“Mbewenhle!” A shaky scream escapes his lips, snapping her out of her half unconsciousness.

Just as the burning grass is about to fall on her, with a swift move that he also can't fathom out, he shoves her away. The burning grass falls on top of him, sending him down to the floor. He shrieks in agony as Mbewenhle bawls her eyes out, watching him burning in front of her. She crawls towards him in attempt to help him.

“Get up and jump out of the window!”

“Siyabonga...”

“Go Mbewenhle! Now before this whole roof falls on you!”

“I can't leave you here Siyabonga.”

“One of us have to get out of here alive and that's you my love. I know we were meant to be and had so much to live for together but I guess our love story is written on the other side

of the world. Don't worry I will be waiting for you in the afterlife and we will unite once again. Now go my love and shine bright like a diamond that you are," Siyabonga says choking between his grunts as the fire is having a feast on his flesh.

Through the mist in her eyes she sees the window and forces her body up then walks to the window where she forces her head out before jumping out of the window. Mvelonhle sees her as she stumbles to the front side coughing profusely and runs to her.

"I'm so so sorry sis," he says squeezing his sister in his arms. The thought of almost losing her has his eyes flooding with tears.

"Yeyeye!" Muzi says and it's only then Musa notices as well that his daughter is out and she's alive. They both run to her.

"I'm sorry my child. Are you hurt? Let's me take you to the hospital now." Qwabe

“Please save him baba, please.”

“Save who?” Muzi

“Siyabonga, he is inside and he saved me.”

“Oh that bastard deserves to burn in hell! He’s the one that took you Yeyeye...”

“I know but...” She’s disturbed by the sight of the whole burning roof of the hut falling inside the hut.

“Nooooo!” She screeches

trying to run towards the fire as if she can save him but Mvelonhle holds her tightly in his arms.

They won’t understand that as much as he kept her out of her will in these past two days, she ascertained the love Siyabonga had for her, that she disregarded for two years. “No one will harm you trust me on that. I will protect you with everything

that I've got." Those words sounded meaningless at that moment he said them up until right in this moment. She didn't think that when he said "with everything that I've got." he meant including his life.

Maybe just maybe if she reacted differently things wouldn't have turned out this way but she also doesn't know how differently she could've reacted. "One of us have to get out of here alive and that's you my love. I know we were meant to be and had so much to live for together but I guess our love story is written on the other side of the world. Don't worry I will be waiting for you in the afterlife and we will unite once again. Now go my love and shine bright like a diamond that you are." How sad that though things didn't turn out the way he planned but he still believed in them being together. If not in this lifetime they would definitely be together on the other side of the world.

The sharp pain of jealous travel through Muzi as he looks at his Yeyeye crying so painfully for another man, a man that kidnapped her. He was fucking worried about her for two days but it's clearly that she was enjoying his company. Musa tells Mvelonhle to take his sister home while they sort out these dead bodies. They can't leave these dead men like this because

this might come back to them even though they were saving his daughter which is something the police failed to do.

Mvelonhle piggybacks his sister and makes his way home. He's one of those boys who has a well built body, tall and rugged. Being an indlamu (Zulu dance) dancer is also a contributing factor to his masculinity. Thembeke screams with relief when she opens the door for her children and attacks her daughter with a hug the moment Mvelonhle puts her down.

"Oh my baby how are you doing? Did they hurt you? You reek of smoke and look pale what have they done to you?"

Mbewenhle fails to utter a word and bursts into tears in her mama's arms. They go to the couch and settle down. Mvelonhle narrates everything that happened.

"Serves him right!" Mpilenhle

"Really Mpilenhle how can you say that." Mbewenhle says with her hoarse voice.

“Because it’s true little sis.”

“I know what he did was cruel but he wasn’t a bad guy and he didn’t deserve to die like this.”

“I can’t believe that you care about someone who kidnapped you and was planning to korebelanize you,” Mpilenhle says in disbelief.

“Let my baby be Mpilenhle.” Thembeke

“We should take her to the hospital to ensure that she’s not hurt. The smoke she inhaled must have done some damage inside her body.” Mvelonhle raises his concern.

“I don’t want to go to the hospital I just want to sleep.”

“Are you not hungry?” Thembeke

She doubts she will be able to down the food with her burning chest and throat and besides she's still full from that pizza and yogurt Siyabonga brought her for supper. The grandmothers force her to drink milk and wash her face with it then her mother takes her to her bedroom where she tucks her in.

"I'm so glad that you are back and safe. I was so scared that I will never see you again. I love you so much my child."

"I love you too mama," Mbewenhle says weakly and closes her eyes allowing the exhaustion to take her to dreamland.

☆ Muzikayise ☆

It's been one ghastly night that I shall never forget for as long as I live. Seeing the fire exacerbating by the second and being unable to help her had me feeling cold in my stomach. To make the situation worse is that she had to be saved by that bastard! I have never felt so useless like I am right now and seeing her crying painfully for a man that kidnapped her pains in the deepest part of my heart.

I can't believe that he died so easily I wanted to teach him how to accept rejection from a girl. Once we are done throwing the dead bodies of the guards in the fire and ensure that we leave no trace of us here we leave. I'm so relieved that she's safe but the pain I'm feeling right now doesn't want to allow me to go see her yet my arms are itching to be wrapped around her.

"Thank you so much guys for coming into my rescue, without you I wouldn't have been able to get my woman back."

"Don't mention it Muzikayise ungowakwethu wena." (...you are one of us.) says Felempini and others agrees with him. I respect these men they don't play ufa naso isbhamu sakho once they announce their presence. They are true warriors and Shaka Zulu would be proud of them. I leave them in my lounge and walk to the kitchen.

"My boy did you find her?" Mama says the moment I walk into the house.

"Yes mama and she's safe."

She wants me to enlighten her about what happened but the kitchen is filled with every relatives that I don't trust.

"I will tell you some other time mama for now can you guys prepare something to eat for the warriors. They're in my lounge."

"Okay my boy we will do that."

"Where's baba?"

"He's in the lounge with the elders."

I nod and walk out. It's going for 11pm now but people are bumbling around the yard as if it's not late already even the kids are playing around.

"Malumes how did it go? Did you find her? Who took her?"

“I’m out of cigarettes boy don’t you have some?”

“Come.”

He leads me to his room and I’m surprised to find Isisa sitting on the bed and watching TV. My eyes catches an unfamiliar bag on the chest of drawers.

“Hi Isisa.”

“Hey Muzi. Did you guys find my best friend? Is she okay?”

“We almost lost her but she’s fine.”

“Oh my God what happened?”

“You’re her best friends she will tell you herself.”

Thuthuka passes me the cigarette and lighter then we walk to the back of his room. We lean against the wall as I begin to tell him what happened while smoking.

“Wow! I didn’t think he was serious when he said a war has begun between you two.”

“He’s a coward and he died so easy!”

“I don’t like you when you are like this you need to calm down it’s all over now.”

I take a drag of my cigarette and breath out the smoke through my nose.

“I was worried sick about her Thuthuka kanti she was enjoying his company!!”

“That’s not true how can you say that.”

“It’s clear she did! How can she cry for him when he’s the one that kidnapped her? You could’ve seen her wanting to jump into the fire and save her psychotic boyfriend!” I throw the cigarette butt and stamp on with with my caterpillar boot.

“Calm down before you drive yourself crazy and do something that you will regret. Mbewenhle loves you and she has a heart of gold so it’s expected of her to behave like this. It doesn’t necessarily mean anything. Here.” He passes his cigarette since mine is finished.

“I’m already going crazy boy. Anyway I saw an unfamiliar bag on your chest of drawers please don’t tell me Isisa is going to sleep over.”

“Yes she’s sleeping over.”

“Haibo Thuthuka how can she sleep over while the yard is buzzing. People are going to need a space to sleep.”

“Hayi that’s the reason I brought her I don’t want anyone in my room who’s going to steal my things.”

I laugh. Trust Thuthuka to do that.

“You’re mean.”

“Singashauna”

“I hope you are going to wait for her and not manipulate her into having sex with you Thuthuka.”

“It’s easy for you to say that because you only have months to wait mina I still have to wait for next year for her umemulo.”

“Isisa is younger then Mbewenhle?”

“No she’s older then Mbewu with few months but her mother and sister are still budgeting for her umemulo ceremony so it’s going to be next year.”

“Eish hade boy but the wait will be worth it.”

“I need a side chick to tap I can’t wait for this long yhooh.”

“Uyabheda ke manje!”

“Serious malumes I’m horny as we are speaking and to think I’m going to sleep next to a pussy but I won’t fuck it hayi!”

I can’t help but laugh.

“Uyalayeka!” (Serves you right!)

“Mxm. Let’s me go check on her, she doesn’t like it when I leave her for so long alone.”

“Please give the warriors some African beer and beers.”

“Sure.”

He leaves me and I continue smoking in the dark while my mind harks back to the event of hours ago. I never knew that I’m capable of loving deeply. I’m so mad at her right now but I want to feel her warmth next to me and drink the sweetness of her lips like there’s no tomorrow.

“Are you crazy!”

“Hawu kahle Sonto angizwise kancane nje.” (Don’t be like that Sonto please let’s me taste me a bit.)

I look at where the voices are coming from and anger boils inside of me when I see uncle Bhekisisa grabbing my mom’s behind who’s disposing something on the other side of the fence. I can tell by the smell of it that it’s beer strainers (amavovo)

“Leave me alone!”

I step on the cigarette butt and walk towards them.

“Is everything okay here.”

“Yes my boy it’s okay.” I can’t miss the quavering in my mom’s voice. She must have thought it’s Dad as we have similar voices.

“Oh yes everything is fine. I was just asking your mom some beer,” he slurs and burps loudly. This bastard thinks I’m stupid.

“Why don’t you ask my father?”

“Aw you know how your father is. The mobile fridge is locked.”

“Come with me. I will get you a beer.”

“Aw ngiyabonga mfana wami wena awuncishani njengo yihlo uzilungele.” (Aw thank you my boy you’re not parsimonious like your father, you are kind)

He follows me as I go to my car to take the spare key of the mobile fridge and go to the garage to open it before taking out six pack of castle lite.

“Thank you so much my boy!”

“You’re welcome. Don’t you want us to take a drive uncle.”

There are two things he loves dearly in this world that are alcohol and car rides. He agrees as anticipated. I lock the fridge then we take a drive. He’s drinking his beer while sharing his crazy stories but I humor him until we arrive at Tugela river.

“Where are we?”

“Let’s get out you will see.”

We both get out of my car and he almost fall on the ground. He's sloshed and he can barely stand. I pull out my gun from my behind and point at him. He raises his hands up in the air.

"Son..what...what goin..." I don't even wait for him to finish what he's saying but shoot him on his forehead. Once he's on the ground I shove him to river and get inside my car then drive home.

.....

"I'm not moving until you come out of the car and talk to me ."

She's standing on the road and blocking my way. I heave a sigh and step out of the car then walk towards her. Today it's a Tuesday and I haven't seen her since that night and as much as I hate to admit it I'm so happy to see her. The polka dot short dress she's wearing hugs her every curve gloriously. I have

noticed that she loves short clothes and they surely do accentuate her sexy long legs.

“Ufunani Mbewenhle?” (What do you want Mbewenhle?)

“What have I done? Why are you ignoring my calls?”

“You don’t know what you did?”

“I wouldn’t have asked if I knew Muzikayise and this thing of yours ignoring me whenever there’s something bothering you is annoying. You act like a woman right now and I’m the man who always have to chase after you.”

Now that ticks me off.

“Go mourn your dead boyfriend and leave me the hell alone nx!”

I get into my car and drive straight towards her but she’s not moving away from the road. This girl is crazy! I sway the steering wheel and drive on the small side of the road. She got hit by the side mirror and fall on the road. Maybe this will teach her that life is not a movie.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

“Don’t blame yourself it’s not your fault.” The sangoma says to me but easier said than done.

See the hardest thing about this is that he will never get a decent burial besides the fact that his remains will never be recognized, we have to pretend as if we don’t know what happened to him. Dad said if we tell what happened to him they’ll be arrested for taking the law to their hands. They were supposed to call the police the moment they learned about my whereabouts.

The same police who just came an hour ago after they were informed about my disappearance the morning I disappeared. I give them 10/10 for their audacity. So we made up a story about where I was and I came back yesterday. “You know kids these days when they have a disagreement with their parents they throw tantrums” That what mom said to them and fortunately they seemed to believe our story.

“Some things are better left like this my child because if you let them linger in your mind they will steal your peace and happiness. Just let things be and unfold on their own way.”

“I hear you makhosi.” My voice is hoarse and my chest is burning, so is my throat.

What if he haunts us? What about his soul that is going to be roaming around in the streets? He needs to be united with his ancestors at least.

“Your thoughts are too heavy for your health and your age. The boy wasn’t killed he died peacefully because he chose to sacrifice his life to save you. One way or the other his family will find out that he has joined his underground family and do everything that is supposed to be done. Stop stressing yourself.”

This old woman reads mind too that’s creepy! I clear my throat and steal a glance at her. I want to ask something but I’m scared.

“Feel free to ask anything.”

“Could it be possible that he was actually the one who was meant for me? I mean for him to go to such extent just to win my heart.”

I don't know where do I gain the courage to look at her and I find her staring at me with her brown protruding eyes.

“After the death of his father as the elder son he had to man up and head the family. That's a huge responsibility and he needed someone by his side who was going to be his pillar of strength. He consulted a sangoma and there was a ritual that was done. The purpose of the ritual was for his ancestors to show him in a sort of a dream the woman they choose for him. You happen to be the chosen one for him.”

To say I'm shock would be putting it lightly.

“So this means he was the one for me?” It comes out as a whisper.

“You were the one for him not the other way around.”

Huh? I guess my demeanor shows how confused I am because she goes on to say.

“Umuntu wesilisa uyena muntu owadalwa enothando emhlabeni bese umsebenzi wakhe ukutshala imbewu yothando kuloyo muntu wesifazane thizeni amuthandile. Yingakho phela kwaba umuntu wesilisa oshelayo hayi lento eseyenziwa manje abantu besifazane bashela abantu besilisa bese bayakhala uma abantu besilisa bebagila. Vele azange akushele ngoba akukuthandi uyamazi umuntu amuthandayo. Kodwa izikhathi zishintshile futhi nanokwenza kuhlukile kunakuqala.” (Love was naturally embedded in a male and his job is to plant the seed of love to that particular woman he loves. That’s the reason a male is the one who has to court a woman not what these women do now busy courting men and when these men show them flames they cry. He didn’t court you because he doesn’t love you, he knows who does he love. But times have changed and things are done differently now.)

Mmm that's deep but I'm still stuck on the fact that I was chosen by his ancestors for him what does this mean about me and Muzikayise.

"What I'm trying to say to you is that you were the chosen one for him because they saw you fit to be his wife but it was his job to plant the seed of love inside of you. Just as it was your boyfriend's job to plant the seed of love inside of you until you gave in. If you don't understand this now then I don't have anything more to say my child," she says and walks out leaving me still trying to get what she said.

"What did the sangoma say to you?" Lonhle snaps me out my reverie.

"The woman was speaking in riddles little bro."

"Tell me about it."

"What did she say to you."

“Something about forgiving myself and doing a ritual to give my baby a name so that can he Rest In Peace. If I don’t do that all my children will die before they are even born.”

“Shhuu now that’s deep.”

“Eish you can say that again.”

“But she’s right about you forgiving yourself hey.”

“It’s not that easy but I will try.”

“I understand little bro. I still wanted to ask her about Ndalwenhle.”

“That’s the subject she refused to delve into I don’t know why. Come let’s go say goodbye to gogo.”

He helps me up from the couch then we head out to join my family. They’re bidding gogo farewell, the one who gave birth

to dad. She's not a monster in law it's just that she's scared of her children, especially her daughters.

"Get well my nunu."

"Thank you gogo."

She envelopes me in her arms before planting a kiss on my forehead. We all say our goodbyes and she promises to come back for my umemulo ceremony. Dad is driving his mom and the sangoma back to Ladysmith with his 14hundred. It would be a miracle if they make it to Ladysmith without this scrap breaking down on their way.

Once they've left mom and I prepare to go to the hospital. I don't want to go to the hospital but mom insists to take me there because my breathing was wheezing the whole night and my chest and throat are still sore. I didn't even eat breakfast.

"Don't we need a referral letter from the clinic first?" I say to mama as we are driving to the hospital. Mpilenhle's car is really

helpful shame I wouldn't have survived public transport because I'm still weak. I think it's about time mom has her own car but that just a wishful thinking. That stingy man of her husband will never buy her a car.

"I spoke to Gcobolwakhe and apparently there's this doctor he knows that works there."

"Oh I didn't know you are still in contact with him." I regret saying that the moment it slips out of my lips.

"What does that supposed to mean now? You're walking today because of that man stop being ungrateful."

"He was doing his job mama and you paid him why are you talking as if it was for free?"

"I don't like your tone right now!"

"Ngiyaxolisa." (I'm sorry.)

The rest of the drive is quiet except Bab Solly Mahlangu who's bursting through the speakers with his mellifluous music. We are shown Dr Msibi's office when we arrive. Damn he's such a giant, tall and big boned. Every feature and part of his body is big. Uyindlondlo ngempela shame. Once greetings are out of the way we get to the reason we are here.

We start with chest X-ray to check the infection and lung damage but none of the mentioned is detected except irritation in my chest which is caused by the excessive coughing. A series of blood tests follows to check the functionality of the organs that are associated with oxygen. Fortunately nothing is damaged but he gives me bronchodilators to relax my lungs muscles and widen my airways and antibiotics to prevent infections. Hot liquids like soup and tea are also recommended for the sore throat.

"Here

go to the canteen to buy something to eat so that you can take your meds," mom says giving me money. I do as I'm told leaving her with the doctor. I thought we are done now or maybe there's something she wants to ask the doctor without me

being there. I don't have appetite but I buy chips and russians with buns and 2l of coke.

"Thank you." I say taking my change and walk back. Just as I walk in something catches my attention.

"You're indeed pregnant Mrs Qwabe."

"Oh Jesus! How far am I?"

"Let's do the scan to be sure how far are you."

Oh my goodness she's pregnant! Who's the father? I hope it's not Uncle G. I decide to go wait for her where we parked. I don't even want to think how things would be if this baby turns out to be not dad's. Her husband will be so angry and mama will be the talk of the village. A disgrace of a woman who brought a bastard child in her marriage. I don't even want to mention my dad's family, they're going to crucify her for this. I'm so scared on her behalf, God please don't let this baby be uncle G's I don't want my mom to face such humility.

I see her coming and study her face as she gets nearer but I'm not sure of her facial expression. She unlocks the doors and we slide in before buckling up. Off we go after bringing the engine to life.

"Let's eat."

"I'm not hungr..." she heaves a shaky breath and takes a russian. I bet she thought of the baby she's carrying hence the change of mind. Maybe this means the baby is dad's.

.....

"The number you've dialed....." I furiously end the call before Joyce finish saying her favorite saying. Now I'm angry at her for saying one and the same thing! Her monotonous voice is echoing in my ears now as we speak. A change of words would be better maan yeses! How about "Phephisa sthandwa sami usakaka lomuntu uzobuye akuthinte" (I'm sorry my love this man is pooping he will call you later) I need to hear something

different why my calls are being ignored not this number  
you've dialed bla bla!

It's a Tuesday and since Saturday I have been trying to call  
Kayise but his phone rings until Joyce takes over. I don't know  
who said this white old woman has a nice voice. Sifa nini vele  
lesalukwazi?

"Sazothenga bo!" (Can I buy!)

"Musa ukuthetha phela!" (Don't shout!) I say getting up from  
my chair and attend her.

"What should I do if you have a hearing problem? I have been  
calling you out for hours now."

"Hours? Why didn't you just go back Khathazile."

"Cela amasi." (Can I have maas.)

Of course she doesn't have a choice not unless if she's up for the long walk. This is the only nearby shop available so you can imagine the money we make here if almost the whole village buys here. I don't want to mention alcohol sales. People love alcohol in Satafika yet dad is stingy, sazesasha sibancane.

"Do I have to ask how many liters?"

"Yini ngawe wena? Isiyanginukela manje le attitude yakho."  
(What's with you? This attitude of yours is starting to stinks)  
Khathazile

"Mina nginukelwa inkununu yakho."

I hear laughter and it's only then I notice Isisa by the door. She walks towards and asks me to open the bulgar for her then she attends this...whatever she is argh.

"Wena what's with you it's so not like you to be rude like this."  
Isisa says after Khathazile has left.

“I’m fine.”

“Yeah right.”

She takes a packet of simba chips and grabs a chair before sitting adjacent to me.

“This is the reason I don’t want you this side of the store.”

She laughs out loudly and tears off the packet of chips.

“Aysuka angeke siwe istolo nge R13 Mbewu” (The store won’t lose profit because of R13 short only Mbewu)

“You always say so I’m sure the things you have taken for free almost cost R1000 now. See that a whole month grocery.”

She can’t stop laughing. I think R1000 is even less. Friends we keep! The good thing is that I’m the one who record everything

and balance the amounts. Even if I make a mistake dad wouldn't notice.

"Talk to me?"

"It's Muzikayise he has been ignoring my calls and hasn't asked me to see him. Something is going on but I don't know what."

"I've just saw his car yaz I'm sure now he's going to pass by."

"Really?"

"Yes."

"Please attend the customers. Don't take anything Isisa please."

She laughs and nods her head. I know that by the time I come back she will be eating tennis biscuits with a can of coke. I head out and see his car coming on the gravel road. Now this is time

to test if my legs can still run. Damn it's feels like it's been ages. I pick up my pace and right on the gravel road I stand waiting for him. He hoots when he sees me but I don't move then his car comes to a halt.

"I'm not moving until you come out of the car and talk to me ."

I'm standing on the middle of the road and I know that he won't run over me. Today we are going to talk about this whether he likes it or not. He steps out of the car and studies me.

"Ufunani Mbewenhle?" (What do you want Mbewenhle?)

That question is a confirmation that he's mad at me.

"What have I done? Why are you ignoring my calls?"

"You don't know what you did?"

What have I done this time? Cela ningikhumbuza bafethu.

“I wouldn’t have asked if I knew Muzikayise and this thing of yours ignoring me whenever there’s something bothering you is annoying. You act like a woman right now and I’m the man who always have to chase after you.”

“Go mourn your dead boyfriend and leave me the hell alone nx!”

He gets into his car and drives towards me but I standstill on the middle of the road. The car sways to the other side of the road and drives by hitting my hip with a side mirror. I lose balance and fall on the road Jizas is this man crazy? For a moment I lie on road listening to my throbbing hip. Tears stings in my eyes when I see his car driving away. I cover my face with my hands and weep.

“Yeyeye!”

I turn my head on the side and see him running towards me. Not getting up from the road must have scared him hence he decided to stop.

“Baby I’m sorry.”

It’s like he pressed a button I bawl my eyes out. He picks me and I don’t even have energy to refuse. He walks to his car with me in his arms and when we get to his car he gently places me on the front passenger seat then goes to his side. The drive to his home is filled with my snuffles.

The kids stop playing in the yard when they see him carrying me. I want to tell him to put me down but for some obscure reason I don’t. He puts me on the bed and takes off my sandals then joins me on the bed after taking off his carvela.

“I’m sorry let me see where did I hurt you?”

I lift up my dress and show him my hip. Talking about skin color betrayal! There’s nothing at all that shows that it’s throbbing.

I'm so disappointed in my skin color if I was yellow it would be red right now.

“Kuphi?” (Where?)

“Haibo awuboni yini la kwi hips!” (Can't you see? Here on my hip)

He chuckles and plants countless kisses on my hip. The tingling sensation of his beard rubbing on my thigh has me moaning.

“Ngiyaxolisa sthandwa sami but you also didn't want to step out of the way.”

“I can't forgive you until you tell me what have I done usungaze ufuna ukungibulala nje.” (...that you want to kill me.)

“Hawu baby...”

“Don't hawu baby me Muzikayise.”

He heaves a sigh and explains to me that I hurt him when I cried for Siyabonga. Now it's my turn to sigh.

"I'm sorry Kayise it was never my intention to hurt you."

"I thought Siyabonga kept you without your will."

"Of course baby."

"Then why feel sorry for him to an extent of crying for him like that? It wasn't nice to see you crying for another man in front of me. The same man that kidnapped you and was planning to take you away from me. Not only did you hurt me you humiliated me as well in front of those guys I asked to accompany me to get you only for to cry for the same man that held you hostage."

Now I understand why he's been like this and I admit it didn't play out nice.

“I’m sorry sthandwa sami. I didn’t mean to hurt you or anything. I felt sorry for him because no one deserves to die like that. Yes he kidnapped me but he deserved to face his punishment in jail not dying brutally like that. I have never seen someone dying in front of me. It was a traumatizing situation for me. I’m sorry that my reaction towards the situation hurt and humiliated you. I hope you find it in your heart to forgive me.”

“It’s okay I understand. I just want to know if you’ve ever felt something for him maybe?”

“No I have never felt anything for him. I disregarded his love for me and to be honest I only realized in these days days he held me hostage so I felt sorry for him. That he died for the love that I never reciprocated let alone acknowledging. Not that I regret that but somehow I feel like I didn’t show him enough that I wasn’t interested in him and if I reacted differently things would’ve turned out differently as well.”

“You can’t blame yourself for how people choose to accept or understand the message you are sending across. How people behave is not your responsibility. Not everything in life goes as

we plan if Siyabonga couldn't understand that well that's not your problem."

"True. Please forgive me Sidwaba Siluthuli."

"Of course I forgive you my slavit."

I giggle and lean closer to kiss his lips. Oh I how miss his lips.

"Muzikayise can you please stop ignoring me whenever there's something going on between us. Communicate with me please. I hate it when you don't answer my calls and it breaks my heart."

"I'm sorry I take ownership of that and I promise to never do it again. The thing is when there's something bothering me I need time to myself to digest everything and calm down. The last thing I want is do or say something that I will regret later."

“I completely understand at least tell me that you need time and I will definitely give you space and look for a side nigga to entertain me for a while.”

The look on his face has rolling in the aisles.

“Don’t play like that Yeyeye.”

“Ngiyadlala but on the serious note baby do let me know if you need space.”

“I will definitely do that sthandwa sami now kiss me I missed you so much.”

My face meets his half way and our lips collide, creating some magical friction that forces both of us to swallow each other’s moans. He attempts to take off my dress but I stop him.

“Trust me baby okay. I won’t make you do something that you are not ready for.”

He captures my lips in his, coaxing my lips to open for him as he takes off my dress leaving my body half naked. I don't wear a bra I don't even own one. The warmth of his breath against my body sends goosebumps all over my body as he plants delicate kisses all over my body. I love that he respects that I don't want him to suck my breasts but that doesn't stop him from giving them pleasure that I have never felt in my entire life. Shivers rack through my body as he fondles my boobs and pinches my nipples.

“Mmmhh Kayiseee.”

I purr softly as he continues to ignite electrifying sensations through my body. I'm pooling down there and it's not even funny. He takes off my panties and my nakedness is exposed to him. Once again he rains kisses on my body and the ones in my inner thighs causes my body to shudder. I clamp my legs together when I feel a swipe of his tongue on my nana. Oh Shaka Zulu what is this Zulu man doing to me?

“Open your legs for me baby please.” I almost jump out of the bed thinking that someone has join us the way I can't recognize

his voice right now. It's strained and hoarse. I open my legs for him and he dips his head between my thighs. Involuntarily I jerk up when I feel his tongue on my bud. Jizas!

"Relax baby...just surrender your body to me and let me do my magic."

It's magic indeed. My fingers are digging holes on the covers as he laps up at me like a dog slurping water. His strokes are deep and intense. I'm a moaning mess and I don't know what to do with myself. Now I understand what mom meant when she said she didn't know she should cry or laugh or both at the same time.

"Haweee Kayiseeee please ahhhhh"

"Please what my love?"

I also don't know please what. I have lost every sense. I cry real tears when he strokes his tongue from my butt hole to my clit. Damn I have never felt anything like this before. I feel an

intense sensation building up as he dives his tongue into me. I want to pee but this is the different kind of need to pee. It's like a yearn to sneeze not with my nostrils nor my mouth but....No man a pussy can't sneeze this is urine. I move away from him but he holds me in place. My toes curl and my whole body becomes rigid. Shwele Jehova what's happening? I scream loudly as hot liquid gushes out of my lady part.

"Hey there"

I gain a courage to look at him between my thighs and he has a look of gratification.

"I'm honored to be your first to make you cum for the first time," he says and swipes his tongue on his lips. It's funny how I never notice what a long tongue he has until now. What if...? No! He crawls on top of me and looks at me.

"Wahlahla amehlo manje?" (Why your eyes are bulging out now)

“Your tongue...it’s too long..what if..”

“What if what?”

“What if it broke my virginity?”

“It’s possible yaz,” he says and burst into laughter. God I can’t believe that he’s laughing at the serious matter like this! This Saturday I’m going to virginity testing what have this man done to me?

## ☆ Muzikayise ☆

Every girl I date notice how long my tongue is right after taking her to muff town but Yeyeye had to be Yeyeye and thinks it's long enough to break her virginity. Jesus Christ! Ngasho ngathi ngiyagulelwa mina. How can a tongue break a virginity though? I can't stop laughing and it's irking her that I'm laughing at her.

"You are laughing? Get off me!"

She pushes me off her but I hold her arms and press them above her head on the bed.

"Why are you mad now?"

"Suka phekwami Kayise uyasinda." (Get off me Kayise you are too heavy)

“You can’t be mad for such madness baby. A tongue can never break your virginity.”

“One can’t be too sure with that long tongue of yours. Have you ever seen how long it is I swear I felt it in my womb.”

I can’t help a laugh that bursts out my chest.

“You’re so dramatic my love.”

“I’m telling you, if you were to enter a competition for a man with a long tongue ever in the world you will definitely win baby.”

I laugh and she joins me. This is one of the things I missed about her. She’s the whole mood I tell you. I’m so glad that we ironed things out and she made me realize how inconsiderate I am. It has always been about me and nursing my feelings until I’m ready to talk, even in my previous relationships and my exes knew that.

This is one of the reasons I love Yeyeye, she makes me want to become a better version of myself without even trying hard. I love how her presence and love calm my mind and put peace into my heart. Out of all the things that I have done in my life, she's the one thing that I've done right.

"I love you Mbewenhle."

"I love you too Muzikayise."

I lower my head and our lips fuse together with passion. Her moans always does things to me, things that only her is capable of doing on my body. I want to feel her flesh against mine so I get up from her and study her face as I take off every piece of clothing on my body. She's gawking at me like I'm sort of an art piece displayed for sale. I chuckle at how her eyes are bulging out when I take off my boxer. It's funny how it's like it's for the first time she sees my dick, she never get used to it.

A moan vibrates through my chest when I lay on top of her. The feel of her warm body against mine is pure magic. Our lips meet in a dance and the frisson caused by our groins thumbing

together causes us to moan in each other's mouth. I make her legs to clamp around my butt and flip over so that we are both lying with one side, facing each other.

I'm hard and leaking, I take her hand and wrap it around my dick before giving my hard cock strokes with her hand. Fuck this feels incredible! I wrench my lips from hers and we stare at each other as I pleasure myself with her soft warm hand. It's not that long before I feel my balls spasming and my sperms shooting out of my dick. Her laughter brings me back from my stupor.

"What's rib-tickling now."

"You're so ugly and scary when you reach your high." She mimics my voice on the last two words.

"Uyaphapha yaz!" (You are forward!)

"Ngathi uyafa!" (It's like you're dying!) she says and we both crack up.

“Your cumming face is for scaring kids.”

We are cackling even harder. She just makes my day without even trying hard. Me love this girl bafethu! I roll out of bed and go to the lounge where I warm up water with the kettle. Once the water is warm enough I take it and go back to my bedroom to wet my towel with the warm water.

“Open your legs for me.”

She looks at me shyly before opening her legs. I wipe her pussy and my cum on her hand before wiping my dick. We cuddled on the bed after I have hanged the towel.

“How was your first cum.”

She giggles softly, there's this thing she's doing with her fingers on my chest and it's waking up Khabangobe.

“It was...I’m still going to invert the right word to describe it and comeback to you.”

“Okay Miss tongue virginity breaker.” I say laughing and she punches me on my chest.

“Indoda ayishaywa Yeyeye.” I joke and now it’s her turn to laugh.

“I have to go back before I find my dad’s store empty.”

“No one will steal in a broad daylight baby.”

“Heee baby you don’t know Isisa wena. That girl takes and takes but no return. She owes me R1000 now.”

I laugh oh ay eyabangani angiyingeni but she’s not going anywhere I’m still enjoying her company. It’s been so long since we’ve been together. It’s around 5pm when I decide to take her back to the store and I really had an amazing day with her.

“Buti can we talk,” Ndondoloza says just as I enter my house.

“Sure.”

We both get in and settle down on the couch then I look at her expectantly.

“I want to apologize for being a thorn in your relationship with Mbewenhle.”

“It’s okay but stay away from boys because they’re driving you crazy do you hear me.”

She nods her head as she looks down, twiddling her fingers.

“Can I ask you something?”

“Yes what is it?”

“What did you mean when you said to dad your child you say?”

I swallow a thick lump in my throat.

“I don’t even remember saying that sis I was angry and blubbering nonsense.”

She looks up at me as if she’s studying me. I take her hand in mine and squeeze it.

“Why are you asking?”

“I have been thinking about it and it sounded like...I don’t know...argh you know what it’s okay. I’m being crazy.”

I heave a sigh and pull her closer to my chest.

.....

I can't help a smile that breaks across my face when I look at her holding my kid in her arms with so much care like it's a baby. Nurturing is in her blood I see.

"Why are you looking at me like that?"

"You're going to be a good mother."

"You think so?"

"I don't think so I know so."

"How do you know that?"

"Nurturing is in your blood."

"Isn't it a woman's job to nurture?"

“It is but there are women who fail to nurture.”

“True hey.”

The stupid goat gave birth to multiples and left the kids on top of the mountain. We stroll down the mountain while conversing about anything and nothing and laughing. I always enjoy every second with her. It's a Saturday and she has to go prepare for her virginity testing.

“Thank you for accompanying me.”

“Don't mention it baby.”

“Can I get a kiss.”

She cares a lot about what people say so she looks around first and once she's satisfied there's no one she kisses me.

“I love you.”

“I love you too.”

I take the kid from her and watch her walk away for a minute before going to home as well. Mom meets me half way as I walk to the goats' kraal.

“It was you right?” She whispers and I look at her perplexed.

“What are you taking about?”

She looks at her behind as if she's searching for something then leans closer to my ear.

“You are the one who killed Bhekisisa.”

“What? He's dead?”

“Muzikayise I'm not your fool.”

“Serious mama I don’t know what you are talking about. Uncle Bhekisisa is dead?”

“Yes he was found in Tugela river without eyes.”

“That’s bad.”

“Muzikayise, he just disappeared out of the blue. It’s not like him to miss the ceremony. Please tell me it’s not you who did this.”

“It’s not me mama how do you think of me? You think I’m a murderer?”

“No my boy it’s just that...I’m sorry.”

“I was going to talk to him mama about...you know I guess his death is a blessing in disguise. Now you are free.”

“True but I never wanted him dead.”

“It is what it is.”

Dad is the one that taught me to protect my family from everything that is menacing to destroy it and to me that includes Bhekisisa. I had do it and I hope if ever this comes out dad will forgive me.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

Durban was fun, Uthandiwe and Zipho showed me the kind of fun that I mostly watch in TV and it was nice but I cannot compare it with ukhlohlwa kwezintombi (virginity testing). See the fun we have here is beyond the word fun.

Khathazile starts a song as she goes to the front then picks me to challenge her. Isisa and I look at each other and giggle. I see that she’s still sore about our encounter on Tuesday. Let me

win this challenge then apologize to her. I shouldn't have took out my frustrations on her.

♪♪Qhude manikiniki

(Ziyeke, ziyেকেle zibulalane)

Ziyেকেle zibulalane

(Ziyeke, ziyেকেle zibulalane)

Qhude manikiniki

(Ziyeke

ziyেকেle zibulalane)

Ziyেকেle zibulalane

(Ziyeke, ziyেকেle zibulalane)♪♪

The maidens are singing and clapping hands while Khathazile and I are challenging each other ngokugida (doing Zulu dance). Not to blow my own horn but I'm really a great Zulu dancer. They all know I even come up with some moves by mixing them up with Amapiano and Gqomu dance moves. That's one of the things Mvelonhle and I took after our father.

At 10pm we are called inside our house. Yes Gogo Mthombeni built the house to accommodate her maidens. She's the old woman that tests our virginity and her assistant is Isisa's mom. Once we have settled down plates start rolling in and we scream with cheer. We usually eat supper at 8:30pm, they started cooking late today. I'm so hungry I could eat the whole cow.

"Look girl I'm sorry about Tuesday I was having a bad day and I took out my frustrations on you." I say to Khathazile. I sat next to her on purpose because I wanted us to talk.

"Uthe nginuka inkununu Mbewenhle."

Isisa laughs and I nudge her with my elbow.

"Ngiyaxolisa njena. Please forgive me" (I'm sorry.)

"I will forgive you on one condition."

"Okay I'm listening."

“Give me Muzikayise.”

“Rather you stay angry at me until you die sis.” I say and all three of us laugh.

“Just kidding but can you teach me your moves.” Khathazile

“No problem girl.”

Once we are done eating supper we continue with singing and dancing until midnight then we retire to sleep. The next day we wake up at 5am and take our toiletries then head to the river to bath. This is the part I hate more than anything. I hate bathing with cold water and now that winter season has started, bathing with cold water is one daunting task ever.

“Stop sulking kanti when will you get used to bath with cold water?” Isisa asks and I shoot her a dead stare. She raises up her hands in surrender. I’m going to have a full splash at home, here I’m washing the important parts of my body only.

♪♪Amatshitshi ayatelebhela

(Ayishaya kancane)

Ayatelebhela

(Ayishaya kancane)

Ayatelebelaaa

(Ayishaya kancane amatshitshi ayatelebhela)♪♪

Now we are going back to the Mthombeni household and they are singing. I spot Muzikayise a bit far herding his goats.

“Nanguya usbali!” (Here’s the brother in law!) Khathazile says and they all start calling out for him “sbaliii!” like really now. Bayaphapha laba! The annoying thing is the more I reprimand them it’s the more they get worse. Isisa tickles me trying to snap me out of my foul mood until I crack up.

“Umaqondana wami loya.” I begin singing and they join me.

♪♪(Umaqondana wakho loya)

Ubaba wezingane zami loya

( Ubaba wezingane zakho loya)

Uma-lovistooooo

(Your love, your love, your lovistoo)

Uma-lovistooooo

(Your love, your love, your lovistoo)♪♪

They just know how to make me feel better now we are all singing from one song to the other until we are at Mthombeni homestead where Gogo and Isisa's mom are already waiting for us. As usual they start with the ones who are on their periods first and when it's our turn I'm the first to go inside. The tongue incident comes to my mind and I freeze on the door.

"Come MaQwabe." Gogo Mthombeni says and gives me her 4 teeth smile. Yes she's that old and has been doing this since forever.

The way Kayise's tongue is so long I'm still not convinced that it can't break a virginity heey ziyenzeka izinto langaphandle! I walk closer to her and lie on the mat before her then open my legs wide for her. My heart wants to jump out of my mouth as she fiddles with my vagina.

"Sibonge ntombi," (Thank you girl) she says patting my thigh. Relief surges through me as I sit on my butt. She places her hand on my chest and feels my heart calling out for dudu.

"Why are you nervous? Have you been naughty MaQwabe?"

God what a question.

"No Gogo."

She looks at me but I shift my eyes from her gaze.

"That boy can't force himself into your father's kraal without doing right by you. If he's putting you under pressure tell me I will summon him right in this moment and tell him."

“No he’s not gogo.”

“Good but we can’t shy away from the truth that you are both humans and you are in a relationship so you will definitely be tempted. Ukusoma ( non penetrative thigh sex) is the way my grandchild”

I listen to her as she enlightens me about ukusoma. It’s a practice to ensure that young people still gratify their physical needs in love relationships, but without having penetrative sex. During ukusoma, the young female would keep her thighs together, cross her legs and the young man pushes his penis in between the female’s thighs. In that way, sex it’s safer as the young man would not penetrate the vagina but she warns us to be careful of the sperms as they might swim through and impregnate me.

.....

“Most of these kids their parents don’t have money to buy them Xmas clothes so I want to save the money for them so that we can buy Xmas clothes for them.”

“Oh baby bro that’s so sweet.”

“Yeah.”

He heaves a sigh

“Then why it’s seems like you are not happy with your decision?”

“I want a phone sis. I’m the only one in my squad who doesn’t got one yet my father is considered as someone who has money.”

“Buy the phone I will see what I can do with the Xmas clothes for the kids. It’s August I still got time.”

Mvelonhle and his kids that he teaches indlamu have been hired by the Zikalalas, one of the homestead around the village. They're hosting a ceremony (bakhuphula ubaba wekhaya). The maidens are hired as well.

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to steal 1 grand each month from the sales we make at the store." I say and we both burst into laughter.

"Father won't even notice ukungafundi Jesu!"

"You see why I don't want you to drop out?"

"Yeah I see."

"Good."

I think 5 grand will be enough to buy one outfit per child for Xmas but if it's not Sidwaba Siluthuli will have to add more. The

man is living to make me happy all the time. I have grown to love him more than I did three months back. He's proving to be the perfect man I could ever ask for. I love that whenever he's wrong he corrects himself and our communication has improved. I ain't perfect either and I do correct myself as well. We are both committed and invested in this relationship to make it work no matter what.

"We are going now." I say to mama who's sitting on the sofa stuffing herself with vetkoeks.

She can eat those the whole day and not mind. Her bump is showing now and dad is super happy. The man is treating her like a glass that would break if it fall. They seem to be at the happy place but I'm still wondering who the father is.

"Please make juice for me before you go."

Can she give birth already she is sending me here and there none stop. I'm tired now yhooh. I mumble my complaints as I walk to the kitchen. Mango juice is her favorite lately. I mix one with water in a jug and take the tray to her in the lounge.

“Thank you my baby.”

“Goodbye.” I say and rush out quickly but I hear her calling me the moment I step outside. I swear uzondiswa mina she never asks anyone except me to do things for her. The next thing she will ask me is to bath her I tell you.

“Mother is calling you.” Mvelonhle

“Hayi you know she wont stop if I don’t run away from her.”

We both laugh. I help him carry the drum then we make our way to the Zikalala homestead. It’s quite a distance but we don’t feel it as we are conversing. Wow the whole village is here people love meat or is it alcohol? Lonhle’s boys spot him and they run to us to carry the drum. They’re already wearing their attire. I spot Isisa and the maidens and make my way to them. We are also into our imvunulo.

“Thank God you are here, we are about to start.” They say relieved that I’m here.

Don’t be surprised I did say that I’ve got killer moves. They call us to the center and we do our thing. The ululations fill the entire Zikalala homestead. I spot my man in the crowd and it’s actually his first time seeing me doing my thing. The smile on his face Gaaad! Why is he smiling in front of phambi kwabantu with a ugly smile like this.

This guy comes forward and places a R100 note on my feet as I’m busy doing my Zulu dance. It’s not that long before Muzikayise comes forward as well and puts a fixed R200 note on my feet. I try to fight the urge to not look at the guy but fail dismissally. He’s laughing hard that he’s throwing his head at the back.

Once we are done Mvelonhle and his boys take over and damn! He really trained these boys. It’s such a heartwarming sight and makes me proud to be a Zulu. If I was an American I’d scream loudly and say “eyhoo that’s my lil brother!” but I’m a Zulu girl so I ululate louder then everyone.

The stick fighters follows after Lonhle with his boys. The R100 note guy is one of the stick fighters and his opponent is some guy that I'm also unfamiliar with.

They both tap each other's shield and begin their fight. Back in the days stick fighting was used during Shaka's reign to train young men for war and self defense but now stick fighting is a form of sport that is practiced in traditional gatherings.

I'm so mesmerized by this R100 note guy. The way he's shielding himself with ibhoko then strike with induku to his opponent. Damn his fighting styles are unpredictable and impressive. The crowd is rooting for him and I'm internally rooting for him as well.

"Who is that guy?" I ask this girl next to me.

"Manelisi Maphumulo"

Shuu I'm satisfied just by looking at him. Ikhona nayi insizwa madoda! Muzikayise goes to the front once their fight is over...no please don't tell me that he's going to challenge him I don't want him to embarrass himself.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

They both tap each other's shield to show that this is a fair fight. The looks they give each other sends a cold rush in my intestines. Their fight begins and the noise of cheer fills the Zikalala homestead. I don't want Kayise to embarrass himself in front of these people but I also don't want him to hurt this guy. I won't forget that Siyabonga became mute after he punched him. I know my man, this is not a fair fight to him. He's trying to prove a point and I don't like this at all.

He's not bad at all, in fact he's good but Manelisi is phenomenal. Stick fighting is a skill to him. You can't help but marvel at his unpredictable fighting styles. I find myself forgetting that this guy is competing with my man and root for him then my conscious would chastise me. Jizas!

The crowd that is rooting for Manelisi erupts into a dissatisfaction noise when Kayise hits him on the head. Now he's not fighting fair. There are rules and one of them is that

they're not supposed to hit each other on the head. God what is he doing now? I hope Manelisi is not injured.

"This yellow guy is not fighting fair. If he can't take the heat he should accept defeat!" The girl I ask who's the guy is says next to me. I swallow a thick lump in my throat. I can't even defend him because I know that she's right about fighting fair. The heat I'm not sure, so far he's doing so well. I didn't know he knows stick fighting.

God it's seems like I spoke too soon, the guy is attacking and striking him, not giving him a chance to strike back that he falls on the grass. He doesn't stop even when he's down which is wrong. The other rule is that a downed opponent cannot be hit. Why is hitting my man while he's down. I find myself walking to the center but Isisa pulls me back.

"No don't."

I heave a sigh. Induna pulls Manelisi back and the fight stops. Kayise gets up from the ground and walks straight to his car. I look at Isisa and she lets go of my hand then I quickly follow

Kayise. Just as he's about to drive away I get in his car and close the door.

"Yeyeye what are you doing here?" He says looking at me and I gasp at his sight. He's red and being light skinned is not doing him justice. His bottom lip is swollen and bleeding.

"I'm going with you."

"Go back to your friends baby I'm okay."

"No drive off I'm not going to enjoy here knowing that you are hurt."

"I'm not hurt."

"Your lip..."

"That's nothing go enjoy with other kids."

“I rather be with you.”

He gives me a faint smile and kisses my forehead then drives off. I can tell that he’s angry the way grabbing hard on the steering wheel and how his jaw are clenching every now and then.

“You did great hey.”

“Great? Are you serious right now or you being your crazy self? If so don’t Mbewenhle this is not the right time for your craziness!”

Ouch now that stings. I wasn’t trying to mock him or being “my crazy self” whatever that means. He really was great I give him 8/10. I decide to shut my pap hole until we arrive at his home. Today he’s not even opening the car door for me but walks straight to his house and leaves me behind.

Guess what? His mom is sitting under the tree and making a grass mat. I always make sure that they never see me when I'm here because they might have gave us their blessings and approved our relationship but that doesn't mean we shouldn't respect them. Things have to be done the right way first before I can parade the Maseko homestead with pride for now I'm still a girlfriend not a daughter in law. I heave a sigh and step out of the car then go to greet mama.

"Sawbona mama." (Greetings mama) I say bowing down my head.

"Hawu yaz ngithi uhamba yedwa uMuzi. How are you my child."  
(...I thought Muzi is alone..)

"I'm okay mama and yourself?"

"I'm fine as well sis. I haven't seen you for a while. I don't like that when you are here you don't come to greet me."

"I'm sorry mama."

“I told you to feel free MaQwabe. You are my future daughter in law. Don’t hide from me please.”

“I won’t mama.”

“Do you promise?”

Now she’s pushing it but do I have a choice?

“Yes mama I promise.”

“Is everything okay?”

“Yes mama.”

“Are you sure? I know my son wouldn’t have left you in the car if everything is okay. Something might have happened.”

“It’s not something we can’t handle.”

She smiles and nods her head before allowing me to go to Kayise’s house. I find him lying on the bed skyward still fully clothed. I heave a sigh and take some ice cubes in the fridge then wrap them in his face cloth. I climb on the bed next to him and place the face cloth on his swollen lip. He winces with pain.

“I’m sorry.”

I continue with the task in silence. The only thing I can hear is his loud breathing. It always get like this when he’s angry. Once I’m done I discard the ice cubes in the dish and hang his face cloth. I take his cigarette and light it then give him. See in these months we have been together I have learnt a lot about him. If it’s not me who can calm him down it’s definitely a smoke. He chuckles and sits on his butt, leaning against the headboard before taking his cigarette and ashtray.

“I’m sorry for taking my anger on you.”

“It’s okay I understand but I wasn’t trying to mock you baby, you were really amazing.”

“You’re saying this to make me happy

” he says and breathes out the smoke through his nostrils.

“No I’m being for real.”

“He beat me and he’s just a boy that what annoys me the most Yeyeye!”

“It was just a game baby don’t take it too personal.”

“Oh hell no he made it personal the moment he gave you his filthy R100 note. Don’t use that money futhi lethla la ngizoshidaba ngayo.” (...give it here I will wipe my ass with it.)

I laugh but the moment I notice his serious face I stop laughing and take out the money underneath my bangles on my wrist then give him the R100 note.

“Plus I need to release my bowels right in this moment.” He gets up and walks out leaving me stunned to speak. Come on who wipe isghrma with money while the cost of living is this high?

☆ Isisa ☆

There's nothing I hate then washing dishes, imagine washing dishes that were used by the whole village. I'm not exaggerating this is how it's done in this village. They don't mind to bring the whole family including their cats and dogs in a ceremony. No it's not deemed wrong or anything instead people who are hosting a ceremony love it when there are so many people.

We are done eating, now we are washing the dishes as per mom's demand. Sometimes she annoys me. These people hired us to entertain them now we are the ones who are washing dishes for them what msunery is this? Futhi mina I want my money on my hand. This thing of saving the money into the

maidens bank account and use it when we are going to the reed dance it's not on for me. Next month it's my man's birthday I have to buy him something but with what? I also don't know.

"Girls I want my share of money who's with me?" They all laugh. I see they think I'm joking.

"Don't laugh I'm serious."

"I also need some money to buy Xmas clothes." Khathazile

"Awusemdala nje for Xmas clothes," (You're too old...) Nelisiwe says and they burst into laughter.

"Hayi kahle ukuphapha Nelisiwe. Xmas clothes have no age restrictions and Khathazile is still young." (Stop being forward...)

Khathazile is our baby, she's the youngest out of all of us. 17 years old and such an adorable girl hence I was surprised when

Mbewu was mean to her. I knew that moment that something is not right with her.

“I was just kidding Isisa.”

“Nibobheka izinto enidlala ngazo.” (Watch what you play with.)

“Well talk to your mother then.” Pink.

If that was possible I would have done it already. Mom akasipetuli shame hence I need their back up for this.

“She won’t listen to me we have to tell her all of us. Organize a meeting and address her and gogo.”

We all agree to do that and pray that it would work.

.....

The vibration of my phone wakes me up from my deep slumber. I answer the phone without checking who's calling.

"Mmh."

"I'm outside come out."

I pull my phone away from my ear and look at the time. It's midnight and I can hear that he's drunk because of his slurry speech.

"It's late Thuthuka."

"Late for who? Come now before I knock on the door and ask you from your mother."

I wouldn't put that past him especially when he's drunk. Mama doesn't know that I'm dating, it's my sister only who knows.

“I’m coming.”

I hang up and turn the light on then freshen up quickly before going to him. He attacks me with a kiss the moment I get to him.

“Why you didn’t bring your bag we are going home.”

“I didn’t know you should’ve told me.”

“It’s doesn’t matter you will wear my clothes and use my toiletries. Get inside.”

“Can you drive drunk like this?”

He’s driving Muzikayise’s car.

“Get inside I will show you.”

I heave a sigh and gets inside the car. It takes him forever to go to his side. God I don't trust him with my life when he's drunk like this. He starts the car and we drive to his home.

Surprisingly he's driving perfectly and we arrive to his home unharmed. Muzi and him are the only males who have their rooms separated from the main house. Muzi is a two roomed house but Thuthuka's is a spacious one room.

Once again when we get into his room he attacks me with a kiss and the taste of alcohol in his mouth makes the kiss erotic. He pushes me on the bed and I fall on top of it then he gets on top of me attacking my lips hungrily. When he starts to undress me I stop him.

"Thuthuka...."

"I need you so bad baby."

"You know I can't."

"Please I will just put the tip."

“Don’t do this to me please.”

“Don’t you love me?”

“Of course I love you Thuthuka.”

“Then give me please. I can’t take this wait anymore.  
Ngiyakucela.” (...please.)

God the pressure he’s been putting on me lately is too much. Ever since I turned 21 last month he wants me so badly. I won’t lie and say I’m not tempted but I can’t, not until my umemelo ceremony which is next year February.

“Madlokovu please just be patient with me.”

“Mxm!”

He gets up from me and almost fall as he stumbles. That mxm stings like hell. I watch him as takes off his clothes. His dick is standing proudly and so hard. He switches off the light and gets into bed. I sigh and take off my clothes as well then join him.

“Ungasondeli nje kimi. I don’t want to be charged for rape.”  
(Don’t get close to me...)

“You are being unfair Thuthuka. You knew what you’re signing up for the day you started dating me.”

“Of course I knew Isisa and I’m not forcing you to sleep with me but we can do oral sex. Why don’t you ask Mbewenhle to tell you more about it.”

“Mbewenhle and Muzi do oral sex because they trust each other wena you want to trick me into sleeping with you hence I don’t sleep over anymore. I don’t understand why do we always have to compare our relationship with theirs!”

He doesn't responds but turns to the other side, giving me his back. Mxm I can't believe this is what I woke up for! I would be dreaming about lottery numbers right now not this nonsense!

I don't know when did I fall asleep but I'm woken up by loud banging on the door. At first I thought it's a dream but the banging is persistent. I roll out of bed and get dressed quickly then go open the door. It's Muzi.

"Where is he?"

He pushes his way in and walks to the bed where he grabs a sleepy naked Thuthuka from the bed then presses him on the wall. What the hell is going on?

"Malumes what the fuck?"

"What the fuck ukunuka wena! Why did you send my woman's nudes to your phone huh?"

Huh? Thuthuka stutters.

“You’re stuttering now? I asked why did you send my woman’s nudes to your phone! Those pictures are very private! Okay let’s wait a minute about those pictures and the name of the folder you saved them in and talk about the video. How do you have a video of my woman bathing in my bedroom Thuthuka!”

“It’s not what you think Malumes.”

“Of course it’s not what I think boy because you are going to tell me!”

“I’m sorry malume...”

“Not yet boy...not yet!”

He grabs him out of the door and throws him into the car as naked as he is and gets inside then drives away. I’m left shocked.

☆ Isisa ☆

They leave me standing on the door not knowing what to do next. My mind is a surging perplexity I need some clarity to clear the fog in my brain. It's the morning and I'm still here. My mom is going to rake the whole yard with my ass. I take my phone and wear my sandals then run out. Thanks the heavens no one sees me. I'm trying to piece together the puzzle as I'm making my walk of shame. How can he have my bestie's nudes in his phone?

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"Friend sorry to wake you up."

“No problem friend. Are you okay.”

“Yes...No...I don't know. I slept at Thuthuka's place and overslept mama will kill me. Can I come to you and I would pretend as if I was fetching water.”

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Wow.

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“Ngiyaxolisa Isisa!” (I’m sorry Isisa!) She screams after me but I continue with my walk. The pain of her betrayal is raw. It’s like my heart is bare

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☆ Mbewenhle ☆

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“What’s wrong?” I hear mama’s voice behind me and wipe my tears quickly then turn to her with a forged smile.

“Nothing mama.”

“I thought I heard voices. Isisa wasn’t here?”

“Yes she was here to fetch water.” My voice is shaky and I’m five to from breaking down.

“Mbewenhle is everything okay?” The concern in my mom’s voice compels my tears to come out.

“Eh mama.” (Yes Mama)

“Kwenjenjani mtanami khuluma nami.” (What’s wrong my baby talk to me)

I cover my face with my hands and sob. Mama takes me to the house and we settle on the couch.

“Sssh it’s okay. Whatever it is we would sort it out don’t cry.”

She has me wrapped in her arms as I drench her pinafore with my tears and snot. We can never sort this out. How will I unbreak my best friend's heart? I have never seen her hurt this much and being the reason for her pain breaks my own heart.

"Talk to me baby."

"I messed up mama and Isisa will never forgive me."

"There's no such thing. Friends do fight but they forgive each other especially if the wrong one acknowledge her wrongness and rectify her actions."

"Oh mama how I wish it was that easy. I betrayed her in the most cruel way and now she's broken because of me."

I tell her nothing but the truth and she's breathing fire.

"Muzikayise's mom knows that you kissed her grandson but you're dating her son! Amahlazo osifaka kuwo Mbewenhle!"  
(You are embarrassing us Mbewenhle!)

“I didn’t kiss him mama he kissed me. You can’t blame me for what he did.”

“If you made it clear to him that you’re not into him from the first place he wouldn’t be so comfortable to kiss you Mbewenhle! It seems like you never draw a line that these boys won’t jump. You are not even their daughter in law already you are embarrassing us ay sies maan awuziphathe kahle!” (...sies maan behave yourself!)

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“Where are you going? Your father is about to wake up now he has to find his bath water and breakfast ready for him.”

I swear we are both married to your husband!

“Uthini?” (What did you say?)

Oh no did I say that loud?

“Don’t worry mama by the time dad wake up everything will be ready.”

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“Don’t lie to me Mbewu. What did he do huh? Did he hurt you? Ngiyomfaka lembazo ekhanda njengamanje!”

“Kabha Mvelonhle, Dad is going to wake up any moment from now.” (Chop the woods...)

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"She said she's not going to the forest you can go." Isisa's little brother, Sboniso says. I let out a sad sigh.

"Please tell her to answer my calls or respond to my messages."

"Okay."

I turn and make my way to the forest with a heavy heart. That girl means so much to me I don't know what it will become of me without her but I won't give up on our friendship.

☆ Muzikayise ☆

I'm not sure where am I driving to but I know the moment I stop the car I won't be hold responsible for what I will do. The rage is surging through my body like a deathly poison and begging for a release but I don't want to touch him because I know that I will kill him.

"I'm sorry malumes," he says with a shaky voice. The fear in his eyes is visible. He knows very well that I don't play especially when it comes to my woman!

"Why Thuthuka huh? What are your intentions of sending my woman's nudes to your phone and take a video of my woman while bathing?"

“I’m sorry...”

“Hey wena maan stop saying sorry give me the damn reason why!”

“She’s the one malumes.”

“What did you say?”

“She’s that girl I told you about. The one that you knew how badly I wanted. The one I was courting for a year and months.”

What? I pull over on the other side of the road and turn around to look at him at the back seat.

“I’m sorry malumes...”

“Why you didn’t tell me Thuthuka?”

“It’s not like it was going to make any difference. You and I know that you manipulated the situation so tell me how was I going to tell you when you already asked her parents her hand in marriage?”

Now it makes sense how sore he was after Mbewenhle and I started dating and I thought it’s because I won the bet. The threat that if ever I break her heart, he will show me the side I don’t know about him. The way he loses it when there’s something happening to her. Zimiphi’s incident, he literally cried when he thought it’s her who died. It takes so much for him to cry. The day she went missing he was going crazy and wanted to search her but he was supposed to assist dad with the ceremony preparations since I was also not there. Everything makes sense now and I can’t believe that I didn’t think of this.

“You were supposed to tell me Thuthuka I would’ve backed off!”

“Really? Were you going to back off?”

Would've I?

"I thought as much!"

"You are like my brother Thuthuka of course I would've backed off for you to have your girl. I knew that she meant so much to you. Keeping quiet about this didn't make the situation any better because you still love her!"

"She loves you not me. It took her a second to agree to give you her heart."

"So all this time when you were talking about a competition you literally meant you?"

"She told me straight to my face that she wanted a man not a boy so no I wasn't talking about myself but Siyabongas out there."

I didn't expect this at all I don't even know how to handle this situation now I'm numb.

“Then why are you still lusting over her now when she’s mine? How dare you disrespect me like this by taking her nudes in my phone let alone taking a video of her bathing! Uyangidelela Thuthuka!”

“I’m sorry I couldn’t help myself...”

“You couldn’t help yourself? Uyanya wena!”

I start the car and drive off. Once we are at Dundee Mall I pull over.

“Get out!”

“Malumes please don’t do this to me. This is me your nephew we can’t let a girl come between us.”

“You didn’t think of that when you took a video of her! I want you to go to shop by shop.”

“Malumes...”

I punch his mouth before he says anything further. He’s fueling my anger nx!

“I said out!”

He opens the car and steps out of the car covering his manhood with his hand. I step out of the car as well and go to his side then kick his butt.

“Remove your hand on your manhood!”

“Malumes please I’m begging you. Don’t humiliate me like this. I could get arrested for public indecency”

I pretend to pull out my gun from my behind and within a second he walks away. People are looking at him and laughing, some are taking his pictures and videos of him.

☆ Isisa ☆

They leave me standing on the door not knowing what to do next. My mind is a surging perplexity I need some clarity to clear the fog in my brain. It's the morning and I'm still here. My mom is going to rake the whole yard with my ass. I take my phone and wear my sandals then run out. Thanks the heavens no one sees me. I'm trying to piece together the puzzle as I'm making my walk of shame. How can he have my bestie's nudes in his phone?

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☆ Muzikayise ☆

I'm not sure where am I driving to but I know the moment I stop the car I won't be hold responsible for what I will do. The rage is surging through my body like a deathly poison and begging for a release but I don't want to touch him because I know that I will kill him.

"I'm sorry malumes," he says with a shaky voice. The fear in his eyes is visible. He knows very well that I don't play especially when it comes to my woman!

"Why Thuthuka huh? What are your intentions of sending my woman's nudes to your phone and take a video of my woman while bathing?"

“I’m sorry...”

“Hey wena maan stop saying sorry give me the damn reason why!”

“She’s the one malumes.”

“What did you say?”

“She’s that girl I told you about. The one that you knew how badly I wanted. The one I was courting for a year and months.”

What? I pull over on the other side of the road and turn around to look at him at the back seat.

“I’m sorry malumes...”

“Why you didn’t tell me Thuthuka?”

“It’s not like it was going to make any difference. You and I know that you manipulated the situation so tell me how was I going to tell you when you already asked her parents her hand in marriage?”

Now it makes sense how sore he was after Mbewenhle and I started dating and I thought it’s because I won the bet. The threat that if ever I break her heart, he will show me the side I don’t know about him. The way he loses it when there’s something happening to her. Zimiphi’s incident, he literally cried when he thought it’s her who died. It takes so much for him to cry. The day she went missing he was going crazy and wanted to search her but he was supposed to assist dad with the ceremony preparations since I was also not there. Everything makes sense now and I can’t believe that I didn’t think of this.

“You were supposed to tell me Thuthuka I would’ve backed off!”

“Really? Were you going to back off?”

Would've I?

"I thought as much!"

"You are like my brother Thuthuka of course I would've backed off for you to have your girl. I knew that she meant so much to you. Keeping quiet about this didn't make the situation any better because you still love her!"

"She loves you not me. It took her a second to agree to give you her heart."

"So all this time when you were talking about a competition you literally meant you?"

"She told me straight to my face that she wanted a man not a boy so no I wasn't talking about myself but Siyabongas out there."

I didn't expect this at all I don't even know how to handle this situation now I'm numb.

“Then why are you still lusting over her now when she’s mine? How dare you disrespect me like this by taking her nudes in my phone let alone taking a video of her bathing! Uyangidelela Thuthuka!”

“I’m sorry I couldn’t help myself...”

“You couldn’t help yourself? Uyanya wena!”

I start the car and drive off. Once we are at Dundee Mall I pull over.

“Get out!”

“Malumes please don’t do this to me. This is me your nephew we can’t let a girl come between us.”

“You didn’t think of that when you took a video of her! I want you to go to shop by shop.”

“Malumes...”

I punch his mouth before he says anything further. He’s fueling my anger nx!

“I said out!”

He opens the car and steps out of the car covering his manhood with his hand. I step out of the car as well and go to his side then kick his butt.

“Remove your hand on your manhood!”

“Malumes please I’m begging you. Don’t humiliate me like this. I could get arrested for public indecency”

I pretend to pull out my gun from my behind and within a second he walks away. People are looking at him and laughing, some are taking his pictures and videos of him.

## ☆ Muzikayise ☆

I steal a glance at him and he's biting the inside of his cheek, totally far away with thoughts. This escalated quickly then I anticipated. Now we are from the police station. The police arrested him for public indecency so I had to pay a fine for them to release him.

The moment I park my car on the yard I see my elder sister, Nomvula through the windscreen that she's angry. I can tell by the way she's flouncing towards the car that she's breathing fire. I guess Thuthuka is trending on these social media things. The whole family is also out well except my father who's not here.

Thuthuka steps out of the car covering himself with my jacket which was in the car and attempts to walk towards his room but his mom stops him.

“Please tell me that the boy that is trending on social media is not you Thuthuka!!” Nomvula

“No it’s not me it’s my twin brother,” Thuthuka says with a forged smile.

“What’s going on? Muzikayise how can you watch your nephew parade his nakedness in a mall nogal!”

“Now you are asking the right person so let me leave you two to it. I need to get dressed,” he says walking to his room.

The pairs of eyes staring at me with curiosity has me feeling a bit of remorse for how I handled the situation.

“Kwenzakalani Muzi?” (What’s going on Muzi?) The rage in my mom’s voice is so evident and she doesn’t know yet what’s going on. Just as I’m about to reply Thuthuka comes out with his sport bag.

“Wait where are you going now with that bag Thuthu?”  
Nomvula

“I’m going to aunt Xolisile.”

Xolisile is his aunt which he’s very close with. She lives in Standerton and wanted him to live with her after the passing of his father but Thuthuka refused.

“You can’t just up and leave without explaining to me as your mother what’s going on Thuthu.”

“It’s Sunday today mama and public transport is scarce. I don’t have time I need to go.”

“Hey you two stop this and tell us what’s going on!” Mama

“Are you going to tell them malumes or should I?”

“Do they have to know. I mean this is between us boy.”

“Oh now it’s between us but you humiliated me in front of the world.”

“Let’s talk about this...”

“No I don’t want to talk malumes. I opened myself to you and told you the truth. I know what I did is wrong and nothing could ever justify what I did but I would’ve preferred you to kill me then mortify me like that.” The tremor in his voice is the evidence of his vexation.

“Let’s get inside and talk people are watching us now,” Nomthamsanqa says and we all get inside the house and settle on the sofas.

“Muzikayise you’re the elder one explain to me what’s going on.” Mama

I let out a sigh and wipe my imaginary sweat on my forehead then explain to mama what happened.

“Aw Muzikayise why didn’t you come to us instead of embarrassing your nephew like this? I’m so disappointed in you my son.”

“How could you do my son dirty like this Muzi huh? All this pain and humiliation for just a mere a girl!” Nomvula’s shrill voice fills the entire lounge.

“She’s not just a mere girl sis Nomvula...” She interjects.

“You haven’t married that girl Muzikayise! She’s not your wife so she’s a damn mere girl!”

“Sis Nomvula I know that I allowed my wrath to get the better of me but please let’s not include Mbewenhle here and belittle her.”

“I’m glad that you acknowledge that what you did is wrong my brother but let’s not overlook what Thuthuka did. He was so wrong in so many levels how could he do this to his uncle’s girlfriend?” Nomathamsanqa

“I take ownership of my actions Ncane. I was so wrong and I apologized to malumes but he didn’t want to hear it.”

“Thuthuka what did you promised me huh?” Mama

Thuthuka looks down with shame

“I promised you to stay away from her and respect my uncle’s woman.”

“Then what is this?”

“Wait mama you knew about this?” I ask in disbelief

“Yes I know that Thuthuka courted MaQwabe way before you and she also didn’t know that you’re his uncle. We talked about this, the three of us and sorted it out well at least I thought so. I’m defeated honestly.”

“I apologize once again for what I did malumes and I’ve learned a lesson. I disrespected you and Mbewenhle but one thing for sure I didn’t humiliate you nor strip off your manhood. It’s fine though I’m leaving and you don’t have to worry about me harassing your woman. You just made me hate ever crossing my path with hers because if I didn’t I wouldn’t feel the way I feel right now.”

He gets up from the couch and takes his sport bag.

“Don’t go my boy please.” Nomvula

“Mama I need to be away from the eyes of the people of this village. At least in Standerton they don’t know me even if they laugh at me it won’t hurt like it would hurt if I’m here. I love you though, all of you.” With that said he walks out leaving the atmosphere somber and melancholy.

☆ Isisa ☆

I don't know what hurts the most between the fact that she watched me fall in love with someone she knows is into her and that my boyfriend wanted a version of my best friend in me. We have been best friends since we were young to the point that we almost look the same. They say it does happens when people have been together for a long time they end up looking alike. I think in Madlokovu's mind..argh look at me still calling him with his clan when he doesn't deserve it.

Maybe he wanted to manipulate his stupid mind and makes it believe that he's dating her while he's dating me. I don't know if that makes sense hey and forgive me if it doesn't because I'm not going to go any further. My head is throbbing I have been crying none stop and my nose is blocked.

"Isisa!"

"What Sboniso!"

"There's some guy calling you and he gave me money look!"

I glaze at him with boredom as he shows me a R50 note and the smile on his face is so wild as if he won lottery. I understand though that for a 10 year old R50 is a big money especially if you have never owned it before.

“Please come I promised him that I will bring you to him,” my little brother says grabbing my wrist. I heave a sigh and roll out of bed then wear my slippers. I follow behind him. The good thing is mom went to town.

The audacity of this guy! He’s actually standing by the gate. What if mom came out? Sometimes I never understand what’s going on this guy’s head shame.

“Here she is.”

“Thank you boy.”

“Sure sure skhokho.”

Thuthuka chuckles and bumps fist with Sboniso who runs away after that

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probably going to Qwabe's shop to box that money.

"Let's move away here. Our neighbors are nosy they will tell mama."

He nods and we walk away from my home in silence.

"How are you." Eventually he breaks the silence.

"What do you expect."

"I'm sorry and I know how it looks like sthandwa sami. I'm not here to justify my actions but I'm here to ask for your forgiveness. Mbewenhle sent me a long essay giving me a piece of her mind I guess now you know the whole truth. I'm sorry that we both didn't tell you. I want you to know that maybe at first I just wanted to get over Mbewenhle but now I'm deeply in love with you girl. It would be hard for you to believe me I know

considering what I have done. I don't have an excuse for what I did baby and from the deepest of my heart I'm sorry."

"You used me Thuthuka." Tears stream down my cheek but he catches them with his thumbs

"I'm sorry sthandwa sami and I don't want to lose you but I'd understand if you don't anything to do with me anymore. I mean I broke our trust and now whenever you see me with Mbewu your mind will always have these thoughts when we are just having an innocent interaction. I swear baby I'm over her especially after what Muzikayise did to me today he made me regret the day I ever met her and loved her."

"What did he do?"

"You didn't see the video of me naked trending on Facebook?"

"No I don't have data."

“Why you didn’t tell me I would’ve loaded it for you. I always tell you to tell me when you need something. I’m here for you baby to take care of your needs.”

“What video?”

He tells me and his eyes glistens with tears but he doesn’t let them fall. Oh now my heart breaks for him. How could Muzi do this to him. I understand his anger but this was way extreme.

“I’m sorry.”

“Argh it’s fine.”

“So the bag?”

“I’m going to Standerton. I came to ask you to forgive me and to say goodbye.”

My already broken heart sinks to the pit of my stomach.

“You’re leaving?”

“I can’t stay here baby I just need to be away.”

“Thuthuka how can you hurt me like this then leave me?”

“I’m sorry it wasn’t my intention at all. Give me a reason to stay then.”

“I need time to think. This is too much.”

“And I understand my love.”

He twitches his wrist and looks at his wristwatch

“I have to go. Ngiyakuthanda yezwa.” (...I love you)

Gone are those days I used to believe him when he says that. He cups my face in his palms and we share an intense kiss. Why does it feel like it's a goodbye kiss for good, like I will never see him again?

☆ Manelisi ☆

The pain on the side of my head is throbbing and this sun is scorching. One would disagree that it was a cold morning today and somehow I thought it will rain.

“Hayi ntomb mbovu!!”

I run after the calf, this one is stubborn and chaotic. It always feels like she's 10 cows in one but I wouldn't trade her for anything together with her mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters.

Bab Mthiyane, the owner of these cattle thinks I'm insane. I mean what kind of a 27 years old guy talking to cattle like

they're humans. To him It's no different from talking alone but to me it's not like that. These cows are like my friends. They're the only living thing that never look at me with pity, judgmental or disgust look.

I hit the ground with my long whip and whistle as I shepherd the cattle to the river. Once I get to the river I decide to rest a bit while the cows are drinking water. I find a shade under a big rock where there's no water and lie down skyward. I feel dizzy I don't know if it's because of the fact that I last ate at the ceremony yesterday or it's because of this excruciating wound on the side of my head.

It serves you right! Uyistapura angithi wena? Mr throwing hundred note to girls. I groan in pain as my conscious mock me. I don't regret giving her the money the thing is it was my last R100 note and there's nothing at home. I'm only waiting for Bab Mthiyane to come back from Durban and pay me this month's salary, I'm his herd boy.

I was smitten by her moves. I loved how she mixed Zulu dance and amapiano dance moves together and created a bomb Zulu-Modern dance. It was beautiful to watch such talent. The word

amazing doesn't begin to describe how good she is. That girl is...I wish I had more than just a R100 note. I don't know why that yellow guy had to come for me. I have been told that he's her boyfriend and everyone knows that she's his since she sent the flag to his homestead. Brika nsizwa it's just a flag not a ring nor lobola.

Not that a girl like her would ever look at me that way but I must say such jealousy is not on. It shows that as a man he doesn't trust himself. I'm not surprised though these yellow guys are too soft. He is not bad yena on stick fighting but I'm way better than him. I was taught by the best, Bab Mthiyane and another secret when it comes to stick fighting is your weapons. No one can fight with my weapons except me because they were specially made for me.

I close my eyes and allow my sleep to claim me. My dream is vague and I can't make out of it but there's this sweet scent hovering me. As I'm still trying to understand where's the scent coming from or belong to I hear this sweet voice calling out for me.

"Manelisi!...Manelisi!...Manelisi!"

I blink my eyes open and they're met by this beauty looking at me with so much worry. I swear I have seen this face before.

"Hey are you okay? You're bleeding."

I groan as I sit up and touch my throbbing wound. My hand comes back stained with blood.

"I'm fine."

"You don't look fine to me Manelisi."

Shidi maan the way my name rolls out of her lips has me feeling mushy.

"How do you know my name?"

I can't help but notice the beats my heart skips at her gaze locking on mine.

"Your wound looks horrible did you go to the clinic though?"

"It will heal don't worry."

"It's bleeding. Come get up and let's go to the clinic."

"Why do you care?"

"I don't care."

Ouch why does that hurts? I mean of course she doesn't know me why would she care.

"He wasn't supposed to beat you up like that as much as you weren't supposed to beat him like that."

“He started it!” I retort

She heaves a sigh and stretches out her hand for me. I look at it for a second then take it. The jolt of electricity shoots throughout my whole body and she instantly retracts it as if I’m burning her.

I get up but I don’t want to go to the clinic. I tell her as much but she insists that we go to the clinic. We hide her bunch of wood so that no one takes it with my whip and go to the clinic.

“So what can I call you ntokazi?”

“You can call me by anything you like.”

“Okay I will call you Jamludi.”

She stops on her tracks and looks at me laughing. Yhoo muhle umtanabantu! I could listen to her laughing all day.

“That’s my dad’s cows name man come on!”

I laugh as well

“You are the one who said I must call you with anything.”

“Not a cow’s name though!”

“Okay dombolo lami”

She giggles softly and we continue walking side by side. The sides of our bodies keep touching and that sends warm feeling through my body. Thank God the queue is not that long. Half and hour later it’s my turn and the nurse yells at me that I should’ve came yesterday after I got hurt. She cleans my wound before wrapping a bandage on my head then gives me my medication. I thank her profusely and leave.

“What did they say?”

“The nurse shouted me I was supposed to come yesterday after I got hurt but they gave me medication. So I will be better thank you for forcing me to come here dombolo lami.”

Oh her smile makes a guy like me who knows very well that he doesn’t stand a chance to wonder how does it feel to call this beauty “YOURS”

## ☆ Muzikayise ☆

There's nothing I detest then seeing her crying but I need to understand why she never told me. Maybe if she told me, I would've confronted Thuthuka and we would've sorted this out like brothers. No I'm not blaming her for my outburst but I hate that there was something she's keeping from me.

"I'm sorry Muzikayise. I thought all of this is over okay."

"I hear you Mbewenhle but I want to know why you didn't tell me? If you can hide something like this it makes me wonder what else are you hiding from me?"

"I swear there's nothing I'm hiding," she says wiping her tears but they keep falling.

"Did he ever tried something funny to you while you are with me?"

“No he didn’t.”

“Look at me when I’m talking to you please.”

She looks up at me and I can’t penetrate through her beautiful sparkling eyes. I will have to trust her word I mean she has never lied to me.

“I don’t like secrets between us Yeyeye let it be the last time you keep something from me okay?”

She nods her head and I wipe her tears before kissing her.

“I love you my tongue virginity breaker.”

Oh how I miss hearing her sweet giggles and I love it even more when I’m the one who’s responsible for those sweet giggles.

“Uyaphapha.” (You’re forward)

I giggle and reach out for my phone that is ringing. It’s an insurance company call. I have been telling these people that I don’t want insurance but they always call me. I was expecting Thuthuka’s call but he hasn’t called since he left yesterday. Sadness washes over me like cold waves. I truly regret what I did.

“What’s wrong?”

“I hate what’s going on between me and Thuthuka.”

“I’m sorry give him time I’m sure he will come around but I must say you really disappointed me.”

“Please not you too. I feel really bad already. I can have the world judging me but not you please. Soothe my aching heart please.”

“I’m sorry but I have to tell you the truth baby and I’m scared that if you can do something like that to your nephew what would you do to me if I ever do you dirty.”

Now that cuts deeper. Am I that bad?

“You make feel like ngiyikunzi kasathane Yeyeye.” ( ...Im a cruel Satan.)

“No baby you’re not just check yourself okay. Learn how to control your anger. Never react while you’re angry because at the end of the day you’re a human rather you take a walk or drive to calm yourself first before tackling whatever may be the issue. I also feel bad that I’m the reason you and your nephew are not getting along now. I hope you guys won’t let this destroy your brotherhood. I love you though you’re my perfect imperfect strabismus eyed man,” she seals her beautiful speech with a kiss that sends a twinge to my member.

.....

This place is beautiful and serene, for some obscure reason the quacking sound of the ducks in the lake which is just a few feet away from us is mollifying. I'm lying skyward on the picnic blanket and she's lying on her stomach probing her upper body with her elbows next to me. Nothing makes my day like spending quality time with her. The need to be always by her side is the reason I won't waste anytime. The day after her umemulo I'm sending my uncle's to the Qwabes. February we are getting married.

"Kayise!"

"Baby"

"Where are you I'm talking alone now."

"I'm thinking about us."

"What about us?"

“The day after your umemulo I’m sending my uncle’s. February I want us to get married.”

“You’re not wasting any time Mr

” she says shoving the chocolate into my mouth.

“Are you complaining Ms?”

“Oh no I also can’t wait to be Mrs Maseko. Well since we are talking about marriage and all let me show you something.”

She reaches for her duffle bag and takes out her phone then shows me a mansion on her phone after going through it for a second.

“This house is beautiful baby.”

“Beautiful? Come on sthandwa this mansion is opulent.”

“That’s true baby but I’m not sure I get where you are going with this?”

She squints her eyes making a puppy face, looking so cute.

“It would be amazing to grow our family in this mansion don’t you think.”

I look at her confused.

“Kayise you can be slow at times when you want. I’m sure an owner of two farms can afford this house.”

This moment right now makes me realize that we haven’t had a meticulous talk about our future plans.

“Where is this mansion?”

“Durban.”

I heave a sigh and kiss her cheek.

“Baby don’t tell me that you are expecting us to move out of home after we get married.”

“Of course I’m expecting that baby.”

“I’m the only son baby I can’t leave home. Who’s going to take care of my parents?”

“Your sisters are there mos Muzikayise.”

“They are all going to get married and build their own homes.”

“So you’re telling me that you and I will never have our own house?”

“We do have our house baby.”

“I’m not talking about that two room house you have Kayise but our own home where we are going to raise our kids together without your parents and sisters.”

“We are still going to raise our kids together even in my parents homestead.”

“Look I know that Durban is far. I was just trying my luck but we can build our own house maybe a few houses away from your parents and sisters that way we can still visit them everyday.”

“No that’s not going to happen sthandwa sami as the only son I won’t move out of the main homestead and that’s the promise I made to my parents.”

“Wow what happened to a man should leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife?”

“We are going to be okay in the main homestead you will see.”

“This is bullshit!” She says getting up and leaves me packing our things and loading them into the car boot.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I keep stealing glances at him as he’s tapping the steering wheel while singing some maskande song that I don’t know. I understand his reasoning but do we have to? To think I will be doing makoti duties 24/7 for such a huge family leaves a bitter taste in my mouth but it’s not like I didn’t know that he’s coming from a huge family right?

Now I may be a sweetheart to his family but a lot can change in few months into our marriage if we live in his parents homestead. They will start having their own observations. I would be a lazy daughter in law who cooks food that tastes like a donkey’s poop. His sisters’ thousands kids will dirty the house just right after cleaning and I would be expected to shut my mouth and clean again? It’s going to be challenging to live together but it seems like I don’t have a choice. His hand running between my thighs breaks my reverie.

“Damn woman I love how warm you are between your thighs.”  
His voice is thick with arousal.

He strokes my nana over my panties and I find myself opening my legs giving him a great access. I have learnt to love and enjoy all these things he does to me. They’re electrifying and exhilarating as F. Now I’m curious how does getting the real deal feels like.

The anticipation of what is about to come increase my desire. He slides my panties aside and runs his fingers between my folds as if he’s collecting the moisture before rubbing my clit. Damn what he’s doing there with his fingers is fuzzing my brain. How is he able to drive while doing this to me?

I flinch a bit when he slides his fingers into my opening. It’s a bit uncomfortable but the feeling subsides as the pleasure takes over, forcing incoherent things out of my mouth.

“Ohh aahhh.”

“How does it feel baby.”

“Kumnandiiii haweee jesu!”

He’s alternating between fingering me and rubbing clit. It’s freaking good and I’m losing myself. As I feel my body getting ready for what is about to come he pulls out his fingers and sucks off the juices on his fingers then continue with his driving

“Muzikayise.” I whisper I don’t know where my voice is

“What is it Mbewenhle?”

“I haven’t reached that toe curling part .”

“Manje ngenzeni mina?”

“Baby come on.”

“You won’t get ‘that toe curling part’ Mbewenhle. Uyadelela wena.” (...you’re rude.)

“I’m sorry sthandwa sami. It’s fine we can stay with your parents.”

“Vele we are going to live with them.”

“Okay I’m sorry for being disrespectful”

“Okay.”

“Please forgive me.”

“I forgive you.”

“Thank you so much.”

I wait for him to continue with doing the toes circling things but he continues with his singing.

“Baby.”

I give his thigh a squeeze and he looks at me with a serious look that makes me hesitate to ask this but my vagina needs a sneeze he can't do me like this.

“Mmh.”

“Cela ungikope tu.”

He looks at me with a raised brow then bursts into laughter. I don't know what's rib tickling him so now I have to wait for him to finish laughing and explain to me.

“Wow you never cease to amaze me yaz. I'm driving can't you see?” He says with a smirk on his face. Mxm!

“Why did you introduce me to all of these things if you’re going to do me dirty like this huh?”

He laughs all over again and he seems satisfied with what he is doing. I thought he’s going to change his mind but it’s only when he drops me off I realize how damn serious he is.

.....

I can’t believe that it’s been whole two weeks without talking to Isisa. The girl is still mad at me and I don’t know what to do now to save our relationship. Kayise went to Pietermaritzburg to one of his relatives for some ceremony. I don’t know what the universe is trying to do but somehow Manelisi and I have been bumping into each other a lot lately that we end up spending time together. He’s a nice guy to hang around with and don’t ask me why am I even hanging out with him because I also don’t know.

Usually I’d find him sitting under the tree at the pasture watching over the cattle but today he’s not here so are his

cattle. I decide to go to his home and cross my fingers that his dogs won't bite me. It's quite a distance from the pasture to his home but I make it to his home without any complaints. Thanks God the dogs are tied so I make my way inside the yard and knock on a wide open door. He's sitting on the chair and feeding an old woman food who's on the wheelchair.

"Dombolo lami? What are you doing here?" The shock in his face is evident. It's funny that he still doesn't know my name.

"Can I come in."

My eyes involuntarily dart to their food on the table which is pap and archaar. He takes the plates from the cupboard that can fall anytime and covers their food.

"Uhm yes," he says trying to hide a look of mortification on his face but it proves to be impossible. My heart sinks to my knees why is he embarrassed? He grabs the chair for me and takes the empty packet of drink o.pop on top of it then shoves it in his faded torn jean.

“You can sit.”

I do as he says and for a moment there's silence. I see that my presence here is making him uncomfortable. He's roaming his eyes around the kitchen as if he's looking anything wrong that my eyes shouldn't see.

“Greetings gogo.” I say to the old woman and she just looks at me.

“She can't talk. Gogo this is dombolo lami. This is my grandma dombolo lami.”

I giggle shyly and stretch out my hand for a handshake which she takes it with her wrinkled hand.

“I'm Mbewenhle Qwabe gogo.”

The old woman looks at me and shakes her head as tears fill her eyes. She's holding on to my hand too tightly that it's starting to hurt.

“Gogo let her hand go now.”

Manelisi tries to remove his grandmother’s hand from mine until he succeeds.

“Let’s me take her to the bed.”

He pushes the old woman and they disappear to the other room. I heave a sigh as I scrutinize my devastating surroundings. It doesn’t need some evaluation to see that Manelisi’s life inswampe. He comes back from the room and looks at me.

“Uhm do you want something to drink?”

I don’t want to seem rude and refuse but at the same time I feel like if I agree I would put him into so much trouble. He doesn’t wait for me to agree but pours a glass of juice from the jug which is on the table.

“Here.”

“Thank you.”

I take the glass and I realize after taking a sip of my juice that it's drink o.pop.

“What are you doing here?”

“I didn't find you at the pasture so I was worried.”

“Ma Mthiyane went to the clinic today so there was no one who can stay with my grandmother.”

“It's just the two of you?”

“Yes.”

“Where are your parents?”

He sits down next to me as he tells me about his life. His mom passed on years back and she never told him who his father is. The old woman got sick and lost her voice years back. I guess my demeanor shows that I feel sorry for him but his pride doesn't want to allow him to tell me how hard life is for him.

"We are doing fine." That's what he keeps on emphasizing to me. I want to offer him something but I'm scared how he will take it.

"What is your biggest dream?" I redirect the mood to the lighter one.

"To get out of this village and hire a nurse to take care of my grandma."

"You're such a sweet grandson."

Jizas his smile? Thethelela smakade!

“I try.”

I spot a guitar by the corner.

“Is that a guitar?”

“Yes. It’s mine.”

“You know how to play a guitar. A stick fighter and guitarist you are a man of many talents Mr Maphumulo.”

He blushes giving me that smile of his that... mmmh athi ngithule!

“Oh I try Miss Qwabe.”

“Show me what you got.”

He gets up and go to take the guitar then comes back. He sits down on the chair and starts playing his guitar while he's singing.

“Aw ngiyekeni ngiyekeni mina ngifuna yena

Aw ngiyekeni ngiyekeni mina ngifuna yena

Ngiyekeni ngiyekeni mina ngidingayena

Oooh ngiyekeni ngiyekeni mina ngifuna yena

Oooh ngifuna yena

Ngifuna yena

Aayi ngidinga yena

Ooh ngifuna yena

Oh ngidinga yena

Ah ngifuna yena

Ngifuna yena

Aahh mina ngidinga yena aa

Ngifuna yena

Aaaah ngidinga yena

Aw funa yena

Ngidinga yena

Aah ngifuna yena

Ngifuna ukuthi ube ngowami ntombazane

Ngifuna ukuthi uhambe nami

Ngifuna ukuthi ube ngowami ntombazane

Ngifuna ukuthi ube ngowami

Ngifuna ukuthi ube ngowami ntombazane

Ngifuna ukuthi uhambe nami

Imihla namalanga funa ube seceleni kwami

Imihla namalanga funa ube seceleni kwami”

God I’m smiling like an idiot and I’m not sure if it’s his voice or his skill for playing the guitar that has my body breaking into goosebumps.

“Wow you’re amazing!”

I put the glass on the table and clap my hands for him.

“I try.”

He puts the guitar on the floor.

“No you’re the best.”

“Thank you.”

The beat of my heart increases as our gaze locks. His tongue tentatively slips out of his mouth and licks his shiny lips. I swallow spit as his face comes closer to mine. Our lips touches and for a second there’s no movement. He is the first to initiate the kiss and my body melt against his compelling me to reciprocate the kiss. It’s a sweet, magical and butterflies dancing in the stomach kinda kiss. A picture of Kayise flashes before my eyes. I pull back from the kiss wiping my lips and sprint out. Jesus what I have done?

## ☆ Manelisi ☆

The pang of yearning to be with her echoes through the very marrow of my bones. I can't fathom out how her absence is affecting me this much I mean we just got to know each other. I never knew that missing someone could take over every fibre of your being and wring you out like a wet sponge every day. It is an anguish I wasn't prepared for.

In these three days I have been hoping that she will pitch at the pasture but she hasn't. I shouldn't have kissed her maybe that scared her off. I wish she could come back so that I can apologize to her because I don't have guts to show my face at her home. I won't even know what to say. Or maybe the kiss is not the reason that is keeping her away from me but the situation she found at home.

I'm sure she's been observing me and the old faded clothes I wear shows that I'm not coming from a well off family. Finding us eating pap and archar and downing it with drink o.pop was the only thing she needed to conclude her scrutiny and realize

that I'm just a poor guy who she can't associate with let alone dating. It's not something new I'm used to it now but the problem is that she left a mark in my heart in a short period of time. I can't seem to get her over my mind it's pure agony!

A sigh of defeat escapes my lips when I realize that it's time to send back the cattle and still today she didn't show up. I wish I had a phone I would've phoned her at least just to hear her sweet voice even if she's shouting at me kobe akusenendaba lokho. Maybe she would stop invading my mind and I would have a peaceful night. I whistle hitting the long whip on the ground to get the cattle's attention. Ziyamazi umelusi wazo that's the only thing I do to get the attention. I shepherd them back to the Zondo homestead.

Once I have locked them in the kraal I head to the main house to explain to Ma Mthiyane that I will fetch gogo a bit later I just need to take a bath first. It's been a long hot day and I've been sweating like an old man with high blood pressure. The Zondos are good people I really appreciate them. Ma Mthiyane looks after my grandma when I have to herd the cattle. You know there are things a boy wouldn't be able to do to his grandma. So she's the one who does that then her husband plays a father

role in my life. I would never forget them and one day I'm going to show them my gratitude.

They have 2 children, their daughter, Blessing is married now and I won't lie when she got married I was so broken to the core. Yes we have a history but I understand that I couldn't provide her the life that she wanted hence she met someone better than me. Then there's Isenathi who is the rebellious son. Me and him don't get along because "I'm the adopted golden son". He blames me for the none stop fights he has with his father.

There's nothing to eat today but at least grandma would eat at the Zondos. I have lost count of days I spent without food. The only thing I always make sure is that gogo eats. I can even rob a bank for that old lady. I don't remember much about my mother, she was that kind of a mother who was chasing after men and nice life. Grandma is the one that raised me up to this far. Even in her grave she's useless why don't she give me a job? I have applied for countless jobs but I never get feedback even a mere interview. I think there's a dark cloud hovering over me.

I'm about to discard my bathing water when I hear a knock on the door. I look myself in the mirror and wipe the ashes on the corner of my mouth. I was using them to brush my teeth as there's no toothpaste. We have run out of our essentials. Can Bab Mthiyane get here already. I shuffle to the door in my shorts only and my heart moves from the left to the right then returns back to the left.

"Dombolo lami!" The excitement in my voice is loud I had to stop myself from scooping her in my arms. I don't want to scare her off once again.

"Hey can I walk in."

"Of course."

I make a space for her to walk in and catch a whiff of her sweet scent as she passes by. She's carrying a backpack on her back. I give her the chair to sit and tell her to wait for a moment I have to discard my water. I come back from discarding my water and sit adjacent to her then give myself a good time to stare at her beauty.

“Don’t stare me like that.”

“I can’t help myself I thought I will never see you again.”

“Ah well I’m here but I’m not staying.”

Now that feels like needles piercing through my heart and the look that she’s giving me I could tell that whatever she’s going to say will break my heart.

“Oh.”

“Uhm I don’t know how you will take this but I want you know that I couldn’t help myself. I’m not a person who overlook something especially when it’s bothersome. Here.”

She unhooks the backpack from her shoulders and hands me the bag. I look at her surprised as I unzip the bag. There’s a lot of tin stuff in here and some goodies.

“What is this?”

“Your sexy eyes may be small Manelisi but I’m sure they can see.”

Did she say my eyes are sexy?

“I realized that you don’t have a fridge I would’ve brought meat as well. Tin stuff can be tiring at times but here’s the money to buy maize meal and meat whenever you going to cook one,” she says sliding the hundred notes on the table towards me. I take the money and count the notes. It’s R500.

“I’m sorry Mbewenhle I can’t take this.” I can hear the iciness in my voice.

“I knew you would say that but I’m not going back home with these things.”

I chuckle in disbelief. Who does this girl thinks she is huh?  
Mother Theresa?

“Take your shit and leave my house! I don’t need this!”

“Stop being prideful Manelisi! Pride ayisizi kwesinye isikhathi!  
You might not need this but grandma does!”

“We are not your charity case maiden girl! Leave now!!”

I shove the bag and money to her. She glares at me angrily and puts everything on the table.

“If you don’t want these then throw them in the toilet  
okusalayo mina I brought these for you herd boy!!”

She springs up and flounces towards the door. I get up from the chair and take long strides towards her then grab her wrist, pulling her closer to me. She falls right into my arms and I capture her lips into mine but she bites my lip. I groan not pulling away though but intensify the kiss.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I'm not winning no matter how I try my body melts under his touch. Biting his lips didn't help either. Now we are sharing the taste of his blood like vampires. He scoops me up and I wrap my legs around his waist. I can feel him walking with me but I'm not sure where he's heading to and I don't even care.

His lips has me hypnotized. They taste like something I have never tasted before and something forbidden yet delicious and irresistible. He gently lays us on the bed positioning himself on top of me. The sexual tension is humming throughout the room. I can feel his hard on thumping on my nun as he tightens his grip on my butt pulling me closer to his crotch.

I moan softly at the feel of his warm breath against my skin through the thin fabric of my dress as he bites my nipples over it. Jizas this feels incredible! I'm pooling. He makes his way down there and buries his head between my thighs, sniffing me

like a police dog. I come back to my senses when he's taking off my panties.

"Manelisi wait." I can't recognize my voice right now. It's thick with arousal.

"You are not ready I know I just want to eat you so bad please." His raspy voice sends goosebumps through my body. Now his eyes are barely open and he looks so dangerous.

"I can't do this. I have a boyfriend  
not just a boyfriend someone who's going to marry me."

He heaves a sigh and crawls on top of me.

"Of course a loser like me will never be able to give you the wedding your dreams and take care of you."

My heart sinks to my toes at how pained he sounds right now.

“You’re not a loser.”

“Do you love him?”

“Of course I do.”

“Then what about me?”

What about him? I also don’t know I’m confused. How can I feel so strongly connected to him as if I have known him somewhere. I don’t think the word love alone can describes what I feel for him. Am I even supposed to feel something for him? He’s good as a stranger!

“This was a biggest mistake. I’m sorry I lead you on okay. The other reason I came here was to tell you that we can’t hang out together anymore.”

“I wasn’t just singing to you Mbewenhle. Ngifuna wena ngampela.”

“Oh Manelisi you can’t have me.”

“I know I’m not the ideal boyfriend and I don’t want to sell you dreams but dombolo lami your presence in my life gives me hope that one day ngizopopa.” I can’t miss the rawness of his emotions in voice and that beaks my heart.

“I can’t do that I’m sorry.”

“We can always have fun then you don’t have to label what we have.”

“It doesn’t work like that Manelisi. Someone is going to get hurt and I don’t want that please understand that.”

“So this is the last time we see each other.”

I nod my head and he buries his head on my neck. We stay like that for a moment, our hearts are having a conversation that we can't have verbally. How did I get here?

"I have to go now."

Kayise is coming back today and I promised him that I will see him today.

"Can you linger please?" He asks pulling his head up from the crook of my neck. The sadness on his face is so evident and it's funny that I can just read him easily no matter how he tries to hide his feelings from me.

"I can't....."

I'm cut mid sentence by his lips that devours mine like the world is ending. My hands involuntarily frame his face as the kiss intensifies, his tongue delving into my mouth with passion. We are both breathless when we break off the kiss.

“Thanks for walking into my life and makes it look promising then crush that hope once again.”

“Manelisi...”

“Sssh it’s not your fault maybe there’s a lesson I have to learn from this. Go dombolo lami.”

He gets off me and I shamefully fix myself. The stickiness down there is making me feel uncomfortable.

“You’re not going to accompany me?”

“No we don’t want to attract people’s eyes.”

Ouch. I nod my head and leave. I start at Isisa’s home but she doesn’t want to see me at all. I walk back home with tears stinging in my eyes. The moment I get to my bedroom I change my panties first then throw myself on the bed weeping silently. Why does it hurt so bad that I made this decision? It’s the best for all of us and it is not supposed to hurt like this.

“You should stop crying and move on with life baby. It’s clear that Isisa doesn’t love you as we thought. You are trying to fix things but she’s not willing to forgive you.” Mama says occupying a space next to me.

“It’s not that easy mama.”

“No one said life will be easy baby.”

“Maybe you can talk to her for me please.”

“I don’t want involve myself in this. If she will forgive you it has to come from her heart. Don’t cry now okay.”

She caresses my cheek. I wish I can tell her about Manelisi and how I feel right now. Maybe she would make me feel better but after Thuthuka’s saga I don’t want to give her any idea that “I’m embarrassing them”

I'm so not in the mood of seeing Kayise but maybe seeing him will make me forget about Manelisi and remember why I chose him out of the squad that was courting me. He just sent me an sms to come to our spot.

"Don't come back late we don't want to eat late."

Of course she has to say something about food. Can't she see that she's gaining so much weight now?

"When are we welcoming the baby?"

"When it's time," she says getting up from my bed.

No one knows when she's due. Not even my dad she keeps on saying if she reveals the date people are going to bewitch her and she will have a complicated pregnancy. What a lame excuse if you ask me but ke if her husband believes it then who am I.

I find Kayise waiting for me outside his car. That ugly smile of his it's the first thing I see as I walk closer. He meets me half and scoops me in his arms. Someone missed me. It's only now I realize I missed him too.

"Don't drop me please."

"I missed you so much."

"I missed you too baby."

He puts me down and we get inside the car before sharing an intense kiss.

"I brought you something."

He reaches for the gift bag in the back seat and gives me.

"Don't open it now, open it at home."

“Thank you so much baby. I wonder what is it?”

This man loves me bakithi why am I allowing Satan to come between us? Ngathi kuzomele ngincinde nje ngikwifwe umoya omubi that want to come between us.

“You are spending the night with me?”

“No I can’t baby I have to cook, since mom is pregnant she’s a lazy bastard...”

“Your mom is pregnant? Wow that’s amazing!”

“No she’s not.”

I remember that we have to keep it a secret. He chuckles and takes my hand in his.

“I won’t tell anyone baby.”

“Pietermaritzburg didn’t love you baby you look ugly. Did you even bath there?”

“Yey wena who’s ugly,” he says tickling me and I’m a giggling mess.

“Baby...Stop...It!”

Is he listening to me? No he’s not I can’t even breathe.

“Manelisi maan stop it!”

Immediately he stops and my heart stops beating when I realize what I’ve just said.

“Who’s Manelisi?”

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

“Who’s Manelisi?” He says looking at me with so much intensity. Something murderous flashes beneath the surface of his hardened expression. I swallow thick saliva in my mouth as sweat trickle down my neck.

“What?”

“Manelisi who is that?”

“I don’t know.”

“Don’t make me your fool Mbewenhle! You are the one who just called me Manelisi!”

“No baby I said mana Kayise maan.” (...stop it Kayise)

“Are you saying I have a hearing problem?”

“Of course not Sidwaba Siluthuli. I was choking on my giggles maybe I sounded as if I was saying whatever that you think I said. You said I said what?” I’m staring at him as I’m saying this while running my fingers on his hairy forearms.

“Manelisi.”

“I’m sorry in my head I was saying mana Kayise maan.”

I watch as his hard facial expression softens. Oh it seems like he’s buying it.

“Let’s jump to the back seat I just want to feel you close to me. I missed you so much.” He gives me his ugly smile then we jump to the back seat, cuddling.

If FOOL was a person that would definitely be me! How can I mistake my man with Manelisi? I release a breathe of relief when he tells me about his stay in Pietermaritzburg.

.....

The ache for him gnaws at my heart every single second of the day and knowing that I can never help myself slaps hard in the face, drenching me in a cold sadness. It baffles me why can't a stranger that I have only spent days with exit my mind like any other stranger. I spend my days and nights wondering if I will ever be the same again. I wipe the tears in the corners of my eyes and answer my phone that is ringing.

“MaDinangwe.”

“Staap it now!”

I giggle. I didn't know that coconuts also like it when they're called by their clans.

“How are you MaKhondlo.”

“I’m okay and yourself?”

“You’re not okay I can hear you but we will delve into that once I’m there. Please come fetch me I managed to drive to your father’s shop only.”

I jump up from my pillow and sit on my butt. This girl mustn’t dare play me like this.

“Uthandiwe don’t play me like that.”

“I’m not playing babe. Let me give this guy who introduced himself as Mngqobi the phone.”

I hear some shuffling then Mngqobi’s voice comes through making me to scream in shock.

“Come and get her babe,” Mngqobi says mimicking Uthandiwe’s voice.

“Oh my god I’m coming!”

Okay she’s here for real. I thought she was just pulling my leg when she said that she’s going to visit me. I spring up and slide into my slippers before dashing to my parents’ bedroom. The way I’m so excited I forget to knock and walk in, finding my mother on the bed staring a beautiful diamond neck piece.

“Wow that’s beautiful mama. It must have cost fortune.”

“Mbewu why don’t you knock,” she says, briskly putting the neck piece back to its box. I spot the card on the bed and take it.

“Yey leave my things wena!”

“Come on mommy I want to see what dad wrote in here phela the man can’t even write. I didn’t even think he’s a romantic type.”

In a flash she's up from the bed and walking towards me as I run away, trying to read the card.

“Mbewenhle ngizokushaya give back that card now!!!” (Mbewenhle I will beat you up...)

I giggle as I run to the lounge and read the card. ‘Morning Gorgeous. The breakfast is in the warmer. I’m sorry to leave you alone in my house I have to go to the practice...’ before I can finish reading I feel a spank on my buttocks.

“Ouch mama!” I scream as she snatches the card from me.

“It’s so painful mama. What did you hit me with.” I look at her hand and she’s carrying her flip flop. Damn this thing stings

“Yizo lezinga zakho ezinkulu ezikuphaphisayo! Ufunani ezintweni zami? Ngizokushaya angisiye untanga wakho mina!” (This big butt of yours makes you forward! What are you doing with my things? I will spank you I’m not your peer!) The very same butt that I took after her. Sigh!

“Ngiyaxolisa mama.” (I’m sorry mama) I say rubbing my butt.

“Haisuka!”

I knew that dad is not that romantic and that necklace cost a lot. He will never spend money on ‘useless things’. This has uncle G written over it. So there was a time mama spent a night in his place wow! No I shouldn’t judge at all, I’m the last person to judge.

“Uthandiwe is at father’s shop can I go and fetch her?”

“Your father’s shop?” The shock in her face is so evident.

“Yes she’s here for a visit.”

“Oh my goodness Mbewenhle why didn’t you tell me? What will she eat?”

It's not like she told me too mother.

"She will eat whatever we eat, it's not like we are out of grocery and there's meat in the fridge."

"Yoh ngane ka Musa yaz udonsa kude. These suburban kids eats sushi and tofu!" (Yoh Musa's child you are so slow....)

I giggle, shame my poor mother is stressing out. Uthandiwe is not that kind of a girl and I believe that when you are visiting you can't expect things to be the same as you are when you're at home. Here we eat normal food, sushi and thofu or whatever that is called we don't eat it here. We are the lovers of meat here.

"Don't worry mama she knows that this is not burbs but a village."

"Izohamba izacile ingane yabantu jesu!" (By the time the child go back home she would be skinny!)

“Mom you’re so dramatic! Let’s me go.”

I make my way out and head to my father’s shop. It’s funny that even after talking to Mngqobi I still don’t believe it I until I see her pink Porsche which was imported especially for her on her 21st birthday this year. Rich kids adla ilife nge tooth pick I tell you! The moment I walk in she runs to me and we share a hug as our noise of cheer fills the entire shop.

“God I missed you.”

“I miss you too babe.”

“You look amazing!” I say, pulling away from the embrace while gawking at her.

My girl is rocking a grid print cropped top and matching mini skirt with a slit. She paired her outfit with red block heels that compliments her lip stick and nails. The brown color of her wavy weave suits her round shaped face.

“Oh thanks babe but I’m sorry I can’t say the same to you. God what happened? You look like a mess! Those eyes bags are telling a story!”

“Argh I’m okay don’t worry. Mngqobi thanks for looking after her for me.”

“Thank me with her number.” Mngqobi

“Next time bro.” Uthandiwe says dismissively then we walk out.

I get in the passenger seat while she gets to the driver seat then we drive home as I direct her.

“My mom is super worried that you are coming.”

“Why?”

“She says rich kids eat sushi and fotho.”

“Tofu?”

“Yes whatever that is called.”

She cracks up and I find myself joining her.

“Your mom should relax. I’m my father’s daughter. I eat pap and meat. Nenhloko nje nayo ngiyayidla. Plus you told me that your father has cows I want to taste milk from the cows tities.”  
(...I also eat a cow’s head...)

“Wow you never cease to amaze me.”

“I ain’t snobbish babe that’s one of many things Mamacita instilled in us, to never look down on other people or their lifestyle.”

“Your mothers sound like nice women yet they’re not your biological mothers.”

“Yes they’re amazing I won’t lie but the void for my mother and my father will always be there.”

“True hey. I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be it keeps getting better with time but I know once I find the killers of my parents I will get closure.”

“You sound like you’re on a mission Uthandiwe?” It comes out like a question then a statement.

“Of course I am. You think I chose law just for fun? No babe I’m going to avenge my parents using the law.”

“Didn’t you say your mother’s killer is arrested.”

“Yes he is but it’s not him someone framed him. I couldn’t believe it when I was young but now I’m old and I believe him. No one knows though at home that I visit him and we have

grown so close. He's only left with 3 years only to come out of jail."

"Are you sure he's not manipulating you Uthandiwe."

"No he's not I'm not dumb Mbewenhle and I have been working on avenging them since I was 16 years old. I'm not in a hurry even if it can take 20 years."

"Wow. I wish I had guts like you hey but at least wena you know that they were killed. Unlike me I don't even know if my twin was killed or still alive. I won't even know where to begin if I were to avenge her."

"Eish neh yours is kinda tricky. I don't know if I help how will I start."

Now we are home. I help her take out her luggage from the boot then we walk to the house. Dad is home and he's watching TV with mama who's eating magwinyas. We greet the parents and I introduce my friend to my parents.

“We meet again mama. It’s nice to meet you baba

” Uthandiwe says hugging mama and then goes to baba who pushes her that she almost fall.

“Hayi angithintwa mina ononkilozi!” (I don’t want to be touched by hoes)

“Baba no, that’s rude.”

“Vele unonkilozi lo mbuke ugqoke kanjani necici enkabeni nezinzapho zomthakathi. Your parents said you’re okay when you’re dressed like this?” (It’s true, she’s a hoe look what she’s wearing, she has a ring on her navel and witch’s nails

Jizas my father though!

“Don’t mind him child. He’s getting old,” Mama placates Uthandiwe who doesn’t seem bothered at all.

“This is Nkosinathi’s daughter Qwabe.”

“Nkosinathi Dlomo the taxi driver?”

“Yes.”

“Your father was a passionate and ambitious man I’m sure he’s turning in his grave seeing his child turning into a prostitute.”

“Hayi Qwabe this is how youth of today dress in nowadays. Stop this yhooo. Baby take your friend to your bedroom.”

I signal Uthandiwe to follow me and we go to my bedroom. To say I’m embarrassed would be putting it lightly.

“I’m sorry about that gosh he is so backward!”

“Argh don’t worry about that babe.”

“Are you sure?”

“Of course I’m sure I think I’m going to enjoy my stay here. He’s interesting,” she says giggling.

My father interesting? Oh no please what is this girl talking about. I place her luggage next to my wardrobe then we go to the rondoval to prepare supper. She insists on helping me and I’m glad that she can help. I thought she can’t cook. I see there’s a lot I thought about this girl so now I’ve decided to stop thinking and allow her to reveal herself to me.

“How’s your man?”

“He’s okay.”

“What’s wrong talk to me. Is he beating you up?”

“What? No why would you think of that?”

“I was just asking. He sounds like a control freak and the way he shoved down makhandakhanda, the guy had a green butt for a week!”

“You’re lying Uthandiwe.”

“I’m telling you!”

“Well he’s not beating me up in fact he treats me like an egg.”

“Then what’s wrong because I can see something is not right.”

I badly needed someone to offload to but since Isisa doesn’t want anything to do with me I have been bottling this up. Mpilenhle is trying to make me free around her, we talk on the phone almost everyday. The thing is not easy to just open up to her. I feel like she’s going to judge me like mama. I go check the coast and once I’m satisfied that there’s no one coming I come back.

“Well,” she says holding the piece of meat. I heave a sigh and hold the other side of meat then cut it before throwing it into the pot on top of the brazier

“I met this guy in some ceremony around the village...” I continue and tell her everything that happened.

“Damn girl you’re caught between two guys.”

“Issa mess but Kayise is the one I just wish I can forget about Manelisi gosh.”

“What makes you so interested in this Manelisi guy?”

“He’s so hot and when he smiles Jehova! Kuvele kuthi ngiwavule amathanga nge ngithi uzobona nawe umisa kanjani.”  
(...His smile makes me want to open my thighs wide and tell him you will see what you can do.)

We break into a fit of salacious giggles.

“He’s that hot?”

“He even has dimples! Honestly his looks are just a bonus what I like about him is how he makes me feel. He listens to me when I speak to him, he respects my ethics and values. When I’m with him I feel valid I’m not sure if that makes any sense. He doesn’t make me feel like a little girl but a wise special woman. I don’t know if you feel me. I love his passion he might not have anything now but that’s temporary. Nothing will ever stop him from achieving what he wants. Let’s just forget how weak he makes me feel, how hard my heart beats when I’m around him, how sweaty my palms become when I’m with him, how his kisses and touch sends butterflies in my tummy. Jizas that guy bewitched me! Can you believe that I called Kayise by his name when he was tickling me.”

“You’re lying! What did Muzikayise say?”

“I told him that I meant to say mana Kayise.”

She bursts into laughter.

“And he believed that?”

“I think he did because he didn’t probe any further after I said that.” I say and we both laughed. I almost peed on myself that day.

“Tell me what do you love about Kayise?”

“Kayise is a good looking man. I love how he’s so possessive of me. He makes me happy most of the time and he hasn’t put me under pressure to sleep with him instead we just do oral sex. He doesn’t make me do things that I’m not comfortable with. He respects me and spoils me rotten with gifts. He’s a good guy for me just as my parents says.”

“Tell me more about how your relationship started with Kayise.”

I smile as I hark back to the day I met Kayise and how I thought he’s Mnumzane to him changing the locks. How he disguised

himself to be a grandma so that he can talk to me. How he went behind my back and told my parents that he wants to marry me.

“Can I be honest with you on what I observed.”

“Of course.”

“Well the way I see this Kayise manipulated you into agreeing to be in a relationship with him by going to your parents. I noticed how you kept on emphasizing that your parents were so proud especially your father when you were telling me about how your relationship started. You only agreed to date him because you wanted to make your parents happy not that you loved him. It’s not like you were interested in one of your suitors so you thought let me give him a chance. Of course you did and you found yourself loving him then months down the line boom Manelisi makes his entrance in your life now you start to feel different from what you feel for Muzikayise. You know why? It’s because he’s the elixir that’s running through every single vein of your body. He’s the one your heart beats for, he’s the one that...”

“Stop it! Stop it! Please stop you are confusing me!”

“No I’m not confusing you Mbewenhle. You are the one who’s confusing yourself! Face the fact babe and choose the one your heart beats for not the one your parents think is best for you.”

“I choose Muzikayise.”

“You do know that if you stay with someone you don’t love you won’t be happy in your relationship and that’s a decision you will always regret.”

“I love Muzikayise with all my heart finish and klaar! Let’s stop talking about this now please.” The last line comes out as a whisper as tears stream down my face.

She pulls me to her arms and I sink in her warm embrace, taking in her lemony scent.

“Mbewu whose car is...ohh.” Mvelonhle stops mid sentence as we pull away from the embrace. He gawks at Uthandiwe from her toes up to her face.

“Hayi Mvelonhle you can’t undress my friend in front of me have some respect!”

He clears his throat and walks towards us stretching out his hand for Uthandiwe who takes it.

“Ndoniyamanzi kunjani?” (Dark beauty how are you)

“I’m okay and yourself?”

“I’m also okay now that I’m seeing such beauty before my eyes. Mvelonhle Qwabe.”

“Uthandiwe Dlomo.”

“Aww ndoniyamanzi kwavele kwaqondana nje. Uthandiwe inhliziyoyami Mkhabela.” (Oh dark beauty what a coincidence. You’re loved by my heart Mkhabela.)

He kisses her hand and Uthandiwe is a blushing mess. If she was a yellow bone I swear she would be like a tomato right now.

“Ningazongibhora nina nobabili.” (You two don’t bore me) I pull Lonhle away and push him out of the rondoal then close the door.

“Geee really now!”

“He’s a kid Uthandiwe!”

“How old is he?”

“17”

“Not bad...”

“Don’t even think about it okay.”

“Okay kodwa okusalayo he’s bae grrrr!”

I shoot her a look and she giggles. At 7pm we dish up and serve the food. Uthandiwe kneels down when he serves dad and dad’s look has me laughing. He’s trying to hide how shocked yet impressed by her gesture. This girl is going to make dad want us to serve him while kneeling.

“Sithembe ukuthi izinzipho azigaladelanga ebhodweni.” (Let’s hope your nails didn’t drop inside the pot.)

Uthandiwe laughs. It’s so weird that she doesn’t find dad offensive yaz.

“Don’t worry baba enjoy your meal.”

Uthandiwe cooked the creamy samp and I cooked beef stew. I have to take the ingredients it’s really nice.

“Who cooked the samp?” Dad

“It’s her.”

I say pointing at Uthandiwe who's exchanging flirty stares with Mvelonhle. I have to nudge her to bring her back from her naughty world.

"You're not bad."

"Just say it baba that she nailed it." Mvelonhle

"Kona akufani."

We all laugh except dad. Why can't he just compliment her, umona ekhehleni owani? Ndiwe and I wash dishes after supper. Once we are done I go outside to discard the water. I spot a silhouette in a darkness and terror surges through my veins, icy daggers straight to the heart. I don't dare move closer but throw the water on a distance and attempts to run away but I feel a hand gagging my mouth. Oh God save me from this world's cruelty. Just as I'm about to bite the hand I hear a whisper in my ear that sends shivers down my spine.

"Sssh it's me dombolo lami,"

Jizas this guy wants to kill me with a heart attack! I turn around when he lets go of my mouth to face him.

“You scared me!”

“I’m sorry.”

“What are you doing here.”

“I miss you dombolo lami. I’m going crazy without you.”

“I miss you too.” The words rolls out of my mouth before I can stop myself. He attempts to pulls me closer to himself but I refuse.

“You are wet Manelisi.”

“Wuwe ongithelile yhoo ngiyathemba awungithelanga ngomchamo Wenhle!” (I hope you didn’t pour me with urine) I can’t help but giggle at how comical he sounds right now. He’s sniffing himself and gagging.

“Relax it’s the water I was washing dishes with.”

“Oh Mvelinqangi! I was hoping you will say it’s just water ungithele ngamapapa isichitho esingaka bakithi!”

“God you’re such a drama king. You won’t die.”

“Hayi ngeke sondela sibemanzi sobabili.” (No come closer so we can be both wet)

I walk closer to him and fit perfectly in his arms. There’s a silence for brief moment as we hold each other for dear life. I can hear his heart beating hard against his chest and its rhythm is matching mine.

“I have to go now before your father comes out. I had to see you dombolo lami I couldn't function without you. Now I will have a peaceful night knowing that I held you in my arms like this and smelt your lovely scent,” he says inhaling deeply.

Why is he making it hard for me to forget him. Him coming here will make it even more harder! Who knows maybe tomorrow I would've woken up forgotten about him.

“You're not supposed to be here.”

“But you are happy I'm here.”

I don't reply to him.

“Say it dombolo lami  
you want me here.”

“No I don't. Just go you are complicating my life.”

“That’s not true and you know it search deep in your heart and tell me what’s in there.”

I try to pull away from his arms but he tightens his arms around me, making me feel protected and safer then I did a second ago in his arms. God what is happening to me?

“You love me.”

“No I don’t.”

“Yes you do.” He whispers in my ear and pulls my earlobe between his lips tugging it gently, eliciting a moan from me.

“Nooo”

“Yesss”

He palms my face and claims my lips. The kiss is hot and heavy, we are drinking on each other like we have been deprived for

years. I feel his hand sliding between my thighs and cupping my pussy over my already damp panties. He barely touched me but I'm already soaked magosh it's so embarrassing.

"You love me Wenhle," he mumbles between the kiss and I moan my 'no' against his lips.

"If you don't love me then why are you so wet. I have barely touched you."

"Just leave me a...ahh" he slides his fingers underneath my panties and rubs his thumb on my clit tantalizingly. I find myself standing with my toes as he plunges his finger into my sex while breathing his warm air on my neck and leaving trail of kisses.

"You love me."

I bite my lip trying to muffle my moans as he finger fucks me. God I'm dying with pure ecstasy! He strokes a spot that sends a flush of blood running throughout my whole body.

"Yes yes yes I love you..so so much!" I scream as I ride a hot wave of orgasm rocking my body intensely.

"Now you just gave me a reason to not let you go without a fight. Sizobona ezodla umhlanganiso."

☆ Isisa ☆

It's one of those lazy days and I don't know how did I manage to finish cleaning the house now I have to go to the pit to fetch water then come back to cook lunch. I start with renewing the fire first on the brazier before taking the bucket, heading to the pit but my mom's words stops me on my track.

"I hope you are not going to the pit. Since you have been fetching water at the pit I have diarrhea."

What is this woman saying to me? Where will I fetch the water now?

"I don't understand why you no longer fetch water at the Qwabes?"

"Mom we have been using the water from the pit way before the Qwabe's gave us the permission to use their tank now I don't understand why you have diarrhea." My tone is sharp and

I swear that was not my intention at all. I guess I couldn't hide my exasperation at her comment. Aqale nini manje ukumhudisa lamanzi?

"Just because we were using the water from the pit that doesn't mean that water is in a good state to be used let alone drinking it," she says calmly which is something I wasn't expecting after my retort.

"Futhi anoshobishobi amanzi asemfuleni mama," my little brother adds his two cent opinion. I don't know who asked him.

"You're lying Sboniso!"

"Vele Isisa!" The fact that he calls me by my name while I'm 11 years older than him it's the reason why he has the audacity to backchat.

"He's not lying Isisa. Go to the Qwabes, whatever that is going on between you and Mbewenhle don't involve us to the point of killing us with chorela."

I won't even ask how did she know that there's something going on between me and Mbewu because it's absolutely obvious. I wonder why she hasn't asked me about the reason why we are at loggerheads.

"If you don't want that beautiful bracelet she made for you might as well give it to me."

I squeeze my eyes shut as a wave of anger washes over me.

"You went through my things mama?"

"Yes and I read the letter. That girl is pouring her heart and asking you to forgive her but your heart is stoned just like your father."

Oh please she mustn't dare compare me with her late husband!  
Wait she said she read the letter that means...

“I’m so disappointed in you that you’re allowing a friendship of years to be destroyed by a boy Isisa, the boy that you’re always giggling with on the phone at night. So it’s easy to forgive the boy that doesn’t love you but used you then forgiving your best friend who’s remorseful for what she did.” Why is she so calm about this? I expect her to yell at me and beat me up.

Okay let’s get this clear before you judge me. I haven’t forgiven Thuthuka, it’s just that he never stops calling that I end up answering his calls. I’m still hurt and angry and I’m allowed to stay like this for as long as I want. They both betrayed me but Mbewu’s betrayal hurts even more because I thought she can never hurt me like this. If only she told me I wouldn’t be feeling like this. I would’ve forgotten about him and not date him. That time it was going to be easy to delete my feelings for him unlike now when I want to hate him but my heart is saying the opposite.

A few days back she sent Sboniso to give me a gift bag. Inside there was a beautiful beaded bracelet which she made herself and a letter. I remember years back when I was teaching her how to make accessories with beads and we would laugh at her ugly bangles and necklaces she made.

Of course we used to fight as friends but our fights never got to this point where we don't talk to each other for almost a month. This is not about the pencils or pens she would steal from me or me robbing her when we were playing umasigende it's way deeper than that and it hit straight to the heart. It questions trust and loyalty in our friendship.

"I haven't forgiven him mama."

"Oh but you do talk to him while you are not speaking to Mbewenhle? I want you to stay away from that boy do you hear me? He doesn't love you and he's not right for you if he's coming between you and Mbewenhle!"

"Eh mama." I say and swallow a thick spit in my throat.

"Now go fetch the water from the Qwabes!"

I don't want to go there and see her face but I don't have a choice so I drag my walk but it seems futile because I will still

get there. There's a pink Porsche in the yard. It must be Mpilenhle's new car, that woman changes cars like they're panties. See when we talk about someone who's living the life I want for myself it's her. She got a rich husband who does everything for her and they look good together even though her husband is ugly. I think I can do an ugly husband if only he could provide me with a nice 'madam' life.

"Isisa hi." There's a hint of shock in her voice but the wild smile on her face is the evidence of how happy she is to see me.

"Hi can I use the tank?" I say flatly and her eyes move from my face to the 20l bucket I'm carrying.

"Oh okay." The disappointment in her voice is thick. She takes the bucket from me but I stop her.

"Don't, I know how to do it."

I walk to the tank and run the water into the bucket. I don't know if it's because I want to see myself out of here already or

what but the water seems to be running slowly then usual. I smell her sweet scent as she walks towards me. It seems like she's going somewhere. The v neck sleeveless chiffon floral dress moulds her every curve which is paired up with laced up sandals that compliment her long sexy legs. Her afro is tied into two buns on each side of her head, she looks so nunus and gorgeous.

“Look I know that I sound like a broken record now but I won't stop until you forgive me. Please forgive me I miss you so much Magwaza.”

“Mbewu I came to fetch water with peace okay.”

“I'm sorry from the deepest of my heart,” she does the unthinkable and kneels down on the ground.

“I'm begging you please.” I heave a sigh. I would be lying if I say I don't miss her too and I think I have punished her enough. Maybe it's time we put this behind us.

“Mbewenhle I would be lying if I say...” I’m disturbed by this girl she met in Durban strutting towards us. Oh the car it’s definitely belong to her and I’m not surprised. You can tell that she’s a girly girl hence the ‘pink’ color of the car. They’re wearing almost the same but she paired up her dress with heels.

“Hey girl.” She greets me politely and I just nod my head with a faint smile.

“Babe why are you on your knees? Please don’t tell me it’s because you’re begging her to forgive you. If she doesn’t want to forgive you let her be. Don’t you dare put yourself in such a low level like this and kneel for her. You don’t kneel down for anybody!”

“Cheese girl would you shut up and not meddle in our business!” I retort

“I’m not a cheese girl you ntuthu girl!”

I know that I'm smelling smoke because I was making fire but for her to call me ntuthu girl ticks me off. I turn the tap off and pick up the almost full bucket and splash the water on her. She squeals in shock and her friend on the ground is also shocked to speak.

"Ungangijwayeli kabi msunu kanyoko!" I click my tongue and take the bucket then walk away with it as empty as it is.

"Where's the water Isisa?" It's the first thing mama asks when I get home.

"The truck didn't come to fill the tank mama. They said they will tell us once there's water in the tank." I say and walk away, not giving her a chance to study me nor say something.

Once I'm in my room I take my phone and call Thuthuka.

"Sthandwa sa Thuthuka."

“I have changed my mind please send the money at Shoprite I’m coming there.”

☆ Muzikayise ☆

I don’t know if I’m overthinking or what but my mind can’t seem to stop. I’m sure that she said Manelisi but she wanted to say mana Kayise which makes sense why am I over analyzing this? She’s the only one who calls me Kayise while everyone calls me Muzi. I need to stop this before I drive myself crazy with this.

“Whaaa!” I’m ready to attack and that causes her to laugh. She settles down next to me on my couch and I’m surprised because ever since what I did to her son we haven’t been on good speaking terms.

“What’s bothering you?”

“I miss Thuthuka. He calls everyone but not me.”

“Do you blame him.”

I don't response to her then I hear her releasing a sigh.

“Both of you were wrong but I don't like what is happening between the two of you. I love the relationship you have with my son Muzi and I really appreciate the role of a father you play in his life. It's really means a lot to me. One mistake doesn't make you a bad uncle it's just how you responded to the predicament but I understand why you didn't put your hands on him.”

I look up at her and ask her why.

“It's because you knew that once you put your hands on him you will definitely kill him.”

“How did you know that?”

“I’m your elder sister Muzi and I know you.”

I sigh and scratch my head. I was definitely going to kill him. I try my level best to stay away from fights and violence because I don’t want blood on my hands especially not my nephew’s whom I love so much.

“Please tell him I’m sorry when he calls and tell him that I miss him so much.”

“It would take a lot for you two to be the way you used to be but what I can tell you is don’t give up on him. He needs you Muzi, you’re his father more then Xoli’s husband can ever be.” Hearing her saying this warms my heart.

“Thank you so much sis Nomvula this really means a lot to me.”

“Don’t mention it. So what else?”

“Huh?”

“What else is bothering you?”

“Nothing.”

“Trouble in paradise?”

“Not really it’s just that lately somehow I feel like she’s disconnecting from me. I don’t know how I can explain it. We used to call each other everyday and when I didn’t call I knew that she will call me but now two days can pass without us talking to each other.”

“You do know this thing called honeymoon phase?”

“What is that?”

“The honeymoon phase is that magical time when your partner is still perfect and you are very much in love. This period

features high levels of passionate love, characterized by intense feelings of attraction and ecstasy

as well as an idealization of one's partner. The strong emotions associated with passionate love have physical manifestations, such as butterflies in the stomach or heart palpitations. Now you guys have passed that stage and your relationship is starting a normal phase where by you're used to be in each other's life."

"This is more than that sis I can feel it."

"Are you trying to tell me that she's seeing someone else?"

"Not she will never do that to me but I can't seem to put my finger around what really is going on."

"When did this started?"

"I'm not sure but after I told her that we are not moving out of here after getting married. That's when things started to be a bit off between us."

“Kanti vele why wena ungafuni ukuphuma inxiwa?” ( Why don't you want to build your own home)

“It's my responsibility as the only son to look after my father's house sis Nomvula.”

“Aw uyabonake wuwe obhora umtanabantu. There's no girl that is going to agree to stay with her in laws after getting married especially in nowadays. Incane lengane Muzi ukuthi ingakhona umuzi ongaka iyodwa.” (See you are the one who's boring the poor child.....This child is young to take care of this huge homestead alone...)

“She won't be alone I will be here.”

“You're not the one who's going to be cleaning, cooking for more than 10 people, doing laundry and make sure that everything runs smooth in the Maseko household while ensuring that your needs as her husband are also well taken care of. She will be always tired and deprive you sex. Time to look after herself won't be there because she would be busy

taking care of us and your children then you will resort to cheating because of lack of intimacy and how unattractive she would become.”

I never look at it that way.

“Marrying her doesn’t mean everything should change around here. Everyone is going to continue to cook and clean. She’s my wife not the family’s wife.”

“Unfortunately it doesn’t work like that brother. Once you get married you marry the whole family and don’t forget that in this village everything still goes by the book don’t ask me what book because I also don’t know.”

“She wants us to move to Durban my life is here. I don’t see myself moving out of here. I love it here.”

“Well I’m sure she can comprise on that and you guys can build your home around the village. Dad can talk to the chief and they will give you a land.”

“I hear you sis.”

“Ungabhoru ingane yabantu Muzikayise. Yes she’s coming from a well and disciplined home but she’s still young which leaves a room for mistakes. There are also friends who are going to influence her wena make sure that as much as you nurture her to be the woman and wife you want her to be but don’t disregard her feelings nor change her for who she is.” (Don’t bore the poor child Muzikayise...)

“I hear you loud and clear sis wami. Thank you.”

Now she’s giving me something to ponder on. I also don’t want my wife to be a slave.

“Let’s me go to finish my cooking.”

“I also want to buy grandpa at the shop my head is pounding. Let me take my wallet in my bedroom we will walk out together.”

I skip to the bedroom to take the wallet then we both walk out. Her going to the kitchen and me going to the Qwabe shop. I'm hoping I will see my baby there I should have brought my phone to call her yaz.

"Lemon cream cakes, simba chips the cream cheddar ones, tropika juice, chocolate top deck, red cakes and utramel," says this guy who's body structure is so familiar as his back is facing me. I walk closer and anger attacks me when I see who is he. It's that guy who beat me on stick fighting.

"Mnqobi."

"Sure sure Muzi," he greets me back and this guy turns to look at me.

"Uphi lomuntu." (Where's this person?)

"She asks me to stand in for her today."

“Okay.”

“Your money is short mfethu, ” Mngqobi says to the guy.

“With how much?”

“R25.”

“Okay,” he says counting few cents.

“Give me grandpa Mngqobi and deduct the money he owes you as well.” I give Mngqobi the R200 note.

“Ah mfethu don’t worry I got this.” The guy says with pride.

“Judging by the situation I don’t think so.” I say staring his cents on his hand then look at him. Mortification flashes across his face and I don’t know why my heart dances at that. Mngqobi gives me my change and the grandpa.

“Thanks man.” I head to the door then stops on my track and turn around.

“Are you not supposed to thank me?”

“Thank you,” he says and swallows hard.

“It’s a pleasure my boy.”

I walk out whistling leaving him chuckling with shame.

☆ Manelisi ☆

I chuckle as he walks out whistling and you can tell just by his walk that he thinks he own this world. Not that I blame him though with a smell like that and nice clothes like that I swear I’d walk like that and add a spring on my walk.

He did this to embarrass me I know that and I won't lie it worked. It's proving to me that I can never afford Mbewenhle I can't even afford to buy her goodies and her man had to help me out. The mortification attacks me like waves threatening to engulf me.

The days I spent without her after she came home to tell me that we can never hang out together I couldn't function. Demedi I love that girl and the love is growing in a rapid pace which scares me. She gave me a reason to fight for her when she told me she loves me last night but between you and I, I worry if I will ever win this fight.

This man just proved to me that I'm nothing but a loser. He's definitely better than me which makes me wonder what does she love in me? Sigh! Let me not spoil this day with pessimism. Today she promised me that she's coming to see me a bit later so I'm preparing for her visit. These things I bought are for her. I take my things and put them in a plastic then leave.

Ma Mthiyane fetched gogo this morning so I have all the house to myself. It's a 4 roomed house. Two bedrooms, one is gogo's

bedroom and another one is mine. The other rooms are kitchen and lounge with their outdated furniture. The first day she came here I was embarrassed but I don't want to be fake to her just to impress her. This is who I am and where I stay.

I make sure the house is clean especially my bedroom because it's the room that has decent furniture. Thanks to whoever came with a lay buy. I managed to lay by the furniture in a pawn shop with my salary for herding the cattle. Everything is set what is left is decent food. The tin food is there in the cupboard but I haven't forgotten her comment on how annoying tin stuff is. I bet she's a lover of meat and besides I can't cook pap and tin fish or baked beans for her.

The money she gave me I bought mostly toiletries and maize meal. There's nothing that makes me feel self conscious then not having a proper bath with toiletries. I can't wear rags and still smell bad that would make me look like a hobo. As old and faded my clothes are I make sure they're always clean.

I prepare the fire and cook the pap once it ready for cooking. Mind you I don't know lepapa uzoliphelezela ngani. 45 minutes

later I'm done I sit down on the chair trying to crack my brain what to do next but my mind is blank.

"Manelisi!!!!"

Not this woman what now! I drag myself out and find MaBhanda fuming with anger.

"Mama."

"See your dogs ate my chickens!"

"How is that possible mama I tied them on the pole for that reason."

"Yheyi angazi kodwa impangele yami ilahlekile!!!!"

"Ay I don't know where it is mama but as you can see my dogs are tied on the poles."

“Ngiyayifuna impangele yami wena mfana!” She charges for me with a cooking pan but I run inside the house and lock myself in.

I can hear her screaming and beating up my dogs which are howling in agony. Shame my poor dogs are being punished for nothing. Once she’s satisfied she walks away but still shouting. I hear the clucking sound and follow where the sound is coming from. I enter my grandma’s bedroom and see the hen on the bed and it just laid an egg. Idlozi lami alilali shame. Let me prepare my girl a chicken stew but athi ngihlohlosize kuqala iqanda ngithi ukuthatha mandla.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I watch her as she wipes herself with a towel while shaking her head and chuckling. Her shivering body is the indication of her anger.

“This girl doesn’t know me. I’m going to get her and I swear it won’t be nice even to you Mbewenhle,” she says and chuckle. It’s like she already has something in mind that she will do to her and I don’t even know how to respond to that.

“I’m sorry Ndiwe I don’t know what got into her.”

“Oh no it’s not your fault babe. Don’t worry I will sort this out on my own. I see you used to let this girl walk all over your head. Kuzonuka umnsinsila umhlaba wonke girl.” I’m not sure I like her tone right now but I don’t blame her. Isisa was way out of hand.

What she did is unnecessary and childish. Mom have been telling me to let her be now I've reached that stage where I don't care especially after what she did to my friend.

She's done wiping herself now she's changing into another dress. We are going to Newcastle Mall for shopping. I'm not sure if we are still going though they way she's angry. I give her the hairdryer and take her wet clothes before heading outside to hang them.

"Isisa is so rude! I'm going to her mother right now! How dare she splash water on my guest!" I come back to my mom yelling.

"No it's okay mama don't worry. I don't want to cause any problems. I don't want to seem like I'm coming between neighbors." Ndiwe

"No this girl needs to learn that..."

"Please don't do that. I forgive her. Sit down mommy and relax I will get you your amagwinyas and mango juice." Mom

chuckles at Ndiwe's comment who then walks to the kitchen. A few minutes later she comes back with a tray. Mama sits down on the couch and thanks Ndiwe as she takes the tray from her.

"Babe please hair-dry my hair," Ndiwe says to me.

"Sure let me go take the comb in my bedroom."

I skip to my bedroom to fetch the comb then begin to hair-dry her hair. Once we are done, mama styled her hair then we leave.

"I should teach you how to drive."

"You can't teach me with this car what if I break it?"

"You won't break it. I'm sure by the time I leave, you will know how to drive."

“I would really appreciate that. I’m sure dad won’t mind to give me money for the license.”

“If he refuse let me know I will sort it out for you.”

“I can’t expect you to do that for me Ndiwe.”

“Why not?”

“It’s too much Uthandiwe.”

“I’m sorry if I make you feel like a charity case I was just trying to help you babe.”

“I understand don’t worry about it.”

“So have you decided what you’re going to do with isithembu sakho,” she says and we both laugh

“I can’t leave Muzikayise but at the same time I can’t stay away from Manelisi. I don’t know what to do Uthandiwe.”

“Let Muzikayise go babe.”

“Letting Muzikayise go is not an option. That will tarnish my reputation. I will be the talk of the village. Not only my parents are going to be disappointed in me, Gogo Mthombeni who’s testing our virginity and her assistant, Isisa’s mom. How can I forget the maidens it’s going to be a mess. Chances of my dad beating me up and disowning me are so high. My parents are not like yours Uthandiwe especially my dad. He’s living in 1960 whereby girls children are only good enough to expand his kraal and being wives nothing more, nothing less. The meek and obedient wife mom is doesn’t help the situation.”

“Yhoo I didn’t think it’s that deep babe I’m sorry. So you will stay with someone you don’t love?”

“I do love him.”

“But not as you love Manelisi.”

“I don’t want to compare them because they’re different men and I love them differently.”

“But what you’re doing won’t solve anything moss. You’re literally cheating on Muzikayise right now and I’m scared for you babe. What if he finds out? You would still be the talk of the village and your reputation will be tarnished. Leave Manelisi then. Don’t string the poor guy along knowing that you can never be with him.”

“Manelisi is stubborn and he’s adamant that he will fight for me. No matter how I tell him I can’t be with him, he doesn’t want to hear it and not being able to control myself when I’m with him is not helping the situation.”

“At the end of the day you have leave to Manelisi or Muzikayise.”

“I’m trying, I’m really trying to leave Manelisi.”

“Still today you’re going to his place.”

“Yes to tell him that though I love him but we can’t be together.”

“Why don’t I trust you?”

“I don’t trust myself either.” I groan and bury my face in my hands. God why are you doing this to me? Or is it my ancestors who are playing with me? I feel her hand squeezing my shoulder.

“Whatever happens just know that you can count on me okay.”

“That means a lot to me Ndiwe. Thank you so much.”

“No thank you.”

“Oh please you are the one who’s very supportive. I haven’t done anything for you.”

“It’s your presence in my life that means a lot to me. Yaz I never had a friend before. My siblings and my mothers are my best friends. Abo Zipho are just my people who I get sloshed with, our relationship is nothing close to friendship.”

“Oh I guess I’m the lucky one then. If you don’t mind me asking why don’t you have friends.”

“Trust issues.”

“Ain’t we all have.”

“I guess we all do but it depends on our reasons or things we have been through.”

“I feel you hey.”

We arrive at Newcastle Mall. It's been a while since I have been here and in my eyes it feels it's my first time.

"So what's your budget girl."

"There's no budget babe we will shop until we drop," she says showing me her credit card.

This girl is living the life! I may not have such privilege but my children have to taste this life, I've got to make sure of that. Kayise won't deprive my children a better life. If he wants to be stuck in the village for the rest of his life it's okay but my children will become whatever that they want to be and they will travel the world.

We start at Lina boutique and buy a few dresses and sandals then we go to Spitz. Some sneakers catch my eyes the moment I walk inside the store but I chastise myself. Jizas can't he just leave my mind for a second pulizzz!

"You love them?"

“What?”

“The sneakers duh. Ain’t they big for your ant’s feet.” I laugh as I punch her playfully making her to laugh too .

“I don’t have an ant’s feet wena!”

“This is a male section moss babe,” she says taking the sneakers and looks at them. I don’t say anything to her which makes her to look at me, more like observing me.

“You want them for Manelisi.”

“What? No I can’t...”

“Take them.”

“Uthandiwe...”

“No Mbewenhle , you’re the one who told me that he’s struggling. I think this is a great thing to do in fact you can even choose anything for him I don’t mind. Not that I’m bragging but my family has money that we don’t even use why not help the need.”

“No that’s way extreme Uthandiwe. It’s really enough that you’re buying me clothes you can’t buy for my side nigga as well.” Look at me saying side nigga as if it’s a nice thing to say.

“Well I’m not taking no as an answer! What size does he wear?”

God this girl! I heave a huge sigh.

“I’m not sure but these look like they can fit him not that I’m saying we should take them. He has pride he won’t accept them in fact he will be angry at me.”

“Don’t give him a choice. We are buying these sneakers for him.”

“How much do they cost.”

“R1990.”

“Yhooo Uthandiwe....”

“I said I’m not taking no for an answer babe.” I have no choice but to acquiesce.

After paying we go to sportscene where I choose pairs of jeans I, shorts and t-shirts. I can already see his angry face as I’m taking these. He’s going to eat me alive but I fail to just watch him while there’s help I can offer to him. Truworth is our next store followed by Edgars. I’m getting tired by the second but this girl want us to empty the stores. Our last shop is Woolworth then we go to Nashville Spur pushing big trolleys filled with our shopping bags.

“Thank you so much MaDinangwe for the shopping! You are the best!” I say with glee when we sit down on our table.

“Ah don’t mention it babe it’s nothing big.” It’s nothing big? Is this girl serious I have never bought so much clothes in my life. Once we have made up our minds she calls the waiter to take our order.

“Can you be impelesi yami on my umemulo ceremony.”

A myriad of emotions flash on her face but she masks them with a faint smile.

“I would love to babe but I can’t.”

“Why?” I can hear disappointment in my voice.

“I’m not a virgin anymore.”

“You naughty girl! Tell me more.”

“Well I was raped at the age of 7 years by a group of boys I used to play with.”

Oh nooo! Me and my big mouth I shouldn't have probe any further.

“I'm sorry Ndiwe.” I reach for her hand and squeeze it. She gives me a faint smile and blinks back her tears.

“This is the reason I find it hard to let people in my life but I'm fine don't be sorry.”

“Oh girl...what happened to the boys?”

“They were locked up at the juvenile for two years the younger ones had to clean a community hall because they were young to go to the juvenile.”

“Yhoo I don't know what to say girl. I'm really sorry for everything you went through. You have been through a lot hey

but yet you're standing strong and tall. I don't think I would've survived what you went through. Uyimbokodo yaz keep mbokoding little mama."

"Thank you so much babe." She briskly wipes a tear that escaped from her eye and grins.

"So who's your special somebody?" I redirect the mood to the lighter one.

"I don't do relationship babe."

Our food arrives and we dig in.

"You're lying!"

"I'm telling you I do fuck around though."

"I've always known there's a naughty side of you!"

She giggles and I join her.

“I’ve did them all girl but Makhandakhanda yoooh that boy was so clueless which gave me more power. I took his virginity.”

“Oh my goodness you fucked Makhandakhanda!”

This is unbelievable!

“Yes I was holding on his funny shaped head while twerking on him. He was literally crying for his mom..awemaaalooo,” she mimics him on the last word and we crack up into laughter.

This just reminds me of my sexcapades with Kayise which I share to her and we are rolling in aisles. Spending time with her it’s nice. I love her and we are going to have a great friendship. She’s fun to be around with and I love how smart, observant, caring and kind she is.

After our lunch she wants us to start at her home because her mothers want to meet me but I'm not ready and I'm glad she understand when I tell her that. We buy some goodies and pizza for supper because we would be tired to cook when we get home. Mom will have to cook for her husband because he will never sleep with pizza.

Once we are at the village I tell her to tell the folks that I'm at the shop but she insists to call Mvelonhle and they take a drive together after she dropped me off at the Maphumulos. I'm nervous now that I'm here especially because of these shopping bags I'm carrying. I'm about to knock when he appears with a wild smile on his face. He allows me in and stares at my fully occupied hands with a frown.

"Dombolo lami."

"Mqwebu wami." I'm trying to soften him up. Oh is that a blush I'm seeing?

"How are you my dumplings."

“I’m okay my biltong and yourself,” I say putting the plastics and paper bags on the table.

“Now that you’re here I’m happy. Come here.”

He envelopes me in his arms and his warmth seep into my being. Our lips meet half way and we share a kiss as I wrap my arms around his neck, standing on my toes and enjoying the taste of his lips against mine. The grip of his hand on my buttocks tightens forcing out a moan in my mouth. God I don’t like how wet I just become under his touch it’s not normal.

“Ngiyakuthanda,” he says staring deeply in my eyes with his raspy voice. There’s an intense emotion laid out in his voice.

“I love you too but....”

“Shhh I don’t want buts okay. Today we are just going to enjoy our time together. Siyezwana angithi?” I find myself nodding at his command.

“What are these?”

I bite my lip as I disentangle myself from his arms.

“Don’t be mad please.”

He cocks his brow and peeks inside the plastic bags.

“What are these dombolo lami.”

“Uhm something from me as a gift.”

He goes through the bags and takes the clothes out, looking at them as if he’s observing them then throws them back. My heart skips a beat when he turns and looks at me with a hardened expression.

“Clothes Mbewenhle? Did I tell you that I’m short with clothes?”

“No Manelisi I thought...”

“You thought argh shame skephseli senkosi let me buy him some clothes.”

“It’s not the way as you are putting it Manelisi.”

“Oh really? How is it like then huh? Don’t make me a fool! You just want to show me how useless and loser I am!!! Well I don’t want these clothes. I’m fine with the clothes I wear I don’t need you to throw it on my face how poor I am! Ngiyazi!” He bellows angrily and his body is shaking. I should have listened to my gut and not bought these clothes yaz.

“I’m sorry it wasn’t my intention to throw your struggling on your face. When I saw these clothes I thought how good they will look on you. I will take them back but please find it in your heart to forgive me.”

He clenches his jaw and I move closer to him and caress his cheek while staring deep into his now bloodshot upturned eyes.

“One thing I will never do on purpose to you is to throw a situation on your face you didn’t brought upon yourself. I wish you could see in my heart that when I do things for you it’s not that I pity you but I care so much. I wish you could stop reading much into this and allow me to be here for you in more ways than one. Allow me to lessen your burden wherever I can Dubandlela please.”

He heaves a sigh and momentarily closes his eyes as I run my nails on his beard.

“Ungenza ngizizwe ngiyisihluleki sendoda.” (You make me feel like a loser of a man)

“But you’re not my biltong. I wish you could see yourself through my eyes. Manelisi I have a man who loves me so much and who has everything that you don’t but I’m here okay. No matter how I try to stop myself I always find myself here right

next to you. I don't see a loser in you but a man who has dreams and passion. A man who nothing will stand on his way to achieve whatever he set his mind on. I believe in you Zikode and this it's just a passing phase. One day when you have achieved everything you want you will remember this moment and maybe it will only then you will realize what I see in you is not just a figment but it's who you are."

He chuckles softly and a teardrop rolls down his left cheek. I catch it with my thumb and wipe it away.

"Where have you been all this time?" Before I can respond he kisses me. The kiss is laced with so much love and we are our pure and vulnerable selves.

He picks me up, allowing me to clamp my legs around his waist. I feel him moving with me and when I take a little peek we are going to his bedroom where he gently lays me on the bed and gets on top of me. He wrenches his lips from mine only to pin them against my ear and whisper "I love you dombolo lami" causing my body to break into goosebumps. He peels off my clothes and leaves me butt naked.

“I’m coming,” he says and disappears out of the door. I look at him with a raised brow when he comes back with an utramel. He wants to eat an utramel while I’m naked and soaking wet. Can’t he take care of the ache down there first. He puts it on the pedestal and I watch him as he takes off his blue faded t-shirt with rats bites holes. Though he’s in on the skinny side but he’s well built.

“Manelisi...sssss,” as I’m about to complain but the cold feel of utramel on my skin causes me to wince. He pours the utramel on my upper body.

“I want to eat this custard on you dombolo lami,” he says and runs his tongue on my neck going down to my chest licking off the utramel. I could feel my breathing getting rapid and unsteady at the feel of his warm tongue sliding up, down and in circular motion all over my body.

I attempt to stop him from sucking my nipples but it proves to be futile. I’m writhing and moaning, damn this is mind blowing and it makes me wonder if this is how mothers feel when they’re breastfeeding? That must be weird I tell you. He opens my legs apart revealing my dripping wet cunt.

“You have a beautiful vagina dombolo lami.”

I want to laugh, this man can't be serious. This thing is ugly ngathi inunu yokuthusa abantwana and mine is even worse because I have huge labia minora. I see him fiddling with his pants and hear some funny noise then he blows air on my vagina which makes me to moan. I jump from the bed when he strokes his tongue on my vagina. What the hell?

“Relax okay.”

How can I relax when his tongue is creating a hot and electrifying sensation that I have never felt in my whole life in my pussy. This is different from what Kayise usually does to me kanti linjani ilimi laManelisi? I keep jumping up every time his tongue comes in contact with my vagina and he bites on my thighs.

“You have no manners why are you disturbing me when I'm eating my cupcake.” his voice is raspy and thick with arousal.

“I can’t help myself what are you doing to me huh!”

In a quick move he lifts me up with my buttocks and my mound is right on his face. Now I’m on the bed with my head only and balancing with my hands can you imagine? I swear my orgasm juices will come out of my nostrils. He’s lapping up at my juices and diving his tongue into my core.

“Uzophuka intamo dombolo lami stop jumping.” (You will break your neck my dumplings stop jumping)

I scream as a bolt of electricity shoots through me causing my whole body to tense up. He eats me up, swirling, sucking and dividing his tongue deep into my core. My toes curl in the air as an intense wave sweeps over me. I cry out his name and explode into his mouth. For a few seconds I black out and when I open my eyes he’s lying on top of me and staring at me with a smile.

“Are you okay.”

“What did you do to me.”

He giggles and sticks out his tongue at me which has something that looks like a sweet.

“What’s that.”

“It’s a halls sweet.”

“Jizas Manelisi you want to kill me with ecstasy!”

“I plan to madam,” he says and takes out his pants together with his boxer. His member is standing proudly

He’s not big as Kayise but he’s also well endowed.

He kisses me and I taste the mixture of halls and myself in his mouth. The feel of his hardness rubbing against my slit ignite a desperate need that I’m unable to decipher. I wrap my legs

around his butt pulling him closer but to myself as if he's not close enough.

"Lisi please," I whisper not sure what am I asking him to do. He unclamps my legs from his butt and rubs the tip of his manhood between my folds. The slurping sound together with our noise of pleasure fills his whole room as he strokes his dick up and down my vagina. I reach the second orgasm unexpectedly and that seems to trigger his as I see him holds his cock and strokes it fast and hard.

"Oh fuck!!!"

He throws his head back, biting his bottom lip and release a gruff whisper as he spills his semen on my tummy.

"Kubusa wena enhlizweni yami MaQwabe," he says panting as he collapses on me, burying his head on the crook of my neck. A wave of warmth spreads throughout my body at those words. It feels so wrong yet so right.

☆ Isisa ☆

I have no doubt that I look lost here and the way people are looking at me. Can Thuthu get here already before the tsotsis see a target and rob me not that I have any money with me but I can't lose my phone. Bajabulile is still paying for this phone. She has a Edgars account so that how she bought me this phone on my birthday. The old one I gave it to my little brother.

Just as I'm about to call him a red Renault Clio pulls over next to me and I spot him inside of it. He steps out of the car and comes to me with a grin. Damn he looks gorgeous in a black tee and tight jeans. I missed him so much and he has grown a beard which makes him look sexy.

"Sthandwa sa Thuthu."

"Hey."

We share a hug then he briefly kisses me. I blush because I have never kissed anyone in public while people are staring. He takes my bag and puts it in the boot then open the front door for me. Once I'm inside he closes the door and jogs to his side.

"Who's car is this." I ask as we drive away.

"It's my aunt's. I'm so happy you are here baby."

"Bajabulie wants to talk to you when we arrive."

"Yhoo what does she want to say to me?"

"Ay phela my mom wasn't going to allow me to come. I had to lie and say I'm visiting Bajabulile."

"Eish okay." I can see that he's stressing out shame he will be strong because the only way she agreed for me to do this is that she wants to talk to him.

Bajabulile stays in Newcastle she's a manager at Pick n Pay in Newcastle town. Mom thinks she's renting kanti she stays with her man. That woman would flip if she were to find out that Jabu is cohabiting let alone that her man is an ex convict.

"How are you my sweetheart."

"I'm okay baby."

"Things between you and Mbewenhle are still the same?"

"Yes they won't change."

"Haibo Isisa that's your best friend you can't stay mad at her forever."

"It's not like I matter in her life, she replaced me with that cheese girl."

"Don't you think you are being extreme right now."

“Wuwe osixabanisile Thuthuka awuyeke ukungidina!” (You are the one who caused us to fight stop annoying me!)

“I’m sorry okay and I won’t stop apologizing until you forgive both of us. I know I made a biggest mistake but for you to come here gives me hope. I love you Isisa.”

I also love you moron and I’m not supposed to be here but I couldn’t miss the opportunity to be out of the village for a few days just to clear my head. This place is beautiful and abantu bala bakhile yoooh.

He drives through the yard of this beautiful huge single story house with double garage and opens the door for me after stepping out of the car. I do so as well and wait for him to take my bag in the boot then leads me to the house. We are greeted by the aroma of chicken stew as we enter a spacious kitchen with built in cupboards and granite tops.

“Oh you’re back,” says this beautiful petite woman who’s wiping her hand with a dish cloth then walks towards us.

“Yes Aunty. This is her.”

“Hello baby.”

“Hi aunty.” I say politely bowing my head.

“Yhuuu she’s so beautiful Thuthu. I’m Xolisile, his aunt and you sis?”

“I’m Isisa. Isisa Magwaza, his friend.”

“Friend huh,” she says and we all giggle. God she’s beautiful with a flawless skin and she looks like she’s in her late thirties.

“You are welcome my girl. Thuthu take her bag to your room.”

“Okay aunty.” He walks away leaving me with his aunt.

“What do you like to drink?”

“Juice please.”

“Okay come make yourself comfortable.” She leads me to the lounge and I make myself comfortable on the comfy black leather couch. The lounge has that vintage look yet it’s beautiful. I text my sister and tell her that I’ve arrived. She calls me immediately.

“Give him the phone.”

“Geee Jabu.”

“Hayi Isisa we had a deal!”

I roll my eyes and just then Thuthu walks in.

“Okay here he is.” I hand him the phone and guess what he walks out. Where is he going? I also want to hear what she

wants to say to him. His aunty walks in with a tray and give it to me.

“Thank you.”

“I’m still cooking but soon I will dish up.”

“No problem aunty.”

I indulge in my piece of chocolate cake and juice while conversing with his aunty. She seems like a nice woman. Thuthu joins us and gives me the phone. I study him but I can’t seem to read his face. I hope Jabu wasn’t harsh too on him even though he deserves it. Of course I told her what he did to me, she’s my go to woman. I’m blessed to have a sister like her.

Aunty Xoli’s husband and their 14 year daughter arrives. Thuthu introduces me, the husband seems nice as well but their daughter has attitude. You can tell that it’s the adolescent stage. I must say though that the Mthabela’s are nice people.

We eat supper at 8pm and around 10pm after I have washed the dishes with miss attitude's help I retire to sleep. Thuthu is already in bed waiting for me. I take off my clothes and look for my pjs.

"Don't wear pjs ngikfuna unqunu cwe." (...I want you naked.)

I look at him, he better not start his nonsense now.

"No I won't break your virginity baby. Your sister warned me okay. I just want us to have fun you are going to enjoy it."

"What else did she say?"

"It's between us but it's nothing to worry about. Come to me baby."

The moment I jump into bed he attacks me with a kiss pulling me closer to his warm body. Yes he's also butt naked.

"I need you to trust me okay," he whispers in my ears and I nod allowing him to do whatever he wants to do with me. Tenderly he kisses my neck going down to my chest and sucks on my tities like an infant. I moan his name softly. He makes me lie on my stomach and pulls up my ass then he reaches for a bottle of oil on the bedside table. I feel him smearing it on my asshole and rubs it with his finger.

"We are going to try anal penetration okay."

"Does it hurt?" The fear in my voice cannot be missed.

"Not it doesn't."

I swallow hard, my heart is galloping against my chest. I tilt my head and look at him as he smear the oil on his hard dick.

“I will be gently okay,” he says, I guess he can see how scared I am.

“Okay.”

I feel the tip of his penis entering my asshole. The more he pushes in his cock it's the more it hurt. I'm trying to be brave but no maan kubuhlungu.

“Thuthuka it hurt.”

“Just a bit baby it will be better right now.” He pushes in once again and I scream in agony and move away from him.

“Kubuhlungu” Tears stream down my face.

“Okay don't cry I'm sorry. I'm not going to penetrate you anymore.”

“Let's just sleep please.”

He wipes my tears with the back of his palms and kisses the pain out of me. His tongue is making love in my mouth as my body melts underneath him. When he pulls his mouth away from me he whispers sweet nothing things while raining kisses all over my body until his head is stuffed between my thighs. I scream at the first swipe of his tongue in my vagina.

“Aaahhh Thuthuu!”

What is this guy doing to me? His strokes are driving me insane. I have even forgotten that there are adults in this house and I’m screaming on top of my voice, gurgling his praises. I feel a surge of wave gushing down but he replaces his tongue with his dick.

He rubs himself on me and it feels good we are both moaning and groaning enjoying the feel of our private parts rubbing against each other and creating an intense pleasure. The pace of his hand is increasing and my nails are digging deeper into his arms. Tears well up in my eyes as a foreign sensation attacks my body causing it to shudder.

“Ohhh my goodness!”

“Oh shit!”

Right at that moment our bodies convulse and we hold on each other tightly as I feel warm liquid gushing out I’m not from me or him but it feels so damn good. He collapses on to of me panting.

“I love you so much Isisa.”

“I love you too Thuthu.”

.....

My stay at Standerton was amazing I really enjoyed everyday we spend together. We had plenty of picnics, watch movies

which is something I only watch in TV and had a lot of oral sex. It's been a blissful days of my life.

He begged me to fix things with Mbewu. I told him that I will do it if he also fix things with Muzi so now we are back in the village. It's been a day since we have been back.

Now I'm going to the Qwabe homestead and I'm preparing my speech. I suddenly feel scared and I can't seem to get my words straight. She's playing cards on the veranda with cheese girl. God when is this girl going back to her home? I see her nudging Mbewu and they both look at me as I walk closer to them.

"Greetings girls."

"Hey Isisa," replies Mbewenhle only.

"Can we talk."

"Sure," she says but doesn't move from where she's sitting.

“In private please.”

“You can talk Isisa,” she says flatly showing no interest. Okay I guess I deserve that. I heave a sigh

“I’m here to tell you that I miss you so much and I would like us to put everything behind us. I would understand if you don’t want...” before I can even finish talking she springs up from her seat and attacks me with a hug that I almost fall.

“Thank you so much ay kodwa unenhliziyoyeqinile yeeerrr.” we both giggle in each other’s arm then pull away from the embrace.

“You also have something to say to Uthandiwe friend.”

“She mustn’t even bother,” cheese girl says

“Vele I wasn’t going to say anything to you cheese girl! Ubuyela nini kin?”

“Hayi Isisa I wont allow you to say that to my friend. You’re the one who called her names and splash water on her you have to humble yourself.”

“Don’t worry babe I don’t want her apology. Wena nuthu girl I will go back home once I’m done humbling you. I see you think you poop chocolate.” with that said she walks inside the house.

“Well you heard her she doesn’t want my apology so let move on with life.”

“Would you stop this jealousy? It’s annoying really. Uthandiwe is my friend and you’re my best friend yini inkinga manje?”  
(...What’s the problem?)

“Okay I’m sorry I’m not used to share you. Please call her so that I will humble myself and apologize to her.”

“Okay.”

She walks inside and I wait for more then I thought I would but she comes back alone.

“She refused but she will come around. You want anything to drink.”

“No I have to go back and cook friend.”

“Okay let me walk you out.”

She walks me out and I tell that I fixed things with Thuthu. I don't want her to find out from someone else.

“Are you sure about that?”

“I love him friend and he's really remorseful.”

“Well I’m always here to support you friend as long as you are sure and happy about this. Your happiness means a lot to me.”

“I went to Standerton to see him and we tried anal penetration yhoo I thought I was dying.”

“It was that horrible?” She asks giggling.

“It was painful friend I even cried. Then he tongued me and rubbed himself on me damn! Why you didn’t tell me how nice oral sex is.” We giggle.

“Manelisi tounged me while he had halls sweet in his mouth. Yhoo friend that shit was mind blowing.”

“Who’s Manelisi.”

“I said Kayise.”

“I can differentiate K and M Mbewu.”

“Uhm I have to go. Thank you for forgiving me. I love you.” She kisses my cheeks and runs away leaving me confused. Who’s Manelisi now? I walk back home.

“You made a good decision I saw you walking with her. Now let’s hope you will stay very far from that boy.”

“Eh mama.” What else can I say? I get started with preparing the supper while chatting with my man on WhatsApp.

It’s the next day and I’m going to visit Mbewu and I’m hoping that cheese girl is calm now and I can apologize to her. The pink car is parked in the yard, well this means they’re here. I knock on the door and I’m greeted by mama’s stomach. Is she pregnant?

“Greetings mama.”

“Hi Isisa.” I can’t miss the iciness in her voice.

“Is Mbewenhle here?”

“No she went to the shop with her friend.”

“Oh okay let me go there.”

On my way to the store I receive a text from my man telling me that he’s coming to fetch me we should meet half way. I will see Mbewu later let me take another road and head to Masekos.

God I can’t believe that he made me walk alone. I call him but his phone rings unanswered. I’m so mad at him why is he making me a fool! I jump the fence at the back of his room so that no one see me. The kids are just playing in the yard and not even aware of me. I quickly walk to the door and barge inside his room. I couldn’t prepare myself for what I’m seeing right now. Cheese girl is on top of Thuthu riding him like the world is ending and he’s grunting.

“Thuthu.” I whisper loud enough for them to hear me.

“Oh shit! Isisa sthandwa sam.” He says pushing cheese girl away from him and jumps off the bed, coming to me butt naked with his dick wrapped in a condom. I shake my head vigorously and run out, tears blurring my vision.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

“Hayi maan baby what if someone walks in,” I say giggling as he tries to slide his hand between my thighs and finger fuck me, mind you we are at my father’s shop.

“No one will come my love.”

“Ha.na baby.” I’m trying so hard to not say names before I find myself calling him with a wrong name.

“Awufuni ngikope,” he says and I giggle.

“Not here anyone could walk in here.”

“Not here what?”

“Hayi Kayise.”

“Oho.”

He holds me in place and slides his hand under my panties.

“Baby please.”

“Say it first then I will stop.”

“Uzobuye ungikope Sidwaba Sikuthuli.” (You will finger fuck me some other time Siluthuli) I say and he giggles softly then looks at me like I’m sort of a meal that he wants to devour right in this moment.

“I never thought this word is this dirty and sexy until you said it.” He’s referring to the word ‘ungikope’ as if there’s any other word I can say. That’s how Zulu is, it’s raw like that.

“So things are good between you and Thuthuka.”

“Yes and I’m so happy baby now that we have put this behind us. See Thuthuka may be my nephew but he’s like my brother.”

He shoves a chunk of simba chips in my mouth.

“I’m glad things are okay between you two, I was so worried.”

“Don’t be...you and Isisa.”

“We are also okay we fixed things yesterday. I just wish she and Uthandiwe can get along.”

“I don’t like this Uthandiwe girl.”

“You don’t know her baby.”

“Don’t think I didn’t hear you in the phone that you were drunk last night Yeyeye.”

Oh God and I thought he didn't hear that. Last night Isisa, Lonhle and I were drinking bottles of wine Ndiwe bought when we were in Newcastle days back. Of course we drank without the parents knowledge. They both had an early sleep yesterday because mom wasn't feeling well. It was really fun we retired to sleep around 3 in the morning.

"No I wasn't baby."

"Haibo njalo," he warns and I bite my lip nervously.

"Okay I just had one glass Muzikayise."

"Didn't I tell you to never drink again?"

"One glass Kayise is not drinking."

"Don't make me your fool one glass wont make you drunk like that."

“Ngiyaxolisa.” (I’m sorry)

“Uphinde ke uzobona.” (Dare drink again you will see )

“I won’t but please don’t involve Ndiwe in this because she didn’t force me.”

“She’s the one who’s influencing you to drink alcohol.”

“That’s not true Muzikayise.”

“Kiss me and stop defending her because I know what I’m talking about.”

I heave a sigh and lean closer to kiss him. Our tongues are dancing to their own tune and we are moaning in each other’s mouth. A loud sob disturbs us and when I pull away from his lips I see Isisa. I jump up from my chair and go to the customers side.

“Isisa what’s wrong?” I ask and she flings herself into my arms.

Her painful and raw cry makes my mind think of the worst scenarios that happened. I’m not sure I want to hear what she’s about to tell me. Thuthuka throws himself inside the store as if he’s chased by wild animals.

“Baby I’m sorry,” he says walking towards us.

“Leave me alone Thuthuka!” Isisa shrieks.

“What have you done now Thuthuka?” Muzikayise

“Eish Malumes...Isisa can we talk please?”

“I don’t want to talk to you! Go back and fuck your cheese girl!” Isisa barks angrily against my chest. I didn’t think that he would hurt her already in such a short space of time they’ve fixed things. Wait she said cheese girl? It can’t be Uthandiwe that she’s talking about.

“I’m sorry Isisa from the bottom of my heart. I succumbed to temptation sthandwa sami please forgive me.”

“What’s going on Thuthuka?” I ask

“I didn’t mean to I swear Mbewenhle...”

“What have you done! Talk dammit!!!”

“Baby calm down please.”

“Don’t tell me to calm down Muzikayise. Look at her? How am I supposed to calm down when she’s crying like this!!”

“Your friend seduced me and I wanted to control myself I swear I couldn’t. Isisa found us having...sex.”

“My friend?”

“Uthandiwe,” Isisa says with a crying voice. Oh no what have they both done.

“Oh she forced you to sleep with her?”

“Of course not Mbewenhle....”

“Do you realize what you have done Thuthuka? Once again you have come between me and my friends! God I hate you right. Get out of my father’s store now!!”

“Can I talk to her please.”

“She doesn’t want to talk to you! Leave!” I’m shaking with anger.

“I will see you tomorrow Yeyeye.” Muzikayise

“Okay.”

He kisses my cheek and tells Isisa that he’s sorry then walks out. I take Isisa to the other side and make her sit down then get water for her to drink.

“Here friend drink.”

She takes the cup with shaking hands and drinks the water. Thuthuka doesn’t deserve Isisa yaz. He’s an asshole! Yes it takes one to know one. Thuthuka and me, same WhatsApp group.

“I’m sorry friend. I don’t even know what to say to you and for the fact that Uthandiwe is also involved in this leaves me speechless.”

“But she didn’t force him to sleep with her. He fucked him willingly and he was enjoying it when she was twerking on him. How could he hurt me like this Mbewenhle?” She bursts into tears and my heart aches for her.

“He did this because he’s an asshole friend and he doesn’t deserve your love. There are so many guys out there who will be so lucky to have you in their lives. Guys who will appreciate you and treat you like a Queen that you are. Cry my friend release all the pain inside of you and wake up tomorrow stronger than before.”

I take the glass of water and put it on the counter then envelope her in my arms allowing her to release the pain inside of her. I can feel her pain, the same pain Kayise is going to feel if he ever finds out about my shenanigans. Guilt is having a feast on me and I feel so awful.

I want to believe me I really want to stop this and focus on him only but I can’t help myself. I don’t know what am I hoping to achieve with what I’m doing with these both guys. I need isguqo, indayela and shembe Vaseline to cast out ubufebe in me.

“I want to go home and lie down.”

“Okay let me tell Mngqobi I’m leaving. I won’t let you go alone.”

“No it’s fine you don’t have to leave the store. I’m just going to lie down maybe I will wake up feeling better.”

“I insist on leaving with you.”

“Okay if you insist.”

I go to the liquor side and tell Mnqobi I’m going, as always he doesn’t mind. Now I feel like I’m taking an advantage of him. I need to talk to dad to increase his salary at least. I take my phone then Isisa and I leave.

“I don’t think I will ever get through this Mbewu. It hurts so bad. Mom did say I must stay away from him I should have listened to her. I’m so stupid!”

“No you are not stupid friend. I won’t allow you to crucify yourself for that asshole. I’m sure it’s going to take time for you to get over this but I want you to know that I’m here for you anytime. Even if you just need to vent and cry in the middle of

the night don't hesitate to let me know okay. I love you so much."

"I love you too friend."

Once we are at her home I greet her mom who seems happy to see me then we go to her bedroom. I allow her to rest her head on my chest and stroke her back as she weep silently until she falls asleep. I gingerly put her on the bed and cover her with a throw.

"You're a good friend. I'm glad that you fixed things." Isisa's mom's voice startles me. She's standing by the door.

"I'm also glad mama." I say and we both walk out of her bedroom.

"What happened? She didn't look okay at all."

"Uhm she's okay mama."

“Don’t lie to me Mbewenhle. She’s my daughter I have a right to know what’s going on.”

“Then you will have to ask her. I don’t want to betray her once again. Usalekahle.” I walk out before she forces the truth out of me.

Something in me moves when I see Uthandiwe lying on my bed with her back and her legs crossed. She’s giggling with whoever she’s chatting with on the phone.

“Did you have to do what you did?”

She tilts her head to look at me.

“What?”

“Don’t make me a fool Ndiwe.”

“I didn’t know she’s her boyfriend babe.”

“You’re lying Uthandiwe. You have been asking me about Thuthuka and I gave you all information not knowing that you are planning something malicious!”

“So you are seriously on her side? She called me a cheese girl and pour water on me Mbewenhle!”

She gets up from the bed and glares at me angrily.

“I’m not saying what she did is right but what you did is extremely wrong! How could you do this to another girl?”

“I don’t owe her shit! Maybe now she will learn to respect other people.”

“You’re so cruel Uthandiwe!”

“So this is you taking her side vele?”

“I’m not taking her side but she’s been wanting to apologize to you. There was no need for you to sleep with her boyfriend! I thought you are a good hearted girl clearly I was wrong with you!”

“I like that you said you thought...well it’s your problem sis that you thought wrong. I never claimed to be a sweetheart mina. No one is going to walk over my head and I will keep quiet about it! Some of us are not fake like you Mbewenhle. We don’t hide behind virginity testing claiming to be perfect while we know very well that we are whores. Muzikayise is so sure that he scored a good beautiful maiden to wife kanti weee you’re busy entertaining another guy. I feel sorry for him the day he finds out who he really falls in love with!”

“Wow I never thought that you will use this against me! I told you this because I trusted you Uthandiwe!”

“I’m leaving sala with your friend and continue to lick her ass as you always do!”

She gets up from the bed and takes her luggage on top of my wardrobe then starts packing strenuously.

“What’s going on? What is this noise about?” Mama says as she barges in my bedroom. I don’t know what to say to her.

“Why are you packing Uthandiwe?”

“I’m leaving mama.”

“I thought you will leave next week.”

“Your daughter doesn’t want me here anymore.”

“Stop lying!”

“Mxm!”

She zips her luggage and takes her phone on my bed.

“It was nice to be here mama. Thanks for your hospitality hopefully one day we will see each other.”

“Don’t go sis, whatever that is going on between the two of you please let sort it out.”

“Goodbye mama.”

She walks away lugging her luggage. I shuffle to the window and watch her as she packs her luggage in the boot and closes it then go to her driver seat. In a few seconds the car is driving out. I let my tears fall the moment she’s out of my sight. What just happened?

“What happened Mbewenhle? What did you do to her?”

“I didn’t do anything mama.”

“She said you no longer want her. That girl is kind and respectful something must have happened talk to me baby.”

“I can’t tell you because the next thing you will do is to turn this to be about me.”

I take the big pillows on my bed and put them on top of my chest drawers.

“What does that supposed to mean?”

“Nothing I want to sleep. Don’t wake me up for supper.”

“What supper? Did you cook it?”

Oh no her laziness is going to make me hate this baby. To think for 3 months after giving birth she won’t be doing anything. I better steel myself.

.....

I have been awake for an hour now but I don't have strength to wake up. I hate how things transpired between me and Ndiwe. I wanted to know if she arrived safe at home but she blocked me even on WhatsApp. I've lost her I can feel it in my gut. Our heated argument is still ringing in my ears. I never claimed to be perfect to anyone. Not that I'm trying to defend myself or justify my actions but maidens are also humans and they make mistakes like anyone.

Kayise has a surprise for me and he said at 10am I must be ready. I drag myself out of the bed and make my bed before cleaning my room. Once I'm done I go outside to prepare the fire. Lonhle is taking out the cattle from the kraal and preparing to send them to the veld. This is his everyday job and sometimes I envy to be a boy yaz. Lonhle's duty is to look after the livestock only while I have to make the fire, cook, clean and collect the woods from the forest. The universe is against us women I wonder what have we done to who?

"Uthandiwe blocked me everywhere kanti what happened between the two of you."

“Good morning Lonhle.”

“Hi. So?”

“Why do you have her numbers Lonhle.”

“It’s none of your business.”

“Ngizokukhahlela mawuzokhuluma nami ngathi wehla entabeni!” (I will kick you if you are going to talk to me however you please)

“I’m sorry for taking out my frustrations on you.”

“Uyayithanda lento yakho yokuthi uzokhuluma uthuvi bakho lakimi bese uthi I’m koli I’m koli I’m koli amasimba or you want me to tell dad that you disrespect me?” (You like this thing of yours that you will talk shit to me then say I’m sorry, I’m sorry I’m sorry that’s bullshit....)

“No I’m sorry sis, please don’t tell dad. I will never disrespect you.”

“Why are you stressed out that she blocked you.”

“I thought we were vibing well.”

“Oh well you thought wrong she fucked Thuthuka to hurt Isisa. I confronted her and we had a fallout hence we have been blocked.”

“She fuck...what?”

“Yes she wasn’t going to date you Lonhle. You’re young and she doesn’t do relationships.”

“Oh she fucked Thuthuka,” he whispers and I see disappointment flashing on his face but he conceals it with a faint smile.

“Let me get going,” he says and leaves me making the fire.

Once I’m done I start with cleaning first and by the time I’m done the fire is ready so I take the brazier to the rondoval. I pour water into the kettle and place it on top of the brazier. Mom is not feeling well and dad insists on taking her to the doctor. I give them my water and boil another one for me and Lonhle. By the time they’re done Lonhle is back from the veld. They say their goodbye and leave.

“They didn’t leave my pocket money?” Mvelonhle

“No they didn’t.”

“Oh okay. Thanks for the water.”

He pours the hot water into his vaskom and walks out. I’m still mad at him for talking to me like that but my heart doesn’t allow me to let him go without pocket money. I go to my bedroom and take my last R50 which is the change I kept when Kayise was buying fruits in the store yesterday.

I decide to wait for him first to finish before I can bath. I wonder what surprise is Kayise planning for me today. I can't wait the curiosity is killing me. At long last Lonhle finishes and comes to the lounge to say his goodbye.

"Here."

He looks at the R50 note and his lips curves forming a smile.

"Thank you so much sis!"

I'm suffocating in his arms as he gives me a bone crushing hug before planting a peck on my forehead.

"I love you."

"Haisuka I love you too even though you make me mad."

He giggles as I fix his tie then he leaves. Now it's my time to take a bath. I'm not even sure what am I going to wear. When I finish bathing I wear a floral short jumpsuit and white all star sneakers. I dont have energy to undo my sleeping knots so I pull on the head wrapper.

At 10am Kayise is waiting for me at our spot. I take my bag and phone and leave after locking the house. I greet him when I slide inside the car and we briefly kiss then he drives away.

"Where are we going baby?"

"You will see."

I wonder where we are going? I'm about to play music via Bluetooth when ijele by Khuzani plays on uKhozi FM.

"Sale sewuyeka baby," (Just leave it baby.) he says and sings along. This has to be the most boring song Khuzani has ever released I tell you. It's not even one of those songs that are not

nice when you listen to them for the first time. It will be still boring as fuck even after listening to it for the 100th times.

I thought we are going out of the village but no we're still around and we've just pulled over to an empty sight. I look at him hoping that he will tell me what's going on but he tells me that we have arrived to our destination. He steps out of the car to open the door for me and once I'm out I scan my eyes around this big sight before me confused.

"Baby why are we here?"

"You want a mansion right? Well here you can build your mansion."

I gasp in shock and look at him hoping that he's joking but he's damn serious.

"Oh my goodness Sidwaba Siluthuli!" I scream and launch myself on him. He giggles as he catches me in his arms and lets me wrap my legs around his waist. This is indeed a surprise!

“Thank you so much for this baby!”

“You’re welcome my love.”

“Why did you change your mind?”

“I told you that as long as I live I will give you the world. I’m sorry that you wanted to go to Durban but my life is here baby and...”

“No baby this is perfect I love it! Who wouldn’t want to be the only person who has a mansion in this village. This is the best I love you so much.” I really do mean it before he says anything I claim his lips with mine.

☆ Isisa ☆

“You’re not going to tell me what’s going on my child?” Mama asks me with so much concern in her voice. I can pretend that I’m okay to her but I cannot hide the swollen eyes due to the tears I shed all night and for the fact that I’m still in bed at this time of the day is a proof that I’m not okay.

“I’m fine mama.”

“Isisa I don’t like that you are keeping things from me. Are you fighting with Mbewenhle again?”

“No mama.”

“Then what’s wrong?”

“I have periods pains.”

“It must be that Ngema boy? Isn’t it?”

“No Mama you said I must stay away from him and I did. I’m a good child and I listen.”

She stares at me intently and lets out a deep sigh then walks out of my bedroom. I reach for my phone and switch it off. Tons of messages comes through and they’re all from Thuthu. I don’t understand how can you hurt someone and say “sorry” expecting things to be okay after that. I should’ve listen to mama. Parents always know what best for their children, she knew that Thuthu is not a right guy for me.

I chose to listen to my heart look at me now? I don’t know which hurts the most between the fact that he fucked cheese girl and that it hasn’t been a week since fixed things between us and he breaks me like this once again. I can’t believe that I poured my heart out for him and love him with all my conviction only for him to play Russian Roulette with my heart.

“Can I come in?” I quickly wipe my tears that are running down my cheek and look at the door with a forged smile.

“Yes come in.”

She walks in and her sweet scent pervades my bedroom. The windows and curtains are the first thing she opens before sliding into bed next to me.

“How are you feeling today.”

I shrug my shoulders.

“I’m sorry friend.”

“I don’t want to feel like this anymore Mbewu please take the pain away. It’s suffocating me.”

“Oh friend,” she says enveloping in my arms and pecks my forehead.

“I wish there’s something I can do to make you feel better. You are a beautiful girl, you know that?”

“Not as beautiful as you and cheese girl.”

“You’re beyond the word beautiful. See this beautiful face of yours doesn’t deserve to be stained with tears because of a boy do you hear me. Thuthuka is an asshole that doesn’t deserve you. Isisa you are not born to be disrespected and condemned. Make a promise to yourself that you won’t settle for anything less than committed love. I believe you are still yet to meet your soul mate who will heal your broken and wounded heart.”

“Ngiyamthanda Mbewenhle.” (I love him Mbewenhle)

“I know friend but loving him brought you nothing but pain. He couldn’t stay faithful to you just right after you guys fixed things. Thuthu doesn’t value you nor your relationship with him.”

She’s telling me the truth I don’t want to hear because of how agonizing it is.

“Cry

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let it all out until you see no reason to cry anymore. You deserve all the best, friend.” She holds me tightly in her arms as I bawl my eyes out.

“You’re going to be fine.”

“Thank you for being here for me.”

“That what friends are for.”

“So you’re going to continue to be someone’s friend who hurt me like this? A friend of my enemy is my enemy. I need to know where do I stand with you.”

“Wow it seems like you no longer want me in your life.”

“Of course I want you Mbewu but we have to be straightforward and stop fooling each other is it her or me?”

“You know it’s funny that you’re always ready to cut me out of your life but not Thuthuka, the very same guy who hurt you. You know what Isisa I won’t stay in a relationship where I’m no longer needed.” She attempts to roll out of bed but I stop her.

“I’m sorry it came out wrong. I love you Mbewenhle but I need to know where your loyalty lies?”

“Why should my loyalty lies with you Isisa when yours lies with Thuthuka?”

“So you’re telling me that your loyalty is not with me?”

“My loyalty has always been with you and I find it very unfair that your are questioning my loyalty when yours is not with me. You forgave Thuthu before me and see now you are not ready to let him go but you’re ready to let me go.” The sadness in her voice breaks my already broken heart.

“That’s not true Mbewenle.”

“It is true Isisa. I think you’re the one who should check herself here. By the way I confronted Ndiwe about this and I told her how unhappy I am. We had an argument and she left. I’m going home let me know when you are done thinking if you still want this friendship or not ngoba angeke ngikhone ukuncikiselwa because of one mistake I did.” With that said she jumps down from the bed and slides into her sleepers before going out.

.....

I try to will my legs to run but I’m not fast enough and before I could reach out of the door I spurt everything I ate on the floor.

“Sies Isisa!” yells my brother with a scrunched nose and runs out.

I wipe my mouth with my hand and reach for a jug on the table then drink water. I have been cooped up in the house for almost three weeks now. I just didn’t have energy and strength to get out of the house surprisingly my mom have been very

understanding. I can see that she's worried about me and telling her is not an option.

Lately I haven't been feeling well. I never knew that emotional pain triggers gall (inyongo). I'm forever tired, nauseous and throwing up. I'm praying that by next week I will be better because we are going to the reed dance (umkhosi womhlanga). Thuthu has been a nuisance calling none stop and asking my brother to call me but I don't want to see him. I hate that I still love him even after what he did to me and I miss him but this..it's unforgivable.

"Come and see sisi." I hear Sboniso's voice says first before Jabu walks in. When did she come back?

"See she puked on the floor and it stinks!" That's Sboniso once again showing our sister my puke.

"What's wrong?" Jabu

"Ngiqhunyelwe inyongo. When did you come back?"

“An hour ago and I didn’t want to disturb you on your sleep. You don’t look okay and mama is very worried. I had to come,” she says and places her hand on my forehead.

“Your temperature is okay nje.”

“I will be fine it’s nothing big mom is exaggerating.”

I clean up the mess I made on the floor and go join my sister in the lounge who’s watching TV.

“Where’s mama?”

“She went to see MaZwide. Talk to me what has he done now?”

I couldn’t tell her this time what Thuthu did. She already doesn’t like him.

“Nothing.”

“I thought you fixed things with Mbewu.” I haven’t seen her since that day and we haven’t talked. I fear that our relationship will never be the same again. Sigh!

“We did.”

“Then what is it?”

“I said nothing Jabu Gee!” I get up from the couch and walk to my bedroom. I jump on the bed and lie on it skyward. Jabu walks in without knocking and sits next to me.

“Show me your breasts.”

“What?”

“Let me see your breasts Isisa.”

“Why?”

“Show me first.”

“Hayi I won’t do that.”

“What are you hiding then?”

“Even if I am hiding something you seriously think I’d hide it on my breasts?” I ask laughing.

“Show me your breasts Isisa!” Now she’s wearing “I’m your elder sister” look and I have no choice but to do as she says. I sit on my butt and lift up my pj top though I don’t know what she’s looking for.

“Isisa no!”

She palms my tender breasts and squeezes them then shakes her head. I'm not sure what I see is anger or disappointment on her face.

"Oh my goodness Isisa! You couldn't wait to open your legs for that boy?"

"No I didn't sis."

"Don't make me your fool!"

"I swear Jabu."

"You're telling me that you miraculously fall pregnant?"

Preg....what?

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

“Where are your socks?” I ask as if she’s going to answer me. It hasn’t sink in me yet that she’s mute.

I search for her socks and find them in a drawer packed nicely. God bless Ma Mathiyane for looking after this old woman. Everything of hers is sorted in an organized way and it’s not a hassle to search any item of hers.

I’ve just finished bathing her and dressing her up. I offered to look after her since Ma Mthiyane went to town and Lisi went to Dundee for a job interview. I believe in him to nail that interview.

“I found them,” I say closing the drawer and shuffle before her where I crouch and slide the socks into her feet.

“There you go. Now it’s time to eat.”

I push her wheelchair to the kitchen and dish up for her. I've prepared chicken stew and rice for her because I don't know what is she allergic to. It's infrequent to find a person who's allergic to chicken. Once I'm done dishing up for her I grab a chair and settle down before her.

"You know I wish I can have a conversation with you. The way you always look at me gives me creeps gogo. Open your mouth."

As usual she stares at me and I wish I can penetrate through her brown wide set of eyes. There's a story behind them. I force the spoon between her lips and she welcomes it and begins to chew.

"I wonder what kind of sickness you suffered that left you mute and impaired."

I continue to feed her while talking to her even though I have a hankering for her response.

“I talk too much neh I’m sorry.” I giggle and her lips curve. Oh my goodness is that a smile I’m seeing?

“Did you smile or it’s my imagination?”

She stares at me blankly. This old woman makes me feel like I’m crazy, it’s like I’m talking to myself. Maybe if her hands are not impaired she would write for me but I doubt that she can write. Sigh.

There’s a knock on the door and when I look up I see this lady standing on the wide opened the door. I tell her to come and she does exactly that. She’s carrying Boxer plastic bags.

“Hello nana,” she says with a smile on her face and places the shopping bags on the table.

“Hi.” That’s my flat response to her chirpy greeting. I detest to be addressed as “nana” or “dear” to me there’s that mocking

intent behind those words. She greets gogo and shakes her hand before turning to me.

“Where’s Mane?”

Who the hell is her nicknaming my man. Looking at how beautiful and classy she is has me feeling jealous. The red bodycon dress she’s wearing moulds her curves nicely and her cleavage is all out on display. Why is she wearing Lisi’s favorite color?

“Who’s that?”

“Manelisi.”

“Oh you mean Dubandlela?” she chuckles and gives me a side smile.

“Let me guess you are Mbewenhle?”

“Yes and you’re?”

“Blessing.”

“Oh the ex girlfriend that left him for a rich man.”

She scowls at me.

“And you’re the girlfriend that made promises to another man.  
You have no shame tshitshi ndini.”

“You’re way too forward sis brika.”

“Ungazongijwayela wena sfebe!”

“Isfebe unyoko!”

I hold my breath as she charges for me pretending to be not scared but inside I’m shaking in fear. She’s up to my face

breathing fire and when she raises up her hand to slap me. I cover my face with my hands.

“Bless what are you doing!” Lisi’s voice says and I uncover my face.

“Uyadelela lotikiline!” (This harlot is rude!)

“Don’t you dare call her that and who gave you the right to raise your hand on my girl in my house!”

“Mane she insulted my mom and called her...”

“Get out!”

“Listen to me please.”

“What brings you here vele Bless?”

“I brought these for you and gogo.”

“What for? Take these and leave!”

“Mane come on...”

“No Blessing I haven’t seen you for years and here you are with your grocery then you expect me to accept it. Who told you that I want grocery?”

“I’m sorry I...”

“Leave!”

She looks at him sadly and takes her grocery then walks out.

“Are you okay.”

I don't know if it's the worry in his voice or it's him saving me from getting beaten up by his ex girlfriend that triggers my tears.

"Wenhle talk to me what did she do to you please," he says swaddling me in his arms like a baby as I weep against his chest.

"Shhh don't cry. I'm here now and I'm very sorry. Let me go to her right in this moment and sort her out!"

"No don't I'm fine. You saved me before she could lay her hands on me. Thank you for that."

"Are you sure? Don't protect her dombolo lami."

"I'm sure mqwebu wami."

He disentangles me from his arms and wipes my tears before kissing my lips.

“Gogo is here show some respect.” I say pushing him away from me which makes him to giggle.

“I’m sorry gogo but you should know that this is the one for me. She’s going to be your granddaughter in law.”

“Lisi stop it and tell us how did the interview go?”

I continue to feed gogo as Lisi tells me about his day which went well. I’m crossing fingers that he gets this job. This is his first interview out of thousands job applications he has ever applied for.

“It smells nice here what did you cook?”

“Let me finish feeding gogo and I will dish up for you.”

“Okay dombolo lami I will go change in the meanwhile.” he walks to his bedroom.

I help gogo to drink water after she's done with her meal then dish up for Lisi. He comes back pressing his phone, wearing shorts only and walking barefoot. I swear I have never seen a man with beautiful feet. I could dish up on his feet and eat on them without the care in the world. I bite my lip as I gawk at his well built body and his visible bugle on his shorts.

"Stop gawking at me and give me food I'm hungry." I giggle shyly and give him his food as he sits down on the chair.

"It's gogo's nap time now," he tells me putting his phone down on the table.

"Okay I will take her to bed. Here's water to wash your hands." I place the bowl of water before him on the table and take gogo to her bedroom where I help her get on bed. I cover her with a throw and join Lisi in the kitchen who's eating like he hasn't eaten for days.

"Slow down you will choke."

“Do you blame me, this is a palatable meal dombolo lami  
” he says with food in his mouth.

“Lisi?”

“Mhhh”

“Do you still love Blessing?”

He looks up from his plate while licking his fingertips.

“No.”

“Then why did you kept on calling her ‘Bless’?”

“Come on dombolo lami.”

“Don’t come on me Manelisi.”

“See right now you want us to fight for nothing. I told you everything about Blessing.”

“Why is she here all of a sudden?”

“I don’t know Wenhle.”

“I’m going home.” I get up but he pulls me to his lap.

“Don’t be jealous of Blessing. I’m over her and I love only you dombolo lami. Angidlali mangihlezi ngiktshela ukuthi uyabusa enhlizweni yami.”

I don’t know where our love will take us and whenever I tell him that he doesn’t want to hear it.

“I have something for you. It’s in my bedroom.” I get up from him and we both walk to his bedroom. He makes me sit on the

bed and takes the gift bag from the bedside table before kneeling down before me.

“This is for you.”

“What is this?”

“It’s nothing much baby I just want to show how much you really mean to me. You make my life beautiful and meaningful. I know that you don’t believe it when I say it because of your presence in my life that I was called for an interview for the first time in my life. You bring nothing but positivity in my life. A source of inspiration, emotional courage and emotional strength is what you are to me. You magically bring out the best in me and I promise to love you for the rest of my life.”

I’m tearing up right now and this what I do every time he tells me how much he loves me and how much I mean to him. I wish I can reciprocate his love without any limitations nor restrictions. I wish I can be certain what does our future has in store for us or at least make promises that no matter what I will always be by his side.

“Don’t cry dombolo lami you make me sad.” He wipes off the tears on my face and kisses my nose.

“I love you too Lisi.”

“Now open your gift.”

I search through the gift bag and take out a coffee mug. It has a picture of us, I can’t remember what was I laughing at in this picture and he was kissing my cheek. There’s a short message below our picture ‘love gives life its meaning and without it there isn’t much life at all’

“Oh baby this is beautiful!”

“There’s another one.”

I take out a small Edgars plastic bag and retrieve panties. It’s red in color and in front it is written like this ‘Manelisi is my 🍎

owner' I can't help but burst into laughter. Thanks to Bab'Mthiyane who bought him a phone two weeks back and I have been teaching him social networks and emojis.

"Jizas you're so crazy!" We both crack up with laughter.

"There's one more," he says and I take out the small box then open it. Inside there's a beautiful beaded ring.

"I don't remember much about my mother but the day she took her last breath she apologized for failing me and not being a best mother in the world then she gave me this ring. Apparently she was given by my father and before I could ask more about him she died."

"Then why are you giving me this ring? It has a connection to your both parents."

"I was angry at mama that she only left me with this stupid ring and nothing to secure my life because she was busy whoring. I still don't understand why she couldn't tell me about my father

but she gave me a ring that he gave her. Well until you stepped into my life and I realized how special this ring is and I can't help the need to pass it to you dombolo lami. This ring is my promise to love you forever and my soul will always stay entangled with yours till the end of time."

"Today you just want me to cry huh."

"If it's tears of joy then it's okay."

"I don't know what to say Lisi. You just take my breath away. I'm so honored and humbled to receive such a sentimental gift from you but I don't think I deserve it mqwebu wami."

"I wouldn't have given you if you don't deserve it Wenhle please don't reject it. You will break my heart if you do that."

I sigh as we lock eyes on each other. God knows I love him.

"Wear it please."

I try it on my middle finger but it's big so I end up putting it on my thumb and it fits perfectly. It's really gorgeous and whoever made it is artistic and creative.

"You're so amazing you know that?"

He gives me that smile of his that always tempts me to do ungodly things.

"I try."

I put everything on the bed and lean over to kiss his lips. I can feel his hands caressing my hips as we kiss intensely. In his kiss I am home. My phone is ringing in the kitchen and no matter how we try to ignore it but whoever is calling doesn't want to give up. We break the kiss then he goes to fetch it.

"Who is it?"

“It’s your mom.”

He hands me the phone and I answer mama politely.

“Where are you?”

“I’m at the shop mama.”

“Mbewenhle I’m not your grandma. You’re not at the shop and don’t you dare say you are with Muzikayise because he just dropped me off.”

Oh God. I don’t know what to say, I’m a stuttering mess.

“Come back home now.” I don’t like her tone, she’s angry.

“I have to go, mama is calling me.”

“Is she okay?”

“I don’t know but she sounds angry.”

“Don’t worry maybe it’s hormones. I heard a pregnant woman goes through different emotions in a short space of time.”

I nod and give him a kiss before putting everything inside the gift bag. Once I’m done he walks me out.

“I will call you.”

“Sharp.”

I walk home and when I get a call from mama I decide to run. I’m dazed and I don’t know what will I say where am I coming from to mama because now it’s clear that she knows that I’m lying. I cross my fingers as I enter the kitchen.

“Uphumaphi?” (Where are you coming from?) I’m greeted by mama’s angry voice.

“Uhm at the shop mama.”

“Haibo amanga Mbewenhle.”

I bite my lip nervously not knowing what to say next.

“What is that?” She asks staring at the gift bag in my hand. I should have left it.

“Nothing.”

“Give it here.”

I shake my head no

“Mbewenhle I said give me that gift bag!”

“I can’t mama I’m sorry.”

She charges for me but I keep walking backwards.

“Don’t make me run after you! What is inside that bag?”

“Nothing.”

“You want me to beat you up.”

“No.”

“Then give me that bag now!”

I shake my head as tears fill my eyes. She snatches the bag and my heart is galloping as she takes out the mug and panties. Our eyes meet and the anger in them send shivers down my spine.

“You know I was following behind Ma Zondo and she was talking on the phone. She was telling whoever on the phone

that you are looking after that witch and complimenting you on what a good girlfriend you are to the witch's grandson. I thought maybe she's talking about another Mbewenhle not my daughter so explain to me what is this?"

"Mama I can explain."

"Yes that what I want from you. Now explain to me."

"There's nothing going on between me and Manelisi we are just friends mama."

"Friends huh? Friends buy each other panties that are written like this? Why are you even friends with a boy let alone that witch's grandson when you have a man that loves you?"

I look down, shame is gripping on me.

"You're cheating on Muzi with that boy isn't it?"

“I’m sorry mama I didn’t mean to...” I don’t get to finish saying that as a hard slap lands on my face causing my head to spin. I hold my cheek, my tears running down my face.

“You’re sorry? Is that what you going to say? Do you realize the ignominy you are going to bring upon us if the Masekos and the whole village find out about your whoring ways! Ufebiswa yini umncane kangaka huhhh!” She throws the mug against the wall and my heart shatters into pieces simultaneously as the mug breaks into pieces.

“I’m so ashamed to call you my daughter! Skhebereshe sengane! Why did you send the flag to the Masekos if you want to whore around! Out of the boys you had to choose that witch’s grandson!” She roars in anger as she tears the panties. I’m crying now.

“Why are you crying? I haven’t done anything to you! Maybe I should tell your father what a disgrace of a child are you!”

“Please mama don’t tell dad I’m begging you. I’m going to stay away from Manelisi. I promise mommy.”

“Why are you doing this Mbewenhle huh? How could you do this to Muzikayise? He loves you and this is what you do to him? You don’t realize how lucky you are to have a man like him. Boys in nowadays sleep with girls and leave them pregnant! Muzi is serious about you and he’s going to marry you. Marriage doesn’t come easy! That boy of yours is an example of poverty how will he marry you? Is he going to pay your lobola with his grandmother’s tikoloshes?”

“I didn’t mean to mama I don’t know how did I fall in love with him. Please calm down and let’s talk like mother and daughter. I need you to understand my point of view please.”

“Understand ubufebe? Uyahlanya wena!”

“No but understand being caught up between two men and loving them both. You should understand better.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Baba and uncle G.”

“I don’t know what you talking about and don’t you dare make this about me because it’s about you!”

“I saw you having sex with uncle G and I’m not judging you mama I understand that....” she slaps me hard I reel backwards and fall on the floor.

She grabs the mop behind the door and beats the shit out of me. I’m screaming in agony trying to block the stick of the mop from reaching my head and body but it’s ineffectual. Each time the stick lands on my body it is breaking into pieces until she’s left with a bundle of coarse strings only. I thought she’s going to let me go now but she begins to kick me while swearing at me. My screams nor my pleas are moving her.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I have stopped pleading because clearly it's not going to help. This woman is determined to kill me. Never have I heard my mom throw insults like this nor have I been beaten up like I'm no human especially by her. I'd expect this from dad not her. I understand what a disgrace of a daughter I am but does she have to kill me?

I'm not sure which hurts more between her feet that are mercilessly kicking me and the malevolence in her voice. "Sfebe! Nondindwa! Skhebereshe ndini! You're going to whore around and justify that with my affair uyisibozi sengane! What did I do to have a daughter like you huh? You're the one who should've disappeared not Ndalwenhle! Ubolile Mbewenhle!"

I'm saved by Isisa's voice on the door who's kicked out of the house before she could say more. We haven't been talking for almost three weeks now. I'm afraid our friendship will never be

the same again and I hate Thuthuka for that. He destroyed my friendship with my friends.

Mom disappears out of the kitchen and comes back before I could get up from the floor as it's a battle due to the excruciating pain all over my body. My left eye can barely open and it's throbbing as fuck.

“Get up!”

I toil up from the floor crying in agony and when I'm finally up she drags me with my arm and we head outside where she opens my dad's 14 hundred and shoves me inside the passenger seat. She goes back to the house I don't know to do what but when she comes back she's carrying her phone. After sliding inside the car we drive off.

“Stop crying and shut up!”

I cover my mouth with my bruised hand in attempt to block my sob but only my voice is muted, my tears are still cascading

down my face. I notice that we are going to gogo's house. The moment the car comes to a halt I step out of the car, ignoring the pain as I walk towards the house.

Gogo is sitting on the couch listening to Khozi FM while sipping on her favorite, mdoko wamabele. I think she's addicted to it, a day never passes without her bowl of mdoko wamabele. She looks up at me when she feels my presence and the shock in her eyes is the evident of how horrible do I look.

"Mbewenhle what happened to you!"

I don't know if it's because I know that though she's strict but when it comes to her grandchildren she's soft-hearted or it's the panic in her voice that has me bawling my eyes out all over again. In a flash of light she's on her feet and I'm swaddled in her arms.

"Talk to me my grandchild," she says taking me to the couch where we settle down but she's not letting me go instead she holds me tighter.

“What happened mzikulu ka gogo. Who hurt you like this.”

“It’s mama,” I say with a crying voice, right at the moment as mama joins us. If I knew when she’s due I’d say she’s almost there the way she’s huge.

“Thembeke why did you hurt the child.”

“Ask her what did she do?”

“Whatever she did she didn’t deserve to be beaten up like this. Look at her she’s bruised all over her body!! Have I ever beat you up like this??”

“No because I was a good and disciplined child,” Mama says settling down on the empty couch.

“This is no way to discipline a child Thembeke! I don’t care what she did!!”

“I brought her to stay with you for a week or so until she recovers. I don’t want her father and brother to see her like this because they’re going to want to know the reason why I beat her up. If her father finds out about this she’s going to be worse than this.”

At least she’s not going to tell father and I’m grateful for that.

“I will go boil water wokumthoba and you will tell me what did she do.” Gogo disappears after saying that leaving me with her daughter who’s throwing daggers at me. I’m scared she’s going to attack me again.

“Stop crying! You’re making noise!”

I swallow a sob which turns into a painful ball in my throat. I don’t think I have ever seen her this angry before.

“Lalela la, you’re not going to whore around and then justify your immoral behavior with my affair do you hear me me?”

“I’m not justifying my behavior with your affair. I expected you to understand this better and I was hoping that you will guide me through this as my mother.”

“Talk? Are you hearing yourself right now? After what you did you want me to talk to you! Jesus you have a nerve to say that!”

“I’m not judging you for what happened between you and uncle G. Well honestly I did at first...” she interjects

“You said you saw us  
when was that?”

“On the day Zipho took me out for a date.”

An emotion of mortification glints in her eyes but she conceals it with a stern look.

“I’m sorry that you had to see that and I’m not proud of what I did. I don’t understand why would you do something that you know is not right just because you saw me doing it.”

“You’re missing the point mama. This is not about me copying your behavior. I didn’t plan this at all I found myself trapped in this situation.”

“Situation? Oh please child don’t try to sugarcoat your straying. I’m not going to explain myself to you Mbewenhle, you are a child but as I’ve said I’m not proud of what I did and I regret it. What you have to know is that no matter what I do that doesn’t change the fact that I’m your mother and all I want from you and for you is the best. If you think I’m going to applaud you for cheating just because I did it as well then you got another thing coming my girl. I won’t clap hands for you when you misbehave. I’m not going to watch you drag your name and ours to the mud.”

Gogo emerges with a basin filled with hot water. She places it on my feet and pulls the face cloth that is hanging on her shoulder then dips it inside the hot water.

“What happened?” Asks gogo as she gently places the hot face cloth on my eye. I need to soak my whole body into hot water.

Mama explains to her what happened and I can't bring myself to look at gogo in the eyes.

“Aw kodwa Mbewenhle why would you do this.”

“I'm sorry gogo.”

“The Maphumulo boy pho?”

“What's wrong with him?”

“Heee nansi imihlola you still have a nerve to ask what's wrong with him?” Mama

“Who doesn't know that boy's grandma is a witch. She's involved in your twin sister's disappearance my grandchild.”

No maybe they're not talking about the same Manelisi's grandma that I know.

"Are you sure we are talking about the same Manelisi's grandma? That old woman is sitting on a wheelchair and she can't talk let alone doing things for herself."

"That's the results of her witchcraft! I may not have an evidence that she's involved in my daughter's disappearance but it's her."

"Mama if you don't have proof then why are you so sure that it's her? I don't remember you telling me about this."

"It has always been public knowledge that old woman is a witch. Wayeganga kakhulu ngezulu and I didn't take it serious until a few months later after your twin sister disappeared. There was this sangoma that we went to see and he performed a ritual. I don't think you remember because you were still traumatized and distraught. He told us that whoever is involved

would be severely sick and never talk again nor would walk again. So tell me is it a coincidence that she out of all the people in this village this happened to her?”

This is news to me!

“If you guys knew who took Lwenhle then why you never brought her back home.”

“That’s the thing with witchcraft without proof you fight a losing battle. The police were anonymously tipped off to search her house but they didn’t find anything in her house. Of course incriminating evidence was hidden by her tikoloshes!”

“Mama no that’s not true! Why you never told me?”

I can’t believe that they’re talking about the same woman that I bathed with my own hands and took care of. The woman I always worry about if she ate or not. Fresh tears form in my eyes, blurring my sight.

“You were a child Mbewenhle and badly affected by your twin sister’s disappearance. I didn’t want to add more trauma than what you were already going through.”

“You are saying that because you want me to hate Manelisi mama.”

“It is true my grandchild why would she lie about something huge like this. I thought you love Muzikayise sis why would you do this?”

“I do love him gogo.”

“Then what is this? Why would you do this?” Gogo asks calmly.

“I’m sorry gogo.”

“I know you are nunu but I need to understand why. You’re a very good girl, so well mannered and disciplined. I know you wouldn’t just drag your name to the mud and embarrass us like this without a valid reason.”

“Haibo mama what are you doing? This child cheated and you want her to give you a reason? You’re condoning her behavior and that is so wrong. She cheated and there’s no reason for such behavior. Ufuna induku nje qha kuzophela ubufebe!”

“Hayi awume Thembeke haven’t you beaten her up already! Give her a chance to talk to us and tell us what led her to this! Maybe Muzi is not treating her right and we have to help her before he marries her!”

“That’s rich coming from you mama. You never gave me that choice. I had to marry Musawenkosi despite the fact that I already had someone who I was willing to give myself to.”

Oh so she never wanted my father? Then why did she marry him?

“I wanted what best for you Thembeke I wasn’t going to watch you give yourself to Khubonye knowing very well that he had nothing to provide you with.”

Who's Khubonye?

"Look at him now. He's way successful then Qwabe."

"Don't tell me you don't see that uthwele lomuntu. Where does he get these riches when he never worked even a day and don't tell me he accumulated all these through his position."

"You never liked him mama and now you are accusing him of ukuthwala!"

"Thembeke please stop this okay! This is about Mbewenhle not you!"

"True it's about Mbewenhle who wasn't forced to send the flag to the Masekos and to agree to marry Muzikayise. We are only left with two months only for her umemulo ceremony before her lobola negotiations take place. She can't embarrass us by jumping from one boy to another let alone to that boy. Just like you mama I'm also not going to watch my daughter marry the

grandson of the woman who is responsible for the disappearance of my daughter.”

“What if Muzikayise is not treating her right?”

“There’s no such thing Muzikayise is a good boy and he was raised well. I wouldn’t want any son in law other than him.”

“Nunu is Muzi treating you bad?”

“No gogo...”

“See there’s nothing wrong uvukwe ubufebe nje lo. You’re going to end your relationship with that boy and tell Muzi that you’re in Ladysmith when he wants to see you. No one will see you like this you’re going to stay here with your grandmother until you recover do you hear me?”

“Eh mama,” I say wiping my tears carefully not to hurt my injured face.

“If you think you’re going to make me a fool and continue dating that boy I will be forced to tell your father about your shenanigans.”

I swallow a thick lump that seems to be clogging my throat. Father is the last person I want to know about this because I know that his punishments are severe then mom’s but her reactions towards this shocked the hell out of me. Not that I blame her though I’m a disappointment, indeed it should have been me who disappeared. Ndalwenhle would’ve made our parents proud.

☆ Isisa ☆

I don’t know why I’m panicking because I know very well that I’m not pregnant. I’m sure I would’ve have felt him penetrating me but the way Jabu is so sure that I am pregnant has me feeling anxious. I couldn’t sleep the whole night thinking about the what if. Pregnancy is the last thing I need right now. I don’t

want anything that is binding me to Thuthu for the rest of my life. I'm done with that guy and for good this time.

In these passed weeks I had time to think about this and now I'm rational to make a decision. He got time to play and my heart is not his playground. I'm super mad with myself that I considered to go back to him after finding out that he used me to get over Mbewenhle. I don't want to live in her shadow for the rest of my life. I want someone who's going to love me for who I am.

I let out a heavy sigh as we pull over at the parking. Jabu insisted to take me to the doctor for proof. She came with her man's Ford Ranger and lied to mom that it's one of the benefits of her job. I don't know she will keep lying to her until when because the man wants to send his uncles to pay her lobola.

We could've went to the clinic but mama is known there by almost every nurse because she tests their children's virginity. Imagine the mortification when her daughter comes to the clinic to check for pregnancy while she's also a maiden like their daughters. I'm praying that the test comes back negative I cannot embarrass my mom like that.

I close the door after stepping out of the car and follow my sister who's already walking towards the doctor's surgery. The tension between us is almost tangible. God please don't let this be true I don't want to ruin my life nor do I want to ruin my relationship with my sister and mom.

We settle on the comfy chairs after enquiring and filling all the necessary information. He's busy with someone at the moment but after that person it's me. I can't escape this hurricane of thoughts and anxiety is threatening to engulf me.

"Stop doing that!"

I look at her and notice that she's talking about the tapping on the floor that I'm doing with my foot. I don't think I have been this scared in my life. My heart literally stops beating when the receptionist tells us to go through. We do just that and when we get inside he shows us two chairs as we exchange greetings. Once we are seated Jabu tells the doctor the reason we are here.

“She claims that she didn’t sleep with her boyfriend but she has all the signs of pregnancy.”

“Miss...” he looks on the file before him and continues

“Magwaza you didn’t sleep with him?”

“Yes doc.”

“Stop lying Isisa!”

“I swear Jabu why would I lie to you huh? You know that we share everything. I would’ve told you if we did.”

“Doctor please check her.”

The doctor asks me to lie on the bed and pull up my t-shirt. He applies the cold gel on my tummy and right now I feel like some character in a movie as he moves this thing on my tummy while staring at the screen.

“You’re indeed pregnant Miss Magwaza.”

The world stops around me for a moment as I try to understand how did this happen? My brain is having a difficulty to digest all of this.

“Isisa.” Jabu snaps me out of my trance and I don’t know when did she get up from the chair and came to us by the bed.

“You’re still denying?”

I hate that she doesn’t believe me.

“Are you sure doctor about this? I’ve never had sex with anyone!” I’m five to from breaking down this doesn’t make sense.

“Stop den...” The doctor stops Jabu before she finishes.

“Miss Magwaza your sister seems adamant that she didn’t sleep with anyone let’s try to understand what happened to her. It could happen that she was raped but she doesn’t remember because whoever did this might have drugged her.”

I see her facial expression turning from anger to fear. The doctor wipes the gel on my tummy and throws the tissue into the bin before taking me to the chair I was sitting on. Now we’re all settled down and I’m under the doctor’s scrutiny.

“Isisa did you attend any party or ceremony?”

“No.”

“Did you drink anything or someone gave you something to drink?”

“No.”

“Do you have a boyfriend?”

“Yes I do.”

“What do you do when you’re together?”

I look at Jabu and clear my throat then answer the doctor.

“We used to kiss only but weeks back we had oral sex. I swear there was no penetration. The only penetration we tried was anal and I couldn’t take the pain so we stopped.”

“Explain to me how do you do oral sex?”

Haibo does this man hear what he’s asking me do. Oral sex is oral sex, I can’t go into details that’s embarrassing.

“I need to understand how it happened Miss Magwaza so that we can get to the bottom of this.”

I look down and twiddle with my fingers.

“Okay did he ejaculate?”

“Yes?”

“Where?”

“Outside of course.”

“Outside of what?”

God take me now!

“My vagina doctor.”

“Now that answers our questions.”

“I’m not sure I understand doctor.” Jabu

“Any sexual activity that introduces sperms into or around the vagina could result into a sperm making it way to the egg.”

I’m not sure I’m following isn’t penetration only that causes pregnancy? I guess he could see my confusion because he goes on.

“See if a male ejaculates and the sperms comes in contact with the vaginal area, though chances are small but it’s possible that the pregnancy may occur. He may also produce sperms in his pre-ejaculate fluid and when his penis comes in contact with a vagina that can also result into pregnancy. Another thing that you have to know is that these fluids cannot be transferred to a vagina by a penis only but toys, fingers and mouths. Sperms are good swimmers, one millimeter of ejaculate contains between 15 to million sperm and it only takes just one to get pregnant.”

Oh no what was I thinking? I cover my face with my hands and burst into tears. I don’t want to be pregnant I’m not ready to be a mother nor am I strong enough to face the humiliation once

the news are spread all over the village. I don't hear what he says next as my mind is reeling. I'm brought back to reality when Jabu tells me that we should go.

"I don't want to keep this baby." It's the first thing I say the moment we get into the car.

"Jesus Isisa don't tell me you want to kill an innocent child!"

"I don't want it okay! Thuthu and I are over! He cheated on me I cannot have his baby!"

"You should have thought of that before you had any sexual interactions with him. I understand that you're 21 years now but I was looking forward to your umemulo ceremony. I've already asked for a loan at the bank. To say I'm disappointed in you would be an understatement. I thought I'm setting a good example to you as your elder sister by behaving myself and waiting for marriage before having a child. Not only am I disappointed but I'm hurt as well." Tears that are strolling down her face are the evidence of how she's feeling and that makes me feel worse than I do.

“I’m sorry sis.”

She doesn’t say anything but wipes her tears and heaves a huge sigh before bringing the engine to life.

“I’m really sorry it was never my intention to disappoint you. I didn’t think these are going to be the results. I thought I’m safe from pregnancy I’m really sorry.” I cry and still she doesn’t say anything but drives off.

Thuthu has not only broke my heart and ruined my friendship with Mbewu but ruined my whole life. How am I going to have a baby with him. I already see myself detesting this baby I’m carrying. The tension and stillness makes this drive to be the longest drive ever. I can’t bear it when my sister is this cold towards me. I want to bawl my eyes out in someone’s arms and Mbewu is that someone. I tell my sister to drop me off in the middle of the road and walk to the Qwabe household.

I hear someone screaming as I approach the door and that voice belongs to Mbewenhle I can never mistake it. Her painful screams impels me to pick up my pace. The door is open and I’m met by Mbewu’s mother who’s kicking her daughter on the floor and swearing. I swear this is not the calm MaQwabe that I

know, not even her huge tummy is a deterrent to kick her daughter. My heart breaks at the sight and I knock thinking that I will save Mbewu but her mother kicks me out. I wonder what did she do for her to punish her like this.

My phone is ringing and when I look at the screen 'Madlokovu' flashes on it. Tell me why do I still have his contact let alone saved by his clan name. He should be saved as 'njandini' I don't want to talk to him but I think this is the time to tell him about the pregnancy.

"Yes."

"Oh thanks for answering my call. How are you?"

"How do you think I am?"

"Baby I'm sorry. Can I see you please."

"Come see me there's something I want to tell you."

"Thank you. Where are you?"

"Let's meet halfway."

“Okay. Thank you for agreeing to see me.”

“I’m not doing this for you, there’s something I want to tell you.”

I end the call before he says anything. I don’t know if he was running or he was already close by because I don’t even get that far before I see him. Heart don’t you dare! This guy betrayed us! Why are you skipping a beat at his sight. He pulls me to his arms and holds me close to his body. His warm embrace has me tearing up.

“I’m sorry sthandwa sami. I know no amount of sorry could ever fix what I’ve broken nor mend your broken heart. I was weak baby and I’m really sorry but please give me one last chance. Just one last chance I promise to spend the rest of my life showing you how sorry I am. I love you so much and I can’t live without you please take me back. I’m begging you,” he says and the snuffling sound that follows after that makes me to pull back and look at him. His eyes are bloodshot red.

“I’m pregnant.” I whisper as tears run down my face

“Huh?”

“I said I’m pregnant.”

“Who’s the father?”

“It’s you of course Thuthuka!”

“Haibo Isisa you’re joking right?”

“Do I look like I’m joking?”

He chuckles and looks at me intently

“That can’t be my baby. So you were cheating on me all along?”

Wow! I can't believe he said that. I click my tongue and turn around, going back home with tears running down my face as he insults me. Saying I played him and now I want to pin the baby on him. He's not stupid and he can see right through me that I'm a conniving bitch. I keep calling Mbewu but her phone rings unanswered. God I need her right now this is so heavy on me.

☆ Manelisi ☆

"Yesssss!" I shriek with joy and do my victory dance. Finally things are looking out for me. Dankie dlozi lami! Two days back I went to an interview and I've just received a call that I got a job as a cashier at Shoprite. I'm so over the moon, happiness is overflowing.

"I got the job gogo no more hunger do you hear me? We will eat meat everyday!" I say to gogo who smiles. I know that this woman has been praying for me to get a job. Ultimately her prayers have been answered.

She's the reason I held on even when I wanted to give up. I want to give her the best life that she deserves. I know that I'm not going to be paid millions but the salary will be way better than what Bab Mthiyane pays me for herding his cattle.

I haven't been able to reach dombolo lami for two days now. I don't know what's going on and I'm starting to get worried now. I try to call her so that I can share these news with her. I know that she will be so happy for me. See besides gogo, that's another woman that prays for me more than she prays for herself. She's the reason behind my determination to be the best and strong version of myself so that she will always admire and be proud of the man she chose to have in her life.

"Hello." The sounds of her voice has my tummy fluttering.

"Dombolo lami how are you?"

"I'm okay and yourself?"

But she doesn't sound okay and I'm getting more worried.

"I've been worried about you. Why your phone has been off?"

"I haven't been feeling well." I knew it something is wrong.

"What's wrong my baby."

"Manelisi we cant be together anymore."

"What?" I'm not sure I heard her right it could be the bad network connection.

"It's over between us."

"You're joking right?"

“I wish I was.” She whispers audible enough for me to hear and the fear of losing her attacks me like waves threatening to drown me.

“Mbewenhle can I see you?”

“You can’t.”

“Please dombolo lami. I want you to tell me what’s wrong face to face you can’t dump me over the phone.”

“Manelis I can’t...”

“You owe me that much Mbewenhle.”

I hear her heaving a sigh then agrees to meet me in the river. I take gogo to Ma Mathiyane and find her with Blessing.

“Where are you going Mane.”

“It’s none of your Blessing.”

“Since when have you become so rude?”

“Mxm.” It’s all I say and leave. Maybe she’s the reason dombolo lami wants to call it quits.

When I get to the river I sit on the big rock and wait for her. There she is walking towards me. It’s too warm for her to wear tracksuits. I stand up from the rock while staring at her as she sashays towards me. Every step she takes you can tell that she carries herself with dignity.

I never get used of how beautiful, intelligent, kind and wise she is. There’s nothing I hate then a fact that she has given up on her dreams. Not that I blame her though when you live in this village dreams seems to be far fetched and it doesn’t help that girls are only raised to be wives here, nothing more nothing less. Not that I’m saying being a wife is wrong but there’s more to life.

She can be anything she wants in this world but still be my wife and I will be her cheerleader. There's this picture in my mind that makes me sleep at night with a smile on my face. I see us in our mansion, sitting on the balcony while staring our children who are swimming in the pool. Or me, playing guitar for her and watching her blushing shamelessly. Ahh man idombolo lakhe no mqwebu wakhe! I know it's a bad combination but I guess that what makes us even more compatible.

"Hey," she says and I study her face, my heart beats hard when I see bruises on it especially her eye.

"Dombolo lami what...what happened to your face."

"Nothing."

"Did he hurt you like this?" I swear I'm going to kill him with my bare hands!

"No it's not him."

“Then who is it. Come closer please don’t stand there.”

“I’m not staying I have to go back before someone sees us.”

“Mbewenhle talk to me please.”

I grab her wrist pulling her closer to me but she winces in pain. I pull up the sleeve of her top and my heart breaks when I see bruises on her arm.

“Who did this Mbewenhle!!”

“It’s mama, she knows about us. We can’t continue to do this.”

This is unbelievable uyahlanya yini lomfazi!

“Your mom beat up you like this?”

She nods her head and a tear runs down her cheek. I wipe it off and press her to my chest. I feel her body vibrating and I just know that she's crying.

"I'm so sorry my love."

I take her to the rock and she narrates everything that happens to say I'm angry would be an understatement. What kind of a mother that beat up her daughter with a mop stick?

"You are not breaking up with me Wenhle I love you."

"I love you too Lisi but we can't do this anymore..."

"No baby don't break my heart like this please." I can hear my voice breaking with every word coming out of my mouth.

What would I be without her? She has given me a purpose to live and a glimpse of happiness. I can't remember when I was this happy in my life. She lights up the dark places in my heart and soul. It sounds crazy that I've been living without her

before but now I don't see myself managing to lead a life without her.

“Manelisi I can't keep on two timing Muzikayise. At some point I have to choose between the two of you and it's him that I choose. I'm sorry from the bottom of my heart but I want you to know that I love you so much.”

“Baby please.” The desperation in my voice is so loud and I can't take the pain in my heart.

“I got a job at Shoprite baby I can take care of you now. Please don't do this to us, choose me please Wenhle don't break my heart like this.”

I knew this day will come where she has to choose and I thought by that time I would be the one she will choose.

“Wow I'm so happy for you my biltong. I knew you would get it!”

“Don’t hurt me like this please. Tell your parents that you love me and want me not him. It’s not like you and Muzi are married the flag can be teared off

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even if you were married people divorce every now and then now. Don’t do this to us please.”

“I’m sorry Manelisi but I can’t do that. It’s not easy as you think. There’s a lot that is at stake here.”

“Like what? Money? Wealth?”

“Jizas Manelisi why do you always bring up money and wealth.”

“It makes the world go around Wenhle.”

“I don’t care about money or wealth! I also have nothing on my name! I’m not a gold digger Manelisi, your kindnesses, time, support, effort, patience, loyalty, honesty and patience is what I love about you. Money doesn’t make the world go around, well not in my world especially where love is concerned. You have

no idea how much you hurt me every time you bring this topic!”

“Don’t shout at me!”

“I’m sorry but you’re frustrating and hurting me more,” she whispers, tears spilling down her face.

“I’m sure it can never measure what you are doing to me.” The pain inside of me seeps out in my voice. I refuse to let her go without a fight.

“I’m sorry but you knew that I have someone in my life. I told you countless times that we can’t do this because someone is going to be hurt but you were adamant to fight for me.”

“That’s the thing Mbewenhle you never gave me a reason not to fight for you. We connect like two strong magnets and we are magically compatible. I love you so much, you’re every breath that I take dombolo lami and I love that you don’t deny that you love me too which gives me more reason to fight for

us. I understand you're are afraid of fighting for us but worry not my love I will fight for both of us, for our love because you and I were meant to be."

"Lisi stop this pl...." I shut her up with a kiss and we share the sweetness of passion.

"It's over please move on. You will find someone who will love you and who deserves you not me. I never deserved you from the first place. I hope one day you will find it in your heart to forgive me for the pain I've put you through." Her words feel like a knife twisting in my already bleeding heart. She gets up from the rock but I grab her wrist before she could walk away.

"Wenhle I love you!"

"I love Muzikayise."

"You heard her ndoda." A voice says behind us and when we turn we see her boyfriend. Wenhle removes my hand from hers and looks at her boyfriend. Fear is written all over her face.

“Kayise,” she says with a shaky voice.

“KuseMnambithi la?” (Is this ladysmith?)

“No....” he cuts her off

“Go to the car.”

“Kayise....”

“I said go to the car Yeyeye!!”

“Don’t shout at her!”

“Ukhuluma nami masaka?”

“Ya ngikhuluma nawe stapura uzokwenzani?” I say walking closer to him. He chuckles and throws a punch but I duck then throw it right on his jaw.

“Guys stop it please!” Wenhle

We continue to fight, throwing punch after punch and fall on the ground still battling on each other. He manages to sit on my stomach and we exchange fists. I make sure that I’m aiming for his strabismus eye ngifuna listheke kakhulu kunakuqala or might as well livaleke unomphela and see if he will still be charming.

He groans in anguish and punches me none stop not giving me a chance to fight for myself that I feel like I’m losing my consciousness. Through my blurred vision I see him taking a huge rock next to us and raises it up with his both hands to hit me but it hit Mbewenhle on her forehead who is on his back trying to pull him away from me. She reels backwards and falls on the ground. We both freeze as we look at her lying on the ground and not moving.

## ☆ Muzikayise ☆

I walk around as I look at the builders' progress. These people are fast. It seems like by next year January we will be staying in our house. Yeyeye insisted that I hire a construction company since they're professional bazoyikhipha njengoba injalo iplan yendlu. I don't even know where did she get the plan of the house and I love it. It's going to be a double story, Yeyeye waze wabasukela abathakathi bezihlelele. No one stays in a double story in this village izimfene zohamba emini I tell you.

Once I'm satisfied with what I see I take pictures for her and send them to her via WhatsApp as I walk to my car. She's at Ladysmith visiting her grandmother. I miss her already and what exasperating is that she also doesn't know when she will come back. An unfamiliar beautiful lady signals for me to stop the car and when I pull over she opens the car and gets in mind you I didn't tell her to do so.

"Hi."

She's wearing a black body hugging dress and it shows off her enticing cleavage.

"Hello."

"You are Muzikayise right?"

"Who wants to know?"

"Blessing...Blessing Jagath."

"Wakabani isbongo I have never seen you here before."

She giggles and tugs her weave behind her ear looking at me in the eyes.

"Jagath is my surname."

“I have never heard of that surname in this village. What kind of surname is that?”

“It’s my marital surname actually. My maiden surname is Zondo. My husband is an Indian.”

“Oh okay so where are you going because I’m going home.”

“I think there’s something you have to see at the river.”

“What is that?”

“It’s about your girlfriend.”

“Maybe you’re mistaking me lady, my girlfriend is in Ladysmith.”

“Not unless if you have many girlfriends but Mbewenhle is at the river right now with someone. They’ve been spending so much time together and the rumors says they’re dating.”

“I don’t know what you are trying to do sis but it’s not going to work. Get out of my car.” I say calmly but sternly.

“It’s fine you don’t have to believe me but I know what I’m talking about. I have proof.”

She presses her phone before showing me a picture of Mbewenhle with that stick fighting guy. The picture doesn’t show any intimacy between them but it can’t be a coincidence that this is the same guy that gave her a hundred note.

“Goodbye Muzi,” she says and steps out of the car, closing the door behind her.

I feel a shard in my guts that is threatening to take every breath of mine and leave me dead in the inside at the thought of Yeyeye two timing me. Trying to ignore this is proving to be difficult, my curiosity is building up with every second.

Every pound of my heartbeat I can feel it against my chest as I drive to the river. I can never mistake her with anybody. I pull over a bit far and step out of my car, heading straight to them. I can't grasp her actual words but I can hear her voice. Now she's standing and it looks like she's walking away but the guy grabs her wrist. They are not aware of my presence as I'm behind them.

"Wenhle I love you!" The guy says and that fuels my anger. So she lied to me that she's in Ladysmith so that she can see him?

"I love Muzikayise." If she saw me I'd say she's saying this because of that, somehow that calms me down but what is she doing here?

"You heard her ndoda."

Yeyeye wrests her wrist from his grip and looks at me. There's intense fear glinting in her eyes.

"Kayise," she says with a shaky voice.

“KuseMnambithi la?” (Is this ladysmith?)

“No....” I cut her off before she goes any further.

“Go to the car.”

“Kayise....”

“I said go to the car Yeyeye!!”

“Don’t shout at her!” The nerve of this guy to say that. I turn to look at him and he stares right back at me.

“Ukhuluma nami masaka?”

“Ya ngikhuluma nawe stapura uzokwenzani?” He says walking towards me, challenging me. We are the same height and right

now we are eyes to eyes, nose to nose and breathing each other.

I chuckle and throw a mean punch. Our fight escalates in a second and Yeyeye is trying to stop us then the next minute she's lying on the ground. My heart literally stop beating and I look at her lying on the ground and not moving. I throw the big rock in my hands and rush to her.

"Yeyeye!"

There's blood coming out from her nostrils and she has lost her consciousness.

"Baby wake up please." I slightly slap her cheeks but she's not waking up and that is when I notice bruises on her face especially the eye. What happened to her?

"See what you have done you idiot!" Who is this bastard talking to? He fusses over her but I push him roughly and he falls with his butt into the paddle of water. I pick up Mbewenhle and rush

to my car with her where I gently place her on the back seat. When I go to the front seat I find him already sitting on the front passenger seat.

“Get out of my car!”

“I’m not going to let you go with her alone. I also need to know if she’s okay. Get in the car and let’s go to the hospital.”

“Uyahlanya I’m not going with you!” I grab him in attempt to wrench him out of my car but he balances.

“Out of my car now!”

“Stop wasting time by fighting me and get in the car, she could be in danger as we speak!”

Trying to drag him out of my car proves to be fruitless and that is infuriating me. I give in and slide into my car then drive to the hospital.

“Uyinja!” I roar in anger not believing that he just made me drive my woman to the hospital with him!

“Wena uyisihlama sothuvi!”

“What do you want from my woman!”

“There’s nothing that shows that she’s yours and please don’t tell me about the flag. Isdwedewe nje esinga dabuka.”

I glance at the side mirror for a car behind me and when I don’t see one I lean over and punch him. He groans in pain while massaging his jaw.

“You do know that fighting me won’t change the fact that she will end up with me?”

“Sishimane ndini are you that desperate vele going for another man’s woman.”

“Intombi ithathwe esokeni”

“Mbewenhle is mine leave her the fuck alone if you don’t want to meet your ancestors!”

“I can’t leave her alone I love her. If I die I die.”

Every time he opens his mouth, he antagonize me further. If my priority right now isn’t Yeyeye I’d hit the side of the car to the other car that is driving next to us. At the hospital we are attended the moment we arrive. I sit impatiently on the bench while staring at him as he paces up and down.

“If you’re not going to sit down and wait get out! This up and down you’re doing is annoying me!”

He grunts and sits down far from me and I couldn’t be more happier because every second I stare his ugly face my urge to end his life increases. I’m not sure what to think right now

my mind is reeling. I want to hold on to my trust for Yeyeye that she will never do me dirty like this but the fact that she was with him in the river while to me she said she's in Ladysmith makes me question a lot.

The doctor finally comes to us after waiting for what feels like forever. We both stand up and he looks at us.

“How is her doctor?” I ask

“Are you both family?”

“Yes I'm her husband and he's her brother,” The bastard says with a smirk on his face which I want to wipe off with a massive back clap. Doctors with their confidentiality I know if I argue to this he might withhold some information to us and ask us to call her family.

“We are listening doctor.” I say masking my anger.

He explains that she fainted due to the blow on her head and they ran some test fortunately her injury is closed and it's not severe but they are going to keep her under observation for a night. I release a breath of relief.

"She's going to be okay?"

"Yes she's going to be okay but I'm concerned about the bruises that we found all over her body. Sir do you know anything about them?" The doctor is directing the question to him.

"What are you insinuating doctor? I can never beat up my wife. You should ask her brother."

What the hell! Now the doctor is looking at me with an accusatory look.

"Doctor I also don't know what caused those bruises but I'm sure she can tell us. Can we see her?"

“I will give you guys two minutes, she needs to rest her body is taking a lot of strain.”

We follow behind the doctor who shows us where Yeyeye is kept. She’s lying on the hospital bed looking so peaceful while I’m not at peace. I want to wake her up and ask her what the hell is going on but I have to respect doctor’s orders.

What gives this bastard so much power? There’s something more going on here that makes him this rude and arrogant. Once the two minutes is almost over he walks out leaving me with her. I’m attacked by so many emotions right now and I don’t know which one to entertain. I walk out as well after the two minutes is over.

I curse under my breath when I see him ambling along the corridor in his wet faded pants. I’ve even forgotten that I pushed him into the water and for him to insist on going wet like this it shows that he really cares about her. I don’t know if I will ever do what he did just for a girl I’m wooing especially when she has someone. I smell a rat here and that unsettles me.

“You’re lucky she’s going to be okay because you would be the one going to meet your ancestors before me.”

“Why don’t we just fight this off like man to man once and for all ngoba ngiyabona ijwayelana amasimba la phakathi kwami nawe!”

The bruises on his face are starting to be visible I bet mine as well and being light skinned doesn’t help. I have to admit that he’s way strong then I anticipated not only physically but mutically as well. This is the only way to explain how he’s not badly injured after I laid my hands on him or the muti in my body is getting weak?

“There’s no need for that stapura, what you have to do is to tear off isidwedwe esilapha kini ngoba yena uzogcina la kimi.” (...tear off that cloth in your home because she will end up with me.) He winks at me and walks away whistling. I have to stop myself from jumping on him and strangle him to death.

When I get into my car I look for my cigarette in a glove box but I can’t find it so I drive around and make my stop at this shop to

buy a pack of stuyvesant. After receiving my change I get to my car and start smoking. With each drag my mind is building up these pictures of them together as its try to understand all of this. No she can't do this to me!!! I throw that cigarette butt through the window after my last drag and drive home.

There's this bastard walking alone on the road, of course he doesn't have a taxi fare and he still has a long way to go. My anger is peaked at the sight of him and unleashes the monster in me. I slacken my drive and wait for the two cars to overtake me and another one that is coming on the front to drive pass. Once the road is clear I put pleasure on the accelerator, speedily driving straight to him and run over him then leave his body on the side of the road.

"Shit what the fuck happened to you!" That's a first thing Thuthuka welcomes me with. I don't know why is he drinking alcohol in my house.

"You better clean up these cans of yours once you're finished Thuthuka! I can't clean up after you!" I say and flump on the couch.

“Mbewenhle cleans here malumes not you. What happened to your face.”

“Got into a fight with that asswipe!” I go on and tell him what happened.

“Damn malumes! The nerve of that bastard!! You should deal with him once and for all! He’s disrespectful.”

“Already done with that my boy. Do you think Mbewenhle is cheating on me?”

He heaves a sigh and sips on his beer.

“Honestly I don’t know malumes. You never know girls. One minute you think you know them the next they throw a bombshell on you.”

“Mbewenhle is not any girl, she loves me so much to do that to me.”

“That’s true malumes but my question is why that guy had the nerve to disrespect you like that. It like there’s something he knows that you don’t. Girls are fool of shit!”

“I hope you are not talking about Isisa here because you’re the one who hurt the poor girl.”

“I hurt the poor girl,” he says and chuckles bitterly

“Yes Thuthuka own up to your shit.”

“She’s pregnant and she claims to be pregnant with my baby. This girl has been two timing me malumes. You know what hurts the most is that I have been waiting for her umemulo but she allowed some asshole to fuck her then has a nerve to pin the pregnancy on me! Heeeehh.” Once again he chuckles and shakes his head.

“She’s pregnant? That’s big news but why would she pin the pregnancy on you if she hasn’t slept with you.”

“What will you know what goes on in that girl’s head. She thinks I’m stupid!”

“This doesn’t make sense boy I mean...are you sure you didn’t fuck her?”

“No malumes we only had oral sex, no penetration.”

“How did you go about that?”

“Haibo malumes now you want me to go into details?”

“Not really I just want to understand this because it might happened that you cum near her vagina.”

He stops his beer halfway his mouth and looks at me.

“Yes I did for several times.”

“Jesus Thuthuka don’t you know that you don’t do that!”

“Why not its so damn hot there and when I nut on her pussy it makes feel like I’m cumming inside of her.”

I laugh in disbelief it’s unlike him to be ignorant.

“I never thought a smart ass like you could do something so stupid. If you come near her vagina there’s possibility of pregnancy you idiot! Sperms are good swimmers!”

“Oh shit!” He says, letting go of the can of beer in his hand and spilling the beer on my rug.

“Thuthuka maan! Now my house will be smelling like a brewery!”

“I’m going to be a father?” He says rather to himself.

“Yes and you better fix things with Isisa and support her because you’re the one who put her through this. You should’ve protected her from pregnancy.”

I get up and leave him. I’ve just remembered that I have to inform Mbewenhle’s parents about her whereabouts before they get worried. Mam Qwabe is the one that welcomes me. Is it me or her tummy is growing each day. Two if not three days back it wasn’t this big when I gave her a lift. She was coming from the clinic.

“Muzikayise come on in.” I walk inside the lounge and she leads me to the couch where we both settle down.

“How are you mama?”

“I’m okay my boy and yourself?”

“I’m also fine. Uhm is your husband home?”

“No he’s not. Is everything okay?”

“There’s been a little incident which led Mbewenhle to the hospital but the doctor said she’s going to be fine. They’re going to keep her for overnight.”

“Ohh what incident?”

“She got hit with a rock on her head it wasn’t intentional.”

“Rock? What was she doing with you in the first place?”

“She wasn’t with me I met her in the river. It’s a story I would like to keep between us mama and I would really appreciate if you don’t probe any further”

“You can’t expect me to just accept what you tell me Muzi without the details. I need to know what happened that led my daughter into the hospital. I haven’t forgotten that you once brought her unconscious now you are telling me that she’s in the hospital.”

“I told you that she fainted after I declared Zimiphi’s death that day Mam Qwabe or you don’t believe me?”

“I do believe you but it seems like you can’t protect her. Something horrible have to happen while she’s with you.”

“Well I’m sorry you feel that way. It was an accident and she’s going to be fine though the doctor is concerned about the bruises all over her body. So basically I should be questioning you as her mother regarding the bruises she has.”

“Questioning me? Have you forgotten who you are speaking to? You can’t question my parenting skills in my house. Haibo mfana isibindi esingaka usithaphi?”

I heave a sigh and scratch my head.

“I’m sorry that came out wrong but what you need to know is that I can never hurt her deliberately. Accidents happen she’s going to be okay that what the doctor said.” I say getting up

then tell her which ward her daughter is if she wishes to see her then leave.

.....

The dreams disturbed my peaceful sleep last night. The moment I dozed off I'd see them making it out in front of me. It felt so real and even now as I'm on my way to the hospital those pictures of them from the dream are still haunting me. When I arrive to the hospital I find her awake and with the doctor. She can barely look at me in the eyes and that alone has my mind thinking of the worst.

He briefs me about her recovery and tells me that he's discharging her. She's wearing pjs I bet her family brought her pjs last night. I couldn't bring myself to come, I wasn't ready to face her and hear what she has to say about this. I wait for her to change into tracksuits and once she's finished I sign her out then we leave. I haven't said any word to her and I can feel her stealing glances at me.

“Where are we driving to?” She asks after a while when she notices that I’m not driving back to the village.

“Somewhere.”

She doesn’t ask any questions after that and that’s good for her because I’m not in the mood for 21 questions. I pull over at this secluded area, far away from everything. It’s just me and her only.

I pull out my gun from my behind and place it on the dashboard then turn to look at Mbewenhle who has her eyes bulging out of her socket at the sight of the gun on my dashboard.

“Let’s talk suka sambe wami and don’t even dare think of lying to me because I will know when you are lying and akuzukubamnandi.”

## ☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I'm lying on the hospital bed and staring at the window not that there's anything interesting that has caught my attention, it's already late and starting to get dark. My mind is reeling I can't escape the hurricane of thoughts. The moment I chose to end all of this it's the same time I get caught. I'm rattling in fear of the consequences of my shenanigans. I'm not ready for what awaits me when I get out of this hospital.

I hear my mother's voice before she appears with my sister. Our eyes locked and my heart begins to pound harder against my rib cage. Kayise told them Oh God I'm dead this time. Baba is going to kill me if Kayise doesn't kill me first. They walk closer and my sister smiles at me.

"Hey little sis," says Mpilenhle giving me a hug which I return and when she pulls away my eyes involuntarily looks at mama.

She looks angry and murderous. I hold my chest as my breaths begin to come in pants and trying to get control of my

breathing is proving to be futile. I can hear my sister's panicked voice telling me to breathe but the anxiety bubbles inside my rib cage and I feel so sick in my stomach. I'm not sure if the world is disappearing out of me or I'm the one who's fading away.

"Miss Qwabe breathe....yes just like that...you're doing good," the doctor says and I don't know when did he join us. I focus on his soothing voice and the intense feelings dissipate as I regain my normal breathing slowly.

"What just happened?" That's my mother redirecting the question to the doctor. I'm not sure what I hear in her voice is worry.

"It's an anxiety attack." The doctor says and my sister looks at me as if she's saying 'I told you so'.

"Enlighten us doctor. What is an anxiety attack and how can we help her whenever she suffers one." Mpilenhle

“Anxiety attacks are also known as panic attacks. They are episodes of intense panic or fear. Anxiety attacks usually occur suddenly and without warning. They usually peak within 10 minutes, and they rarely last more than 30 minutes. But during that short time, you may experience terror so severe that you feel as if you’re about to die or totally lose control. Surge of overwhelming panic, feeling of losing control or going crazy, heart palpitations or chest pain, feeling like you’re going to pass out, trouble breathing or choking sensation, hyperventilation, hot flashes or chills, trembling or shaking, nausea or stomach cramps are the symptoms of anxiety attack.” The doctor explains and my sister looks at me once again. I’m still not going to talk to her sister in law.

“Relaxation and breathing techniques can ease the anxiety attack. You can help her by breathing with her counting slowly from 1 to 10. Speak to her calmly and encourage her to focus on breathing and positive thoughts.”

“So there’s no treatment for anxiety attack?” Mama

“Of course there’s treatment

therapy and medication. There are two different types of therapy, cognitive therapy behavior which helps you to identify and challenge negative thinking patterns and irrational beliefs that fuels your anxiety. Then there's exposure therapy which encourages you to confront your fears and anxieties. Medication is for the intense and severe anxiety that interfere with the ability to function. It helps to relieve some symptoms however anxiety medication can be a habit and cause dangerous effects."

They continue to ask the questions and the doctor is pleased to explain to them. I keep zoning out throughout their conversation.

"She's going to be okay Mrs Qwabe. I've been trying to make her talk but she's refusing to tell me who beat her up and she doesn't want to press charges."

"Uhm don't worry doctor we will talk to her. Thanks for everything," mama says and the doctor nods then disappears.

“God mama you didn’t tell me she’s this bad!” Mpilenhle says inspecting my bruises.

“Don’t raise your voice at me wena!” Mama retorts

“This is child abuse.”

“Haisuka child abuse ukunuka. I was beating whore tendencies out of her. This is called discipline not abuse.”

Wow I can’t believe that she doesn’t see anything wrong with the way she beat me up. I’m not saying she shouldn’t have beat me up but with a mop stick that was way extreme.

“I feel drowsy can I rest please.” I say

“Tell us what happened first Mbewu. How did you end up with Muzikayise when I told you that you will see him once you’ve healed.”

I guess Kayise didn't tell them well I can't tell her either. I don't want another beat up. I'm still in pain I will definitely not survive round two.

"I'm sorry mama but can I rest please. I don't feel so good I think the medication they gave me is making me drowsy."

"We brought you pjs, toiletries and something to eat," says Mpilenhle showing me my backpack on bedside table.

"Thank you sis."

"You're welcome. Have some rest we will come tomorrow okay?"

"Okay."

"I love you baby sis."

"I love you too."

She kisses my forehead then she walks out with mama. The moment they're out of my sight I search through the backpack and take out the lunch box. There's beans with bones and dumplings inside. I slide out of the bed and shuffle to the bathroom to wash my hands then come back to dig in.

.....

The doctor discharged me today and Kayise is the one that came to fetch me. I couldn't even look at him in the face when he walked inside the hospital. Now we are parked in this place that I never knew existed and it's only me and him. No one will ever know what happened to me even if he decides to kill me. I can already see myself as a GBV statistic.

I can't tear my eyes away from the gun and the sight of it has me shaking in fear. I don't know if I should tell the truth or lie. My eyes finally meet his intense gaze and terror surges through my veins. I swallow hard trying to gather my words but they've build a painful lump at the back of my throat.

“I’m listening Yeyeye.”

Mam Nomsa once said to mama, men don’t forgive cheating yet they expect us to forgive them when they’re caught cheating. Confessing would be like signing a death warrant for myself.

“There’s nothing going on between me and him I swear Kayise. He has been courting me and I’ve been telling him that I love you.”

“Don’t make me a fool Yeyeye please. You said you are in Ladysmith but I found you with him in the river holding hands.”

“I didn’t want you to see me bruised like this hence I said I’m in Ladysmith. I was taking a walk to stretch my legs and as always he showed up in the river. He’s the one that held my hand not the other way around.”

He looks at me intently and I don’t dare shift my gaze from his because that will be suspicious.

“Who beat you up?”

“I disrespected my mother and she beat me up with a mop stick. Why would I cheat on you when I love you this much Kayise.”

“Stop lying to me Mbewenhle! You are cheating on me with this guy!!” He bangs the dashboard causing me to jump in fright and almost release my pee.

“No I’m not I swear Kayise I will never hurt you like this. I love you so much to do that to you. I can’t believe that you think so low of me.” My voice is shaking.

“Why you never told me that he has been courting you?”

“I knew that you will be like this Kayise. You’re so possessive of me and it’s so scary sometimes. I wanted to handle him myself. I was in control of the situation then you arrived and almost killed the poor guy. If you are going to accuse me of cheating

every time a guy shows interest in me then we are going to have a serious problem. Have I ever gave you the reason not to trust me?"

"How do you expect me to react Yeyeye when I see you with a guy holding your hand while you told me that you're in Ladysmith?"

I feel a surge of relief when I realize that he didn't see us kissing.

"I'm sorry for lying to you about visiting grandma in Ladysmith it's the only thing I thought when you asked to see me. You're the only man that my heart beats for, the man I want to build a family with and the man I'm proud to call my husband."

I stretch my hand and caress his cheek while staring deep in his eyes.

"I love you so much and it hurt that you don't trust me but I understand that the turn out of events gave you a reason to be

suspicious.” I let my tears to fall down my face and he catches them with his thumb.

“I’m glad that you understand my reaction towards this but I trust you Yeyeye with everything in me and I hope you won’t take advantage of that and fool around because when I do find out that you’ve been playing me all along it won’t be nice.”

I swallow a thick saliva in my mouth and he leans over to kiss me. The kiss is intense and we are pouring our hearts into it.

“I love you,” he whispers after breaking the kiss.

“I love you more Sidwaba Siluthuli.”

He smiles and kisses my forehead then puts his gun into the glove box. That went better than I anticipated though I can’t help but notice the sadness that travels through every cell of my body.

☆ Isisa ☆

I don't know how to break the news to my mother that I'm pregnant and my sister has been pestering me to tell her. I'm not ready to face her wrath and disappointment. I'm not even sure I want to keep this baby but the thought of killing an innocent baby spooks the hell out of me. What if I never have any baby after this one?

Mama is making a new imvunulo for me which I would wear at reed dance if only she knew that I'm no longer going there. Thuthu robbed me of my youth now I'm going to be a mother, something I never prepared myself for nor am I ready for. Maybe it would've felt better if he penetrated me.

"Say what you want to say Isisa and stop staring at my like that," mama says without looking at me.

"You're beautiful mama you know that?"

She chuckles and looks at me curiously.

“Ufunani Isisa?” (What do you want Isisa)

Oh God this is way harder than I thought. I settle down next to her and heave a sigh.

“Mama I’m sorry for being a disappointment...” I pause mid sentence as a painful ball clogs in my throat and when I swallow it tears involuntarily spill down my face.

“What’s wrong my baby? Talk to me.” Her voice is dripping with worry.

“Ngiyaxolisa mama.” (I’m sorry mama)

“You’re scaring me Isisa.”

“Uhm I’m uh...I’m pregnant.” The silence fills the room you would hear the pin drop.

“I’m so...” she raises her hand stopping me from saying anything then gets up from the couch.

“Mama please don’t go let’s talk please.” I grab her hand but she wrests her hand from my grip.

“Don’t touch me!” The venom in her eyes sends chills down my spine. I let her hand go like it’s burning me. She disappears out of the lounge leaving me sobbing. I slide out my phone from my pants and make a call. It rings for a while and as I’m about to give up her voice comes through from the other side of the line.

“Hello.”

“Friend.” I sob

“Friend is everything okay?”

“No where are you I need you.”

“I’m at my grams house do you want me to come there?”

“No I’m coming.” I sniff and wipe my tears.

“Okay.”

I hang up and make my way to the Ndwandwe household. Tears are blurring my vision. I can’t stop them from falling and when I arrive Mbewu meets me at the gate. I can’t help but launch myself in her arms and she catches me.

“Sssh it’s going to be okay friend. Whatever it is we will get through it together okay.”

She takes me to the house and we settle down on the couch.

“Talk to me.”

“I’m pregnant and Thuthu denied the paternity of the baby”

“Oh friend I’m sorry.”

She pulls me to her chest and I bawl my eyes out as I explain to her everything that happened, choking between my sobs.

“Thuthuka is such a bastard! Doesn’t he know that sperms are swimmers? If I knew better I’d say he did this on purpose rhhhaaa!” The anger in her voice cannot be missed.

“Mama is angry at me so is Jabu. I have no support Mbewu I’m all alone with this pregnancy. I’m not even sure I want to keep this baby.”

“I’m here for you friend anytime. Just give your mom and sister time they will come around. I can imagine how scared you are but don’t make a haste decision. Let it sink in first and get used to these news. The more days passes by it’s the more you will be able to make a wise and rational decision.”

“I’m not ready to be a mom but at the same time I’m scared that if I do abortion I might never have a child ever again.”

“I don’t think one can ever prepare herself enough to be a mother. There are many women who abort but they still have children I guess it just the matter of what you believe in. Don’t cry if Thuthu doesn’t want to be a father then I’m going to be a father of this baby if you decide to keep it okay?”

I giggle as she wipes tears on my face with the back of her palms

“I don’t need a penis to be a father. Don’t laugh.”

“You’re crazy but I really appreciate your support friend. I’m sorry that I’ve been unfair towards you please forgive me. I don’t want a boy to destroy our sisterhood. I love you and I missed you so much.”

“I missed you too friend can we not let anything come between us please. I’m scared that now we are going to fix things

between us then once you and Thuthuka talk things through somehow he's going to do something that will make us fight once again."

"I will never allow that trust me I've learnt my lesson and I'm done with that moron. He got time for games I'm not his playground. Maybe denying the paternity of the baby is a blessings in disguise. I can learn to raise this baby alone. It hurt that I was looking forward to go to the reed dance since it might be the last time I go there."

"If it's going to make you feel better I'm also not going though I was looking forward to it too since it's my last time as well but hey it is what it is."

"Why are you not going? You should go I mean I'm sure by next year September Muzi would've already pop the cherry."

We share a giggle

“Look at me, I can’t go to the reed dance with these bruises and I’ve made peace with the fact that I’m not going.”

I free myself from her embrace and look at her.

“What happened? Why your mom was beating you up like that?”

“Argh I messed up big time friend.” She goes on and narrates to me what happened. To say I’m shocked will be putting it lightly.

“Wow”

“I know hey and please don’t judge me.”

“I’m not judging you friend it’s just that I never expected you to do this. Why would you cheat on Muzi though I thought you love him.”

“I do love him friend.”

“But?”

“I also love Manelisi.”

“You can’t love two people at the same time. There has to be that one that you love more than the other.”

“They’re different guys and I love them differently.”

“Muzi loves you Mbewenhle please don’t break his heart. That shit is not nice. What does this Manelisi guy do?”

“He just got a job as a cashier at Shoprite.”

“He’s a downgrade from Muzikayise.”

“There’s no need to compare him with Kayise. Akuvelwa kanye kanye kungemadlebe embongolo. That guy has big dreams and

I have no doubt that he's going to achieve them. What love got to do with what he does anyway?"

"Look I know that he's hotter than Muzi but his hotness and love will never provide you security. My sister started as a cashier before she got a managing position. I know that they don't earn much."

"Isisa please don't tell me that you're also one of those who date guys according to what they earn."

"Now you make me sound like I'm a gold digger friend. What I'm trying to say is you have to consider everything the relationship comes with and that includes the guy's financial status. That doesn't make you a gold digger it's means you are wise to choose a relationship that will bring no financial problems in future."

"We don't choose the circumstances we live under friend. Being a cashier for now doesn't mean he will die as a cashier. It's a start, everyone has to start somewhere. Muzi also started with fetching water for the community with his father's donkey

cart and bought one goat look at him now. We can't judge people based on temporary situations, life can turn around for them as long as they're passionate and determined to thrive that what's important."

"Oh my goodness!"

"What?"

"You really love this guy!!"

She releases a sad sigh and looks at me with teary eyes.

"It doesn't matter anyway I'm with Muzikayise and I love him. He's the one I chose umphakathi ubhekile I have to stick to my promises." The hint of sadness in her voice breaks my heart. I reach for her hand and squeeze it.

"Muzi is the best for you friend trust me you didn't make a mistake by choosing him."

“Yeah he’s the best and my parents love him. They know what best for me.”

We spend the rest of the day catching up and eating junk food. This girl knows how to make me feel better without trying hard. I’m never letting anything come between us ever again.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I’ve been cooped up in my bedroom for days now and I’m supposed to stay in seclusion for the whole week until the big day of my umemulo ceremony which is this Saturday. I’m not allowed to leave this room well except at night when fewer people can see me.

In Zulu we call this umgonqo. It is done to ensure that I’m not affected by sorcery and I’m acquainted with the ancestors so that they can give me blessings. Whenever I get out of the umgonqo even for a limited period of time I adopt a shy attitude like a bride. I don’t talk loud or laugh aloud I whisper

when I'm talking to people and whoever wants to see me comes inside my bedroom with a gift.

The terms and conditions that comes with umgonqo are too much I want this to be over already. I have red ochre smeared all over my body including my face and izimpelisi zami has it on their face only. They're the ones who take care of me and do things for me.

The only girl that I trust with my life is Isisa and I'm so sad that she couldn't be impelesi yami since she's pregnant. The news of her pregnancy spread all over and the whole village crucified her. The passed two months have been difficult for her but I'm glad that Thuthu came to his senses and he's very supportive. Just like Isisa he also didn't know that sperms are swimmers.

Today I've been listening to elderly women advising me about accepted behavior as I'm now entering womanhood and the responsibilities associated with it. It's only that moment I realized what a big journey of my life I'm about to embark.

I haven't seen nor talked to Manelisi since that day in the river. This other day after the incident I sent one of Lonhle's boys to his house and he was told that they haven't seen him for a week they don't know what happened to him which was quite alarming. There's this part of me that thinks Kayise did something to him. I decided to stop probing any further before I get caught once again but to be honest there's no day that passes without thinking about him. If only I can hear that he's okay at least that will be better.

"I miss you so much."

"I miss you too sthandwa sami."

"Can I come to steal a kiss please."

"Men are not supposed to see me." The way he's so clingy these days. The week without seeing him feels like a year to him.

"It's dark now I would barely see you sthandwa sami."

“Be patient my love you will see me Saturday.”

“I love you Yeyeye and I can’t wait for your umemulo to be over already so that I can send my uncles.”

I can’t help the smile that embraces my face.

“I also can’t wait. How far is our house?”

“Almost there baby.”

I’m glad that he came to his senses and build our house. I was never going to cope in his parents homestead. Staying with the in laws never yields pleasant results. We continue to talk for a while and when I hang up Khathazile starts a song. We join her and sing together while they dance. I wish Isisa is here, her mother doesn’t want her to come here. I don’t know if she will come for my umemulo ceremony. This pregnancy somehow is a blessing in disguise because since then we have been tighter than a knot.

I'm pressed so I get up and leave the girls singing and dancing. The yard is buzzing with relatives doing whatever they're doing and children playing around and tittering none stop. I skip to the toilet and release my bladder. Once I'm done I wipe myself clean and step out of the toilet. Just as I lock the door of the toilet I feel a cold hand gagging my mouth.

"Ssshhh don't even think of biting my hand because that would be a bad move girl. Now you're going to do exactly what I tell you to do am I clear?" I nod my head tears already streaming down my face.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

“Ssshhh don’t even think of biting my hand because that would be a bad move girl. Now you’re going to do exactly what I tell you to do am I clear?” I nod my head tears already streaming down my face. He breaks into a fit of laughter and in a flash of light fear is replaced by anger. I turn around and punch him mercilessly on his chest.

“Fuck you Manelisi! How could you scare me like that huh! Yaz uyingatha lenja wena!” I don’t stop punching him and he’s laughing as he tries to block my tiny fits against his chest.

“Damn you punch like a man!” That comes out as a groan but I continue, throwing punches on his chest.

“I’m sorry okay I was just pulling your leg.”

“Fuck you!”

He finally manages to hold me and the moment he wraps me in his arms I let out a sob that I have been holding in for two months.

“Ngiyaxolisa dombolo lami.” (I’m sorry my dumplings) The remorse in his voice makes me cry even harder.

The reason I’m crying is not that he scared me but it’s because I missed him so much and seeing him right now makes me happy. There was this huge part of me that thought Kayise did something to him and I will never see him again. Guilty conscience has been nibbling on me for the past two months.

“I’m sorry MaKhondlo,” he whispers in my ear and I feel a blanket of goosebumps covering my body. I haven’t felt safe and protected in a while. In his arms I’m home. He holds me even tighter and I inhale deeply, taking in his scent. He doesn’t smell Protex soap as usual, today he smells like an old spice with a hint of lemon and vanilla. His new scent is stirring and I’m so in love with it.

“I thought I will never see you again.” I croak against his chest.

“There’s no way that can happen sthandwa sami.” I feel his warm lips on my forehead.

“I miss you so much Lisi.”

“I miss you too dombolo lami. Can I ask you a favor?”

“Anything for you my biltong.”

“Come with me just for half and hour. I want to spend time with you even for a few minutes.”

“Manelisi I can’t do that.”

“I’m begging you sthandwa sami.”

“Please don’t do this to me you know I can’t do that. I’m not supposed to go out and you’re the last person I want to be seen with. I’m happy that you are okay but please respect my decision and stay away from me. I don’t want troubles Manelisi I’m begging you.” I dismally fail to mask the pain in my voice not that I’m surprised around him I’m always raw and vulnerable.

He lets out a heavy sigh and disentangle his arms around me leaving me feeling cold and lonely.

“It’s hard to accept and respect your decision but because I love you so much I will give you what you want. Please just few minutes I promise to stay away from you afterwards please.”

“Manelisi...”

“You owe me few last minutes of your time please. I just want to be with you for the last time. Let’s makes our last memories to be something that we will remember each other with and part ways properly dombolo lami.” I cannot miss the desperation in his voice.

“Okay.” The word slips out of my mouth before I can think hard about it.

“Thank you so much.”

“Let me go tell my sister first to avoid any unnecessary panic and stress.”

“Okay sthandwa sami.”

I make my way to the garage where my sister is drinking wine with our cousins and they’re having a loud conversation, no actually they’re screaming at each other one would swear they have hearing problems. The funny thing about this is that they’re talking about sex. What if the elders pass by and hear them.

“Mzala wami!!” screams Thobeka as I enter the garage. I give her a smile and walk to my sister then bend to reach her ear.

“Sis, Kayise is here and he wants to see me, can I go to him for a few seconds please.”

“Few seconds Mbewu I don’t want to answer to the parents when they notice you’re not home.”

“Thank you so much sis.” I kiss her cheek and walk out.

She’s trying her best to be my best friend so I have decided to stop pushing her away and meet her halfway. We are not there yet but slowly we will get there. Manelisi and Muzikayise saga brought us a bit closer. She didn’t judge me but she couldn’t hide how unhappy and disappointed she was.

Mpilehle really set a good example for me as an elder sister. I get where she’s coming from. Sbali Sbu is her first through everything. After her umemulo ceremony he paid lobola for her but she broke her virginity when she was 23 years old and that was the time she fall pregnant with Azanothe.

I check the coast, everyone is too busy to notice. I make my way to the toilet and we jump the fence. He offers to piggyback me and I jump on his back wrapping my arms around his shoulders.

“Where have you been.”

“At home.”

“I tried calling you but your phone has been off since that day and when I sent a boy to your house he was told that they haven’t seen you for a week.”

“That week I was hospitalized, someone tried to kill me by running over me with a car but I survived and that how my phone was damaged.”

I knew that there was something wrong I felt it in my guts and it wasn’t a nice feeling.

“Oh my goodness Lisi I’m sorry. Who tried to kill you?”

“Who will want to kill me though?”

“Muzikayise is not a killer.” I say rather convincing myself then him.

“Well after we left you in the hospital I had no taxi fare so I had no choice but to walk all the way from the hospital to home. He saw me walking along the road and ran over me. I think he thought he left me dead. Some man saved me and I woke up in the hospital.”

I don't know why I'm surprised Kayise could do this. He's so possessive of me and as much as I love it somehow it scares the hell out of me.

“Yhoo I'm sorry Manelisi. What about your work?”

“I almost lost it but when I provided evidence they took me. Don't be sorry it is not your fault. I get where he's coming from, when someone or something threatens to take away

something that you holds close to your heart you do anything in your power to eliminate it.”

“That doesn’t make it right though. No one is entitled to take someone’s life, he’s not God.”

“I don’t blame him though,” he says putting me down on the doorstep then we walk inside the house.

He covers my eyes with his warm palms and leads me to only him knows where. When our walk ceases he removes his hands on my eyes and I’m greeted by scented candles lighted and forming a heart shape. There’s a blanket, cushions and red roses scattered inside the heart. The light is off but the light that is produced by the TV and the soft music playing in the background gives that aura of romance.

“Oh my biltong this is beautiful!”

“You like it?”

“I love it but you shouldn’t have.”

Now I’m thinking of the money he spent doing this. He should save every cent to take care of himself and his grandma.

“I wanted to. Come sit down.”

He takes my hand and makes me sit down before taking off my slippers, putting them away then he joins me. There’s a box of pizza, bottle of champagne and all the yummy things you can think off. Ahh this so beautiful, tears burn in my eyes but I refuse to let them fall. He pours champagne into the glasses and gives me one before opening the box of pizza.

“This is beyond the word beautiful. Thank you Dubandlela.”

“Don’t mention it dombolo lami.”

Why I love You by Major is playing softly as we enjoy our indoor picnic and chatting. This moment right now feels like a romantic

scene in a movie. Butterflies are dancing in my tummy and I'm a blushing mess.

"You weren't badly injured though?"

"No I wasn't."

I take a sip of my champagne and it taste really nice.

"Where's grandma?"

"She's spending a night at the Zondo homestead."

"Oh okay. How's work?"

"It's okay but the transport is a bit of an obstacle. I'm thinking of finding a cheap shack to rent in Dundee and I will come here when I'm off."

“Oh” Now that feels like needles perforating my heart. Bloody stupid organ called heart is greedy! I have no right to feel like this while I chose Kayise over him.

“Hey.” A caress on my cheek snaps me out of my reverie and I look up at him, he’s staring at me deeply.

“Did I say something wrong?”

“No.”

“Talk to me please.”

“You’re going to leave me here alone in this village and find someone else.” I confess and the pain in my voice is almost tangible.

“You know that I don’t have to do that dombolo lami if only you can follow your heart. I’ve come to realize that as much as I want to fight for you I don’t want to put you in trouble. I hate myself that your mom beat you up like that for me.”

“I wish it was that easy Lisi everything is so damn complicated.” I blink and a tear runs down my face but he wipes it off with his thumb.

“I understand my love but I believe that one day we will find our way in each other’s arms.”

“Why do things have to be this complicated?”

“I’m sorry and I hate to see you like this. It breaks my heart.”

“No I’m the one who’s sorry. I’m spoiling this moment for us.” I heave a sigh and gulp down the remaining champagne in my glass.

“Please pour me another one.”

“No problem Miss.” He takes the glass and pours the champagne for me.

“Thank you.”

“You’re welcome my beautiful lady. I have something for you.”

He fishes under the cushion and gives me a small box written American Swiss on top.

“What is this?”

“Open it.”

I flip the box open and I see a thin gold chain with a heart pedant. There’s a price tag on it and I gasp incredulously when I see how much is it.

“Manelisi nooo!”

“What? You don’t like it?” I cannot miss the disappointment in his voice.

“This necklace cost R1.5k!”

“It will look beautiful on you baby. You don’t like it?”

“Jesus Manelisi so much money!”

“Don’t raise your voice. You deserve more than this dombolo lami.”

“You should’ve bought any necklace at Mr Price there are many beautiful R80 necklaces there.”

“Ha.ah Wenhle angeke ngikuthengele amatsharara azophucuka I rather not buy you anything. If you don’t want it I can take it back it’s okay.” (No Wenhle I won’t buy you fake things...) The disappointment in his voice is replaced by sadness and causes my heart to sink to my knees.

“No my biltong its not that I don’t want it. I’m just shocked you spent 1.5k on a necklace for me. I love it thank you so much.”

His lips curve forming that smile of his....oh thethelela smakade! I lean over to kiss his cheek but he tilts his head aside and my lips collide with his. He palms my face we share a sloppy kiss and the taste of champagne in his mouth intensifies the erotism. When we break the kiss he leans his forehead against mine and we listens to our ragging breaths in silence.

“I need to go now.”

“Just a few more minutes.”

“I didn’t even bring my phone with me Lisi I don’t want to get my sister into trouble.”

“Okay let me go take a piss and I will take you back.” He plants a peck on my lips and gets up. Little Dubandlela is already

affected by that intense kiss we shared. He walks out and I stare around as a thought crosses my mind. I get up quickly and search the lounge. I don't know what I am searching for but I need something that will link me to my twin sister's disappearance.

I go to Gram's bedroom and search making sure that I put everything where I find it. There's nothing here not even Muthi that shows that his grandma is a witch but I don't think she can keep her black magic things lying around carelessly. In the wardrobe there's a green dress like a Zion church uniform and it has a big white cross on the back. I take it and search inside the pockets and my hand comes back with a red wool.

"What are you doing?" I jump in fright and look at the dress in my hands then him. I can't seem to construct a sentence, words are stuck in my throat.

"Wenhle what are you doing in my grandma's bedroom?"

"Uhm I was packing." Stupid answer I know. He looks at me intently and walks towards me.

“Letha.” I give him the dress and he hangs it back in the wardrobe then closes the wardrobe before sitting down on the bed.

“Come here.” He pats the space next to him and I pray that my wobbly knees won’t fail me before I could reach him.

“I’m going to ask you one last time and please don’t lie to me. Why are you prying on my grandma’s things?”

“I was just p...”

“Stop that shit right now Mbewenhle and tell me the damn truth!!” He yells causing me to jump a bit.

“Uhm uh.... I”

“Don’t stutter speak clearly so that I can hear you!”

Oh God I don't have any choice but to tell him the truth.

"My mom and grandma told me that your grandma is involved in my twin sister's disappearance that what the sangoma said anyway but there wasn't any proof."

He chuckles and looks at me in disbelief.

"I don't believe it." I add as if that will ever change the fact that he caught me red handed.

"If you don't believe it then why are you searching her things!"

"The curiosity got the better of me I'm sorry." He stands up and paces up and down, making me feel nervous.

"This was your plan from the beginning Mbewenhle? You lured me in so that you can enter my grandma's house and search for your missing twin sister?"

“No that’s not true I swear Lisi. They only told me this that day mama beat me up.”

“You’re just like the rest of the people in this village who think my grandma is a witch!” The venom in his eyes sends shivers through my body.

“No baby I don’t believe it...”

“Unamanga maan!” He points at me with his forefinger and I swallow hard as fear attacks every cell of my body. I have never seen him this angry

this is not my biltong.

“I know how it looks like my biltong please forgive me. I need closure and I acted out of pain and curiosity. It’s been 11 years wondering where is my twin sister and for the first time in years I was given a name. I’m sorry please put yourself in my shoes I can’t move on with my life without knowing where she is I need closure.” Tears stream down my face. He stops pacing up and down and looks at me. I’m not sure what I see in his eyes is pity.

“Come.”

“I’m sorry Lisi.”

“Come maybe what I’m going to show you will give you answers that you’re looking for.”

What does this mean? He stretches out his hand for me and I look at it in hesitation then take it. We walk out of his grandma’s bedroom heading straight to the main exit. Our walk ceases once we are the hut’s doorstep. He pushes the door open and it’s like I’m waking into a prophet hut. There are bottles of water, wools, iziwasho with different colors, candles I mean everything you could find kumthandazi.

“My grandma is not a witch but a prophet. I don’t know why the people of this village confuses her gift with witchcraft. She can make the rain fall or stop that how powerful she is.”

He takes the bottle of water and drinks from it then take another bottle drinking from it once again.

“This is just water but if there’s something sinister going on with it then I’m the one who’s going to face the consequences. You want me to drink everything here and touch it?”

I stop him as he’s about to take another bottle of water and pull him to my arms.

“I’m sorry my biltong ngicela uxolo ngonile ngiyazi.” He doesn’t hold me back and that stings as hell.

“You’re happy and satisfied?”

“Yes and I’m really sorry for such accusations.”

“It’s fine,” he says flatly and walks out.

I follow behind him Gosh I feel so horrible. We settle down on our picnic set up. The tension in the air is so thick and somber. Guilt is ripping me apart I don't know what to do to make the situation better. What was I thinking?

"I remember the day the police came to search a little girl. I was 16 years old and I was coming back from school. My mom sent me to the shop because she didn't want me to witness what was happening. I never really got the full story about what happened but I knew that it got to do with a missing girl. Why people say my grandma is witch it's a mystery to me. These are just allegations without proof and that not only did it affect her but me as well. At school I was always isolated even teachers were acting weird around me. No one wanted to be friends with me because ekhaya kuyathakathwa. Ever heard that straight As students become teachers' favorite? Well to me it wasn't the case instead they spread rumors that I used black magic to pass, apparently I was just pretending to be writing while my grandma's tikoloshes wrote the exams for me. Up to this day ngisazibuza ukuthi kwakungangifanele na ukuphasa? I remember this day this boy came to me and invited me to play soccer with them but it was a trap they wanted me to tell them about my grandma's black magic which I have no idea what they were talking about. They beat me up claiming that I was

lying and protecting my grandma. They put me inside a big sack of maize and tied a knot,” he swallows spit and I hear the sound of his throat swallowing.

“I screamed begging them to release me because I couldn’t breathe but it was all just a game to them. They were giggling and having fun. I couldn’t breathe I was suffocating and getting weak with each passing second. I even peed on myself, in that little space inside of the sack with no oxygen and the smell of my urine didn’t help the situation. By the grace of God, Bab Mthiyane appeared and saved me. That’s when he taught me stick fighting and when I was ready he organized the stick fight with the boys. I beat them up, all of them and since then they respect me. I have always been a loner since I was young. One would think I’m crazy that my friends are Bab Mathiyane’s cattle. Those cows never crucify me, they don’t see me as a grandson of the witch, they don’t judge me, they don’t see me as a poor guy who’s wearing rags. I used to wonder what did you see in me I mean no one wants to hang out with me. The love you showed me I couldn’t comprehend it, everything felt so surreal. I tasted happiness and how it feels like to be loved by a stranger, I tasted how does it feels like to have someone who believes in you, someone who sees you beyond what you see when you look yourself in the mirror but now I’m so

disheartened that you're just like the rest of them. You used me to find closure but it's okay and I'm sorry that I don't have the closure you're looking for."

I can't stop my tears and I can feel my heart shredding into pieces. I crawl over him and straddles him then frames his face that is wet with tears.

"I don't blame you that you see me like the rest of them what I just did gives you every reason but being with you and falling in love with you is not something I planned. I know no amount of sorries can make what I did okay. I promise you that I'm only guilty for being curious and searching. I'm sorry for everything that you went through in your life, you didn't deserve it in fact no one does. I'm sorry that I was never there to protect you and now that I'm here the only thing I did is to open old wounds. Ngiyaxolisa from the deepest of my heart but I've been nothing but true to you Dubandlela. I laid my bare self to you with no flitter just the raw and vulnerable me."

"You hurt me Wenhle," he says and snuffles

"I know and I'm sorry." I say wiping his tears with my palms.

“I can’t blame you though, if your family think and believe that my grandma is responsible for the disappearance of your sister then who am I to convince you otherwise.”

“But it’s not true baby”

“You are only saying this now, you believed it that what hurt me the most. I don’t care what your family think of me it’s what you think of me and my grandma that hurts me.”

“I’m sorry Dubandlela.” I plant kisses all over his face tasting the salt of his tears and when I reach his lips he holds the back of my neck and devours my lips hungrily

“Ngiyaxolisa” I mumble against his lips and he moans his response. “I know baby”

We share the salt of our tears as we kiss intensely and deeply. He grabs my buttocks pulling me closer to himself and the feel of his hardness poking my nun over my already damp panties sends a wave of desire through me.

He takes off my dress and wrenches his lips from mine only to kiss my neck gliding down to my chest. I release a shaky breath as he sucks on my boob while kneading the other one. It’s funny that I never wanted anyone to suck my tits but they’re my pleasure zone. They trigger some powerful electrifying sensation on my body that shoots straight my cookie.

Our lips meet once again and I taste the red ochre in his mouth and it's only then I remember it. Gosh I'm sure I look ugly and funny with a red ochre on my face.

"Baby ibomvu."

"Forgot about it and feel me please," he croaks against my lips as he flips us over, putting me underneath him then he takes off his t-shirt. I can't help myself but run my hands across his manly chest. Our lips fuse together with passion and in that moment the chemistry between us becomes an unstoppable flame.

We are both breathing heavily when he pulls away from the kiss and takes off my panties leaving me butt naked. The lust in his eyes has my nipples springing to attention. I stare at him as he lifts up my leg, getting ready for what is about to happen but he does the unthinkable and sucks my big toe. Damn this feels amazing as disgusting as it is.

He kisses my foot slithering his lips along my leg up to my thighs and inner thighs. By the time he gives the other leg the same

attention I'm shaking with need and my pussy is flooding in anticipation. I suck in my breathe at the feel of his tongue sliding up and down between the moist folds of my slit.

"Lissssiiii" I hiss through my gritted teeth as I feel his tongue spreading my inner lips and gliding up and down and side to side, slipping in and out of my opening. Fuck! A shudder racks through my body and tears burn my eyes. He's so good at what he's doing, nibbling lightly on my clit, pulling it and stroking it with the tip of his tongue. I'm a moaning mess and I don't care how loud I am because..wow! I feel his finger circling around my anal and as wierd as it is it feels so incredible. I can't hold myself anymore but let out a gush of creamy juices into his mouth.

I black out for few seconds and I'm brought back to earth by the weight of his body on top of me and his warm flesh. Now he's naked and his meat is so hard and glistening. A bold of pleasure shoots out from my slit as he runs his warm penis between my slippery folds. Oddly so the slurping sound of our privates rubbing against each other drives me to the edge. I'm going to reach my second orgasm soon.

He pushes the mushroom part of his dick into me and my body tenses. I blink my eyes open and look at him but he claims my lips and we share a passionate kiss that makes my body relaxes. Once again I feel him pushing through my opening and I scream in agony pushing him away from me. He presses my arms above my head

whispering sweet nothing between kisses that he plants all over my face.

I scream in anguish, tears are spilling down on the sides of my face when he pushes himself one more time that I feel him deep inside of me. Gosh it hurt so bad, it feels like razors are cutting through my vagina. His waist begins to move along to the rhythm of Kiss It Better by Rihanna. I'm aware of what's happening but somehow my body and heart want this and the tears that are leaking out of his eyes are debilitating me.

Our bodies are intertwined, moving along to the rhythm of the song and our hearts fusing together. With each thrust the pain is becoming less and it is starting to hurt so good. His groans doesn't match my moans, they're so loud and for some obscure reason it gratifies me to listen to his groans.

“Yhoo Wenhle! This...is...Hawweeee gogooo!” Now that doesn’t sound right. I want to laugh but I’m lost in the trance of passion. The second orgasms hit me unexpectedly and triggers his. He rolls his eyes to the back and convulses on top of me as he shoot a load of his milky juices inside of me. We lay on he floor catching our breaths, arms and legs tangled and listening to the sound of the beating of our hearts. Right in the moment guilt attacks every sense of my being. I can feel my insides dying slowly in the toxicity.

“Suka phekwami!” (Get off me!)

“Baby...”

“Get away from me Manelisi!” I let out a shrill cry, he’s alarmed and moves away from me. I get up and begin to wear but I’m a trembling mess and tears are streaming down my face.

“Wenhle are you okay?”

“Am I okay ? Of course not Manelisi! I’ve just...oh God...” I burst into tears covering my face with my shaking hands.

“What have I done Manelisi? My umemulo is in two days! What will I say to Kayise? God I’m going to be the mockery of this village. Baba is going to kill me!”

“I’m sorry baby don’t cry it’s going to be okay...”

“Gosh Manelisi you don’t get it! The umemulo ceremony has already started I can’t stop it now and the worse part of it is that I gave you my virginity not Kayise! Baba is expecting his cows from him soon after umumelo ceremony! Oh God please take me I don’t want to live anymore.”

“I do get it baby and I’m sorry” He attempts to wrap me in his arms but I push him away not that it helps though. I stop fighting him and bawl my eyes out.

“This is all my fault I should have controlled myself. I’m sorry dombolo lami. We are in this together. I promise you I will be

with you through everything. You're breaking my heart when you are crying like this."

"It's easy for you to say that Manelisi I'm the one who has to face the consequences of what we did."

"Okay you can say I raped you baby that's way they won't hold all of this against you. I will be that bitter guy who couldn't accept rejection and raped you how about that."

"Jesus you want to get locked up!"

"For you dombolo lami I don't mind."

He means it I can hear it in his voice. Jizas this guy the level of craziness in him is beyond comprehension. I'm in deep trouble and I could give anything to bail myself out of this but sending him to jail and ruin his future it's a big no. I will never be able to live with myself. Oh how I wish I can turn back the hands of time.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

Everyone in the Qwabe homestead is in a celebratory and jolly mood while me, usingaye is rattling in fear of the consequences of what I've done. Regret is like a deadly poison that is burning my insides and leaving me empty like a shell. The hardest part is not having anyone to blame but myself. Time seems to be moving fast it's like the universe can't wait any longer to reveal my bare ass for the whole village to see.

It's only a matter of hours before the big day of my umemulo ceremony and my 21st birthday. The day of my birth is the second day that I never look forward to out of 365 days since it reminds me of my other half. I was hopeful though that since it's my umemulo ceremony it's going to be different but now it's clear that it's going to be worse. If only I can stop time for a moment just to steel myself for the ignominy that I've brought upon myself, the wrath of my family and the loss of the man that I claim to love.

The maidens accompanied me to fetch umkhonto (spear) yesterday from the Ndwandwes, my mom's family. I was skeptical about uncle Thubelihle buying the spear for me. That one is a stoner and you cannot trust him with such important things, astoundingly he bought it and it's beautifully decorated with beads. It brings tears in my eyes because I don't deserve it. This spear is not for fighting but it signifies victory, having to fight and won childhood and teenage battles which some are difficult to conquer but I didn't win any battle. I lost right at the end and tarnished my name after years of saving myself. I'm such a huge disappointment I can't even look myself on the mirror without feeling self loathe and self resentment.

♪♪ Kumnandi ukulalela

(Abazali bakho)

Ukulalela

(Abazali bakho)

Ukulalela

(Abazali bakho, ubolalela abazali bakho)

Mbewenhle ubolalela

(Abazali bakho)

Ngithi ubolalela

(Abazali bakho)

Ubolalela

(Abazali bakho ubolalela abazali bakho) 

The women erupt into ululation as the maidens sing and perform ukusina which is a Zulu traditional dance. I fight back the tears that are threatening to come out but I'm not winning. They stream down my face and I briskly wipe them with the blanket that I'm covered with. If only I listened to my parents I'd be welcoming this cow as a gift from them with pride and joy but now inhliziyo yami iyabalisa and for the fact that dad chose his favorite cow to gift me breaks my heart into pieces. I need all of this to stop but I don't know how to stop it.

I spot Isisa with one of my cousins and I'm happy to see her. We sing a few songs as the men get ready to slaughter the cow and after few minutes I walk back to my bedroom while singing. Isisa joins me a second later and I ask my bridesmaids to give us privacy. She gives me R100 note as a gift to me and I thank her though she shouldn't have.

“How are you doing?”

“I’m fine friend and you?”

“I’m okay, how’s my baby,” I say touching her tummy and she heaves a sigh.

It’s still hard for her to accept this pregnancy and enjoys it. I fear that she’s not going to love this baby yaz but I understand where she’s coming from, up to this day people are still talking about her and her mom and sister are still mad at her.

“This baby is making me sick.”

“I’m sorry friend.”

“Argh anyway I’m proud of you my friend. I’m glad that one of us is going to have umemulo ceremony and lead by example for

the kids in this village who wish to follow our route of virginity testing.”

“Don’t say that please.”

“Why not? It’s true nje Mbewu. At least now the village will have something positive to say about virginity testing and maidens. Ulivalile ihlazo lami mnganami and for that thank you very much.”

“I’m worse than you Isisa,” I say with a trembling voice and tears already forming in my eyes.

“What do you mean?”

“I don’t want to live anymore. I know that cowardice but it’s not like there’s anything good that I’ve done in my life. I’m wasting oxygen and my parents money for being alive. I wish I could swap places with Ndalwenhle, she has always been wiser than me.”

“Friend you’re talking in riddles and scaring me,” she says and reaches for my hand.

“I messed up once again friend I deserve to rot in hell.”

“Hayi Mbewenhle don’t talk like that I’m sure it can’t be that bad.”

“It is bad.” I heave a huge sigh and tell her everything after making sure that no one is listening to us. I don’t know why I do that I mean it’s not like they won’t find out anyway.

“Oh my goodness Mbewenhle how could you mess things up for you right at the end! Do you realize the humiliation you’ve brought not only to you but your family, maidens and Gogo Mthombeni.”

“Of course I know Isisa and I regret it.”

“How did all of this happen Mbewenhle? I mean couldn’t you wait for your ceremony to be over before you do this. Some of

us were robbed this chance and you just had to mess things up right at the end!”

“I don’t know how it happened Isisa trust me when I say I didn’t plan all of this. Everything happened so fast, my body betrayed me and maybe I was feeling guilty for accusing his grandma so I felt like I owed him to give him something. I don’t know okay all I know is that where Manelisi is concerned I never think straight. I’m so scared Isisa what am I going to do.” I burst into tears and she envelopes me in her arms.

“Oh friend you are in deep shit and I wish I know how to help you. I’m sorry.”

“Maybe I should runaway I can’t humiliate my parents, maidens, your mom, gogo Mthombeni and Kayise like this. Maybe it will be better if I just disappear they won’t know what really happened.”

“Where will you go friend?”

“I don’t know but I rather be a street kid then watch this mortification playing before my eyes.”

“Nah friend I won’t allow you to do yourself like that. I understand you messed up big time but life in the street is not nice. Just face this once and for all it’s going to get harder before it gets better.”

“I’m scared Isisa

Baba is going to kill me and Kayise is going to be so heartbroken. He will definitely wake up me from death after dad has killed me and kill me himself.”

“How about you tell your sister maybe they can find a way to continue with the ceremony without having to reveal the truth. I mean umemulo can be performed for someone who has a child already so there has to be a way to work around this.”

“Maybe if I don’t say anything the ceremony can go on and nothing will happen.”

“Maybe friend, whatever you decide I’m with you but please don’t runaway okay?”

“It’s not like I have any money to runaway with. I’ve already gave Lonhle the R5000 I stole from the shop to buy his boy’s Xmas clothes.”

“Don’t runaway please life is cruel in the street. You’re so beautiful and these horny vultures will do as they please with you and you won’t have a choice because you will be fending for yourself.”

“I deserve everything bad that will happen to me friend.”

“No don’t punish yourself like this you made a mistake who doesn’t make mistakes? If our parents get tempted and cheat then who are we friend? They can’t expect us to be perfect while there are also battles they tried to fight but failed to win. We are also humans like them and we are still young which leaves us a big room for mistakes as we navigate through this life thing. I won’t lie I’m disappointed in you but I will be right

next to you throughout this ordeal when the whole world turn against you.”

God she’s making me to cry even more. I bury myself on her chest as she strokes my back.

“Thank you so much friend this means a lot to me. You are the best thing that have ever happened to me. I love you so much.”

“Don’t mention it friend and I love you more.” The door swings open and my sister with this lady walk in. I quickly wipe my tears and free myself from Isisa’s embrace.

“Is everything okay?” Mpilenhle

“Yes we are okay.” I say faking a smile. She looks at me as if she’s searching something in my eyes but I shift my gaze from her.

“Thandi meet my little sister engamashiyela ibele, Mbewenhle and her best friend Isisa.”

“Hey girls”

Isisa and I greet Thandi back who smiles sweetly. She’s gorgeous with a flawless skin.

“Baby sis this is my hairdresser and she’s here to do your hair.”

“Oh okay thank you so much sis.”

“You’re welcome little sis. Make yourself comfortable Thandi.”

“Friend I will see you tomorrow.”

“You’re leaving already? Please don’t go.”

“Mama doesn’t want me to be here. It like she doesn’t want people to see me and be reminded of the mortification I’ve brought upon her and myself. We will chat on WhatsApp.”

“Okay thank you for coming.”

“Don’t mention it friend,” she says and gets up from the mat then walks out leaving me with the hairdresser to do my hair.

.....

It’s the early hours of the morning and the maidens are heading to the river amid singing. I’m not ready to face the day ahead of me I wish I could just fade away. I don’t know how many times I stopped myself from running away last night but I guess I’m not brave enough as I thought I am. Once we are at the river we bath, washing off the red ochre.

“Are you okay?” Asks Khathazile, she’s one of my bridesmaids. I have three of them.

“Yes I’m fine why?”

“I don’t know there’s something changed about you Mbewu. You’re not excited as you were when the week of your ceremony started.”

“Maybe I’m just nervous it’s normal hey.”

“Are you sure there’s nothing wrong.”

“No I’m fine sweetheart.” I fake a smile and continue with bathing while listening to maidens joking around and laughing.

I wish they never finish washing themselves because I’m not ready for what comes after this but unfortunately for me they’re finish within an hour. We go to the big tree next to the river and here comes the part of checking virginity. Since it’s my umemulo ceremony I’m the one who has to test first. The maidens are singing a bit far from the tree and I’m with Isisa’s mom who’s sitting on the mat waiting for me. She’s the one who was with us throughout the whole night. Gogo Mthombeni is very old now she had to go home to sleep but she will join us today.

“Come sis.”

I fall on my knees as I clutch on my chest trying to breathe which proves to be difficult. Tears are blinding my vision, Isisa’s mom brushes my back encouraging me to breathe. Slowly I regain my normal breathing and she looks at me with worry.

“Are you okay now?”

I nod my head but tears run down my face.

“Talk to me sis.”

“I’m okay.”

She looks at me intently and tells me to lie on the mat with my back and open my legs for her. I do just as she says and she fiddles with my folds. I don’t know what miracle I’m praying for but when she doesn’t pat my thigh as usual I just knew that I’m no longer a virgin. I sit on my butt and look at her disappointed face through my teary eyes.

“Mbewenhle what have you done?”

“I’m sorry mama.” I let my tears to fall down my face.

“Not you again Mbewenhle I trusted you especially after what Isisa did. Why are you embarrassing us like this huh?”

“It wasn’t my intention at all Mama ngicela uxolo.”

“You should’ve told me before your umemulo ceremony. How could you and Muzikayise fool us like this.”

There’s no way I’m telling her that it’s not him. I will let her think it’s him.

“We were scared mama.”

She let out a sigh of defeat and shakes her head.

“Please don’t tell my parents. I know what I’m asking you is huge and wrong but I’m begging you mama. I don’t want to embarrass my parents.”

“You cannot hide this Mbewenhle these things has a way of showing themselves.”

“But umemulo is also performed for a girl that has a baby mama.”

“Usually that is done when a girl get ill or have problems in her life or marriage because umemulo ceremony was never performed for her. This ceremony is very important for every girl to be performed and ancestors are formally addressed about everything so you can’t trick them.”

Oh God.

“My parents can’t find out about this please mama I’m begging you.”

“Why didn’t you wait for your umemolo ceremony? I tested you last month and you were still sealed which means you allowed Muzi to deflower you when you already knew your umemulo is approaching Mbewenhle! It’s girls like you and Isisa who makes people think ukuhlolwa kwezintombi (virginity testing) is useless. Who drag down our names as women who tests your virginity. It like we don’t guide you girls correctly, we are misleading you! I’m so disappointed in you. I won’t tell your parents but this will end in tears don’t say I didn’t warn you.” There’s so much truth in what she’s saying but it doesn’t make it feel less painful. I’m going to take my chances and hope for miracle to save me from all this humiliation.

When she’s done checking the virginity of the maidens we get dressed into our traditional attire which are short beaded skirts, colourful necklaces and beaded headbands. On top we have nothing. Mine is different from everyone and it’s specifically made for this day by Isisa’s mom. Dad sends one of my cousins to tell us that we can come back now.

At home dad smears the gall of the cow that was slaughtered yesterday on my every joint and wraps inyongo around my

wrist which I tie it with an handkerchief around my wrist. I cross my fingers as he put the cow's caul (umhlehlwe) around my shoulders and breast. He does all of this as he shortly addresses the ancestors, thanking them for looking after me and asking blessings on my behalf. Mama walks in and when she looks at me she smiles with so much pride in her eyes.

"You look so beautiful my baby."

"Thank you mommy."

Dad walks out leaving me with mama. She takes my hands into hers and squeezes them.

"You've just made me the proudest mother in the whole world. Thank you so much my daughter I couldn't ask a better daughter than you. I'm proud of the woman you're growing up to be. You're about to embark on a new journey of your life. There are going to be obstacles on the way because no one promised us life without ones but I know that you will come out of them stronger. Happy birthday baby I love you so much."

I can't help myself but burst into tears. She allows me to rest my head on her huge tummy and caresses my back.

"Don't cry it's your big day you should be happy." If only she knew!

"I love you mama and God knows that I never meant to disappoint you and baba."

"Oh forget about that my darling what important is that you to learnt from your mistake okay."

Mpilenhle and Mvelonhle walk in to wish me a happy birthday after shedding tears my sister do my face. I insisted that she keep my natural look. I don't want to be too glamorous.

"I know this day makes you think of Ndalwe but can we try to enjoy it please."

"I will try."

“Don’t try do it for her, I know she would want you to be happy.”

I heave a sigh and look at her through the mirror. There’s this part of me that wants to tell her but I’m so scared.

“I love you sis.”

“Awww I love you too little sis and I’m so proud of you.”

“Don’t be please.”

“Why not you made me proud not every girl reach this stage in their lives. I’m done any complaints?”

I look myself on the mirror and I’m beyond satisfied. The make up is not too much and the sculptured French braid with a front roll suits me perfectly. Outside I look stunningly gorgeous but inside I’m burning.

“No thank you so much.”

I get up from the chair and she gives me a warm hug before planting a kiss on my forehead. Dad fetches me and the maidens follow behind us singing as we head to the chosen open area (isgacwu) where the rest of the performance will be. I almost faint when I see that the whole village is here and waiting for me. I spot Kayise in the crowd who gives me a smile which I return and hope it is huge as his. Everyone pay their attention to father as he about to address everyone about the occasion.

“Greetings everyone. I welcome each an everyone of you emagcekeni ako Qwabe. We are gathered here today in this ceremony to thank my daughter for her good behavior. She has fought and conquered battles that many girls fail to conquer. Mbewenhle I want you to know that we are proud to call you our daughter. Thank you for the respect you have shown us. I also thank the ancestors and God for blessing us with a daughter like you my child. Impela uyimbewu enhle ntombi yami continue to do the right things and honour your elders.”

Now I'm crying and people think it's tears of joy but deep down I know that I don't deserve these words. They're just the opposite of what I am. The thought of embarrassing my parents like this after this beautiful ceremony they've organized for me. I'm praying for a miracle!

“Once again thank you so much Gumedede,

Wena kaMalandela kaluzumana,

Phakathwayo kaKhondlo kaMncinci,

Osidlabehlezi kaPhakathwayo

Abathi bedlumuntu bemyenga ngendaba,

Bethi dluya kubeyethwe umakoti ubeyethe kabukhuni,

Wena owabuza intaba ngabomu wathi ntabani leya?” The ululation breaks through the yard as he recites the Qwabe clans.

I lead a song with my shaky voice after dad's speech and do a few dance moves (ukusina) then head straight to my father who's now seated with the Qwabes. I stick the spear in the ground in front of him. This is a symbolic action which implies

asking for a gift. Baba smiles with pride and puts R200 note on an umbrella that Khathazile is carrying as my bridesmaid.

We perform ukusina while singing. I forget about everything and do what I enjoy the most which compels the women of the village to ululate with pride. After sticking the spear in front of few people I head to Kayise and stick it in front of him.

“Awusemuhle sthandwa sami.”

“Thank you Sidwaba Siluthuli”

We all know my man likes attention. He keeps impaling R200 notes on the umbrella and with each note the crowd is shrieking with cheer. I keep counting the notes as he puts them on the umbrella then stops him when he has reached R4000. I go to my little brother after Kayise

“Iyakuthandwa ukubukwa lendoda yakho,” says Lonhle and we giggle as he put R300 notes on the umbrella. The next person is my sister’s husband and he does exactly what Kayise did.

Mpilenhle had to stop him. God these men and their egos! Isisa just arrived and I'm glad she came. I lead a song and the maidens join me.

♪♪ We Lonhle ubongisiza

Ungibongele ku baba

Ngalento angenzele yona

Mvelonhle ubongisiza

Ungibongele kumama

Ngalento angenzele yona

Uthi Gumede omuhle,

Uthi Khondlo omuhle

Ngalento angenzele yona ♪♪

I do my traditional dance moves mixing them with amapiono dance moves and the crowd go crazy with cheer. The cow's caul tears apart and changes color. I try to catch it but it slips right through my fingers and falls on the ground.

The world stops for a moment and my eyes search for Kayise's through the crowd. I swear his gaze will forever haunts me as long as I live. He shakes his head and turns around walking to his car. The noise of shock fills my father's yard as the crowd watch him walks away. I will my legs to run after him but the world is spinning and it's like the ground is melting under my feet. I fall on the ground with my knees and hands.

"Let her be she's fooling us!"

"She's ashamed of her disgrace and now she's fainting. Udlala ngathi lo nondindwa!"

I hear the voices going on and on shaming me as I lose every breath of mine. I'm dying and I think it's the best after this mortification I've brought upon myself.

☆ Mpilenhle ☆

The shock paralyzes me and I stand like a statue as I look at my sister trying to run after Muzikayise but she falls on the ground. It registers to me that she's having an anxiety attack but I can't will my legs to move towards her and save her.

Mama gets up from her chair and I thought she's going to my sister but she passes her daughter like she doesn't see her and goes to her husband who's holding on his chest while making gagging and choking sound. I don't know if I should attend my sister who's lying on the ground unconscious or my father who seems like he's having a heart attack.

"She's faking it! Pour her with water and she will wake up!"

"I did say that ukhlohlwa kwezintombi is rubbish! It started with this one who fall pregnant," says this woman pointing her forefinger at Isisa who disappears from our sight the moment everyone look at her " Now it's her! There's nothing special about virginity testing!"

“This one is worse she slept with another boy while she’s with the Maseko boy! Such disgrace sies maan!”

“They hide behind virginity testing and think we won’t know what they do in the darkness. Nothing stays hidden forever!”

Lonhle rushes to the front and tries to wake up Mbewu as people go on and on shaming her. I’m glad that she’s not hearing all of this. Their words cut deep like a knife. I don’t understand why did she let us go on with the ceremony when she knew that she’s no longer a virgin what even worse is that Muzikayise know nothing about this.

“Yeeeeey Fusegani maaan!” Mvelonhle roars in anger looking at the crowd. “Don’t y’all dare judge and crucify my sister as if your children are perfect! You out of them all should shut up! How many children have you forced your daughter to abort because of the “what people are going to say” syndrome huh?”

“Wena you should be worried about bringing the spark in your marriage and stop pretending like you don’t know that your husband is fucking your daughter!”

The crowd goes 'yoooooh' this is getting out of hand now. I force my legs to carry me until I'm next to Mvelo.

"Stop it Mvelo!"

"No sis please don't stop me! Basile laba! All they know is crucifying and judging as if they're saints! They won't do that to my sister while I'm still alive!" He's breathing fire and I have never seen him like this. Veins are popping out on his forehead and his eyes are bloodshot red.

"I know buti wami but calm down okay. Let's focus on Mbewu and Baba."

He picks up Mbewenhle and just then the ambulance arrives. I don't know who called it. Mama cries hysterically when they push baba with a stretcher into the ambulance. The other two paramedics are attending Mbewenhle and I sigh in relief when I see her waking up.

“I’m glad you are awake sis. How are you feeling?”

She covers her face with her hands as she lets out a painful sob. The paramedics assure us that she’s okay then Mvelo picks her up and disappears with her.

My husband insists to drive me, gogo and mama. We follow behind the ambulance. I’m trying to calm mama down who’s crying none stop. Once we are at the hospital we are attended and dad is rushed off to the emergency room. I take mama to the bench and we settle down.

“Don’t cry makoti please try to calm down for the sake of the baby,” says gogo, my dad’s mother.

“This child wants to make me a widow.” Mama

“Father is a strong man, he’s going to be okay,” I say brushing her back.

“Where did I ever go wrong with your sister Mpilenhle huh?”

“It’s not your fault mama. You can’t blame yourself for her mistakes. Honestly Mbewenhle fooled us all.”

“I’m worried about the Maseko boy. I don’t think he will marry her after this. Does this child know that marriage doesn’t come easily? No one will ever marry her after the shame she has brought upon herself. Who took her virginity?”

“It must be that Maphumulo boy and I think that boy bewitched her. How could she go back to him and sleep with him after I warned her about this?”

“What I don’t understand mama is that why Isisa’s mom didn’t tell us? She kept quiet and allowed the ceremony to go on while she knows that Mbewenhle is no longer a virgin. Why?”

“That’s a good question but Mbewenhle better pray that your father makes it because I swear I’m going to bury her with your father!”

I'm scared on Mbewenhle's behalf. I don't know what was she thinking. I don't think we can ever get over the shame she has brought upon us as a family. It would've been better if she slept with Muzikayise. I really feel sorry for him and I can imagine what he's going through right now.

I excuse myself and go outside to make a call. His phone is ringing unanswered and I have a feeling that he's not answering his phone on purpose. I keep trying but I get the same results so I leave a voice message for him.

"Hey Muzi it's Mpilenhle I was checking up on you. Please call me as soon as you get this message. Bye" I heave a sigh. This is a mess!

I feel his arms wrapping around my waist and lean my back on his body, inhaling deeply. How I needed this and he always seems to know what do I need and when do I need it.

"Thank you."

“I’ve got you baby always.” He kisses the back of my neck and I feel a blanket of goosebumps covering me.

“The least she could’ve done is to tell me. Why did she let us go on with this ceremony?”

“She was scared baby.”

“Ngiyazama Sbusiso ngawo wonke amandla ami to be that sister who she can be free around and be open to or is it not enough? What is it that I’m doing wrong?” (I’m trying Sbusiso with everything in me...)

“You told me that she’s meeting you halfway and you’re getting close slowly but surely. This relationship you’re building with her is still new she won’t be open to you overnight but I think she didn’t tell you because she was scared and didn’t want to disappoint you.”

“So she chose to embarrass us like this in front of the whole village! Canceling umemulo would’ve been better than this

mortification she has brought upon us! What about the money we wasted on this ceremony!!”

“You can’t cancel umemulo Mpilo once it has been announced that it’s going to be performed.”

“I know but she was supposed to tell us the truth! The ancestors are supposed to be aware of everything that is happening to avoid such things!”

“Calm down baby please.”

He turns me around to face him and caresses my cheeks, trying to calm me down. I didn’t realize how angry I am until now.

“The doctors are busy with my father because of her and my mother is pregnant she doesn’t need unnecessary stress!!”

“I know what she did is wrong but this is the time that you should strengthen your relationship with her.”

“What does that supposed to mean?”

“Your parents are obviously angry at her and the whole village is shaming her she’s going to need you now more then ever. Be there for her baby please.”

“Never! I won’t do that! That would mean I condone her behavior! She must face the consequences of her behavior!”

“Sthandwa sami....”

“Hayi Sbusiso!”

“Babe...”

“No I don’t want to hear it!”

I free myself from his arms and walk inside the hospital. I settle next to mama and we wait for the feedback from the doctor which feels like it's taking eternity. Sbusiso comes back after a while with soft drinks and gives us.

The doctor finally comes to us and I cross my fingers, praying for good news because I can't seem to read his facial expression. It's so blank I guess it's what they're taught at the medical school, to never show any emotions that is.

"Doctor please tell me my husband is okay."

"Mr Qwabe suffered a heart attack."

Mama bursts into tears. I didn't expect this, Baba is not a man who gets sick frequently this must have affected him badly to cause a heart attack. The doctor goes on and explains that they inserted a catheter that passes through an artery in his leg to open the blocked coronary artery and restore the blood flow to his heart. His condition is critical but stable. Mama is the only one who's allowed to see him and when she comes back two minutes later we drive back home in somber silence. Who

would've thought that such a big and beautiful day like this will end in tears.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

The knock on the door is persistent but Lonhle is adamant to not let me out of here. He locked us in his bedroom and the family have been knocking on the door none stop. I really appreciate his protection but I can't hide in here forever at some point I have to get out of this room and face the consequences.

“Open the door Lonhle.”

“No I'm not letting you go out so that these people can crucify you. You don't owe these people any explanation except mama and baba. We will wait for them until they come back from the hospital.”

The thought of my father being hospitalized or dying because of me has me rattling in fear. If only I can reverse time and make better decisions. I'm attacked by a myriad of emotions but fear and anger overpower the other emotions. I'm so scared of my parents' and Kayise's wrath and I'm so angry at myself for being lose

weak and stupid!

"Hey don't cry it's going to be okay," Lonhle says sitting next to me and envelopes me in his arms.

"It will never be okay Lonhle. I messed up big time I embarrassed everyone, made myself a mockery of this village and broke Kayise's heart."

The yard is still buzzing with people of the village and the youth is serving them food. We can't let the food go to waste the least we could do is to feed them after inviting them to the ceremony for nothing.

"What really happened Mbewenhle? This is so unlike you honestly."

“That’s the thing Lonhle y’all don’t expect me to make mistakes like any other living human being why is that huh?”

“I guess we put you on the pedestal.”

“Well I’m also human and I make mistakes. I wish I didn’t wake up.”

“Don’t say that please.”

“It is true though I’m such a huge disappointment Lonhle. The worst daughter our parents could ever have. I...” I’m cut short by my mom’s voice on the door.

“Mvelonhle open the door!” I can hear in her voice that she’s angry. God she’s going to kill me this time and I won’t blame her I deserve it. Lonhle looks at me as if he’s asking for permission to open the door but mama keeps knocking violently and that leaves him with no choice but to open the door.

“Ye wena nondindwa woza la!!!!”

I jump up from the bed and go to the corner, shaking in fear.

“Mama please don’t beat her up.” Lonhle says, standing in front of mama who’s breathing fire and carrying dad’s sjambok.

“Move Mvelonhle!!”

“Mama please I understand she made a mistake but you can’t beat her up on her birthday.”

“Mvelonhle get away from me!!” She pushes him away and walks towards me.

“Manyalamani la owenzayo huh!”

“I’m sorry ma...” I don’t even finish saying that, she beat me up with a sjambok and I scream in agony. I’m still in my traditional attire which is barely covering my body. Mam Nomsa and gogo walk in and stop her.

“Thembeke stopt it please.”

“Nomsa don’t involve yourself in this!”

“Beating her up won’t solve anything Thembeke!” Gogo

The anger in my mom’s eyes sends shivers through my body. She opens her mouth to say something but instead of words coming out a loud sob escape her mouth. Mam Nomsa envelops her in her arms as she bawls her eyes out.

“I don’t know where did I go wrong with this child Nomsa.” Mama says and the pain in her voice shatters my heart into pieces. I’ve just invited myself millions of bad lucks by making my mother cry and that has me feeling melancholy.

We move to the lounge where the meeting is held. There's gogo Mthombeni, Isisa's mom, my other granny, my sister and my aunts. I settle on the floor while the elders are occupying the couches and chairs.

"I don't understand what just happened there because no one came to us as a family and told us that she's no longer a virgin."  
Gogo

"I would like to apologize for not telling you Qwabe family. She begged me not to tell you but I did warn her." Isisa mom

Mama chuckles and shakes her head in disbelief.

"Khosi so you're telling me that you listened to a child when she told you not to tell us? That's bullshit you did this on purpose to embarrass us just like your daughter embarrassed you!" Oh God umama, did she have to say that.

"Thembeke." Gogo warns her daughter but she doesn't want to hear it.

“It’s true mama! Why would she keep something huge like this? She did this on purpose she want all of us to be the talk of the village just like she and her daughter are!!”

“Thembeke what would I gain for doing that? Still it is my name that is dragged down as a woman who test these children’s virginity. I see you’re looking for someone to blame well go to the mirror sisi. You’re the one who failed to guide your daughter! Parents are the ones who are responsible for the behavior of their children. Gogo Mthombeni and I job is to emphasize on what you teach your daughter as her mother. You can’t expect us to do your job as a mother!”

“Oh well I’m not surprised this happened considering the fact that your daughter is pregnant. I guess you suck at this thing you might as well quit!”

“At least mine fall pregnant while doing something that we teach them which is ukusoma unlike yours who slept with another boy while seeing another one!!”

I swallow hard trying to push back the tears in my eyes. This is getting out of control now and it's all my fault.

“Let's all calm down please. Raising voices at each other won't help. Mbewenhle last month you were still sealed I don't understand why you gave away your virginity while you were fully aware that your umemulo ceremony is approaching.”

Gogo Mthombeni

“I also don't know how it happened gogo. Everything happened so fast and before I could stop myself it was already late. I'm sorry from the deepest of my heart for the mortification I've brought upon you and the maidens.”

“Who's the boy if it's not Muzikayise?”

I swallow spit and look down with shame.

“It's Manelisi Maphumulo.”

“Did you use protection?”

My heart skips a beat at that question and I freeze. Oh no!

“Cha” (No) I whisper audible enough for them to hear.

“You could be pregnant as we are speaking you idiot!” Mama says throwing her shoe on me and it lands right on my forehead.

“I’m sorry mama” I cry

“That’s what you know nyoli nyoli when did you sleep with this boy?”

“Uhm uh..Wednesday.”

They all exclaim in shock and I wish the ground could open up and swallow me.

“Mbewenhle were you not supposed to be in seclusion on Wednesday until today? Hayi uyadelela wena ngane! Ngiswele amandla ngabe ngikfaka induku!!” (...You’re disrespectful child! If I had energy I’d beat you up!!) Gogo Mthombeni

“Wena Thembeke as her mother where were you when your daughter was sleeping with boys on the very same week she’s supposed to be in seclusion? See how reckless you are then you blame me?”

Now Isisa’s mom is talking like I slept with the whole village. I don’t get why elders like to use plurals where it’s not necessary.

“Khosi mmh stop it please. You were also wrong for not telling them.” Gogo Mthombeni reprimands her but she defends herself.

“And I apologized mama but she is the one who is blaming me as if I’m the one who told her daughter to whore around!”

“Khosi...”

“Hayi mama! Thembeke wronged me and she should apologize!”

“Over my dead body!” Mama

“Mxm!” Isisa’s mom says, getting up and walks out. Oh God!

The meeting goes on for another 30 minutes and everyone agrees that I’m going to apologize to the maidens for what I did and cleanse them with a cow for the humiliation I’ve brought upon them. Gogo Mthombeni leaves after that and I thought we are done talking about this but no now it’s my aunts’ turn to give me a piece of their minds.

“Ave uyisiphoxi sengane! How could you fuck another boy while seeing another one let alone on the same week you’re supposed to be in seclusion! Liyabaleka isende huh?”

“No aunt I didn’t mean to.”

“That’s rubbish you walked out of here knowing very well you were not supposed to go out! You disrespected us and brought shame to this family!”

“Oh kodwa nunu after saving yourself for years and you had to mess up two days before your umemulo ceremony.” Gogo says and heaves a sigh of disappointment. I start crying all over again as they go on and on.

“If my brother dies I will hold his death against you!” Aunty Nomzamo says and that hit home.

“You know what even makes me angry is that I warned you about that boy Mbewenhle and you went to sleep with him! What did this boy do to you huh?” Mama

“I’m sorry....”

“Stop saying sorry! Your sorry won’t change anything maan! You have no shame mntanandini! You’re weak and cheap yaz ngiswele umgodi wokuklahla!” Mama

“Not only did you embarrass us but you betrayed us Mbewenhle by sleeping with that boy while you know that his grandma is responsible for Ndalwenhle’s disappearance!” Mpilenhle’s words slashes through my heart like a blade.

“She should be the one who disappeared not Ndalwanhle!”

“Hayi Thembeke.” Mam Nomsa

“Vele maan!”

“You can’t say such words to a child. I understand she made a huge mistake but be mindful to what you say. Words are powerful and they can’t be unsaid.”

“It’s okay Mam Nomsa it’s not the first time she says this. I thought the first time she said this she was angry but she can’t

keep saying one thing every time she's angry without meaning it. Family I know that no amount of sorries could ever fix what I've done or change anything. I messed up big time and I apologize from the depth of my heart. I know I don't deserve forgiveness but I will pray that one day all of you to find it in your hearts to forgive me."

I get up and walk to my bedroom. I lock my door and crawl on top of the bed then bawl my eyes out. The pain is more than my heart can take.

.....

It's been few days since my ordeal and I have been locked up in my bedroom because I'm not ready to face the world. The relatives went back to their homes. I have been trying to call Kayise but he's not picking up and I've sent him thousand of messages and still he's not responding to my messages. On WhatsApp he just blue ticks me. I feel like I'm losing my sanity everything is out of control.

Lonhle is the only one who talks to me in this house and brings me food even though I don't have appetite. He's been very supportive and I couldn't be more grateful to him. Saturday I cried myself to sleep and I was woken up by him. He bought me morning after pills and a box of chocolates to cheer me up. I bet he was listening to us when we had a meeting and that when he learned that I needed them. I'm glad that 72 hours weren't over yet when I took them so I'm hopeful that I'm not pregnant.

Today I woke up to an empty house. I don't know where mama and Mpilenhle are. Lonhle has a soccer game today so he went to the grounds and he usually comes back very late. I've been watching TV the whole day since it's festive it's one movie after the other. I love Xmas movies.

I hear the car outside and voices, my heart skips a beat at the sound of dad's voice. There's this part of me that wants me to run away and go hide myself in my bedroom but it's not like it's going to make any difference.

All three of them walk in. Dad's intense gaze on me sends a shudder through my body. Mpilenhle helps him to sit down on

the couch, putting a cushion on his back for a comfortable position.

“Greetings baba how are you feeling?”

“How am I feeling ukunuka! Get out of my house!!”

I swallow hard.

“Ba?”

“Ka? I don’t have a whore of a child get out of my house now!!”

Nooo! Where I will I go?

“Baba I’m sorry where will I go?”

“Go to that boy who you opened your legs for! You’ve embarrassed us enough! The whole village is talking about us

ngalamanyala osithele ngawo! You're such an ungrateful child after everything we have done for you is this how you thank us! Bengiqosha ngawe Mbewenhle kodwa unghoxile! I don't know how will I face the world let alone the Masekos after what you've done! From today you're dead to me!! Don't even think of packing because everything you own you bought it with my money!!"

I kneel down on the floor as tears stream down my face begging him not to throw me out but he's not hearing anything.

I look at mama hoping she will say something to her husband but she doesn't say anything. Coming to a realization that what I've done has erased every ounce of love my parents ever had for me slaps hard on my face drenching me in a cold sadness.

I get up from the floor and walk out with my phone. I don't think Isisa's mom will welcome me after what happened. Tears are blurring my vision as I keep walking not knowing where am I going. I rub my arms that are covered with goosebumps due to the cold breeze. It seems like it's going to rain.

I find myself at Lisi's home but there's no one. I head to the Zondo homestead and what Ma Mthiyane tells me kills my soul. Apparently Lisi now stay in Dundee so he literally left me to

deal with this alone I guess it serves me right for trusting him even after my mother warned me about him even after I was told that his grandma is responsible for my sister's disappearance. He got what he wanted which is my virginity and I have no one to blame but myself for allowing myself to be played like that.

I can't seem to escape the hurricane of thoughts and the more they're accelerating in my head it's the more my chest is closing in and I can't breathe. It's coming I can feel it so I begin to run and the more I increase my speed it's the more I get control of my emotions. By the time I get to the top of the mountain the darkness has consumed the whole village and I can hear the sound of the drums that are beaten by the community.

I lower myself to the rock and wrap my arms around my knees enduring the huge droplets of the rain that are hitting on my skin mercilessly. There's something so familiar with the atmosphere. The thunder that is rumbling across the sky and threatening to break the world into half. The wind that is violent and its sound so strange as if it's a howling melody. It's like a deja vu and funny enough I'm not scared as I always am. It could be the absurd of my existence that has me feeling like this and I'm ready for anything.

## ☆ Mbewenhle ☆

The rain is pouring heavily and she's been seated on the rock on top of the mountain her arms are clamped around her legs. It surprises her that the booming rumble and the lightning flashing across the dark sky doesn't scare her.

She's oblivious to the fact that her mother's words of wishing that she's the one that disappeared instead of her twin sister are a huge impact of the emptiness she's feeling within her soul. Whether Mnumzane takes her or the lightning strikes her she doesn't care whatever happens it's cool.

She's a shivering mess and being a person who easily gets cold doesn't help it shows that she was born in summer. 10th of December a scorching day it was when she was born right at 2pm. She's the one that came first but in Zulu culture Ndalwenhle is said to be older than her. It seems like the rain is not going to stop and it's getting darker as the night takes over.

She slides out her phone from her pants and scrolls through her contacts. Uncle G's contact is where she stops and taps the call option with shaking hands. It rings for while and just when she's about to hang up a voice of a woman comes through.

"Hello"

"Hi uhm can I speak to uncle G."

"Uncle what?"

"The owner of the phone."

"He's busy at the moment. Can I take a message?"

"Just tell him that Mbewenhle called."

"Okay bye." The woman drops the phone as if she's the one that called.

Uncle G is her only hope she's crossing fingers that he comes through for her. A bolt of lightning flashes on her phone she quickly hides it into her bra and hopes that it won't be damaged due to the rain.

Time moves by as she waits for Uncle G's call but he's not calling back. At least now the rain has stopped but she's still shaking and her teeth are clattering. One more time she tries to call him but the call goes straight to voicemail. She hears male voices approaching and the nearer they get she can hear their conversation.

"What are we going to do bafo?"

"There's nothing we can do we can't find the cattle."

"Malume is going to kill us."

“Hayi he can kill me if he wants I’m tired and hungry! We have been looking for these cows the whole day. Imvula yana yaze yaphela kithi!”

“I just want food and my bed.”

They’re getting closer and she’s not sure if she should hide or run. The latter wins she gets up from the rock and walks away. When she hears their footsteps approaching her she starts running. The coldness in her joints is a deterrent to run faster and the sleepers she’s wearing are not helping the situation. Before she could get far they catch her and one of them lights a torch of his phone on her face. She closes her eyes as the light blinds her.

“Eh isishebo sa Muzikayise. What are you doing here at this time of the night Mbewenhle?”

“Please let me go,” she says through her clattering teeth

“Lengane yangibhayizisa ngiyshela.”

“She did you a favor bafo I heard that she fucked another guy while dating Muzikayise.”

“Oh she’s the bicycle of the village I also want a ride.” The one that use to court her says grabbing her buttocks making her skin to crawl.

“Guys please let me go I’m going to tell my father.”

“Haisuka what will that old man do to us? He fainted at your ceremony just because you decided to supply with your pussy he’s weak!” They’ll burst into laughter.

“Why are you even here at this time not unless your weak strict father disowned you which means we can do anything we want to you and no one is going to come and rescue you.”

Tears fill her eyes and when she tries to free herself from their grips they hold her and press her to the ground. The other one is taking off her track-pants while she’s kicking none stop and

screaming. Once the pants is out she knew that she's fighting a losing battle so eventually she gives up and allows them to do as they please with her.

.....

The silence is deafening and its intensity overpowers the rumbling of the thunder and the ear splitting sound of the rain hitting the corrugated roof. The mother and the daughter may be pretending to be okay but deep inside they're consumed by fear and worry. Mbewenhle is all they're thinking about and the fact that Mvelonhle hasn't come back is adding more worry. In that moment the door opens and in comes the last born of the Qwabes dripping wet.

"You had us worried Mvelonhle!" Thembeke shouts at her son who apologizes and smiles when he sees his father he didn't expect him to be back. He leaves his muddy sneakers at the door and walks to his bedroom to change. Once he has changed into warm tracksuits and push ins he shuffles his feet to his sister's bedroom but to his surprise he finds the bedroom empty.

“Where’s Mbewu?” It’s the first question he asks when he gets to the lounge where Musa with his wife and their elder daughter are seated listening to the heavy rain outside. They don’t answer him, it’s like one is expecting the other to respond.

“Mama where’s Mbewenhle?” Mvelonhle asks again thinking maybe they didn’t hear him as he settles down on the couch next to his elder sister.

“As from today son we’re just a family of four, I will say six when I count my granddaughters.”

Now that confuses Mvelonhle more then ever. What is his father saying?

“I’m not sure I’m following baba.”

“I don’t have a whore of a daughter,” Musa says rather sternly.

“What does that supposed to mean?”

“I mean just that Mvelonhle!” Retorts Musa.

Mvelonhle looks at his father then his eyes travel to his mother and lastly lands on his elders sister. It registers to him that his beloved sister has been disowned. His heart pumps harder as if it will escape at the thought of his sister out there alone in this heavy rain.

“Baba please don’t tell me that you kicked her out?” He says hoping that his father will tell him that he’s joking but his response paralyzes every sense of his being.

“Mbewenhle is dead to all of us!”

“You watched him kick out your daughter?” Mvelonhle redirects the question to his mother who doesn’t say anything.

“Sis you didn’t say anything?”

“Baba is the man of the house what was I going to say?”

Mpilehle responds nonchalantly trying to mask the worry that has her heart pounding hard against her chest.

“I can’t believe this! What kind of a mother are you? How dare you watch your husband throw out your daughter? The daughter you carried for 9 months? But then again why am I surprised you always tell her that you wish she’s the one who disappeared instead of Ndalwenhle I guess you couldn’t be more happier when you’re finally rid of her!”

Those words hurts Thembeke more than the pain she’s been brushing off in her abdomen at the thought of her daughter out there every time the thunder rumbles and the lightning flashes on the window.

“Yey wena don’t you dare talk to your mother like that!” Musa

“As for you baba did mama kick you out of the house when she found out about your infidelity?” Musa clenches his jaw at his son’s question. Who does he think he is talking to him like that?

“Have you forgotten who are you speaking to Mvelonhle?”

“No I haven’t forgotten baba. Isn’t it funny that you were so quick to throw Mbewenhle out but both of you did the same thing and no one kicked you out. Is it because she’s a child and you’re an adult? Adults get a free pass in this household just because they’re adults! Mama I don’t understand how can it be easy to forgive a cheating husband but find it hard to forgive a cheating daughter. The hypocrisy in this house will amaze you I tell you. Mpilenhle I fail to understand that you can forgive a man that never disclosed anything to you about having a son with another woman, the same woman that stabbed you and you woke up in icu but find it hard to forgive your little sister for straying. The little sister that you have been trying to build a close relationship with not so long ago and when she needed you the most you turned your back on her. I understand believe me I really understand your anger, she messed up big time that is undeniable but kicking her out to the street is so cruel especially when the whole world is against her. I won’t sit here with you while my sister is out there in this heavy rain, the exact rain that took away her twin.”

“You think you are the man now and you can talk to us however it suits you? You have another thing coming my boy!!

Ungasijwayeli kabi we are not your peers and If you dare walk out of this house Mvelonhle never come back!”

“With pleasure!” Mvelonhle says and walks out banging the door hard.

Thembeke and Mpilenhle look at each other as remorse gnaws at them. There’s so much truth in what Mvelonhle said and they both know it whereas Musa doesn’t share the same sentiments. His stubbornness and strictness clouds his judgment. That boy thinks just because he can make a girl pregnant now he’s a man. How dare he challenges him or maybe he thinks he’s now weak since he had a heart attack, the same heart attack he refuses to acknowledge. Isifo sabelungu iheart attack and a strong man like him can never suffers one all he needs to do ukukhotha insizi, ashunqise izinyamazane bese abhema umbhemiso.

The moment the rain stops Qwabe excuses himself and goes to his bedroom to lay down. Thembeke bites her lower lip stifling a moan at the sharp pain in her abdomen as she covers her husband with a blanket. Once she’s done she walks to the

lounge where she finds her daughter still glued on the sofa where she left her and she seems far away with thoughts.

“Mvelonhle is right mama,” Mpilenhle says with a shaky voice. Thembeke sighs and settles down next to her daughter. When she opens her mouth to say something pain strikes her once again and she moans softly.

“Mama are you okay?”

“I’m supposed to give birth month end I don’t know what’s going on.”

“Oh my goodness, should I take you to the hospital?”

“What about your father?”

“He’s sleeping mama and resting.”

“We can’t leave him alone.”

“Let me call my husband and tell him to come...” Mpilenhle is cut short by her mom’s loud scream.

“Mama calm down...I will go get the baby bag and drive to the hospital.”

“No please drive me to Tugela Ferry to MaZwide.”

Mpilenhle looks at her mother confused. Why would she wants to be driven to MaZwide while she’s supposed to go to the hospital?

“Mama....”

“Mpilenhle don’t ask too much questions please my child just drive me there.” She doesn’t have strength to answer her questions not that she wants to. Her worry in this moment is the baby that is on the way when she’s expecting it month end.

Mpilenhle doesn't ask more questions after that. She rushes to the bedroom to take the baby bag and helps her mother to the car then she drives to Tugela Ferry.

"Mama why do you want me to drive you to MaZwide? Is she expecting us? We haven't seen her in years." Well she doesn't know that Thembeka has been visiting her mother's sister behind her mother's back.

MaZwide loves her sister's children despite the fact that there's bad blood between her and her sister (Thembeka's mom). Their feud stems from sibling rivalry which was caused by their parents when they were young. The only answer that Thembeka gives her daughter is to drive faster before she pops out the baby in this car.

It doesn't take that long for them to arrive. Tugela Ferry is around the corner. Mpilenhle maneuvers her car through the yard as MaZwide shifts the curtains aside and looks at the car in her yard. The dogs are barking and jumping on the car. She moves away from the window and walks out. Dogs stop barking when she whistles, reprimanding them. She sees her niece

getting out of the car and just knew it's time even though she expected her month end.

"Mamncane." Thembeke acknowledges her aunt and moans in pain.

MaZwide doesn't need to be told what's going on she holds her niece's arm and they walk inside the house while Mpilenhle follows behind them with the baby bag. They walk to the main bedroom and the moment Thembeke settles down on the bed her water breaks.

"You can go home now my child." Thembeke.

"I can't leave you mama. I also want..."

"Go mtanami your father needs you now."

"But mama..."

“Mpilenhle go!”

Mpilenhle huffs annoyingly and looks at her grandma who assures her that her mother is in good hands then walks out. MaZwide lets out a blissful sigh and rushes out to get everything she’s going to need then returns. The moment she’s been longing for is finally here and she can’t wait.

“He’s coming Mamncane please hurry up!”

“I’m here sis now relax on the bed okay”

MaZwide helps her niece to lay on the bed and places a pillow on her back. The legs are wide open and Thembeka is ready to pop out the child. After cutting the panties off with a scissor she delivers the baby. A little cry fills the whole room minutes later. She has delivered and held many babies in her arms but this moment is special because this is not just any baby.

“It’s a boy”

Thembeke smiles through her tears as her aunt hands her baby boy. She expected Gcobolwakhe's replica but to her surprise she's staring at her replica. Now this changes everything.

"I thought he's due month end but he came on the right time. Yesterday I delivered a stillborn and the mother is a mental case. Apparently she's a known looney that roams around the street so we are sorted." MaZwide

Thembeke swallows hard and looks at her aunt with morose plastered on her face.

"Mamncane I don't think I can give him you anymore."

The smile on MaZwide's face disappears. What is this child saying now? She prepared herself for this day!

"What does that supposed to mean Thembeke?"

“I thought he’s going to be Gcobolwakhe’s replica and it will be obvious for Qwabe and everyone to see that he’s not a Qwabe but now he’s just look like me and no one will notice.”

“He’s still a baby once he’s grown he’s going to look exactly like his father. Don’t risk like that. I know it’s not easy to just give him away but it’s not like you won’t know where he is and whenever you want to visit him you will.”

“The twins are my replicas and Mbewenhle still looks like me, she hasn’t change even a bit.”

“Mbewenhle is a girl this is a boy!”

“Look I know that you were looking forward to raise this baby like your own and feel what is like to be a mother but I can’t Mamncane. I love this boy so much I can’t do this to him,” says Thembeke and kisses her baby boy’s tiny lips.

She can’t believe that she was ready and willing to give him to her aunt to raise him for her to avoid problems in her marriage. Now that this little one is born it’s so hard to let him go and since he looks like her she doesn’t have to give him away.

Warmth spreads through her body as she stares at her son who’s looking at her with his cute little eyes. It’s no secret that she regrets eating a forbidden fruit but this beautiful little human is not a regret.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

It's not the fact that they've taken out my track-pants or the fact that they're three strong guys and I'm just a vulnerable girl but it's the emptiness, the deadness, the black hole within my soul that makes me give up without even trying harder. I'm ready for whatever they do to me it's not like there's anything they will take from me. It's already empty, everything is vacuumed the only thing left in me is the ability to breathe.

It's absurd I know because a normal person would be fighting with all her power and screaming for help but not me. The word 'normal' is foreign in my life. How can a human being disappear without a trace? Taking a bullet for your love one is something that we usually watch in TV and I never thought that can be me. I'd do that over and over again for my little brother but the turn out of events is what I didn't prepare myself for. Sitting on the wheelchair for weeks and witnessing my mother entertaining another man while she's married to my father. The same father that cheated on her and made a child with another woman. Sadly the child is now an ancestor and she died for the sins of her parents.

Waking up in a hut I've never seen in my life only to find out that I've been kept against my will by the same person that claimed to love me. I don't want to mention the part where I had to watch him burn into ashes and having to keep that as a secret. I swear this one deserves to be aired on TV as a documentary.

Have you ever had your so life figured out and realize how lucky you are in the world for having to score yourself a great man like Kayise and the fact that your parents approve of your relationship with him is a blessing. Ain't we living to make our parents proud? Well maybe not entirely but our parents are the first people that we want to make proud. Our parents bango Nkulunkulu bethu basemhlabeni. There's nothing that tugs at ones heartstrings as seeing your mother or father looking at you with that pride smile.

I never understood the meaning of life turning upside down until I find myself caught up between two handsome men. What I couldn't fathom out is my heart loving two guys at the same time. Worse of it all is that the other one happens to be the grandson of the woman who's claimed to be responsible for

the grief of years. Let me not mention losing my virginity two days before my umemulo ceremony because that some crazy shit. I mean who does that?

See there's absolutely nothing normal about my life. Maybe this is what I deserve after humiliating my family, sending my father to the hospital and breaking Kayise's heart. Maybe Ndwalenhle is punishing me for sleeping with an enemy. Him being a blood of someone who took her away makes him an enemy right? It doesn't matter that there's no proof. Africans believe in witchcraft proof or no proof.

The panties is out and one of them is already on top of me fiddling with the zipper of his pants while the other two are holding my limbs. I feel the sharp threads of the grass on my back as he presses his weight on top of me while fiddling his dick between my folds in search for an entrance. We hear voices approaching.

“Do you guys hear that?”

“Oh shit this can’t be happening!” The one on top of me says and covers my mouth with his hand.

“Guys listen carefully that voice belongs to our uncle.”

“No no no this old man have no timing at all!”

“Let the girl go bafo they’re getting closer!”

“Awungeke ngiziphuce iqatha emlonyeni. Why don’t you go to them before they get here and when he ask me tell him that we went separate ways.”

“Face it man our mission has failed. We can’t cover for you while we won’t get a ride as well.”

“Sandile is right bafo.” With said they both leave and he curses under his smelly breath.

I hear his loud scream and that's when I notice my teeth are tugging on his palm that is covering my mouth. As I'm still surprised by that I roll over pushing him off me and in a flash of light I'm on my feet and running away. It's like there's some sort of powers that are in control of my speed. I'm not running but flying mind you I don't have shoes on.

I find myself on the Mngqobi's doorstep. It's only then I remember that I'm just on my t-shirt only. I take it off and wear it as a skirt to cover my privates. Ever since I lost my innocence I think my body has changed hence I decided to start wearing bras. Maybe it's just my imagination but Thanks to Uthandiwe for forcing me to buy a pair. Though I'm barely covered but I'm not showing my tits.

I knock on the door and wait for a second as I hear footsteps shuffling towards the door. The moment Mngqobi appears I couldn't help but launch myself in his arms. Luckily he catches me and holds me though I can feel that his body is tense. I know that he's surprised to see me at this time of the night and in this disturbing manner. The aftermath of what I've just went through and finally to be safe should trigger tears but mine are not triggered or maybe I'm still shocked. He takes me to the couch and we both settled down.

“Mbewu what happened to you?” The worry in his voice cannot be missed.

“My father kicked me out of home.”

I see pity glinting in his eyes. He takes my cold hands and squeezes them in his warm palms.

“I’m sorry Mbewenhle. Where are your clothes? Why are you half naked and wet?”

“It’s a long story. I’m sorry to come unannounced I didn’t know where to go.”

“Oh Mbewu you know that you’re welcome here anytime but I’m scared that if your father finds out you’re here I could lose my job.”

Gosh I didn't think of that! My father is capable of doing that so I can't risk him losing his job.

"Don't worry I just need a place to sleep for tonight only. Tomorrow I would be gone before anyone see me."

"I'm sorry Mbewenhle."

"Don't worry Nqobi. I'm fine." I fake a huge smile.

"Come here."

He pulls me to his arms once again and I heave a sigh.

"God you're shivering. Let me get something for you to wear."

I nod then he gets up and disappears out of the lounge. I feel a presence and look up only to find his 15 years old sister looking at me.

“Hi sis Mbewu.”

“Hello sweetheart.”

“Can I make tea for you. It will make you feel warm.”

“Yes please.”

She smiles and walks away. I take my phone out from my bra and press unlock button. Oh no the is screen blank, the water must have penetrated through. I switch it off and open it once again but it's still blank.

“Come,” says Mnqobi. I get up and follow him. He shows me his tracksuits on top of the bed then he walks out. I take off my wet t-shirt and bra then slip into Mnqobi's tracksuit before joining Mnqobi in the lounge.

“The screen of my phone is blank. It must be the rain don’t you have hairdryer.”

“What is that?”

“Hairdryer is for drying hair buti. No we don’t have it but you can switch it off and put it inside of the rice it’s going to be okay.” Ayanda says as she walks in with a tray which she places on the coffee table.

“Don’t listen to her Mbewu that’s crazy.”

“It does work buti.”

“How do you know that you don’t have a phone.”

“My friend does. Hers fall into the water and she buried it inside of the uncooked rice for few days and it worked. Here’s your food and tea sis Mbewu.”

“Thank you sweetheart. I’m skeptical but let’s try it.”

“We don’t have rice.”

“Oh okay it’s fine. Thanks for the food and tea.”

“You’re welcome.” She says and disappears. I take the tray and eat pap and spinach then wash it down with black tea.

I feel Mngqobi’s intense gaze on me and when I look at him worry is plastered on his face. I give him a smile to assure him that I’m okay but he’s not convinced and he’s prepared to even lose his job for me as long as he will know I’m safe with him. That’s so sweet and generous of him but he cannot lose his job. What will happen to his siblings? Before the sun rise tomorrow I will be gone to where I also don’t know.

☆ Muzikayise ☆

I take a long drag of my smoke and feel dizzy for a second. This cigarette is weak it's no longer calms my adrenaline which is pumping hard like it's going to escape. Locking up myself in my bedroom for days is not something that I'd do I'm not weak like that. It's not only the fact that I'm not ready to face the world but it's also the inability for me to function. I have no strength at all and my soul is in deep pain.

The events that took place Saturday are still playing vividly in my head and with each passing second I feel like I'm losing my sanity. The guilt in her eyes still haunts me up to this day. I remember this day I wanted to know what happened to that bastard since I didn't hear there's a funeral around the village. I found out that he's alive but a myriad of questions flooded my mind when I learnt that his name is 'Manelisi'.

In that moment somehow a part of me knew that the storm was brewing. It was no coincidence that she called me with his name a few months back but lied about it and said she meant to say 'Mana Kayise'. I have to give it to her she's so damn good! Like a fool that I am in her eyes I believed her and even when she looked me straight in the eyes and said there's nothing going on between him and that asswipe. Maybe that wasn't a lie, she's been two timing with someone else not him.

I don't know which is which but all in all nothing changes the fact that some fucking idiot fucked her and she allowed that! The picture of someone fucking her is boiling my blood and breaking my heart at the same time. It's not even about the fact that I waited for her while she was fucking somebody else but it's about how perfectly she fabricated her love for me that I couldn't even see that it was fake. It's about how she would look into my eyes like I'm the only man in the universe and say 'I love you Sidwaba Siluthuli' as if she meant that with everything in her. It's about how she made my life revolves around her and how she became the axis of my existence now I can't seem to function without her.

The door swings open and my mom walks in with a tray. Her eyes lands on the vaskom on the floor that is filled with now cold water which she had prepared for me to bath. I'm too broken to do anything and I fucking hate how weak I feel at this moment. A sad sigh escapes her lips when she sees a plate of food that I didn't touch which she brought for me in the afternoon.

"Muzi you can't do this my son

at least eat something.”

“I’m not hungry mama.”

“It’s been days Muzi there’s no way that you’re not hungry and this ugly baboon in front of me is not my son.”

I don’t say anything but she puts the tray on my thighs and settles down next to me.

“You’re worrying me khehla I have never seen you like this.”  
The sadness in her voice forces me to look up at her and I see tears glistening in eyes.

“I’m sorry mama but don’t worry about me I’m okay.”

“Show mama you’re okay by eating.”

“Mama...”

“Please Ngcamane at least 10 spoons.”

I heave a sigh and take the spoon on the tray then begin to eat. It's rice and chicken stew with a coslaw salad.

“That's my boy,” she says with a faint smile on her face and now I feel like some five year old boy. Silence stretches between us as I eat.

“Have you talked to her?” Eventually she breaks the silence and I look up from my plate.

“Who?”

“MaQwabe.”

“No.”

“I don’t believe that she can do this to you my boy maybe if you can talk to her you will find out what’s really going on.”

I’m not surprised she’s saying this she loves Yeyeye and thinks she’s a good girl. Ah well it’s clearly that she fooled us all.

“Well she did it mom.”

“No maan there’s some sort of an explanation. That girl loves you.”

I shrug my shoulders. You don’t do something cruel like this to someone you love! Once I’m done eating she thanks me profusely and kisses my forehead then walks out.

Thuthuka walks in with his hands tucked into his pants. He sits on the foot of my bed and looks at me. Fuck I hate that pity look plastered on his face!

“I’m fine Thuthuka.”

“You know you don’t need to pretend with me and quite honestly it’s only now I realize how much you love her. I’m sorry malumes.”

“Don’t be boy I’m fine.”

“You have to face the world at some point. Don’t give these motherfuckers that satisfaction.”

“I’m sure they’re talking and laughing at me.”

“People will always talk malumes just forget about them. Let me go prepare water for you to bath.”

“Did I tell you that I want to bath?”

“You look horrible and it’s only a matter of time you start stinking.”

“Awuphume kimi Thuthuka.”

We fall into silence and I have never seen him running out of things to say to me. Am I that bad that he doesn't know how to console me?

“Do you think it's that idiot?” he breaks the silence eventually

“Yes but it could be someone else.”

“I can't believe she did this to you.”

“Neither do I.”

He heaves a sigh and steals a glance at me. There's something he wants to say to me but he seems scared.

“What is it?”

“Nothing.”

“Thuthuka come on.”

“I don’t think she ever loved you.”

“Why do you say that?”

“I mean judging how your relationship started with her. You literally didn’t give her a choice malumes.”

I chuckle

“So it’s my fault?”

“No I’m not saying that kodwa iyiphi intombi engala umendo? You pushed her to the corner and she had no choice but to agree.” (...which girl can refuse marriage?..)

“Ehy I didn’t put a gun on her head to agree to date me! If she felt the pressure she should’ve told me so not do me dirty like this! I won’t allow you to make me feel bad for showing how serious I was about her by asking for her hand in marriage! I cant believe that you side with her!”

“I’m not...”

“Get out Thuthuka!”

“Malumes...”

“Ngithe phuma!!”

He gets up and walks out. I take my cigarette and light it then begin to smoke while scrolling through my phone. I mark all our photos and videos together but my finger can’t seem to tap delete option. I groan in anger and hurl the phone against the wall. How could this girl do this to me?

There's a loud knock on the door and it's only then I notice that I was sleeping. I don't know when did I fall asleep. I drag myself out of the bed and shuffle my feet to the door as I stretch my neck. What is he doing here?

"Mvelo."

"Maseko how are you?"

"I'm okay. Come in."

I make a space for him to walk in and close the door. It's the next day but it's still early in the morning, the sun is not even out yet. We settle on the sofa.

"How can I help you?"

"My sister is not here?"

"Your sister?"

“Yes Mbewenhle. Didn’t she come to you last night?”

“No she didn’t.”

“Really?”

“Yes.”

“Dad kicked her out of the house last night and I have been looking for her for the whole night but I can’t find her.”

I can tell by his bloodshot red eyes and tired face that he didn’t sleep a wink.

“You woke me up to tell me that Mvelo how is it any of my business?”

“Look I know that she’s the last person you want to hear about right now but please man help me find her.”

“Mbewenhle is fine wherever she is stop worrying and go back home to sleep. You look drained.”

“She’s not fine. I can feel it in my guts Muzi.”

“Whether she’s fine or not I don’t care Mvelo okay!”

“You don’t mean that I know that you still love her.”

“Well she doesn’t love me! I’m sure she’s probably opening her legs for whoever her boyfriend is while you’re worried here. That’s how selfish and cruel your sister is!”

“I found her sleepers on top of the mountain and her track pants together with her panties. Wherever she is she’s hurt Muzi please I beg you man help me.” Tears escape his eyes and run down his face.

“How do you know that it’s her things.”

“I know and my sister confirmed that she was wearing that when she left.”

My heart stop beating as my mind thinks of the worst scenarios that could’ve happened to her. Please God protect her let no harm to her. No why do I even care!

“Hayi I’m sorry I don’t have help Mvelo.”

He kneels down on the floor and presses his hands together like he’s praying

“Please Muzi. I know you still care about her and love her. I’m sure the last thing you want is for her to get hurt.”

That's the naked truth but I hate feeling like this! I want to hate her! I want to celebrate that she could be hurt! I want to not give a damn about her!

"No you're lying! I don't love her anymore nor do I care! Whether she's hurt or not I don't care! In fact whatever she's going through it's serves her right!"

"Muzi..."

"Leave my house Mvelonhle!!"

He gets up from the floor and drags himself out. I bury my head in my hands. What if someone raped her? What if she's lying somewhere dead? I get up from the couch and rush to my bedroom to get dressed quickly. I take my gun and my car keys before rushing out.

I pause on my tracks as my eyes dart to the cattle inside the kraal which I was going to send to her home the following day after her umemulo. The pictures of her with that bastard

flashes before my eyes. It's like I was there watching them. I can see each thrust, his dick sliding in and out of her breaking that hymen. The sound of her screams together with his grunts.

I feel my chest tightening and tears stinging in my eyes. I hold on my knees for balance as the world spins. When have you become so weak? You're a Maseko, uNgcamane, uSidwaba Silithulu you don't break apart because of a woman! She betrayed you and humiliated you in front of the whole village! My conscience chastises and reminds me. I get up from a squat position and once again my eyes lands on the cows. I don't know what happens next but I can hear the cow crying in agony as it goes down to the ground.

"Muzi give me the gun," Dad says walking towards me with his hands up in the air.

"Calm down and give me the gun my boy."

"No baba I want to get rid of these cows let me be please!"

“Not like this my son we can take them back to the farm. Don’t harm the cows.”

I shake my head vigorously as I aim for the other cow but baba jumps on me and we wrestle over the gun. I can hear my mother and sisters screaming.

“Give me my gun baba!”

“You’re hurting my boy and I understand but you’re taking out your anger in a wrong way. Awukwazi ukuphakamisa isikhali emagcekeni ako Maseko. I’m begging you Ngcamane I know you’re in pain but please calm down,” he placates me and a sob bursts out of my chest.

He holds me tightly in his arms as I sob like a little boy. Never in my life have I cried for a woman. The betrayal is like a furnace in my heart and the craziest shit ever is that I still love her so much. It’s hurts so bad.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I rummage through the dirty bin with my shaking hands and retrieve two slices of bread and chicken skin. A smile tugs at the corners of my lips. It's not everyday you find food in the dustbin, well I'm talking from the 7 days experience I've spent in the street. Cost of living is too high people don't throw food anymore the only thing you will find is chewed bones and empty containers of food.

I couldn't roam in the streets of Msinga and risk anyone seeing me and feeling pity for me. I wanted to be away so I took a lift to Newcastle. The 7 passed days I've been roaming around the streets of Newcastle town. I sleep in the public toilet and during the day I ask people to carry grocery plastics for them and they'd thank me with few coins. Most of them refuse because they think I'd steal their grocery. I mean I've been downgraded to a street kid so yeah I get where they're coming from. If it was for me honestly I wouldn't bother but my stomach doesn't care.

I'm not one who's used to hunger, mina ngiyazidlela bakithi so it's really a struggle for me. I haven't adjusted to this new change of my life. I settle down on the bench under the shelter and eat while observing my crowded and noisy surroundings. It's festive so you can imagine how crowded it gets in town. People are shopping Xmas clothes for their children, some are doing groceries and others are buying so much alcohol one would swear it's for stock. Xmas is in two days from now and I'm not looking forward to it as always. This one is going to be different than others but it's okay.

Once I'm done eating I get up and stand by Tops and Spar waiting for anyone who will let me carry their plastic bags. I don't mind the eyes that are staring at me. I know I look funny in Mngqobi's tracksuits which are starting to get dirty and his sneakers are so big. I wear size 3 and he wears 7 I had to fasten them tightly.

This woman wearing a huge sun hat that is almost covering her face and sunglasses walks out of Tops carrying heavy plastics of wines and ciders. She has her purse under her arm. This one is definitely going to her car parked around here so there's no need to go to her. I watch her as she walks away and notice her purse falling on the ground but she's not aware.

I rush to the purse and pick it up when I turn it around there's a word written in gold 'Gucci'. Do people spray perfumes on their wallets because wow this beautiful purse smells heavenly. No one saw what just happened but suddenly I'm scared. My hands are terribly shaking as I open it. There are 5 two hundred notes and tons of cards. I wonder what are these many cards for. There's also a picture of a man. He's dark in complexion and very handsome. It must be her husband.

I don't know what to do with this purse but it doesn't feel okay to take the money and throw it. I heave a sigh and run towards where the woman headed. She's loading the plastics bags in her typical fancy car. I clear my throat and she turns around a bit startled.

"Hi uhm you dropped your purse"

"Oh thank you so much boy."

"I'm a girl actually."

She giggles shamefully

“I’m sorry baby girl it’s just...” I cut her short

“I’m wearing like a boy and nowadays boys plait too.”

“Yeah but I didn’t mean it in a bad way. Thank you so much may God bless you.”

She takes the wallet and opens it then gives me R400 notes. I stop myself from jumping on her and give her a huge hug. This money is going last me for days!

“Thank you so much ma’am!” I couldn’t hide the excitement in my voice.

“I’m the one who’s grateful sis.”

I give her a smile and walk away just as I'm few steps away she calls me.

"Hey baby girl?"

Oh no please don't tell me she's having second thought and taking the money. I swivel around and look at her.

"Where's home?"

"I don't have a home."

"Come with me."

"Ma'am?"

"I said come with me."

"It's okay ma'am you don't have to. I'm fine really."

“Yes I don’t have to but I want to. Please come if you’re not happy in my house I will let you go. Do we have a deal?”

I have nothing to lose I’ve already lost everything. I agree and help her load the plastic bags into the boot then we get inside the car. Damn it’s even more beautiful inside and it’s smells just like her. She takes off the hat and sunglasses.

“One can’t go into a shop without being recognized,” she says and throws the hat and the sunglasses at the back seat. I couldn’t help but gasp when I see who she is.

“This is a dream right?”

She giggles and shakes her head.

“No it’s not a dream sweetheart.”

“Oh my goodness!” I close my eyes with my hands and open them once again only to find the one and only Aphiwe Dlomo staring at me.

“Wow this is such a small world! I’m afraid I can’t go with you though.”

“Why not?”

“Your daughter and I had a huge fight when she left home. I’m not sure she will be happy to see me.”

She looks at me surprised, her beautifully shaped brows furrowing.

“I have four daughters which one are you talking about and how do you know her?”

“Uthandiwe Ma’am”

“Wait are you the girl from Msinga. What’s her name Mbalenhle?”

“Yes it’s me my name is Mbewenhle.”

“Up to this day she hasn’t told me what happened. It’s about time we fix whatever happened between the two of you because I’ve never seen her interested in making friends until she met you.”

“But....”

“There’s no but. I’m so happy to finally meet you Mbewenhle,” she leans over to hug me but I gently push her.

“Please don’t hug me.”

“Oh sorry.”

“I just need a bath first.” I say when I realize that I offended her.

Well I didn't mean to I don't feel like hugging let alone a celebrity. I haven't bathed for a week I probably stink.

“Don't worry about that when we get home you will have one.”

She starts the car and drives off.

“If you don't mind me asking what happened sis. How did you end up on the street. I thought your parents are both still alive.”

“I messed up big time ma'am and my father kicked me out of the house.”

“I'm really sorry baby girl. I can't believe that there are parents who chase out their children especially daughters in this cruel world we are living in.”

“I deserved it.” I say dismissively but she’s not getting a hint.

“Whatever you did he wasn’t suppose to throw you out.  
There’s human traffickers and rapists out there Mbewenhle!”

Her grip on the steering wheel tightens then she looks at me apologetically.

“I’m sorry I didn’t mean to shout it’s just the thought of you raped or sold for sex that is worrying me. I’m glad that I found you before that happened to you.”

“It wouldn’t have mattered even if it did.”

She tilts her head and looks at me like I have grown another head.

“You don’t mean that Mbewenhle.”

“I do Mrs Dlomo.”

“Why would you say that? Of course it would matter sis...” I stop her mid sentence

“Matter to who? You? I don’t think so I don’t mean to be rude ma’am but you don’t know me. If it doesn’t matter to my parents how can it matter to a stranger? If it doesn’t matter to me why would it matter to someone else?”

“I’m a mother so it does matters to me. I wouldn’t want any child to be sold for sex or raped. You’re going through the most and your parents might have given up on you but please don’t give up on yourself. There’s so much that you can live for and achieve baby girl. I think you owe it to yourself to tap into your inner true potential and enhance your talent. No one is capable of transforming your life except you. You can achieve anything you want in this universe Mbewenhle.”

I swallow a thick painful lump that seems to be clogging my throat. Those words has me feeling emotional which is something that I last felt when dad threw me out of home. I

look to the window as a single tear runs down my face which I surreptitiously wipe it off.

The rest of the drive is silence and when she pulls over to this opulent mansion on top of the mountain I just knew we have arrived. The gate slides open and she maneuvers her car and park on the drive yard in between Uthandiwe's pink Porsche and another red fancy car. Ay cha shame isiphihli sendlu, uyasazi isiphihli.

"We are here," says Mrs Dlomo softly and I just give her a faint smile then steps out of the car as she doe so.

Suddenly my feet are refusing to walk and my heart is jackhammering. It as if she can notice that because she grabs my hand and we walk through. Her hand is so soft I'm even embarrassed of mine which is hard and a bit rough. Eyes are on us the moment we walk in and I can hear the voice saying 'run' but Mrs Dlomo's grip on my hand is so tight. They're all seated on the couches watching TV.

“Mommy!” A boy and a girl who look roughly around 8 years run to Mrs Dlomo. She opens her arms wide for them and they launch themselves into her arms then she kisses their foreheads.

“What did you brought for us mommy,” says the little cute girl.

“It’s a surprise for Xmas sweetheart. Kids how are y’all?”

“We are okay mommy.” They’ll chorus like pre school kids and my eyes meet Uthandiwe who doesn’t keep hers on me.

“Where’s your mother?”

“She went to see grandma Betty she called and said she’s sick.”

“Oh okay. Mbewenhle these are my children, Zobuhle

You know Uthandiwe, Kwanele Junior, Yandisokuhle, Abuse, Mqoqiwokuhle, Melikhaya and Bukamina,” Mrs Dlomo says pointing from the elders to the youngest.

“Guys this is Mbewenhle, Uthandiwe’s friend.”

“Ndiwe you never said your friend is a hobo.” Kwanele Junior

“Kj that’s not a nice thing to say.”

“I’m sorry Mommy. Hi Mbewenhle.”

“Hello Kj”

Abuse gets up from the couch and walks towards me stretching his hand for a hand shake but when I give him my hand he kisses it instead.

“I know that mom introduced me but let me introduced myself. I’m Abuse Dlomo the handsome son out of them all. It’s nice to meet you gorgeous.”

I can't help but giggle. He's such a little charmer. If he's not 10 years he must be 11 but he's very tall and looks like the man I saw in Mrs Dlomo's purse.

"It's nice to meet you too handsome."

I see he didn't expect that which makes him to blush.

"He's blushing!" Yandisokuhle says and they burst into laughter.

Once the introductions are out of the way Mrs Dlomo shows me the bedroom I will be using. It's beautiful walls are in charcoal and white. The white simple bedding creates a serene feel. Fairy lights and plush velvet cushions add warmth and cosiness. After that she prepares a bath for me and once it's ready I take a bath. The warm water is soothing against my skin. It's been so long I couldn't help but take longer as well to finish. By the time I'm done I feel so relaxed and refreshed. I walk to the bedroom and find Mrs Dlomo seated on the bed.

“Please use Uthandiwe’s clothes for today. I promise tomorrow we are going to do shopping for you. These panties are new though she hasn’t wear them,” she says pointing at the clothes and pack of panties on the bed.

“Thank you so much ma’am.”

“You can just call me Aphiwe.”

“I can’t call you with your first name that’s disrespectful.”

“Call me mama then.”

I nod then she disappears after telling me to join them downstairs once I’m done getting dressed. I lotion my body with Uthandiwe’s body lotion and get dressed into a jean and simple tee. Ndiwe and I are the same size it’s just that she’s short and I’m tall which makes the jean shorter and the tee to almost look like a stomach out. She wears size 4 so the sleepers are a bit bigger.

Just as Mrs Dlomo said once I finish I go downstairs and find Uthandiwe and her mom only in the lounge. She hasn't said a word to me since I've got here and I'm wondering what's on her mind. I lower myself to the empty couch.

"Thanks for the bath I really feel refreshed and relaxed."

"You're welcome sis. Zobuhle is preparing food for you."

Finally I'm going to eat decent food. I thank her once again.

"So what's going on between the two of you."

"Mama can I talk to Mbewenhle first?"

"No I don't agree I want to know what happened first."

Uthandiwe and I look at each other. She's biting her bottom lip nervously. I can see through her eyes that she doesn't want her mom to know about her shenanigans.

“Uthandiwe ngiyakhuluma phela!”

“Uhm...uh...” Uthandiwe clears her throat and starts narrating everything that happened without leaving a single detail. The fury is evident in her mom’s eyes and it sends shivers down my spine.

“Jesus Uthandiwe how could you do that!”

“I’m sorry mama I was angry...”

“Angry my foot! What you did is so wicked! Xitlalli and I didn’t raise you to be so evil! The poor girl splashed you with water why didn’t you do that as well if you were so angry? Sleeping with her boyfriend was overboard! You sleep around now where’s your self respect huh?”

“Ngiyaxolisa mama.” Now she’s crying and I feel sorry for her.

“Didn’t I tell you that revenge is not right?”

“You did mama but I couldn’t help myself. I’m sorry.”

“You’re grounded for two weeks!”

Rich kids are having it nice yazin. I wouldn’t mind such punishment just lazing around the house and binge on movies.

“Mama you can’t do that we have already bought tickets for Amco Dam on 27th.”

“No you’re not going usile wena!”

“Mommy I’m sorry please forgive me.”

“I forgive you but you’re still grounded.” She gets up and walks out leaving me with a crying Ndiwe.

“I’m sorry I shouldn’t have agreed to come with her and she wouldn’t have force the truth out of you,” I say

“No it’s not your fault. I shouldn’t have done what I did. I realized when my sister, Zo told me. I went about it the wrong way. I’m sorry for hurting your best friend and I’m also sorry for the mean things I said to you Mbewenhle.”

“You really hurt me Ndiwe especially when you used something I told you against me. I confided in you because I trusted you as my friend and I thought you will never judge me about it but it’s clear I was wrong.”

She wipes her tears and comes to sit next to me.

“I was wrong in so many ways and I’m very sorry. I know that you told me everything because you trusted me but I betrayed your trust and for that I’m very sorry from the deepest of my heart. I allowed my anger to get the better of me and ruin our friendship please give us a chance babe let me fix this. I will even go apologize to Isisa. I know that it won’t make any difference but I just want to show you how much I regret what I

did. I act on impulse most of the time and it's something I'm working on it please give me another chance."

"It's okay I understand that when we are angry we do or say things that we don't mean."

"Does that mean you forgive me?"

"Of course."

She smiles widely and attacks me with a hug.

"Can I confess?"

"Yes you can."

"I missed you so much!"

I missed her too!

“I know you did I have that impact on everyone’s life.”

“Argh awuphaphi.” We giggle and share a hug once again.

“What happened to you?”

I heave a sigh and look at her.

“I messed up Ndiwe big time.” I watch her showing all kind of different facial expressions as I narrate everything to her.

“Oh my God Mbewenhle I’m really sorry. Why you didn’t call me the moment your father threw you out!”

“You blocked me remember.”

“Oh yes I’m really sorry babe. How did you survive on the street? Gosh I hope no one tried to harm you.”

“No there’s no one.”

“You’re lying I can see it through your eyes.”

“They almost did so it’s no big deal.”

“Oh no what happened?”

“I don’t want to talk about it Ndiwe it doesn’t matter really.”

“You do know that just because they almost that doesn’t make it okay? That encounter of almost is traumatic and disregarding your feelings will do you no good. You need to deal with what happened so that you can move on. Pushing something back to your mind is no good. It will eat you slowly but surely and steal your happiness. Being thrown out of home that alone is too much how much more spending days and nights in the street. When you’re ready to talk just know I’m here for you and I’m glad that you’re going to be living with us.”

She envelopes me in her arms and for the first time since everything happened I burst into tears.

“Let it all out babe...cry and cleanse your soul.”

I brought all of this to myself and it's what I deserve. A while later I calm down then she goes to the kitchen to get me water but she comes back with food. I don't waste time but gobble down my food. When I look up Ndiwe is staring at me with tears glistening in her eyes.

“Don't do that please.”

“I'm sorry it just that I can't help but think if I didn't do what I did I was going to be the first person you will call after your parents threw you out. You wouldn't have gone through everything you went through because I was going to fetch you right away.”

“Don't blame yourself it's not your fault Ndiwe. I appreciate that your mom brought me here and I'm okay.”

“But...”

“There's no but Ndiwe I'm fine really.”

“Are you full?”

“Uhm yes”

“See that uhm means no. Come to the kitchen.”

“Its fine...”

“Uzongidina!”

I giggle and she joins me then we go to the kitchen. I watch her make food while we catch up. Once she’s done she settles next to me and we eat.

“So you didn’t try to get hold of Manelisi.”

“No he doesn’t have a phone and he should be the one to contact me if he wants to. He promised me that he’s going to be with me Ndiwe but he left me alone to deal with the humiliation. I guess he

got what he wanted which is my virginity so yeah.”

“It’s over between you and Muzi just like that?”

“I betrayed him I don’t think he can ever forgive me.”

“I promise you I’m going to help you get over this. I’m glad you’re living with us even though coming here just got me grounded.”

I laugh

“Come on that’s not a punishment. See what my parents did to me.”

“Well yeah but I can’t miss out on BlaQ Diamond performance. I have to see Ndu Brown.”

“Gosh I don’t know what y’all see in that guy honestly!”

“Yey wena that guy is hot and his voice damn!”

“Hot? No ways! What annoys more about him is his mole.”

She laughs out loudly.

“You’re crazy!”

“I didn’t know I don’t like moles until I saw Ndu Brown”

She laughs even harder. I can smell a heavenly scent and feel a presence behind me.

“Hey mommy how’s gogo?”

“Hey baby, she’s going to be okay.” The voice of a woman says behind me and when I turn around I’m met by a beautiful light skinned woman with a mole on her cheek.

“Mama meet my friend Mbewenhle. Babe this is my mother, Xitlalli which means Star.”

“Greetings Mrs Dlomo. You’re so beautiful.”

“Hello. Where’s others?” Just like that I’m dismissed. Oh gosh she heard me when I said I don’t like moles.

“By the pool.”

“Okay.”

With that said she walks out.

“Jesus she heard me when I said I don’t like moles! I was just saying Ndiwe not that I meant hers.”

“Come on stop stressing for nothing. Mom is not like that,” she says giggling. Clearly she didn’t notice how she dismissed me. We wash the dishes when we’re done eating then she takes me for a tour.

The house has a large open plan living and entertainment areas, covered patios, bar, lush tropical garden

Advertisement

pool, fire pit, home theater room and large wooden decks. Open plan living areas with wood burning fireplaces leading in to the lounge and dining room. Gourmet kitchen with sit in breakfast area, pantry and separate scullery. Five bedroom are all ensuite except two bedrooms. The 4 bedrooms lead out onto a private covered patio flowing onto the garden and pool

area. I love the guest suite with own lounge and kitchen. Large balcony with vistas of greenery. There's also a pyjama lounge and home office. Ay isiphihli shame!

.....

"Slow down you will choke," KJ says to me and I look down shame gripping on me. Kanti yena ungibhekeni vele? We are seated around dinner table and eating supper.

"KJ eat your food and leave Mbewenhle alone!" Mam Aphiwe

"You can have mine Mbewenhle," says Abuse handing me his plate.

"No I'm fine Abuse."

"Are you sure?"

“Yes.”

The attention shifts from me and they talk as a family. I'm the first one to finish my food but I still feel like I didn't eat at all. I've embarrassed myself enough I won't ask for some more. They're bunch of welcoming and fun people I won't lie about that even though KJ rubs me off the wrong way. He's the kind of a guy that's too forward for my liking.

Once everyone is done Uthandiwe and I wash dishes then I retire to sleep leaving everyone watching TV. I haven't had a decent sleep in a while the moment my head hit the pillow I doze off.

I'm stumbling in the dark trying to run away from a group of men chasing me but I can't will my legs to run. I trip and fall on the ground. They rip my clothes and leave me bare. I'm shaking in fear and begging them not to hurt me but it's seems like my cry excite them. One of them gets on top of me and force himself on me while others are urging him on and singing praises. The excruciating pain I feel with each thrust is leaving me paralyze. One by one they please themselves with me and

by the time it's the last one I can't feel my lower body let alone my lady part.

They leave me alone in that dark place and I wake up crying and that's when I notice that it was a dream. Gosh it felt so real. I wipe the sweat on my face and slide out of the bed heading to the bathroom where I pee. I don't know what time is now but it's not a morning yet.

I'm scared to fall asleep again so I sneak to downstairs and go to the home theater room instead of lounge. I want to feel that cinema aura. The door is left ajar so I walk in and find Uthandiwe's mothers talking. They can't see me as their backs are facing me.

"I know he's going to want to avenge himself now that he's out on parole."

"How will he do that? He doesn't even know who framed him Aphiwe. You're stressing yourself for nothing."

“Of course he will want to find out what happened Xitlalli. That man spent years in jail for something he didn’t do and my mother is free enjoying life. Maybe we should tell Zo and Ndiwe the truth.”

“You think they’re going to forgive us that all this time we knew that their grandma killed their mother? This will not affect them only but all of us. We worked hard to build this family Aphiwe we can’t destroy it now just because Zwelakhe is out of jail. Can you just relax Zwelakhe won’t find anything.”

“I’m so scared.”

“I’ve got you I will do anything to protect you, us and our children okay.”

Mam Aphiwe nods her head as Mam Xitlalli wipes her tears then kisses her forehead. Oh my goodness my ears weren’t supposed to hear that. I turned around to walk out and just as I step out I slip and fall down on the floor. They both jump to their feet and look at me on the floor.

“Girl what are you doing here!” Mam Xitlalli

“I’m sorry mama I had a nightmare and...”

“You’re lying!”

“I swear I just wanted to watch a movie.”

“Then you eavesdropped our conversation!”

“No I didn’t hear anything Mam Xitlalli I swear.”

“Who are you? Why are snooping around huh?”

“Xitlalli calm down. Mbewenhle get up from the floor.”

I get up from the floor as Mam Xitlalli walks towards me and closes the door. The knife in her hand has my heart galloping against my chest.

“Little girl what did you hear?”

“Noth....”

“Don’t even dare think of lying to me because I will cut your throat! What did you hear?” Mam Xitlalli shouts pointing a knife at me.

“Xitlalli calm down please.” Mam Aphiwe

“I won’t calm down until she tells me what did she hear.”

I swallow hard and tell her what I heard. They both look at each other then me.

“Why are you snooping around in my house! We take you and give you a home then you snoop around!” Mam Xitlalli

“Ngiyaxolisa.” Now I’m crying. This woman is breathing fire and I can see in her eyes that she’s capable of using this knife.

“Xitlalli please stop this she won’t tell anyone what she heard right Mbewenhle.”

I nod my head vigorously.

“And you trust her Aphiwe?”

“Yes Xitlalli...”

“Well I don’t trust her. We can’t afford another person knowing this we have to get rid of her.”

“Oh my God Xitlalli she’s just a child!”

“A child that we hardly know and that knows too much!”

“I won’t say anything I swear don’t hurt me.” I plead desperately but she grabs me before pressing my back against her body and places a knife on my throat.

“Star please I’m begging you let her go please.”

“I’m sorry I can’t risk like that Aphiwe.”

Oh God what I was thinking I should’ve stayed in bed but maybe this is for the best.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

The knife is slightly cutting my throat which has me trembling in fear. I swear I'm going to pee on myself. Mam Aphiwe walks towards us and begs her sister wife to let me go.

"Please Star she's just a child and it's not her place to tell Ndiwe this."

"I won't tell her I swear Mam Xitlalli. Not only is it not my place to tell, this could destroy your family. I would never be able to live with myself if I do that especially after welcoming me with warm hands. I know nothing about this please trust me," I say choking on my sobs.

She lets go of me and Mam Aphiwe hugs me.

“I hope you mean it because if you don’t little girl I’m going to cut your throat!” Mam Xitlalli

“I swear on my twin sister.” They let me go and I rush to my bedroom. How did I get here? I can’t believe in a short space of time my life has changed drastically. I let out a rain of tears as I relive everything I went through in the passed days. Everything comes back crashing like a ton of bricks and leaves me drowning in sorrow.

The next day Mam Aphiwe takes me out for shopping she even buys me an iPhone. Once again she apologizes for what happened last night but she really don’t have to. I’m the one who was too comfortable in her house I should’ve stayed in bed. Days pass by and my stay at the Dlomo mansion is not bad at all. Xmas was the best so was New Year though it was my first time without my family.

.....

I feel someone watching me and that compels me to open my eyes that are met by Mam Aphiwe’s beautiful face which

stretches as a smile tugs at the corners of her lips. Damn this woman is so beautiful without even trying hard. I return the smile hoping it is genuine as hers.

“Morning sis.”

“Morning mama how are you doing.”

“I’m okay and yourself?”

“I’m okay too.”

She looks at me intently, deep into my swollen eyes. It has become a norm to wake up with swollen eyes because every single night I cry myself to sleep. During the day I wear a mask to conceal the heavy weight of despair in my heart. Ever since that night when everything came back crashing down like a ton of bricks all I ever do is cry. It’s been two weeks now and my tears don’t want to stop. The emptiness in my soul has been replaced by deep dejection.

Regret is gnawing at me and haunting me every single second like the nightmares at night. Isn't it funny that when those guys wanted to rape me I didn't care but now I'm frequently visited by them in my dreams doing the same thing they wanted to do to me. I'd wake up sweating and crying in the middle of the night and be scared to fall asleep again. Sometimes the music in my phone helps but other days it doesn't.

It is true that money can't buy happiness. I literally have almost everything I ever dreamt of but my life is still incomplete. The Dlomo family are pampering me with a lavish life but still there's that void and sorrow hovering over me. I hate feeling like this why can't I be grateful for being rescued from the street and enjoy this life of living like a rich kid? Maybe it's because at the back of my mind I know that I miss living an average life in a village of Mozane with my parents and siblings. I could do anything to have that life back.

I messed up that's undeniable and I think if I was a judge I'd punish myself severely but I feel like my parents as oNkulunkulu bami basemhlabeni should've at least tried to forgive me. I mean if our savior can forgive our sins as long as we admit them why the hell can't my parents forgive me as well? Ah well it's because they're human beings so I guess I can't compare

them with the man that we have never seen. It could be possible that he doesn't even exist. Heavy Sigh!

“Talk to me baby girl. I can't stand watching you crying yourself to sleep every night hoping that you will talk to me or at least Ndiwe.”

“Ngiyasha mama ngishiswa umlilo engazibasela wona.” (I'm burning mama, the fire I made for myself is burning me) The words slip out of my mouth accompanied by a rain of tears. I feel her sliding next to me and cradles me like a baby.

“It's going to be okay sis don't cry. I'm here for you whatever it is we can work it out together.”

I cry until I have a blocked nose and hiccups. I'm tired of crying! Once I'm calm I tell her everything though I'm ashamed but I owe her that much after welcoming me in her house. She has to know what landed me to the street. I pull away from her embrace and get ready for what's coming. The look on her face is not something I expected. I anticipated anger not compassion.

“I understand that your parents are angry and disappointed however I don’t agree with the fact that they chased you out of home. There are so many punishments you can punish a child with but I guess that’s where our upbringing plays a role. Their anger is justifiable baby girl. You disappointed them and humiliated them. Most of the time when our kids disappoint us as parents we blame ourselves. We feel like failures and it’s not a nice feeling to fail your child. The anger we show our children is actually how we feel towards ourselves for failing our children.”

Maybe my mother can feel like that but not my father. That man lives in his own world, an ancient one at that where by a child is a child and she should behave like one. If she doesn’t behave like one she gets a severe punishment to teach her a lesson she will never forget.

“I won’t dwell on your parents though let’s talk about you and what you did. I’m glad you acknowledge that you were so wrong in many ways then one for what you did. Tell me what pushed you to this other guy’s arms if you love the one you send the flag to even though I don’t know what that means.”

I start by explaining to her what does sending flag means and what it signifies which leaves an expression of awe on her face.

“Wow okay and here I was thinking it’s like a mini lobola thingie,” she says and we both giggle.

“So basically it’s just an ordinary relationship. No lobola paid.”

“Yes which is blessed by the parents and respected by the community.”

“Is a break up not allowed?”

“Not really but why would you enter a relationship with that mindset yokuthi you will break up.”

“I get your point but we can’t run away from such thoughts baby girl because such things happen. I’m sure you also didn’t

know you will do what you did when you send that flag to his homestead.”

I nod my head, mortification gripping on me.

“Tell me about these guys and don’t be embarrassed.”

I tell her about Kayise and Lisi while she’s listening to me attentively.

“If you were to choose who will you choose?”

Both. It’s crazy I know!

“I don’t know.”

“Who do you love the most?”

“They’re different men and I love them differently there’s no one I love more than the other.”

I love how she’s making it easy for me to talk to her and I wish this is what my mother did when she found out about this.

“Oh my goodness!” She bursts into laughter and I look down shyly.

“Don’t be shy it’s just that you remind me of my late husband. That’s exactly what he said when I asked him who does he love more between me and Xitlalli.”

Nostalgia if not sadness glints in her eyes.

“I’m sorry about his tragic passing mama.”

“That’s life baby girl what can we say.” A sad sigh escapes her lips.

“Ye wena ngane are you sure you are not related to my husband how can you love two people differently but not love one more than the other?” she asks and we both crack up into laughter.

“Well unfortunately for you baby girl it’s still a man’s world. You can’t marry your two men. Already you’re crucified in your village but if you were a boy it was going to be considered normal. I can’t blame your culture, upbringing and your environment but those things are somehow playing a huge role on how everything played out. Not forgetting that you were a maiden which means you had to carry yourself with dignity and pride. People break up everyday and it’s not a big deal but just because your relationship with Muzi was made official traditionally and publicly known by the whole village and your parents gave you guys blessings it wasn’t easy for you to just end it especially if your reason was going to be another boy. You were scared of what your parents were going to say as well as the whole village. As for loving these boys I’m not sure you love them both. I think you love one more than the other or you don’t love them both. You’re just confusing what you feel for them with love.”

She leans her back on the headboard and looks at me intently as she continues.

“Meeting my late husband taught me what true love is. He was a taxi driver and I was a drama student in New York. In my eyes he didn’t match my standards but in my heart he was a perfect match. You know that half piece of my heart that was missing all along until I met him. He’s a taxi driver he can’t afford me my mind would scream. I want him as a taxi driver as he is that would be my heart screaming back. I’d say have some soul searching and dig deep into your heart without having to think about making your parents proud

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without having to think about what is the village going to say and without thinking about what the maidens and the women that used to test your virginity would say. Just you and these two guys you could be surprised of the outcome but now I want you to focus on yourself and nurse your broken heart. Deal with the trauma of almost being raped and sleeping in the street. Forgive yourself, the first step to accept healing and moving on is to start forgiving oneself. You’re not perfect sthandwa sami and you can never be perfect. Be proud of the lessons you are learning from your mistakes. They’re going to shape the woman you’re growing up to be. I believe in you turning around your

life and leave that village gobsmacked. You survived everything you went through now strengthen your crown my princess and move forward.”

Gosh this woman’s mentality is so rich I could listen to her every single day.

“Don’t cry come here.”

She allows me to rest my head on her bosom and kisses my forehead.

“I know it hurts deep in your heart especially that your parents disowned you and it’s not something that you will get over it soon. I’m in no plans of replacing them but I’m going to be here for you sthandwa sami. As long as you allow me.”

“Thank you so much mama.”

“Stop crying now and go take a bath. We have to prepare a birthday lunch for Zobuhle.”

She's turning 28 years old today and she wanted a small lunch with her family. I didn't bought her anything but I'm hopeful that she's going to like what I made for her. She's so nice in fact they're all nice even KJ it's just that he's autistic so he says whatever that comes into his mind which most of the time is rude. What I love about him is that when they reprimands him he listens and apologizes.

"I can never thank you enough for welcoming me with warm hands mama. I think I love you."

She giggles and kisses my forehead.

"I love you too. Join us for breakfast."

"I will take a bath and join you guys." She gets up and walks out.

I sigh and take my phone even though I know that I don't have any missed calls or messages. I didn't do a swim swap somehow

I wanted to start afresh. I have fake social media accounts just to read some stories on Facebook and to be up to date with what's trending in the world. Nelly Page posted a new chapter now that a way to start a day. That lady's writing makes me question myself for having a thing for an old man. There's a character goes by Bheki Ngonyama Ngidi. Damn every time I read about this man I feel things I'm not supposed to feel for a man old enough to be my father. Maybe I just wish my dad was like him. The love he has for his children is beautiful but he's old school like baba. He never fails to show how much he loves his children.

Once I'm done reading the chapter I slide out of bed and do my bed then go to the bathroom to take a shower. I'm going to start my periods I have cramps and they're severe then usual. After showering I slip into a leggings and vest then join everyone for breakfast. Zobuhle spent a night at her fiancé's house she's going to join us later for lunch.

"I can't wait for Zobuhle's surprise," whispers Ndiwe in my ear.

"What surprise?"

“She doesn’t know that her brother is out on parole so we chose to surprise her with his presence.”

“That’s nice so your moms don’t believe that he killed your mother.”

“I don’t know honestly I was surprised when they agreed to invite him to this lunch.”

“You seem so excited that he’s coming .”

“Well I just can’t wait to get on our plan I thought we have years before we get started.”

She’s talking about the plan of avenging her mom and it’s so sad that this will destroy her more then it will bring closure.

“I hope you don’t want to eat your late mom’s left overs Ndiwe.”

She laughs and pushes me with her elbow.

“Euww that’s gross!”

“Exactly stop blushing whenever you talk about him. Ubufebe Ndiwe!” We both burst into laughter.

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It’s around 12pm and we’re all waiting for the birthday lady to arrive. The lunch is in the tropical garden. The birthday lady arrives with her fiancé. Greetings and hugs are exchanged. We sing her a happy birthday and she’s blushing none stop.

“Awww thank you family. I couldn’t ask a better family then you guys. Bomama bami I could never thank you enough for raising me and for everything you have done for me. Bantase thank you guys so much for accepting me as your elder sister not even once have you guys ever made me feel that I’m not your biological sister. I always heard that blood makes you related but loyalty makes you family. I can testify to that and

for that thank you so much family. Ngiyanithanda.” Awww now everyone is shedding tears.

The mothers say their speeches as well which brings more tears. I have never seen a family with so much love and they're not afraid to show and spread it. After emotional speeches they give her prezzies and she opens them. Now I don't feel like giving hers mine. These people bought her designer clothes, bags, heels, diamond accessories and all those expensive things while I have this thing nje. Mam Xitlalli gave me her card to spend on anything I want but I didn't know what to buy for her I mean I'm sure she has everything. She's not a bad person yaz, Mama Xitlalli that is. It's just that she can do anything to protect her family and I have no intentions of destroying it.

“Nhle you didn't buy sis Zo a gift? Why you didn't tell me I would've bought it for you,” Abuse says when he notices that they all gave her and I haven't. Ahh this one is my little husband.

“Thank you handsome but I do have the gift it's just that I don't think she will like it.”

“Nonsense I will like it of course.”

I heave a sigh and take the gift bag under the table then give her.

“Oh my goodness this is gorgeous!”

I made her a necklace and matching bracelet with colorful beads. I knew that there are so many chances that she doesn't own traditional accessories and I wanted to give her something she doesn't have.

“Wow where did you buy this?”

“She made it she's talented this one,” Uthandiwe says proudly and I can't help but smile. I don't know how does she know I made these because I made sure that when I made them I was alone in my bedroom.

“It’s beautiful. Thank you so much no one has ever made something like this for me.” Zo confesses and comes to my side to give me a hug.

“Now I’m jealous that my sister received a gift you made by yourself before me!” Ndiwe whines and we all break into laughter.

“Can you teach me how to do it sis Nhle.” Yandi

“No problem sweetheart.”

“Okay now we have one more gift from the family. Are you ready?” Mam Xitlalli

“Not another car guys!”

“It’s not a car relax.” Ndiwe

Mam Xitlalli whistles and this gorgeous man appears. He cleaned up very well didn't they say he's coming from jail?

"Buti Zwe." Zobuhle whispers incredulously as a stream of tears runs down her face. She looks at her mothers and they nod their heads tears glistening in their eyes then she runs to her brother who catches her in his arms and whisks her off the ground twirling with her as she breaks into a giggly sob. What a beautiful union I couldn't help but cry too.

I was expecting KJ to throw his tantrum but it seems they've talked about this before they invited him and they're all welcoming him. He greets everyone and they introduce me to him.

"Nkosazane enhle kunjani?" He stretches his hand and we shake hands as he stares deeply in my eyes even though I feel like he can barely see me with those cute hooded eyes.

"I'm well and yourself?"

“I’m also well. It’s nice to meet you.”

“Likewise.”

Okay can he stop staring me like that and let my hand go. It creeps the hell out of me.

“You can let go of her hand Zwelakhe.” Mam Xitlalli

“Oh uhm sorry.”

Okay that was awkward and creepy! We settle down and eat over a nice chatter. The food is nice so is the wine. Yep they’re free and cool like that unlike my parents. I don’t feel good though the cramps are so intense can I start my periods already!

“You like him?” Whispers Ndiwe in my ear

“Who?”

“Zwelakhe.”

“Hell no! Why would you even say that?”

“I think he wants you he can’t stop staring at you.”

“Well I don’t want him angeke ngiphinde ngithembe lezinto ezinomsila ngaphambili.” (...I will never trust these things with a tail in front) she bursts into laughter.

“Umnandi kodwa umsila” (but the tail is nice) We giggle.

Well I can’t testify to that. I’m good as someone who knows nothing. Yaz it’s so funny how you can keep your virginity for years then it will only take just a moment to break it mxm!

“Haisuka!” I say and moan softly

“What’s wrong.”

“I have never had such intense periods pain.”

“I’m sorry I have some pills they really help. I also have intense of those. Come let’s go to my bedroom.”

“Can you fetch them please.” I bite my lip stifling a moan.

“Mama there’s blood dripping under Nhle’s chair!”

Abuse screams and when I look at myself, the front of my jumpsuit on my lady part is red with blood and it’s dripping on the green grass. Jizas these periods are embarrassing me during the people. The doctor of the family is the first one to attend me.

“I’m okay Mam Xitlalli it’s just a heavy period. I will go clean up myself.” I say embarrassed and get up from the chair. I take a few steps and pause a bit as I feel the ground melting under my feet.

“Uthandiwe help...” I don’t know what happens after that but when I open my eyes I’m in a hospital room and surrounded by both Mrs Dlomo. The doctor one is removing bloody white gloves from her hands and I hope that’s not my blood.

“Hey sis how are you feeling.” Mam Aphiwe

“I’m okay mama I just feel a bit light headed and the cramps are bit better. Can we go home it’s nothing major it’s just periods.”

I hate hospital I means who doesn’t?

“We are home.”

“Oh”

I look around and all I see is a hospital room. How can we be home? Mam Aphiwe looks at me with worry.

“Come on mama it’s just periods stop looking at me like that.”

“Uhm Nhle that blood wasn’t period blood.” Mam Xitlalli says taking my hand in her warm palm and squeezes it.

“I’m not sure I’m following mama. Am I sick? Is it cancer?”

“No it’s not cancer. Tell me when did you had unprotected sex and when did you take the morning after pill?”

“Wednesday night and I took the pills Saturday night. 72 hours weren’t over yet. What happened?”

“Do you take some medication or did you happen to take some medicine while you took morning after pills ?”

“No I didn’t.”

“I don’t think your BMI is over 26 and your weight is over 70kg so weight is out of the way. Did you take them after ovulating or you had sex while you were already ovulating?”

“I don’t know I never notice. I don’t take note of my menstruation cycle.”

“Did you have diarrhoea or did you vomit within 3 hours of taking the morning after pills?”

“Yes I had diarrhoea. What’s wrong mama? Why are you asking all of these questions did the morning pills cause the bleeding and cramps?”

They both look at each other making me more scared then ever. I don’t want to hear what they are going to say to me.

“You had an early miscarriage sis.”

“No it’s impossible mama.”

“I’m sorry sis.”

I vigorously shake my head no. This is not true! Mam Aphiwe holds me tight in her arms as I burst into tears. How can I lose a baby I never knew I was carrying? That’s so unfair!

☆ Manelisi ☆

The passed couple of weeks have been hectic I didn't even go home for Xmas and New Year. I don't know why people never buy groceries and everything they need before Xmas or New Year. We have to work even on days that we're supposed to be off and spending time with our families. That's what I don't like about retail jobs it's not a lifetime job.

I want a driver's license code 14 and a forklift certificate that would definitely increase my chances of being hired in companies. I can be a truck driver or forklift operator but the end goal is to have my company one day. I'm not sure what kind of a company though. I still have a lot of time to do research for now I just want to focus on securing qualifications to get a good paying job.

A matric certificate is not a qualification in nowadays you have to at least have a qualification and experience. I have been saving money to apply for my driver's license and forklift training. I'm hopeful that in two years the money will be

enough. I can't wait to take my grandma out of that village. She suffered great trauma in that place. I also want a specialist that can help her with her impairment. I'm sure there's something that can be done. It's not like she was born like this.

Today was one of the hectic days at work and I'm dog-tired I need a nap. Sis Dudu will wake me up for supper. I don't know if I should call her as my landlord or my employer because I'm like a bodyguard more than I'm a tenant. I met her at work and she was buying door handles. She told me that someone broke into her house and took her TV now she's scared to stay alone. There's no doubt that whoever took the TV it's a nyaope boy. He wanted to sell the TV and get money to buy nyaope and he definitely knows that she stays with her 5 year old daughter only.

I told her that if she has a backroom I can come to live with her but I will pay rent. That's how I got a place to stay in Dundee but she rejected my offer to pay rent instead she insisted that I stay for free and eat her food. She's that kind of a person who never takes no for an answer. That was none negotiable I'm glad that there are still nice people in this world.

I close my eyes and allow sleep to claim me but a knock on the door wakes me up just as I drift off to lala land. I drag myself out of the bed, trudging to the door.

“You have a visitor, ” sis Dudu says pointing at the guy next to her. I nod then she leaves me with the guy. He looks familiar but I can’t put a name on his face.

“Come in. ”

The guy walks in and looks around as if he’s searching for something. I grab the plastic chair by the corner and give it to him.

“Here’s the chair.”

“I don’t want to sit I want my sister. ”

Eh who is this?

“You are?”

“Mvelonhle Qwabe. Where’s my sister Manelisi?” Now I remember that I once if not twice saw his picture in Wenhle’s phone. Speaking of that one I miss her so much. I spent my days filling my mind with our memories and sometimes it’s like I can hear her sweet voice in my ears especially her beautiful giggles.

“Manelisi where’s she?”

He searches unsystematically and untidily through the wardrobe as if he will find his sister hiding in between my folded clothes.

“Eh ndoda you can’t come here and search through my things without asking me.”

“Where’s my sister?”

“I don’t know where your sister is!”

“When was the last time you talked to her?”

“I don’t understand why would you assume she’s here. I haven’t seen her since last year before her umemulo ceremony.”

He shuts the door of the wardrobe and walks towards me. The anger in his eyes is menacing. I’m not scared of him of course but I respect him as the brother of the woman that owns my heart.

“So you didn’t check up on her?”

“I made a promise that I will stay away from her after our last day we were together. I didn’t want to cause troubles for her. ” It hadn’t been easy because she’s constantly in my mind 24/7 but I have to keep my promise.

He laughs very hard that tears roll down his face. It must be the family thing because she also laughs until she cries. I find it very weird honestly.

“Promise my left testicle! You used her and forgot about her like she never existed!”

“That’s not true mfethu I love your sister so much... ” I don’t even get a chance to finish talking as he goes on once again screaming with anger.

“Love? Do you know what’s love wena? Do you call the mess you put her through love? You fucked her two days before her umemulo ceremony! Is that what you call love?”

“I didn’t mean to man....”

“That’s bullshit! You knew that she’s seeing someone! You wanted to prove a point to Muzikayise and mess up everything for my sister! Don’t fucking dare tell me that you love her because you don’t! I’m not an expert of love but I know that if

you love her like you claim you would've respected her! You wouldn't have made her to do something that you know is going to tarnish her name! Even after what you did you would've checked on her and find out how is she after the mess you put her through! It's clearly all you wanted from her was her virginity! ”

“I admit I was wrong for not checking up on her. I don't have a phone and I also didn't want to go against my promise. I love her man I really do but I had to respect her decision.”

“Stop saying you love her! You put her through shit and carried on with your life like nothing happened! Dad threw her out of home after what she did. It's been 3 weeks and days now looking for her and you know what hurt the most is that the next morning I found her track pants and panties she was wearing on top of the mountain. Do you know what that means? Wherever she is she's hurt or worse she's dead because of you! I hope you will live with that!”

He walks out leaving me breaking into pieces. I don't regret sleeping with her and I wasn't trying to prove a point. I knew that I was losing her and when she couldn't resist nor protest I

used that opportunity to create best last memories of our love. I can't bear the thought of her being hurt let alone dead. My heart is pounding and my head is spinning. I lower myself to the bed before I fall due to my wobbly knees and wipe off beads of sweat on my forehead. No this can't be happening! I have to find her and bring her back home.

☆ Mpilenhle ☆

I call him for the umpteenth time but he's not answering his phone. It irks the hell out of me when I can't get hold of him especially when I need him by my side. Just as I'm about to put my phone down it rings. I put my phone against my ear and say nothing.

"Hey baby I'm sorry I missed your calls. I was in a meeting."

"When are you coming back. You have been gone for weeks now."

“I don’t know yet my love but I promise as soon as I wrap up this business deal I’m coming back home.”

“I didn’t know it will take so long for you to come back. I need you more then ever right now business can wait.”

“Mpilo I said I will come back once I’m done.” I cannot miss the exasperation in his voice.

“When? It’s been weeks Sbusiso! I’m going through a lot and I need you!”

“I won’t cut my business trip short for something that you put yourself into by yourself. I told you that be there for Mbewu but you refused! She wouldn’t be out there alone!”

I chuckle bitterly as tears sting in my eyes. Did he have to say that especially at this time?

“Wow I can’t believe you just said that.”

“Well it’s the truth Mpilenhle.” The harsh truth that I don’t want to hear.

“Baby I haven’t seen you since the New Year started.”

“Who’s fault is that?”

“So it’s mine?”

“Are you not the one who spent the whole December at your parents’ home?”

“You know how hectic things have been at home and when mom gave birth I had to stay to help her.”

“Ah well I was also tired of staying in that house without my wife and kids. I was lonely and I needed some fresh air and company.”

“Is that you telling me that you’re not in Cape Town for business purposes but for fun?”

“I have to go.”

“Sbusiso don’t do this to me please and I thought you understand that I had to be at home.”

“Of course I understood that you had to be at your parents house and help out with preparing Mbewu’s ceremony but spending Xmas as well New Year there that’s not something we talked about. I didn’t want to be that husband who stop you to take part in everything that happens in your parents house now that you’re married to me but I see that I was wrong by doing that. You’ve forgotten that you’re my wife and you’re a Cebekhulu not Qwabe.”

“I haven’t forgotten Sbusiso you know in our culture when a woman give birth she doesn’t do anything for three months. I had to be there to cook for them and help mama with my baby brother.”

I hear him chuckling on the other side of the line.

“Who suppose to cook for me during that time? My sin is that I know how to cook?”

“No baby I...”

“Look I have to go. Awuhlale nawe lapho uzwe ukuthi kunjani ukuba wedwa, ” (...Stay there by yourself and feel what it’s like to be lonely) he says and hung up on me.

I was wrong for assuming that he understands the situation at home. Now I realize how selfish and unfair I’ve been. He’s suppose to come first above everything else. Sigh! I text him apologizing for my wrong doings and begging him to come back home. I’ve been careless and ignorant that I didn’t ask myself what business trip he’s going to while it’s festive season. I hope wherever he is he’s not up to no good because that would definitely be the end of our marriage.

Infidelity is a deal breaker for me and he knows that. I know I will never have peace every time he's out of my sight wondering what is he up to and with who. That will drive me crazy. It's been a somber and melancholy couple weeks of my life without knowing where my little sister is or if she's still alive. I've done many things in my life that I regret but there's nothing I regret more than not taking her to my house when dad threw her out.

The word pain doesn't begin to describe how I feel especially that when we find her she won't be the Mbewenhle that we all know. Not after Mvelo came back with her track-pants and panties. Every single second of the day that gruesome scenario haunts me and leaves me drowning in deep dejection. Nothing not even my anger towards her can justify watching our father chasing her out of home. We have been searching for her but we haven't found her and the police are useless no surprises there.

If I stay another second in this mammoth and lonely house I'm going to lose my mind. The kids are with their grandma, Sbu's mother. That woman acts like I made these kids with her. I take my car keys and phone then drive to my parents house while listening to music. It does soothe the soul sometimes.

I can hear Ndabenhle's cry all the way from the gate as I drive through. God he can cry for all the babies in this world. He's such a fussy baby and as much as his presence in our lives is a blessing Mama is really taking a strain.

I step out of the car and walk inside the house heading to Mbewenhle's bedroom where the little cry is coming from. That's where mom has been sleeping with my baby brother because dad was not supposed to see the baby until he's at least one week old. She chose Mbewu's room because she wants to feel close to her and I don't like that. It makes me feel like she's accepting that we will never find her just like Ndalwenhle.

My baby brother is screaming his little lungs out on the bed and kicking none stop while mama is sitting on the floor and staring into space. It's like with each passing second I'm losing her. She's drifting far away and nothing will drag her back from the dark place except finding Mbewenhle.

"Mama Ndabe is crying."

I walk towards the bed and take him after putting my phone on the bed. She doesn't respond so I shake her a bit on the shoulder and she snaps out of her trance.

"Mpilenhle when did you arrive?"

"I've just arrived and found him crying."

"Oh uhm mlethe."

Does that mean she didn't hear him? I'm so worried about her and I don't know how to help her. I give her the baby and she tries to calm him down but he doesn't barge.

"Mama you are the one who used to tell me that when you're not okay emotionally babies can feel that. You need to try..."  
she interjects

“Try and do what huh? I failed her! I failed her! I failed both of them!” she keeps saying that as she rocks back and forth trying to calm down a wailing Ndabenhle.

“We are going to find her mama.” I whisper as tears run down my face

“She’s dead. Whoever raped her killed her. That’s what these rapists do.”

“Mama don’t say that please.”

“It’s been 3 weeks and days probably flies are all over her decomposed body.”

“Mama stop it!”

“Can I at least bury one of them?”

“Mama no don’t say that please. Mbewenhle is alive!”

She wipes off the tears on her cheeks and continues to shush her son who's crying like someone is killing him.

"I'm sorry my boy...ohh bakithi...stop crying now...mommy is sorry...calm down Mkhonto, Dunjwane

Mzilahlizinyo," she says wiping his tears and kisses his forehead. Ndabe finally calms down but he has a hiccup.

"I didn't know Mkhonto, Dunjwane and Mzilahlizinyo are Qwabe clans as well."

"Huh?"

"Since when now do we include Magagula's clans when we recite Qwabe clans?"

My phone rings before she could respond. I can't believe who's calling let me answer before he changes his mind.

“Hey thanks for finally calling.”

“How can I help you.” The coldness in his voice is like an ice.

“Can we meet please.”

“Mpilenhle...”

“Please.”

“I’m just passing your father’s shop.”

“Wait for me there.”

“Mama I’m coming back now,” I say and leave.

I find him sleeping at the back seat and knock on the window. The back door opens and a smell of weed hits my nostrils the moment I slide inside of the car.

“Hey.”

God I can't even recognize him. He looks like he aged 10 years more over the couples of weeks.

“Hello.”

“Uhm thanks for agreeing to see me. I just need your help...” he cuts me off

“If it's about finding your sister go to the police. I'm not a police.”

“Muzi please...”

“No Mpilenhle! How can you ask me this after the pain your sister put me through huh?”

“It’s unfair I know Muzi but I’m desperate and I don’t know who to ask to help me. You know how useless the police are. Baba doesn’t want to get involve I need you please.”

“Why don’t you go ask her boyfriend maybe she’s there with him.”

“Lonhle went to Dundee to his place yesterday and she wasn’t there. He didn’t even know that she’s missing. Actually that idiot used my sister! He broke her virginity and forgot about her just like that because he got what he wanted from her. She’s still young Muzi and easily manipulated. Please don’t give up on her I’m begging you.” I wipe my tears with the back of my palms.

“What is it that I didn’t give her to the point of her allowing an idiot to manipulate her? She wanted him as much as he wanted her akukho manipulation la! I gave her my all Mpilenhle and she...she...” he swallows spit and a single tear escapes his eye but he briskly wipes it off with his bent forefinger.

“I’m sorry from the deepest of my heart for the pain she put you through. I can imagine how you’re feeling but please don’t give up on her. At least help me find her.”

“No,” he says shaking his head no but I frame his face so that he’s looking at me.

“Please If there was any other way I would’ve done it. You’re my only hope, uyindoda enza izinto zenzeke Ngcamane.”

“Mpilenhle...”

“Please ngiyakudinga.” I whisper as we both stare at each other deep in the eyes. His Adam apple bobs as he swallows spit. I don’t know when did his hand tug the back of my neck and pulls my face closer. Our lips fuse together and we kiss. He gently puts me underneath him while settling between my thighs as the kiss intensifies.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

How inequitable it is that I was never given a chance to acknowledge my baby and protect her while she's in my tummy before losing her. Not that I'm saying losing her is right but I feel robbed off a chance to do something. If I knew that I was pregnant I wouldn't have drunk wine. I would've tried to limit my stress. I would've not eat anything I found in the dirty bin. Maybe the stale breads and expired food I'd find in the dustbin put my baby in harms way.

It's absolutely clear that in this moment a baby is the last thing I need but since she was already growing in my tummy it wouldn't have hurt to have her and raise her. I was going to learn along the way to mother her and raise her. Maybe she was going to give me a purpose in life. A reason to hold on because honestly I find my existence preposterous.

The loss of a life I never knew I was carrying is cutting my heart and mind in half and it's excruciating with every breath I take. It's been few days now and all I do is sleep. The disappointment

that grips me every time I wake up and realize that I'm still alive. I want to be free from this anguish but I'm not brave enough to end my life.

The door swings open and Ndiwe walks in with a tray of food. I'm not hungry but I know that she's going to force me to eat. She's been taking care of me so is everyone and I really appreciate that. Yaz they make me feel like I've never received so much love in my life. It's still a bitter pill to swallow that there are actually people who love me more than my parents.

"Here's food babe and don't look at me like that. Eat!"

"Yes mother," I say and we both giggle. She places the tray on my thighs and my mouth waters at the sight of lasagna. It's something that I've tasted here and I have added it on the list of my favorites. There's also a glass of mango juice next to it which reminds me of my mother.

"How are you feeling today," she says sitting next to me on the bed.

“I’m okay and yourself.”

“No Nhle I mean how are you really.”

I heave a sigh and look at her. She has a concern look written all over her face and it warms my heart that even after losing my family I still have people who genuinely cares for me.

“I’m drowning in deep dejection but I will be okay.”

I wipe my hands with a damp dish cloth and begin to eat.

“I’m sorry once again babe for your loss. I might not know what you’re going through but I can imagine it. I think you should talk to someone.”

“I am talking to you and Mam Aphiwe. It is easy to talk to someone who once went through what you are going through.”

Mam Aphiwe told me that she also lost a baby she never knew she was carrying.

“Yeah that’s true but she’s not a professional person to talk to babe.”

“I prefer her then a professional.”

“But she can’t help you like a professional would. You’re dealing with a lot Nhle. Only a professional will help you to deal with your emotional difficulties, loss

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trauma and anxieties.”

“Uthandiwe is right baby,” Mam Aphiwe’s voice says and it’s only now I notice her standing on the doorway.

“It’s fine if y’all are tired of listening to me whining about my pain but you don’t have to send me to a stranger to talk to me I’m fine!” I regret saying that the moment it slips out of my mouth.

“I’m sorry I didn’t mean to say that.” Ndiwe doesn’t say anything but walks out. Now I feel horrible for hurting her feelings.

“I’m really sorry mama.”

“It’s okay sis.”

She settles down next to me and looks at me.

“Look I know that it’s not ideal to other people to talk to someone professional but these people are here for a reason and they really do help.”

“I do talk to you and Ndiwe what’s difference is it going to make when it’s someone professional.”

“They’re trained to help people deal with their mental trauma and emotional difficulties. They’re worth every cent and what’s

good about them is that what you say to them stays between you and them.”

“I don’t want a stranger to force me to forget Ndalwenhle as if she never existed and make me celebrate her life as if there’s anything to celebrate.”

“There’s no way you can forget Ndalwenhle. Not only was she your sibling but she was your twin. Your other half. A professional will help you to deal with the trauma of losing her and accept...” I cut her before she finishes.

“I don’t want to accept anything mama not until I know what happened to her. If that’s not going to happen then it’s okay. I rather drown in misery and grief for the rest of my life than accept the unacceptable.”

She heaves a sigh and the sad look she’s giving me has me feeling awful but no one is going to force me to move on from Ndalwenhle’s disappearance because I don’t want to until I find out what happened to her. I need something tangible to give me enough reason to move on.

“At least promise me to think about it.”

Now it's my turn to sigh. I nod just to make her happy but I'm not going to think about this. She walks out leaving me to finish my food and once I'm done I take the dishes to downstairs then look for Ndiwe. This house is humongous and finding her is a hassle. I find her sitting in her late father's office and staring at the screen.

“Can I come in.”

She doesn't look at me I'm not even sure that she heard me. I close the door and walk towards her then look at what has her engrossed on the screen. My brain stutters for a moment as it registers what my eyes are seeing. Is this one of the movies Mam Aphiwe acts on or what?

“I didn't know that Mam Xitlalli is also an actress,” I say and she jumps up in shock.

“What the fuck Nhle!”

“I’m sorry I didn’t mean to startle you but I did knock and you didn’t answer me. What movie is this?”

“This is not a movie.”

“What do you mean?”

I look at her and that’s when I notice that she’s shaking. I reach for her tremulous hands and squeeze them.

“You’re shaking Ndiwe what’s going on?”

“My mothers killed him!”

“Killed who?”

“Zakhele oh God I can’t believe this!”

“You’re not making sense Ndiwe who’s Zakhele?”

“As you know that I’m working on avenging my parents. Zwelakhe and I have been gathering some information. He told me about this man my mom dated and his name was Zakhele Chonco. He disappeared after my dad beat the shit out of him. Never was the funeral but he was claimed dead. It turned out that he wasn’t dead but he relocated to Mahlabathini with his family. I don’t know if you know his family but they are originally from Msinga, your village to be precisely.”

“Zakhele Chonco? When did all of this happen?”

“About a decade ago.”

“Decade ago I was 10 years I don’t remember anything about Chonco family that relocated. Maybe it was even during the disappearance of my twin sister. So what do you mean your mothers killed him.”

“I suspected that he’s the one that killed my mother and framed Zwelakhe but apparently he didn’t come this side until 8 years ago and that was the last time his family saw him. They don’t know what happened to him.”

“Still you’re not making sense Ndiwe.”

“This is him Nhle look at him.”

She pauses the video just as her mothers are about to put the man into the boot and zooms the screen.

“Is this man not the same as this one?” she asks showing me a picture of the man. Though the one on the screen has blood on his face but they look the same.

“They look the same but how are your mothers involved in this. I mean why are they putting him in the boot and where are they’re driving to? Where is he now?”

“Exactly my questions Nhle! They did something to him that’s obvious but why?”

“Where did you get this video?”

“Last night I dreamt about my father and he was warning me about something but I don’t know what. The dream worries me and I woke up missing him badly so I was just going through videos of him and some of the backed up footage where we use to play volleyball together as a family. That’s when this one popped up and caught my attention.”

“Wait you said footage as in cameras recording everything that happened ?” Does this mean this house has cameras? No Ndiwe cannot find out that I also know who killed her mom that could be the end of our friendship and I don’t want to lose her.

“Yes but outside only. I wish there are ones inside because I’d know what happened.” Relief surges through me.

“Ndiwe I think you should stop digging.”

“Why should I stop?”

“Look now you’re finding things that are not meant for your eyes. I mean it’s disturbing to know that there’s a possibility that your mothers killed a man. Stop this before you get hurt.”

“I’m not a child I know that there comes a time where you have no choice but to kill. Xitlalli was a gang lady so I’m not surprised she can do this it’s Aphiwe that surprises me. I didn’t think she has it in her.”

“I guess we are all capable of killing. Please stop this babe I’m begging you.”

“Mbewenhle just like you don’t want to move on until you know what happened to your twin sister that’s me as well the difference is that I’m doing something about it!”

Now that stings like hell. I’m busy whining about closure but there’s nothing I’m doing about it.

“I’m sorry I didn’t mean to say that. I know that you’d do anything to find out what happened to your twin sister it’s how everything happened which makes it difficult to even know where to start. Not forgetting that your family did everything that they could to find her. Our situation are not the same I cannot compare them.”

“I’m also sorry for hurting your feelings earlier.”

“Argh don’t worry about it I understand where you’re coming from. I need your support Nhle please don’t tell me to stop.”

“You have my full support. I’m sorry for making you feel like you don’t have one. It’s just that I don’t want you to get hurt you know. Sometimes some things are better left unknown.”

“Not this one babe trust me not this one. Zwelakhe spent time in jail for something he didn’t do while the real killer is roaming the streets. Whoever is should face the consequences one way or the other.”

“I hear you.”

“What time is it now? Let’s go get some drinks you have been cooped up in the house for days now. We can call Zo to join us. I need some drinks after what I just saw. How will I look at my mothers without asking myself what happened and why?”

“You want to ask them?”

“I don’t know Nhle but why would they put my mom’s ex in the boot. There’s something going on here.”

I also don’t know what is the issue with the ex kodwa kona ukugiya kwe Rasta kuyasolisa.

“I guess we could do with some fresh air.”

“I thought you won’t agree thank you so much.” She attacks me with a hug. This one is so affectionate.

We get up and go tell the mothers that we are going out. They don’t have a problem with that. We prepare ourselves and by 7pm we are done and we look gorgeous in matching deep v neck short bodycon mustard rompers and white converse sneakers. We both styled our hair nicely and we really look hot.

“Damn girls you look smashing!” Mam Aphiwe

“Thank you mommy.” Ndiwe and I chorus.

“What time are you going to come back.” Mam Xitlalli

“We are not coming, you and your sister wife got the house to yourselves. We are going to sleep at sbari’s place.” Ndiwe

Kj left with uncle Zero yesterday and they’re going to Durban today. I don’t know to do what but Mam Xitlali didn’t seem pleased about that though she couldn’t say no. They treat Kj like an egg that will break you’d swear that he’s the youngest. Yandi, Abuse, Mqoqi

Melikhaya and Bukamina are visiting uncle Senzo.

“Zo is coming with you girls?”

“Yes.”

“Oh now I can relax.” Mam Xitlalli

“Hawu mama don’t you trust us now?” Ndiwe asks

“I don’t trust these horny boys out there.”

“I’m sure they can handle them.” Mam Aphiwe

“I know but....”

“There’s no but Xitlalli just relax. Let’s the kids have fun. Don’t be like your late husband.”

“Oh no I’m better then your late husband he wanted them to start dating at the age of 40 years.”

We burst into laughter. It seems like Mr Dlomo was a character. I would’ve loved to meet him but hey it is what it is. Rest assured he was and still loved the way they always talk about him.

.....

This is a kasi pub but I love the vibe. We're at the Dinangwe's pub and grill. Yes it was owned by her late father which means now it belongs to the wives. I thought we will drink for free but dololo free drinks. Those two women don't play with business like that. I guess parents are all the same somehow. It's been hours since we have been here. Zo couldn't join us she has plans with her fiancé so we're going to go back home once we are done partying.

We are both getting drunk as the night goes by. The moves we have been doing wena heeh I'm sure we're trending on social networks and for once I don't care. I'm having fun and enjoying every bit of it. When Ntyilo Ntyilo plays everyone go crazy as they sing loudly and I'm like do these people have love ones that left them and promised to come back but never did. Or it's how nice the song is. Actually it's dope as Abuse would say. I don't know where does he learn this lingo and it's fascinating to hear him speaking.

I'm dancing and mingling with this guy. Ndiwe disappeared with this other guy and I don't know where to. Knowing Ndiwe I know that they're going to have sex. That girl doesn't mind

once off hook ups. I'm not judging her. I understand that our upbringing are not the same. Sex to me cannot be something that I can have with someone I'm not in a relationship with let alone a stranger. To me it's not just physical but spiritual as well. Okay now he's taking it too far.

"Get your hands off my buttocks man."

"Hawu I thought we..."

"Clearly you thought wrong mfethu susa izandla zakho ezitshekile ezinqendi zakhe." This deep familiar voice says forcing me to tilt my head aside and look at where it coming from. I didn't notice this is how deep his voice is.

"And wena who are you to tell me what to do to my girlfriend," the guy says squeezing my buttocks and the familiarity of the encounter has me shaking in fear which I don't understand where it's coming from.

"Eh ndoda susa lezandla before ngizisusa ngenqindi!"

The guy clicks his tongue and walks away.

“Are you okay?” The concern in his voice surprises me I mean he hardly knows me.

“Yes I’m fine and I was handling that you didn’t have to involve yourself!”

“Oh ngiyaxolisa ukuphapha I thought...” (...I’m sorry to be forward...)

“You also thought wrong Zwelakhe just like him. Kanti why ni so vele bantu besilisa yooh niyakhathaza yaz.” (...why are you males like this yooh you are tiring...)

Just as I’m about to go find Ndiwe I bump into her.

“Can we go back home.”

“Argh my night is ruined as well I just started my periods can you believe it. Bad timing ever!”

“They serve you right! Asambeni!” (...Let’s go!) Zwe

Ndiwe and I look at each other then we follow him. When we are outside he asks for Ndiwe’s car keys and she gives him without any questions then we get inside of the car. Him on the front alone and us at the back.

“Are you okay Lakhe?”

“Don’t call me that your mother used to call me that.”

“That’s the reason I’m calling you that. I’m trying to soften you up you seem angry.”

“Where were you huh?”

“I was in the toilet Zwelakhe why are you shouting?”

“Why didn’t you go with her?”

“Did I miss something? Nhle are you okay?”

“I’m fine Ndiwe.”

The rest of the drive is silence and I can feel Ndiwe stealing glances on me. We arrive at home and Zwelakhe gives Ndiwe the keys then walks away without saying a word.

“And then what was that about?”

“I don’t know Ndiwe.”

We step out of the car and walk inside the house after unlocking it. The lights are off but surprisingly in the lounge it is still on and there’s music playing. No one prepared us for what we see. Mam Xitlalli’s face is buried deep between Mam

Aphiwe's thighs who's lying on the couch and moaning. They're both butt naked.

"Oh my goodness!" Ndiwe screams and Mam Xitlalli jerks and falls down on the floor. They really didn't expect us.

"Girls what are you doing here! You said you're not coming back home!" Mam Aphiwe says as they both fiddle with gowns on the floor.

"What nonsense is this? If you're not killing people you're muffing each other!"

"Ndiwe don't talk like that to your mothers!" I reprimand her but she's super annoyed.

"Argh this is disgusting!!" She runs upstairs and when I follow her Mam Xitlalli stops me.

"What does she mean when she says if we're not killing people. I hope you did not tell her Mbew..."

“No I didn’t mama I swear.”

“Then what does she mean?” She bellows angrily pointing something at me that looks like a penis. This thing doesn’t look like a weapon but after finding out that she was a gang lady you will never know.

“Star please calm down.”

Mam Xitlalli looks at her sister wife who stares at the penis-like-thingie. I hear Mam Xitlalli clearing her throat as she lowers the penis thing and hides it behind her.

“Mbewenhle excuse us.” Mam Aphiwe. I nod and walk to my bedroom.

Ndiwe is already in my bed sleeping. She has been sleeping with me since I had a miscarriage. I change into my pjs and slide next to her. Yhooo the things that are happening in this house

are for the movies I tell you. Let me sleep I've seen enough today.

.....

The next morning we're woken up by the mothers. They mixed us some disgusting thick liquid for hangover and prepared breakfast in bed. Gosh my head! What is a hangover for? Argh!

"Girls uhm about what you saw...."

"We are eating mama don't disgust us." Ndiwe

"Ay wena don't talk to your mother like that where's your respect now?" Mam Xitlalli

"What's going on in this house kahle kahle? Are you the one who killed my father because you wanted Aphiwe? I mean we all know that umamasgebengu wena."

“Haibo Uthandiwe what’s got into you? How can you even ask that! Xitlalli loves your father! We love him!”

“What do you expect me to think mama after what I saw last night!”

“So you are actually saying that I agreed to share your father and made not 1 child with him but 3 children then killed him just to have Aphiwe?”

It doesn’t sound logical to me but everything that’s happening in this household leaves me in stupefaction.

“Uhm uh yes,” Ndiwe says hesitantly

“Actually where does this killing topic comes from?” Mam Aphiwe

“Uhm uh I saw a footage of you two putting Zakhele in a boot and drove off with him.”

The wives look at each other and swallow hard. Mam Xitlalli's light complexion is selling her out. Her face is red like a tomato in an instant but you can tell that Mam Aphiwe is shocked as well.

“Why mama? What happened to him? Where is he now? The footage shows him driving inside of the yard and walking inside the house. About minutes later you arrive while he's still inside then a few minutes later you two come out carrying him.”

Mam Aphiwe is crying now and Mam Xitlalli is squeezing her hand.

“We should tell her the truth Xitlalli.”

“Baby that man was cruel. He wanted to force himself on Aphiwe to get back to your father. They were enemies and I couldn't watch him do that. I had to protect her baby so I shot him. I'm sorry to tell you this.”

“Oh no I’m sorry mama I didn’t know. So where is he?” Ndiwe

“He’s dead obvious Ndiwe.”

“You buried him?”

“That’s not important but he’s dead.”

“Ngiyaxolisa mama I didn’t know I would open old wounds,”  
Ndiwe says directing that to Mam Aphiwe.

“It’s okay baby girl. Uhm about last night. We apologize for  
what you guys saw. We thought you’re not coming home.”

“So when we are not home is this what you two do in our  
father’s house and disrespect his memory?”

“Uthandiwe it’s been 8 years since your father passed on. We  
have needs and we are not that old to find new love but still we

chose him, you and your siblings above our needs.” Mam  
Aphiwe

“That doesn’t make sense. How is muffing each other choosing us and him?”

“We could’ve chose to marry other men and change our surnames but we know very well that would destroy the Dlomo legacy. Kj is still young and he doesn’t want anything to do with taxi industry so we can’t rely on him to sustain and grow the Dlomo legacy. Zenzele is busy building his own legacy he has no intention of taking over his brother’s businesses. So basically if your mother and I marry other men your father’s hard work will be in vain. No men will allow us to sustain and grow a dead man’s legacy. It wouldn’t matter to them that we’re doing it for our children. Like Aphiwe said we chose him and you guys above our needs.”

Wow that speech left me gobsmacked.

“Oh I never thought about it that way mama. So you’re dating?”

“No we’re helping each other. Sometimes self service is not enough you crave for someone’s touch you know.”

“Euww mom too much info!”

The wives giggle.

“You asked moss.”

“Wow I’m impressed! Daddy really was a lucky bastard to have you guys as his wives. Wives who would do anything to keep his legacy. We are lucky to have you two as our mothers.”

I leave them sharing a group hug and take the dishes to the kitchen. The intercom rings and my heart skips a beat when I hear a familiar voice. What is he doing here and how did he find me?

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I thought maybe my ears are playing tricks with me or the intercom has a problem or something but after opening the gate for him it hit me that he's really here. My brain is flooded with questions that only him will answer but there's this painful ball stuck in my throat which is preventing me to articulate a single sentence.

I stand on the door waiting for him as he walks towards me. Each step he's taking closer to me causes my heart to shrink. If I didn't know his sense of fashion I'd would've mistaken him with his father. If I didn't know how much I've broken him now I know. The eye bags and tired face is the evidence of the stress and pain I've caused him.

"Yeyeye," he stares at me with pain filled eyes and swipes his tounge over his now dark lips.

"Sidwaba Siluthuli" It comes out as a shaky whisper. I know how much he loved it when I called him with his clan but now I

feel like it would never sound the same as before when it rolls out of my lips. He steps closer opening his arms for me but stops himself. Ouch that stings.

“Uhm what are you doing here?”

“To fetch you. ”

Huh?

“Nhle! Where are you?”

“Right here mama.”

I hear her footsteps getting closer behind me before her scent fills my nostrils as she drapes her arm around my shoulders.

“Oh we have a visitor. Excuse my daughter for making you stand on the door come on in.”

“Thank you.”

We walk inside and go to the lounge where we settle down on the couch then they exchange greetings.

“Can I get you anything to drink?” Asks Mam Aphiwe but Kayise politely declines the offer.

“I’m sorry to come unannounced Mrs Dlomo. I’m Muzikayise Maseko and I’m here to fetch imanzi yami.”

“What water?” I can’t help but giggle and the annoyed look mama is giving me makes me stop giggling.

“She’s actually sitting next to you right now.” Kayise

Mama looks at me then smiles amusingly.

“She’s your water? Out of all the pet names in the world you chose water. That’s so unromantic of you but hey we can’t live without water so I get you.”

Gosh umama it’s not water as in amanzi but imanzi as any pet name like sthandwa sami. Wait why is he addressing me imanzi yakhe after what I’ve done? He’s up to something I don’t trust him. What if he wants to shoot me? Mam Xitlalli steps down the staircase and joins us.

“Hello.”

“Greetings Mrs Dlomo.”

“Nhle do you know him?” Mam Aphiwe

“Yes mama I do know him. It’s Muzikayise.”

“The flag guy?” Mam Xitlalli asks and I hear Kayise chuckling bitterly. I nod my head.

“He’s here to fetch you what are you saying?”

He’s here to fetch me and take me where? I’m not wanted at home. He’s up to something I can feel it in my gut.

“No we don’t agree Aphiwe don’t even ask Nhle.” Mam Xitlalli

“I think she’s old enough to tell me that Mrs Dlomo,” Kayise says staring at me. I can’t read his facial expression why he’s so blank?

“Musa ukugwajisa ingane ngalensexemu yakho wena. We as women who have been looking after her we have every right to decide if she goes with you or not and if you think we will let you take her just like that you have another thing coming. We are very much aware what she did to you so what brings you here? Are you planning to kill her?” Shhuu Mam Xitlalli doesn’t beat around the bush.

“What my sister wife is trying to say is that we know your history with her and with gender based violence and passion killings happening in the world we can’t be reckless like that.”

“Well I understand what you’re saying. I’m not here for myself only but for her family as well. They’re worried about her. We can call her sister and you can talk to her.”

He fishes for his phone in his pocket and calls my sister putting her on loud speaker but she’s not answering her phone. It’s unlike her to not answer her phone. He clears his throat and calls her once again.

“Muzi we had an agreement that...” Kayise cuts her short.

“I found Mbewenhle.”

“Muzi don’t play like that please.”

“I’m not playing Mpilenhle she’s here with me and listening to you. The family that have been taking care of her want a proof that I’m taking her home and I’m not going to harm her.”

“She’s with you? Can I talk to her? Mbewu!!”

Kayise hands me the phone.

“Hello.”

“Mtasekhaya you’re alive! Oh thank goodness! I’m sorry sis I’m really sorry from the bottom of my heart please come back home.” she cries triggering my own tears.

“Which home are you talking about Mpilenhle ubaba kicked me out of home.”

“I know mtaka mama and I’m very sorry. We miss you and need you. Mvelonhle is losing his mind without you so is mama. Buya sis ngiyakucela.”

I hear mama talking in the background but I can't grasp her words.

"Muzi found Mbewu mama. Some family have been taking care of her. I'm talking to her now." Mpilenhle says then mama's crying voice comes through.

"Mbewenhle mtanami."

"Mama."

"Ngiyaxolisa please come back home my baby. I miss you so much and I'm very sorry. Buya wele kamama."

"Baba..."

"Forget about your father just come back baby please," she's crying painfully and it breaks my heart.

“I’m coming mama.”

“Oh thank you my baby please give the phone whoever has been taking care of you.” I give mom Aphiwe the phone and bury my head on mom Xitlalli’s bosom as she envelopes me in her arms.

“Shhh don’t cry baby it’s okay

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” she kisses my forehead and strokes my back. Once I’m calm I go upstairs to my bedroom and find Ndiwe on the bed looking morose.

“You’re going back home.”

“Yes.”

“I’m happy for you babe but it doesn’t hurt less that you’re leaving me,” she wipes off a single tear with her bent forefinger. I heave a sigh and settle down next to her before pulling her to my arms.

“I’m not leaving you for good. We still going to see each other and chat on WhatsApp. I will come visit you and you can come as well. Thank you so much Ndiwe for everything you’re truly a good friend and I’m the luckiest girl to have you in my life. Your family is nice and I’m glad I met them. You were raised by remarkable women and whatever happens don’t ever forget that they love you so much. Don’t disappoint those women but make them proud okay.”

“Now you are opening taps,” she says with a crying voice holding me tightly. I guess sitting on a wheelchair was a blessing in disguise because I would’ve went to Durban and met her.

We both calm down after a while and she insists to pack for me while I take a bath. I don’t know which emotion to entertain. Sigh! I can’t wait to see Lonhle I miss him more then anyone in that Qwabe household. I take the longest shower ever as this is my last time using a shower I’m going back to vaskom.

I’m going to miss this lavish life shame that’s no lie. By the time I finish Ndiwe is done and my luggage is on the bed. She took

out an outfit for me to wear which is a blue wide leg pants with matching off shoulder crop top. I'm going to pair the outfit with sandals.

I lotion my body and get dressed before styling my hair. Abuse walks in just as I spritz perfume on myself. Someone tell me why is he not knocking what if he found me naked and when did they come back?

"It is true that old man is here to take you?"

"Hello to you too Abuse and why didn't you knock."

"You're leaving Mbewenhle?"

"Yes I'm going back home."

"But why? I thought you're happy here."

"Of course but I miss home."

He nods his head sadly and sighs heavily. I sit on the bed and pull him to my lap. He wraps his arm around my shoulder and looks at me.

“I’m going to visit again. Don’t be sad.”

“When?”

“I don’t know but Ndiwe will tell you when I’m coming.”

“Is that oldie your boyfriend?”

I laugh

“He’s not old Abuse.”

“Futhi mubi and he doesn’t deserve you.” I giggle this boy bathong.

“How old are you?”

“Old enough.”

“Okay Mr old enough. I have to get going.”

“I will miss you.”

“Awww I will miss you too boy.” I kiss his forehead

“You can do better than that gorgeous.”

“Meaning?”

“How about you plant those cute lips of yours here,” he points at his pouting lips and I can’t help but laugh. This child nina!

“Haibo Abuse why should I do that?”

“Because you’re my yoki yoki.”

“How old are you vele?”

“Turning 12 years this year.”

“You’re really young and you should focus on school.”

“I hate school it sucks.”

“Well I’m not your yoki yoki. I don’t like boys who don’t like school.”

“Okay ke I love school.”

“That’s my boy. Now get up you’re heavy.” He plants a peck on my cheek and gets up from my lap.

After checking that I'm not leaving anything he takes my luggage lugging it as we walk downstairs. Gogo Betty is talking to Kayise. She must be the one that brought her grandchildren back.

"Aw mfana awazi yini wena ukuthi itshitshi alilindwa uzodla kudala abanye sebedlile," she says and sips on her tea. Her daughters in law reprimand her but she laughs out loudly. I look at Kayise who clenches his jaw at that comment.

"Sawbona gogo."

"Hello baby you look beautiful."

"Thank you gogo."

I thank the Dlomo family for everything they've done for me and promise to see them soon. We share hugs and kisses. It such a bittersweet moment. I will never forget them

The drive is awkwardly silence and I keep stealing glances at him. This is the first time we are together after that day of my umemulo ceremony. I want to apologize but I'm scared. He starts at Amajuba Mall and leaves me in the car alone. It doesn't take that long before he comes back with 30 of Stuyvesant, sweets and Cadbury chocolate.

“Here.”

“Thank you.” I say taking the chocolate.

He starts the car and drives off. After about 30 minutes drive he pulls over on a not so busy road and lights his cigarette then starts smoking.

“You owe me answers Yeyeye but I know you will lie to me just the last time you looked me in the eyes and lied to me.”

“I’m sorry....”

“No please don’t say that. We are not there yet all I need to know is who

how, why and where.”

I swallow the little piece of chocolate in my mouth that almost chokes me and tell him everything he needs to know. By the time I'm done talking he has smoked 6 cigarettes.

"Ngiyaxolisa Kayise..."

"Do you love him?"

"No" I don't want to hurt him more than I already have. I can see him pushing tears at the back of his sockets.

"How was it?"

"What?"

"Sex? How was it?"

"Kayise..."

“Answer the damn ask Mbewenhle!” I jump a bit with fright.

“It was painful of course Kayise.”

“Did you think about me when he was fucking you?”

“Kayise...”

“Stop calling me uyangibona ngila phambi kwakho.”

“I wasn’t thinking Kayise everything happened so fast. I’m sorry from the bottom of my heart. Please forgive me I never meant to break your heart.”

“But you did Mbewenhle! You watch me committing myself to you and loving you only for you to cheat on me with that idiot! Now it makes sense! The way he was so rude and disrespectful! I could tell that there’s something he knew that I didn’t! You’ve been fooling me for months then the day I asked to come and steal a kiss you refused to me but went to him and fucked him!”

“I’m sorry...”

“I need to know why? Why Mbewenhle? Why would you hurt me like this? Ngikwenzeni le ngaka?”

“You didn’t do anything to me.”

“Did I force you to be in a relationship with me?”

“No”

“Did I put pressure on you somehow?”

“No you even told me that if I feel under pressure we can postpone the ceremony of the flag.”

“Did I mistreat you?”

“No you didn’t Kayise you treated me like an egg and spoiled me.”

“Oh so you never loved me. All this time you’d look into my eyes telling me how much you love me was a lie?”

“That’s not true baby I never lied to you.”

“Then why would you break my heart like this huh?”

“I wish I have a reason why Muzikayise but I don’t. You didn’t do anything to me I’m the one who never deserved you in a first place. I’m really sorry Sidwaba Silithuli”

“I want to hate you with all my heart but I can’t! I love you bitch! Even after the pain you put me through I still love you! What have you done to me? Aaahhhhhh!!!” He screams punching the dashboard countless time. I kneel on the seat and stop him from hurting himself then wrap my arms around him.

“I’m sorry. I’m really sorry Kayise.” I whisper tears streaming down my face. He calms down after few minutes and pushes me off.

“Suka kimi.”

I move away from him and sit straight while wiping my tears. God please forgive me I never meant to break him. It breaks my heart to see him like this. He starts the car and off we go. Once we’re home he drops me off at the gate. Jizas ondaba zabantu are all out of their houses and looking at me as I walk into the Qwabe homestead lugging my luggage. Being home is going to be harder than I thought.

Mvelonhle attacks me with a hug the moment I walk inside the kitchen. I let go of my luggage and hold him tightly as I feel his body vibrating against mine. He’s crying shame umtaka ma.

“I’m sorry little bro.”

“No I’m the one who’s sorry I should’ve...”

“Shhh it’s okay.”

He takes my luggage and leads me to my bedroom where mama and Mpilenhle are. Mama shrieks into a loud sob and a little cry follows after that. It’s only then I notice that she gave birth. I’m sure the baby was startled by mama’s cry. I walk towards them on my bed and mama pulls me to her lap and squeezes me tightly in her arms.

“I’m sorry my child please forgive me. We went about it the wrong way sis. Forgive us please.”

That’s not fair. I also asked them to forgive me but they didn’t why should I forgive them?

“You’re angry and hurt I know baby. I’m going to spend my whole life showing you how sorry I am if only you give me a chance to rectify my wrongs.”

Of course anger is one of the emotions I feel right now especially towards mama and Mpilenhle. They never said anything when father chased me out of home. I messed up I've never denied that but they didn't protect me. I almost got raped! I spent days and nights in the street eating in the dustbins! I lost my baby!

The baby doesn't want to calm down so mama takes him from Mpilenhle giving her a chance to embrace me.

"Ngiyaxolisa mtaka ma."

"I know sis."

Once we are all calm we all settle on my bed and they're fussing over me and asking questions that I'm not ready to answer. I just want to hold this little cute pumpkin.

"Can I hold the baby."

"Your father named him Ndabenhle." Mama

Another 'nhle' ubaba uya cramma ngeke. I take him and cradle him in my arms. Gosh he's so beautiful I wonder if mine would've been this cute. He is mama's replica. I stop myself from asking who's his father.

The rest of the day my attention is on my baby brother and I can see that I annoy them because they also want my attention but they don't voice that out. Dad is in Ladysmith and the way they're dismissing the topic about him makes me wonder what would he say when he finds me here.

Mpilenhle and Mama argue about who's going to sleep with me. They both want to sleep with me and just for control I choose to sleep with Lonhle. I go to my bedroom to change into my pjs then join Lonhle in his bedroom after kissing my baby brother.

He allows me to rest my head on his chest as he strokes his hand on my back. The silence is too loud and I can hear him sighing none stop.

“Spit it out.”

“I found your track pants and panties on top of the mountain. Uhm I’m very sorry sis.” He stops stroking my back and tightens his hold around my waist.

“It’s okay Lonhle.”

“Can you tell me who is it?”

“Their voices were unfamiliar but this other one used to court me.”

“They? How many were they?”

“Three.”

“Oh God Mbewu I’m sorry I...” he chokes and I jerk up my head and look at him.

“Hey don’t cry they didn’t hurt me. They almost did but I ran away.”

“You did?”

“Yeah.”

“Mbewenhle are you not saying this because you don’t want to hurt me.”

“I’m telling you nothing but the truth buti wami.”

“Oh Mbewu you’re so brave and strong. I’m proud of you.”

“Come on.”

“Ngempela. What’s the name of the one that used to court you?”

“I don’t remember his name but the other one they called him Sandile if my memory serves me correct.”

“I will find them! Bazoyikhotha imbenge eyomile!”

“Lonhle I don’t want you...”

“Don’t say it. I’m going to get them and that’s final!”

Someone is shaking me in my sleep and to say I’m annoyed will be an understatement. At the Dlomos you wake up when you feel like it. I blink my eyes open and they meet Mpilenhle’s happy face.

“Haibo why you didn’t tell me that you and Muzi fixed things.”

“I wouldn’t say we fixed things but we talked. I hurt him so bad he will never forgive me.”

“Oh well the Masekos are outside bazocela ubohlobo ubusha. Wake up makoti!”

Huh?

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

Mpilenhle gotta be kidding her! She literally woke her up in her good sleep and disturbed her beautiful dream she was having about her baby just to prank her? She looks at her annoyingly before pulling a cover over her head.

“Mbewu wake up your in laws are here!”

“Look I know that you missed me but like really now? Couldn’t you wait for me to wake up first.”

“I’m not playing games baby sis wake up.”

Just as Mbewenhle is about to reply her mother walks in.

“Mbewenhle why did you not warn us that the Masekos are coming!”

Now this is getting serious she knows that her mother would never play like that and the worry plastered on her face is the evidence of how damn serious she is.

“I didn’t know he didn’t tell me.”

“What do you mean he didn’t tell you?” Thembeke

“Mama we talked and I apologized about everything I’ve done but he didn’t tell me that he’s sending abakhongi. There must be a misunderstanding. Are you sure they’re here for lobola negotiations?” Mbewenhle asks confused what’s happening.

Yes they talked but their conversation didn’t end well it can’t be possible that what her mother and sister are saying is true.

“Go outside you will see them.” Mpilenhle

Just as her sister says Mbewenhle gets out of bed and slides into her push ins before going outside.

“Sikhulekile ko Qwabe nina bo Khondlo....” she runs back to her bedroom and picks up her phone then dials Kayise’s number. Of course she knows it by her heart. It rings once then his voice comes through.

“Hello.”

“Kayise.”

The sound of her voice makes his heart skips two beats and he hates the effect she has on her.

“Yeyeye.”

“Your uncles are here.”

“Yes.”

“What does this suppose to mean Kayise.”

“It means the lobola negotiations are proceeding and once that is out of the way we can set our wedding date.”

“Muzikayise you hate me...” he cuts her mid sentence.

“Trust me I also wish I hate you but I love you even more it’s crazy isn’t it?” he says and chuckles bitterly as Mbewenhle heaves a sigh, guilt is having a feast on her.

“I’ve lost count of the sorries I’ve said to you and I know that not even millions of them could ever change what I’ve done to you. I wish I could turn back the hands of time Kayise and make better decisions. Ngiyaxolisa I’m sure you already had enough of that word.”

“Being unable to change everything you’ve done doesn’t mean you can never try to fix what you have broken. Are you willing to?”

“Of course I am.”

“That’s my woman now wipe those tears umbi mawukhala.”  
(...you’re ugly when you cry.)

She manages to giggle through her tears and wipes her cheeks that are drenched with tears.

“Don’t you think marriage is a huge step after what happened. I mean why can’t we just date and once we are at a good space then proceed with the lobola negotiations”

“If I want to marry you now after what you did I’m still going to marry you even when we are at a good space you’re talking about so why wait. It’s not like there’s difference that is going to make. I don’t see any problem with proceeding with everything not unless if you didn’t mean it when you said you are willing to try and rectify your mistakes.”

“Of course I meant it Kayise.”

“Oh well go and cook up a feast for your in laws Mama Maseko.”

She blushes and nods her head. If this is not love then she doesn't know what love is. Clearly Mam Nomsa was being general when she said men never forgive cheating.

Mbewenhle knows that it took so much of him to choose her even after everything she has done. Surely people are going to talk calling him weak and she knows he thought about that too but still chose to follow his heart. Nothing will rub what she did but her dignity will be restored. She will no longer be that maiden who slept with another guy while dating the son of induna.

Ihlazo athele umdeni wakhe ngalo lizohlanzeka. Maybe just maybe her family would be proud of her and her mother would have a change of heart about wishing she's the one that disappeared instead of Ndalwenhle.

“Okay.”

“I will see you later,” he says and makes kissing sounds which leave Mbewenhle a blushing mess. Thembeke and Mpilenhle are watching her and for a second she has forgotten about them. They end their call then she looks at her mom and sister.

“Ehh moyi moyi ndiya laseMnambithi.” Mpilenhle says to her sister and they break into laughter.

“So should I inform my husband about the people at the gate?”

“Yes.”

Thembeke ululates and pulls her daughter into a tight squeeze.

“I knew from day one that this boy loves you. I hope you’ve learnt your lesson and you won’t break the poor boy’s heart again nor would you disappoint us. We as your parents know what good for you baby and Muzikayise is the best for you. You are one of the few lucky ones. Make the best out of this second chance.”

Tears are already rolling down Mbewenhle cheeks. She's overly emotional lately and she doesn't like it one bit. Her mother catches her tears with her thumbs and wipes them off before embracing her. The hug is filled with warmth and motherly love but there's this cold wall which is a barrier for her to feel all of that. A wall that is created by the pain

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anger, resentment and loss she's consuming and trying so hard to conceal.

"Shhh don't cry baby it's okay. I love you so much" Now those words no longer carry that weight they use to when she heard them from her mother before she wished death or disappearance upon her, before she was kicked to the street and before she lost her baby. Is it unfair of her to feel that her mother more than anyone could've prevented that from happening?

Mpilenhle joins the hug as well and they all share a group hug. Once Mbewenhle is calm Thembeke goes to the bedroom to get her phone and calls her husband.

“Yebo”

She knows just by that response that he’s angry but why she’s yet to find out.

“How are you?”

“How am I supposed to be I have been gone for a day and you’re bringing that harlot of your daughter in my house!”

Of course news travel fast in this village but who has such an audacity to call her husband and inform him about this.

“Who told you that?”

“Is she not there MaNdwandwe?”

“Is it your mistress that told you that?”

“Thembeke I’m on my way right now and I’m going to chase that daughter of yours with a sjambok!”

“I don’t deny what she did is wrong nor am I condoning her but kicking her out to the street is overboard. If you chase her out I’m going to take my children and leave with them. What should I do with the Masekos who are here for the lobola negotiations?”

“The Masekos are there for lobola negotiations? Did I hear you correct?”

“Yes they’re here and Muzikayise is giving our daughter a second chance.”

“Heee madoda that boy never cease to amaze me. I’d never forgive a cheating partner.”

Thembeke swallows spit and clears her throat.

“Isn’t that reach coming from you.”

“Aw kodwa mkami why are you ruining a beautiful conversation. We are talking about our daughter’s lobola negotiations and this means people will stop talking about us now. Bazovaleka umlomo why bring that up now? It’s like you haven’t forgiven me. I’m sorry my fohloza.” Now she’s their daughter funny huh.

“How far are you now?”

“I’m almost there let them stand outside until I arrive. I’m going to pass by your mom’s house and take your brother and your mother.”

“Okay.” She ends the call after saying her goodbye.

The good thing is that pots are already cooking on the braziers. Mpilenhle was preparing a feast to celebrate Mbewenhle’s return. Now that food is going to be the Masekos who are still singing Qwabe clans outside the gate. To say Muzikayise’s father is annoyed would be an understatement.

“They can’t make us stand on the sun and let it fry us until we are coals after what their daughter did to my son.”

Exasperation in his voice cannot be missed. If it was for him they wouldn’t be here but his son begged him and here he is with his brother and Thuthuka. Somehow he understands where his son is coming from he was once head over heels in love with Thembeke. What does the Qwabe women has that seems to drive men crazy and ready to take on the world when it comes to them is a mystery.

“They’re following procedure zalo.” Maseko’s brother says. He promised his nephew that he will keep his brother on the leash and ensures that the lobola negotiation goes well.

Inside the Qwabe homestead the sisters are cooking in the rondoal while Mama Qwabe is cleaning. It’s the least she could do while her little boy is sleeping because once he’s awake she won’t even be able to do anything. The little one is such a fussy baby and ever since he’s been born she has never slept and felt that she has slept enough. How she could’ve when her daughter was out there in the street.

Mpilenhle glances at her little sister as she chops the carrots. The silence is deafening and suffocating her. There's a lot she wish she could say to her but she doesn't know where to begin and the guilt of what she did with her little sister's future husband is gnawing at her.

How funny this life thing is? Just weeks ago she was angry at her little sister for what she did but just a few days ago she was kissing her brother in law. Of course it was just a kiss that meant nothing but why did they even do it in the first place? Weakness? Pain? Vulnerability? If it's not all three together it's one of those. If this doesn't show that we all make mistakes ahh well...

"Did the Dlomos mistreat you?" Mpilenhle says trying to make a conversation.

"No I've never felt so much love in my entire life." Those word hit the deepest parts of Mpilenhle's heart.

"Oh maybe they were still enjoying having you around. They were going to get fed up of your presence in their home. You

know how people are.” That statement rolls out of Mpilenhle’s mouth out of jealousy.

“Maybe I wouldn’t have been surprised I mean if your own family can feed you to the vultures of this cruel world what can I expect from strangers.” Every word coming out of her mouth definitely hit the nerve and Mpilenhle can’t help it. Just as she’s about to reply Isisa knocks on the opened door. She doesn’t wait for anyone to say come in but runs to her best friend and they squeeze each other for dear life.

“God I was so worried about you. I’m glad that you’re alive friend.”

They pull apart and wipe each other’s tears then stare at each other before bursting into laughter.

“How’s my baby.” Mbewenhle says touching her best friend’s tummy which is showing now.

“Your baby is okay we just missed you.”

They continue to chat while assisting Mpilenhle with pots. 30 minutes later Qwabe arrives with his brother in law and mother in law. Mbewenhle tenses when she sees her father walking in but he doesn't say anything nor greet her.

“Where's your mother Mpilenhle?”

“In the main house baba.”

He nods and walks to the door then he stops and glances at his younger daughter.

“Are you sure about this? I don't want to have your lobola negotiations then tomorrow you go out and open your legs for the whole village.”

Mbewenhle looks down as shame engulfs her.

“Nginesiqiniseko baba.”

“Well that’s good. Mpilenhle guide your sister and tell her how to carry herself not as female only but as someone’s wife also. Asifuni amanye amahlazo la and she’s lucky Muzikayise is marrying her because no one was going to marry her after her shenanigans.”

“Yebo baba.” Mpilenhle says. The man of the house walks away to begin with the lobola negotiations as MaNdawndwe walks in and gives her granddaughter a hug.

“I’m so happy you’re alive nunu.”

“Don’t cry gogo I’m okay.”

“Are you?”

“Yes.”

MaNdwandwe studies her granddaughter's eyes but she looks down not giving her grandma a chance to read her.

.....

“Mvelonhle was so worried about you so was I. How did you survive out there?”

“We will talk about that friend right now I'm just worried about what's going on in there. The Masekos will never look at me the same way. Phela after what I did a mere loaf of bread is what I deserve as my lobola.”

“Mistakes happen and you're not marrying them but Muzikayise. They must chill nje.”

“Friend you're not helping.”

“You're just stressing too much. Muzikayise loves you that what matters and I trust Mvelonhle to put them in their place mabedakwa.”

They both laugh.

“Your brother will kill for you. You didn’t hear him spilling beans at your umemulo ceremony.” Isisa says and narrates everything Mvelonhle said that day then they crack up into laughter. She’s not lucky but blessed to have a brother like Mvelonhle. So young then her but still protect her like he’s the older one.

Meanwhile in the lounge where the negotiations are taking place the Masekos are not agreeing with the amount of dowry .

“Ay phela let’s not forget that your daughter is no longer a virgin and she allowed another boy to force into your kraal while she’s with my son! Be reasonable Qwabe!” Maseko couldn’t help himself but say that.

“Zalo,” Maseko’s brother reprimands his brother but he’s hearing none.

“Hayi Mkhuthuzi this is daylight robbery! My son is doing their daughter a favor by marrying her!”

“Oh if that’s the case then y’all must leave.” Mvelonhle

“Mvelo...”

“No baba they can’t come here and disrespect my sister like that. She messed up that’s undeniable but she’s not desperate. Muzikayise can shove his ‘favour’ where the sun doesn’t shine.” Mvelonhle says calmly yet sternly.

“We are sorry about that please forgive my brother. Our son loves your daughter hence we are here. Please excuse us we will be back.” Mkhuthuzi.

The Qwabes agree then the Masekos walk out.

“What was that Mvelonhle. Just because I asked you to join us doesn’t mean you should talk. I just wanted you to see how

lobola negotiations are held. I'm training you for future."

Qwabe

"I know baba and I'm sorry I couldn't help myself. You're still angry at Mbewenhle and I understand but don't allow these people to degrade her because tomorrow Mbewenhle will be alone in their homestead when they mistreat her. We mustn't give them a reason to abuse her they must know if they get tired of her they must bring her back."

"I couldn't have said it better mshana." Thubelihle.

Qwabe won't be told by a child what to do or what not to do but astoundingly he listens and when the Masekos come back the lobola negotiations carry on smoothly.

☆ Manelisi ☆

I'm losing my mind, anxiety has me by the balls. I feel like my heart is going rip my chest apart the way it's pounding hard. I told sis Dudu about the matter and she asked her personal GP to write me a doctor's note to provide at work. I was so grateful and I didn't hesitate but took a taxi home.

I haven't heard anything that could lead me to her whereabouts. Mnqobi also doesn't know where she is and when he explained the manner that she arrived in that night her father chased her out of home my heart literally broke.

"I have news for you my boy," Bab Mthiyane says

compassion clouding his eyes which has me perturbed. We are sitting under the shade of the blackberries tree.

"I'm listening baba."

He takes his bowl of Mahewu and takes a gulp then puts it down.

“Mbewenhle is back,” he says wiping the corners of his mouth.

I look at him and my heart does a flip back. He will never play like this now would he?

“Really?”

“Yes she came back the day before yesterday.”

“Wow that’s amazing! I have to see her now.” I get up from the bench but he pulls me down.

“You can’t go Manelisi you will cause more drama. She’s someone’s wife now.”

“I don’t understand baba.”

“Yesterday it was her lobola negotiations.”

I don't know why my heart is breaking apart all over again because I knew that's going to happen but maybe I was hoping that now Muzikayise knows she doesn't have to hide her true feelings for me and give us a chance.

“Oh.”

“I'm sorry my boy I know you love her but you can't disrespect Muzikayise by going after his wife especially not after what you did. I have a feeling that boy won't let this lie down.”

“I'm not scared of him and I know that she loves me not him. I have to go see her baba.”

“Manlesi you already accepted that she chose him why now you want to cause more trouble than you already have?”

“She doesn’t have to marry him now since everyone knows about us.”

“Maybe but you think she would’ve chose to be with you after you slept with her knowing the trouble she will get into and never check on her after that?”

“I know I was supposed to check on her and I regret that but I didn’t know that this cow’s fat thing is real mina!”

“Yaz Manelisi you like behaving like a suburban boy but for 27 years of your life you have been here in this village. Of course umhlwehlwe uyadabuka mawungaselona itshitshi. The poor girl was humiliated in front of the whole community and kicked out of home. When everyone turned against her you were supposed to be there for her and trust me boy she wasn’t going to be afraid to choose you after that.”

I don’t have to believe everything I hear especially superstitions. I’m Thomas ngikholwa ngokubona.

“But I made a promise...”

“You made a promise before you slept with her Manelisi. After taking her innocence there was no way of keeping your promise. Now take these news as they’re and be strong like a man. Accept defeat my boy she was never yours to begin with.”

“No I have to see her. At least see it for myself that she’s okay. Maybe they’re forcing her to marry him. I mean there’s no way that Muzikayise forgave her for cheating.”

“Manelisi don’t cause trouble...”

“I’m coming back.” I get up and leave. I need to see her face even if it’s for the last time. Once I’m close by her home I call this little boy and ask him to go call her.

“Say Muzikayise is calling her.”

“Okay.” The little boy scurries off. It doesn’t take that long before the boy comes back and tells me that she’s coming. I fish

for coins in my pockets and give him then he runs away. There she is coming and the closer she gets she's holding her steps back.

“Jizas Manelisi it's you kanti!”

I run after her as she turns around and walks back home.

“Dombolo lami wait up.”

I grab her wrist pulling her closer to me and our bodies collide creating that electrifying spark as we both look at each other.

“Leave me alone!”

“Dombolo lami.”

“Don't dombolo lami me!”

“Can we talk please dombolo lami. This is me umqwebu wakho.”

The smile on her face lasts only for a second and if she wasn't under my scrutiny I would've missed it but what worries me more is the pain that is glinting in her eyes.

“What do you want us to talk about?” She pushes me and looks at me with her sparkling eyes. Damn she's still the most beautiful girl my eyes have ever laid on. The red skipper dress she's wearing moulds her every curve and her nipples are poking through the fabric of her dress. It's short and half of her creamy thighs are out on display. I feel my member stirring inside my jeans.

“How have you been?”

“As if you care!”

“I do care sthandwa sami...”

“No you don’t Lisi! If you care you would’ve checked up on me after you know what we did!”

“I didn’t want to go against my promise...”

“There’s no such thing you said you will be with me whatever I will go through but you weren’t there. You left me alone to deal with all the humiliation.”

“Ngiyaxolisa sthandwa sami...”

“Don’t touch me!” My hands can’t help themselves I want to hold her in my arms, feel her body against mine and take in her scent. I miss her so much.

“I was lucky to get a place dombolo lami and I couldn’t miss that opportunity hence I moved in the moment I got it. Not having a phone couldn’t help the situation...”

“Oh please stop it okay! You only had a phone for two seconds don’t make me a fool! You knew how to see me when you

wanted to! How did you get here ke did you phone me huh? Just say it Manelisi that you got what you wanted and I'm no use to you!"

Now she's wounding me deep and cutting to the very core. I'm lost of ways to prove how much she means to me.

"Wenhle your words are a shard in my gut now you're misinterpreting my actions. I love you so much that it hurt so bad. I admit that I didn't do right by you but never think that I only wanted to sleep with you and ditch you like that because that's not the case. I'm so honored to be the one that took your innocence and I know how sacred it was to you. Ngiyakuthanda MaKhondlo uyabusa enhlizweni yami."

"I spent days and nights in the street eating in the dustbin like a hobo." She wipes off the tears but another stream rolls down on her face.

"I don't blame you for what happened you didn't rape me but I thought you were going to be with me throughout everything. I needed you Lisi, we needed you but you were never there just

like everyone who was never there.” The pain seeps out in her words and shatters my heart into pieces. I move closer to her in attempt to hug her but she pushes me away.

“I’m sorry baby..wait what do you mean we?”

“We made a baby that night unfortunately I just lost her a few days back. I also didn’t know that I was pregnant until I was told I had a miscarriage. I can’t stop thinking that if maybe the stale and expired food I’d find in the dustbins put her in harms way.”

The world stop for a moment so is my heart. No what have I done? Pain comes in waves and remorse hit me hard like a hammer. I envelope her in my arms but she punches me on the chest while crying in agony.

“You were supposed to be there but no you went to Dundee and carried on with life like nothing happened!”

“I’m really sorry Wenhle I didn’t know. Jesus I really didn’t know ngiyaxolisa. We need each other now more then ever to mourn our baby together and I will ask Bab Mthiyane to help us do right by him and...”

“I’d be a fool to need you after you never showed up for us. You were supposed to protect us and shield us Manelisi! I hope you’re happy that you failed our firstborn baby!” with that said she leaves me standing there. I’ve never felt so much pain in my entire life. I should’ve listened to my gut and forgot about

the promise I made to her. I failed them! Having a baby with her could've been the best thing that has ever happened to me.

I make my way home with tears blurring my eyes and threatening to come out but I don't want to let them out. I feel cold water splattering me and when I look at myself I have dirt all over my clothes. Muzikayise's car just passed by and drove on the muddy water on purpose. Argh this bastard!

"You won shlama sothuvi!!!!!" I scream and he shows me middle finger through the window. I don't have energy for him. I'm in so much pain. I've lost not only the love of my life but my baby boy as well.

I get up before she even finishes and run way leaving her rolling in the aisles. Gosh what is this woman to doing me.

Ungibangela amahloni. As much as I do experience those funny feelings I can't entertain them I'm single and I'd rather die then have sex with Thuthuka

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I want to be free from all this pain

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anger and grief. I wish I could go back to a couple of weeks ago or better yet a decade ago. Where life was simple and candy was better than money because you can eat the candy. But that's just wishful I have no choice but to soldier on.

I no longer have the privacy of my room since mom moved into my bedroom and I don't know why don't she go back to her bedroom. Now I'm crying in the toilet. It's a bit far from the house and no one will hear me. Seeing Manelisi evoked emotions I'm trying so hard to bury and move on. I think feeling empty is better than feeling deep dejection.

It was way better when I had this void in my soul that consumed everything and left me feeling empty and nothing. I hear footsteps coming closer and cover my mouth with my hand to mute my sobs. The smell of her perfume is penetrating

through the holes of this zinc door. I briskly wipe my tears and gets out of the toilet.

“Oh you’re in there I thought you’re with Muzikayise.”

“He just left.” I say with a fake smile on my face and walk away before she notice anything.

The lobola negotiations went well and I’m happy. Yesterday they paid half amount of my dowry and today they brought living cattle. Dad couldn’t be happier and he’s been standing next to his kraal looking at his cattle with a huge smile on his face. Sigcwele isibaya sakhe manje.

I’ve always wanted to be the reason behind that smile on his face and I’m glad that finally it’s happening even though he’s still not talking to me. I shuffle to my bedroom and find mom changing my baby brother’s nappy.

“Can I take over please.”

“No problem vele you have to get used to this because soon you are going to have your own.”

Isn't it too soon? I don't want to replace my baby. I give her a forged smile and take over changing the baby's nappy.

“You were crying?”

“No I wasn't.”

Once I'm done I throw the diaper in the toilet and wash my hands then cuddle Benhle in my arms.

“You're so good with him and he seems to enjoy your arms.”

“He's so cute. I love him so much.” I press his tiny lips together as he yawns.

“What did Muzi say that made you cry?”

“It wasn’t him.”

“Then who was it?”

“Uhm Manelisi.”

Right in an instant her face changes. It reminds me the day she beat me up.

“Mbewenhle kanti lomfana...”

“It’s not what you think mama. It’s really over between us.”

“You said that the last time but went over and slept with him!”

“I needed to tell him something that I also think you should know.”

“Hayi I don’t want to hear anything about that boy! What did that boy do to you? Yesterday it was your lobola negotiations and today you are gallivanting with...”

“I wasn’t gallivanting mama I was just...”

“Don’t you dare disturb me when I’m speaking to you! I’m sick and tired of this boy now it’s time I deal with him by myself because I see that he gave you love potion!”

“Mama can you listen to me for a second please.”

“There’s nothing I will listen to you Mbewenhle! Nothing will make sense that comes out of your mouth if it concerns that boy. Ukudlisile!”

“Gosh mama you like taking things out of proportion! One can never have a smooth conversation with you! Why can’t you be like Mam Aphiwe or Mam Xitlalli yeses!”

I get up with Benhle and take my phone then walk to Mvelonhle's bedroom where I slide into the blankets and enjoy the presence of my baby brother alone. He's the only thing that makes sense in this house. So adorable and cute. I take tons of pictures with him and look at them. How funny that the more I scroll to the next picture I see uncle G's eyes in him or maybe it's my imagination.

"Can I come in?"

"No I'm bonding with my baby brother can I not be disturbed please."

I hear her chuckling and when I look up at her she has her arms folded against her chest.

"Yaz I thought mama is exaggerating when she told me that you just shouted at her and compared her to your friend's mothers."

"What do you want Mpilenhle?"

“Haibo Mbewenhle you’re so rude and disrespectful! What’s with you huh? Staying with those rich women makes you think now you’re a spoiled brat! Here sis we are not going to treat you like one. You can’t humiliate us like that and expect us to treat you like an egg! We apologized for allowing dad to throw you out of the house what more do you want from us now ? To kiss your booty? Buy you expensive clothes and phones? Unganya sis! You messed up as well stop this attitude!”

I bite my shaking lip stopping myself from saying something I will regret tomorrow. She doesn’t get it they all don’t get it!

“Okay Mpilenhle you have made your point and I hear you.”

“You almost got raped you weren’t raped so what is this drama about and it’s not like you were in the streets you were living a lavish life so ufunani kithi?”

“Nothing Mpilenhle.”

“Go apologize to mama!”

I get up from the bed and go to my bedroom where I apologize to mama. When she accepts my apology I go back to Lonhle’s bedroom.

.....

One never gets enough sleep in this house do I have to be woken up every morning. I blink my eyes open it’s Lonhle.

“Lonhle mh-mh.”

“Sis wake up.”

“Yini?”

“I just came back from the veld.”

“So?”

“Something happened.”

I study his face and I notice sadness clouding his eyes.

“Mvelonhle what is it?” I can hear the panic in my voice already.

“People are talking and when I went there I saw it myself.”

I sit on my butt and look at him curiously.

“What are you talking about Mvelonhle?”

“The Maphumulo house was burnt down last night and...”

“What? Manelisi & Gogo where were they?”

“Unfortunately inside sis.”

“You’re lying!”

I jump out of the bed and change my pjs then dash out of Lonhle’s bedroom. Mama and Mpilenhle are having breakfast in the kitchen.

“Good morning.” I say and walk out before they say anything.

I run as fast as my legs could carry me and when I get there I see few people surrounding the Maphumulo homestead and my heart stop beating when I see the house into ashes.

“Manelisi ...Gogo!” A scream escapes my lips as I run towards the house.

“Child you will hurt yourself. Calm down.” Says this old man.

“Ma..Ma..Manelisi and his grandma where are they?”

The old man looks down in sorrow and shakes his head.

“I’m sorry my child we tried to save them last night but the fire was an inferno.”

“Nooooo!”

“I’m sorry my child.”

I shake my head vigorously as tears cascade down my face then walk inside what is left of the house. Everything is in ashes. A sob bursts out of my lips when I see the remaining wheels of the wheelchair.

“This is all your fault!!!” I hear a voice behind me and when I turn around I see Blessing’s face which is drenched with mucus and tears.

“Excuse me?”

“He came here to look for you! Whoever did this could’ve found this house empty because grandma would’ve been at home and him in Dundee!!”

“I’m sorry...”

“Sorry? Will your sorry bring them back! Do us a favor and leave!!”

Through my glassy eyes I spot a small trunk with a locker which happens to be the only thing that didn’t catch fire due it iron surface.

“You’ve caused enough damage sifebe ndini. Gooo!!!”

I grab the small trunk on the floor and run away tears clouding my vision. This can’t be real! I find myself on top of the mountain and bawl my eyes out. God please let this be a dream I cannot lose my baby and the father of my baby in a short space of time.

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☆ Muzikayise ☆

It's been two weeks since the builders finished and the house has been empty since then but today Yeyeye is dealing with that. I'm useless when it comes to these things I will be useful when it comes to paying.

I'm packing few of my things that I want to take with me to our new house. I open the collection box of my watches and necklaces to check if everything is in there. My eyes catch ucu Yeyeye made for me and the note. I take the note and read it.

"S'dwaba Siluthuli

There's no way better than to express my love for you through ucu.

White Beads: Symbolize the authenticity of my love for you.

Red Beads: I'm over heels in love with you to the point of no return.

Blue Beads: I will stay committed to you and never cheat on you.

Black Beads: You are my eternal and my forever.

Green Beads: I have found my permanent home in your heart.

Thank you so much for choosing me among girls in this village I'm so lucky to be at the receiving end of your love.

Mbewenhle Qwabe."

I never thought these words would lose their meaning because of something she did to me. That's why I'm a man of actions not words. People be going around talking and making promises that they don't mean or can't keep.

I don't understand why love have to be unfair and complicated or maybe the fool is me. I love her from the depths of my heart and I can't just let her go without fighting. I'm willing to fight her mistakes and stick with her despite fights and differences.

I'm very much aware that it's not going to be easy hopefully it's going to be worth it. I never thought I'd be the man that forgives a woman that cheated and honestly speaking I've always been the one who judges those men but here I am. The joke is on me now.

Thuthuka throws himself inside of my bedroom without knocking and he looks like he just saw a ghost. I wonder what's going on now.

"Malumes."

"Yes."

"The police is here looking for you."

“What for?”

“Uhm I don’t know I already brought him inside. He’s in the lounge.”

“Okay.”

I get up from the vanity chair and head to the lounge with Thuthu behind me. He heads out leaving me with a man who’s not in a police uniform.

“Greetings muntu womthetho. I hope you’re going to cleanse my father’s homestead for parking your police van in his yard.”

“Don’t worry Maseko I parked outside the gate.”

“Good then. What can I do for you.” I say lowering myself to the couch.

“I’m Detective Dlangamandla and I’m here to ask you few questions about the Maphumulo house that was burnt down the night before the last one.”

I clear a lump in my throat and lean back while staring at the detective.

“Why do you want to ask me? Am I a suspect?”

“No I have been asking everyone in the community and you’re also the member of the community so I don’t see why should I not ask you as well”

“Okay I see.”

“Where were you the night before the last one?”

“Here in my house sleeping.”

“Do you have a witness?”

“Witness? You mean someone who saw me sleeping? Ain’t we all supposed to be sleeping at night?” I laugh

“I don’t have time for games Maseko this is a serious case. An impaired senior citizen together with her 27 years old grandson were burnt down in their home in the middle of the night.”

I only feel sorry for the old woman but that bastard deserves it. On another note the grandma is free now from all that suffering and not being able to do things by herself.

“So what does that got to do with me?”

He looks at me intently and I stare right back at him. If he thinks I’m going to shake in my boots then he gotta be kidding me. Even a teenage wouldn’t be rattled by this look.

“Maseko it’s not a secret in this village that there was a bad blood between you and the deceased Manelisi Maphumulo.”

“Are you saying I’m the one who did this?”

“Didn’t you?”

“Of course not why would I do that?”

“Revenge obvious. He fucked your maiden girlfriend while you were keeping her for marriage. I don’t believe you got over that just like that.”

Just as I’m about to reply Thuthuka walks in and tells me that dad is stuck in Dundee and he’s not feeling well. I have to fetch him or take him to the hospital.

“Thanks for your time Mr Maseko,” says the detective then he leaves.

“Let’s go then.”

“Go where?”

“To dad.”

“Mkhulu is okay I was trying to get rid of this man.”

I laugh. Trust Thuthu to do that.

“But why man I had everything under control.”

“No you didn’t Malumes you were giving him every reason to suspect you.”

“Ahh boy angithuswa inyoka efile mina.” (A dead snake doesn’t scare me.)

“You are taking this very lightly Malumes!”

“You’re pancaking for nothing boy they won’t find anything on me.”

“You sound so sure I don’t want you to be locked up malumes.”

“Why would I be locked up for something I didn’t do?”

“Everyone will think it’s you because you had every motive. I know you didn’t do it.”

“Why are you so sure that it’s not me?”

“What does that supposed to mean?”

I look at him trying to penetrate through his eyes that are glinting with fear.

“Thuthu what have you done?”

“Nothing malumes.”

“You didn’t do this please tell me you didn’t?”

“No I didn’t. If I believe that it’s not you then why don’t you believe me?”

“It’s not that I don’t believe you it’s just that...arg never mind boy. Don’t panic no one is going to jail.”

“You’re going somewhere?”

“Yes Yeyeye and I are going to buy furniture for the house. Next week Sunday sibika inxiwa.”

“Oh okay so you really like really forgave her?”

“Thuthu you asked me that question and my answer is still the same.”

“I still don’t believe that you really forgave her malumes. She cheated on you I’d never forgive a cheating woman.”

“Never say never boy.”

I get up and walk to the bedroom to get my car keys

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wallet and phone then leave. I find her already waiting for me in our spot. She opens the door for herself and gets inside.

“Greetings baba Maseko.”

“Kunjani mama Maseko.”

“I’m fine and yourself.”

“You don’t look fine your eyes are swollen. You cried yourself to sleep.”

“Yeah but I will be okay.”

“Seat belt please.”

“Oh yes.”

Once she’s buckled up I start the car and drive to Dundee.

“So what made you cry yourself to sleep?”

“Mpilenhle said something to me that hurt me.”

I swallow spit and steal a glance at her.

“What did she say?”

“I don’t want to talk about it.”

“Okay I understand but you know that I’m here for you sthandwa sami and you can talk to me whenever you feel like talking?”

“I know baby and thank you you so much. I don’t know what have I done really to have you in my life because I know very well that I don’t deserve you.”

“I love you Mbewenhle.”

“I love you too Muzikayise.”

I reach for her hand and kiss it. For the first time since she got in here she smiles. I almost forgot what a beautiful smile she has. We start at the doctor’s first.

“Why are we here? I thought we are going to buy furniture for our house.”

“We will go after checking our HIV status.”

“Oh uhm okay but you should’ve prepared me Kayise. I don’t like this thing of yours making decisions without letting me know first.”

“We can come another time then but I thought we should get this out of the way. It is important that we know each other’s status.”

“No it’s fine we can do it now it’s just that when you make decisions on my behalf you make feel so little.”

“Oh I wasn’t aware I do that.”

“Well now you are. Let’s go.”

She takes my hand in hers and we walk inside the doctor’s premises. Once we are at the doctor’s office we exchange greetings then I explain the reason we are here.

“Okay.”

The doctor takes the HIV test kit and pricks our fingers before contacting the small sample of blood to different tests. She then pours some colorless liquid on top of the tests.

“Mr Maseko what will you do if your girlfriend’s results comes back positive and yours negative?” She’s writing something on the files as she’s asking this question.

“She’s my fiancée actually. I’ve just paid lobola two days ago”

“Oh that’s beautiful congratulations.”

“Thank you.” We both say as we smile at each other.

“HIV status wont change anything. It won’t make me love her less but I’m concerned about making babies.”

“You can still make babies even when one of you is positive without infecting the other negative partner but I will elaborate more after seeing the results.”

“Oh well then I’m ready for whatever the results would be.”

“Mrs Maseko to be what would you say if your fiancé’s results comes back positive.”

Yeyeye takes my hand and squeezes it in her warm palm.

“I wouldn’t trade this man for anything in this world. No virus formed against us should prosper.”

“Aww that’s beautiful. Okay here are the results. Two lines means positive and one line it’s negative.”

We both look at the tests and I hear her squealing excitedly. I knew that I’m not HIV positive I haven’t had sex since the last time I checked my status. We thank the doctor after telling us that we must come back after three months then we leave.

OK furniture is the first store we go to and while she's busy searching around I excuse myself for a smoke. I call Mpilenhle while smoking outside.

"You shouldn't be calling me Muzi."

"What did you say to her?"

"Who?"

"Mbewenhle."

"Come on I'm not stupid I'd never disclose what we did especially to her isn't what we agreed on Muzikayise?"

"Yes it's what we agreed on but when she told me that she cried herself to sleep because of what you said to her. I thought maybe..."

“No I didn’t. Mbewenhle is behaving like a spoilt brat. Staying with the rich women spoiled her and now she thinks we have to treat her like a princess.”

“Why does it sound like you’re too harsh on her Mpilenhle. I don’t like that you made her cry herself to sleep.”

“She’s just being a spoilt brat and I won’t tolerate her nor would I allow her to shout at mama.”

“I’m sure she didn’t mean that. Stop making my woman cry please angeke sizwane Mpilenhle if you continue with this.”  
(...we won’t get along..)

I hang up before she says anything then go back to furniture shop.

“Babe should we buy a bedroom suite I mean if we are going to get married soon I will have to buy the bedroom suite.”

“Just buy a simple and less expensive one once we are married we will move it to the other bedroom.”

“Okay if you so then.”

Once she’s done I pay for everything and tell them that I will fetch everything tomorrow. I have to borrow baba’s truck.

.....

The ceremony of ukubika inxiwa is tomorrow, Sunday. Today it’s the day of slaughtering the goat, impangele and inkukhu ebomvu but we had to go to the veld first where my father and I are right now.

It’s drizzling which makes it hard to keep the candle lit and burning impepho but dad says this weather is a sign of blessings and it means the ceremony of introducing my home to the ancestors will be a success.

We are on our knees on the ground. I'm protecting the white candle from the droplets of rain with my hand while watching baba as he places the dry cow dung down and impepho on top it then lights impepho.

Once it's burning I give him the candle and he recites the Maseko clans while sprinkling the snuff around the burning impepho. He's begging the ancestors to call each other and gather here because tomorrow we are going to come back to fetch them. No one has to stay behind they must call each other and we have to find them here.

When he finishes we leave everything behind. Tomorrow morning we are going to come back to collect them and take the candle with us. We drive back to my house to get started with the slaughtering.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

Lala Ngoxolo by Ami Faku ft Emtee has been is on repeat the whole day and the volume is on its maximum bursting through

my headset. Today my biltong and his grandma were laid to rest. I couldn't even go to the funeral because mama has been watching me like a hawk. I wanted to sneak out and go there even for few minutes then come back. I mean it's not like I was still his girlfriend since a girlfriend never attends her boyfriend's funeral and vice versa.

I wanted to see how is the service of a deceased held if there's no body but only the burnt remains of the body. Apparently the forensics were able to identify the burnt remains of their bodies. Most importantly I wanted to say goodbye to my biltong. I was angry at him but I never wanted him to die I will always hold our good memories close to my heart.

I feel the bed sinking before someone removing the headset from my ears. I blink my eyes open and look at him through my teary eyes.

"Don't sleep with earphones they will hurt your eardrums." I pause the song and wipe my tears.

"I wasn't sleeping."

He takes off his sneakers and slides next to me.

“You’re so cold.”

“It’s drizzling outside.”

He makes me rest my head on his chest and clamps his arm around me while the other hand is playing with the ring on my thumb. It’s the one that Lisi gave me I’ve been wearing it since that sorrowful day.

“I’m in no position to judge you mtaka ma but it’s obvious that his passing hit you hard.”

Hard doesn’t even begin to describe what his death is doing to me. I feel like I lost a piece of my heart.

“I never wanted him to die even though I felt like he used me. I loved him Lonhle despite that his grandma was responsible for

Lwenhle's disappearance. Since there was no proof we can't be too sure it's her." I croak against his chest.

"I hate that children have to suffer for their parents' sins but you have to understand where we are coming from. It doesn't matter that there's no proof. There's never a proof when it comes to witchcraft unless a person confess."

"She was a prophet but the people of this village mistaken her gift for witchcraft. He took me to his grandma's rondoal and it wasn't different from any other prophet's workspace."

He heaves a sigh.

"I guess now that they're both gone we will never know the truth. I don't understand though how can they burn into ashes. I mean he didn't even try to save his grandma and escape?"

"Maybe the smoke suffocated them in their sleep by the time the fire was escalating they already passed out but there's something I saw. That morning you told me I went there and

Blessing chased me out. I ran to the mountain and cried. Later that day I went back and there was no one there which gave me time to observe everything. I was looking for a sign or something. I couldn't believe it that he's really dead. The wheels of the wheelchair had slightly burnt knots of a rope tied around them."

"What does that supposed to mean?"

"I don't know Lonhle but my theory is that whoever did this his mission was to kill them. He knew that if he just burn the house chances of Manelisi saving his grandma and escaping were high so he must have tied him making sure that he doesn't escape. The rope must have been one of those fire resistant ropes."

"Who do you think did this?"

"It's not a secret that his grandma wasn't loved nor wanted in this village maybe this was all about 'shisa umthakathi' kind of crime."

“Oh maybe it’s...uhm never mind.”

“Come on Lonhle.”

“Don’t hate me please.”

“Don’t be silly you know that would never be possible.”

“I think it’s Muzi.”

“Hayi Lonhle why would you say that?”

“I mean he’s the one who had a motive.”

“Yeyeye wake up.” He shakes me and I open my eyes. The light is on and he’s fully dressed.

“What’s going on.”

“Wake up and get dressed.”

“Why? What time is it?”

“It’s 4:00am.”

“God Kayise ain’t we supposed to be resting now.”

“We have to be somewhere now. You will rest when we come back.”

“Where are we going and why?”

“Cleansing sthandwa sami. Wake up here are your clothes.”

Cleansing huh? I get up from the bed and get dressed. He takes his car keys then we go downstairs where he takes a bar soap of sunlight and empties the sack of oranges in a bowl then we leave. What’s going on and where are we going? It’s kinda cold because last night it was raining heavily.

“Where are we?” I ask when the car pulls over.

“In the river come out.”

I get out confused and the sound of the water flowing in the river is the evidence that we’re indeed in the river.

“What are we doing here.”

“Undress and get inside.”

“What?”

“Haibo angizikuziphinda ngena ugeze ubufebe.”

“Kayise...”

“You won’t come out until you finish this bar soap.”

Oh God he's so damn serious.

"Baby I'm sorry..."

"I know sthandwa sami now undress and get in."

"I will drown Kayise do you see how high this water is. It was raining last night."

"Mbewenhle ngiyakhuluma njalo," he warns

"Baby please..."

"I said undress and get inside!!!" I jump up at his shrill voice and try to run away but he catches me before I get any further.

"Okay I'm sorry I will get in."

I start undressing as tears flow down my face. I take the bar soap and the sack of oranges then slowly gets inside the river.

“Baby I’m sorry.”

“Geza Mbewenhle and say this after me. Bufebe suka kimi. Ngiyakushiya la umuke namanzi.”

“Baby...”

“Say it!”

“Bufebe suka kimi. Ngiyakushiya la umuke namanzi

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” I cry as I wash with a sack. I’m barely balancing on this rock and I’m afraid a huge wave is going to hit me and I will fall and drown.

“Geza nenquza le ophisana ngayo.”

“The sack is too rough it will hurt my lady part.”

“Mbewenhle stop back chatting and do as I say or you want me to come inside and wash you myself?”

“No I’m bathing.”

He goes to his car and comes back with a cigarette smoking.

“Who said stop? Is the bar soap finished yet?”

“No.”

I continue to scrub myself while crying and shivering. This bar soap is not near from finishing but already my bones are freezing and my skin is burning.

It's not that dark now I'm sure we are approaching 5am and I'm still scrubbing myself with the orange sack. He's watching me while smoking one cigarette after the other.

"Ngixolele sthandwa sami." I say through my clattering teeth.

He throws the bud of the cigarette and comes into the water then he takes my hand leading me to where the water is deep. It reaches below my breasts.

"I'm sorry Sidwaba Siluthuli I..." He doesn't let me finish but shoves me under the water. I spring up as I struggle to breathe but he tightens his hold on me making it hard for me to get up from the water.

"Buzosala la ubufebe namuhla! I won't have a cheating wife do you hear me?"

He pulls me up from the water and I get a chance to breathe.

"Do you hear me?"

“Yes I hear...” he dips my head under the water again and not knowing how to swim is not doing me any justice. He jerks me up and I get a chance to breathe only for a few seconds.

“Ayi...dle..izi..shiyile Ngca...ma..ne.”

Once again he thrusts me the under water. I can't breathe, water is getting inside my nostrils making it hard for me to breathe. I kick hard and wriggle myself from his tight grip but it proves to be futile. I can feel my lungs giving up on me and right in that moment it dawns on me that I won't make it.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

There's nothing petrifying as the feeling of death coming. Surely I had many of those through my anxiety attacks but what I'm feeling right now is way different. It's unique and immense. My body is already succumbing to death but my brain refuses the moment he pulls me upwards and I gasp for air. Letting in all the oxygen he deprived me for seconds which felt like an hour.

When I finally get my normal breathing he scoops me up and walks out of the water with me. He places me inside his car at the back seat and fetches my clothes then we drive to only him knows where. I'm barely aware of my surroundings. The drowsiness is making my vision blurry and the water inside my ears is not helping at all.

The car comes to a halt and when I look around I notice that we are in our garage. He steps out of the car and comes to the back to pick me up before shuffling inside the house heading

upstairs to our bedroom. I'm a shivering mess and my teeth are hitting against each other creating a clanking sound.

He places me on the rug next to our bed and goes to what should've been our bathroom but since we are in the village that lacks infrastructure we use the room to bath and keep our washing basins, towels and hang our underwears. It's actually a bathroom without toilet and bathtub or shower. Talking about a person who forces things that's me.

He comes back with a towel and dries me up then applies lotion all over my body. Once he's done he takes out my tracksuits in our closet and panties in the drawer then dresses me up. I wish I can get a glimpse of what is in his mind. I'm scared what's next after this because it's absolutely clear that he's still angry at me. He changes his wet clothes as well then looks at me.

“Don't you have a wooooh.”

“What's that.”

“That’s thing that makes wooooh sound you women use to dry hair.”

I chuckle

“A hairdryer. It’s at home.”

“Let me go fetch it.”

“There’s no need my hair is going to dry on it own.”

“Okay.”

He takes the fleece blanket in the closet and swaddles it around my body like a baby then picks me up. We make our way downstairs where he places me on the couch in the living room. He disappears after giving me the remote. I switch on the TV and just stare at the screen but my mind is miles away.

Did I make the right choice by agreeing to this marriage? Even if I made a wrong choice it's already too late now. Baba asked me if I was sure of this and I assured him that I'm sure. He already accepted the lobola and I can't abash my parents more than I've already did. The thought of sending the lobola back will definitely kill my father he won't survive another heart attack. Mama would hate me even more for being responsible for her husband's death. I don't want to imagine the wrath I'd feel from my aunts with their beloved brother.

If Kayise is on a mission to stripped me off my dignity in private at least in the eyes of people he reinstated a little bit of it by choosing to make me his wife after I broke his heart and degraded him. Or if he's planning to kill me then I guess May My Soul Rest In Peace in advance.

He emerges from the entrance that leads to the kitchen carrying woods and crouches before the fireplace then prepares the fire. I have a lot to say and ask but I'm too numb to even articulate a single sentence. When he finishes he disappears once again. The shivering stop as the heat radiates through the room and I feel my body relaxing.

“Here.”

I snap out of my trance and take the tray. He prepared coffee and a sandwich of rama and peanut butter for us.

“Thank you.”

He settles down next to me as I mix all the ingredients into my coffee and begin to eat. It seems impossible to down the bread my throat is a bit sore. The pain must’ve caused by the choking I had in the water. I have noticed that my throat is very sensitive. The silence stretches between us and I can’t even look at him but I can feel his intense gaze on me.

“Are you going to kill me?” I eventually break the silence.

“What?”

“Uzongibulala?” Maybe he will hear it better in our home language.

“Haibo Yeyeye what kind of question is that?” He looks at me with a scowl on his face.

“It’s a question that needs an answer Kayise.”

“I don’t understand how can you ask such question Yeyeye. Am I written a killer on my forehead? Even if I was a killer you’re not even the last person I’d kill.”

“You almost killed me Kayise!”

“Uyathetha manje!” (You’re shouting now!)

“What do you want from me because it’s clear that you took me back because you have an agenda.”

“Babe you’re hurting me now. I took you back because I love you. I was cleansing you not killing you.”

“What kind of cleansing is that? You wanted to drown me!”

“Bengikugeza ubufebe Mbewenhle! Now eat your food and stop talking nonsense!”

Now I’m thinking that he’s kinda involved in Lisi and his grandma’s death. We eat in silence and when we finish he takes the dishes back to the kitchen. I quickly wipe my tears as he makes his way back.

“Hey why are you crying,” he says lowering himself on the couch and wipes my tears that are relentlessly falling down my face.

“Don’t cry please.”

“What do you want from me?”

“Your love  
respect, support and loyalty.”

He inches closer to capture my lips in his. It almost feels like a dream that I don't respond for a moment until I feel his tongue delving inside of my mouth and searching for my tongue. His lips are warm and I love the taste of coffee in his mouth. I'd drink it everyday if only it tasted like it does in his mouth. Our tongues duel in passion and we both release throaty moans. We only get a chance to breathe when he wrenches his lips from mine and stares at me with eyes that are filled with love. I could be wrong though.

"I love you that's one thing you shouldn't doubt sthandwa sami," he says and kisses me hungrily leaning towards me.

Ours bodies are blended amorously as we share the sweetness of passion. The feel of a man's touch is something that I haven't felt in weeks and I almost forgot how blissful it is. In a matter of seconds we are both naked and the heat of his warm flesh radiates through my body to my bones. He rains kisses all over my body that leaves me shuddering and when he finally buries his head between my thighs I feel warm tingles surging through my body.

The kisses on my inner thighs are a torture can his tongue stroke that bud already! I cannot take the ache anymore I need his magic tongue to do them toe curling things down there. I suck in my breath at the first stroke against my clit. Damn it feels like it's been forever! He runs his tongue up and down before taking more of my sensitive flesh into his mouth, tenderly sucking it. I can't control my moans his tongue is reaching places that I never thought could as long as it is. I'm a shivering mess and pleasure is shooting through every nerve in my body. He's alternating between my asshole and vagina. The intense sensation builds up and my toes curl as I explode in his mouth.

He gets up between my thighs and holds his hard length in his palm giving it strokes as he stares at my glistening pussy before slapping it with his dick. God I hope this thing won't tear my pussy I'm a semi-virgin if there's even such. He stokes his cock along my slick cunt and I could barely recognize the sound of his voice.

"Ahhh fuck!" He curses under his breath as he enters me. I feel the pain as my pussy envelopes every inch of him. Our eyes lock and his are shining with tears. He begins to buck his hips and with each thrust he's strengthening the speed and depth. It's a

bit uncomfortable but I take it as a woman. He pulls out and shakes his manhood then impales me once again which earns him a yelp out of my mouth.

“Ipetule baby.”

I spread my pussy lips apart for him and that seems to urge him on. His thrusts are erratic and wild. I can't keep up with him gosh. Can he be gently I'm still new in this. He pulls me up from the couch and bends me over placing my left foot on the couch. I balance my hands on the backrest of the couch and scream when I feel him slamming into me. Now he's even deeper I feel like his cock will come out of my mouth.

The sound of our flesh hitting together and my screams is defeating. He's pounding and pumping into me hard.

It's like he's chasing for his orgasm but the moment he's close he slows down. I can feel his nails digging on my waist I will surely bruise as brown skinned as I am.

We move to the other side of the room where he presses me against the wall and holds my one leg against his waist then

thrusts into me. My leg can't keep up with his furious thrusts and when I tell him that he picks me up. I wrap my arms around his neck as he takes a few steps away from the wall. He tightens his hold on my thighs and fucks me harder in the air like I weigh nothing. He's making inhuman sounds and for a moment I thought wild animals invaded our house. My second orgasm hits me before I expected it.

"Baby I can't take it now please can we stop."

Now we are on the floor and we've been fucking for hours but he's not stopping. Every time when he's about to cum he'd pull out and go drink water then comes back to fuck me.

He doesn't responds but fucks me harder and deeper. I feel his body convulsing on top of me and his face turns into a strabismus eyed chimpanzee. Finally he reaches his high and we can stop. Yhuu I'm so exhausted my pussy is burning and my whole body is shaking. I don't know if I need to sleep or eat. He kisses my lips and rolls over to the floor. I get up from the floor but he holds me.

"Uyaphi asikaqedi." (Where are you going we are not done)

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

The burning smell brings me back from Missteps OF A Young Wife. I throw my phone on the couch and run to the kitchen. Damn you Mike Maphoto for your remarkable craft now my dumplings is burnt! I take the dish cloths and remove the pot from the gas stove before opening the pot. A sigh of relief escapes my lips when I see that it's only the plastics covering the dumplings that were starting to burn not my dumplings.

I pull out the two plastic bags filled with big balls of dumplings and put them on the tray then take the tray outside to cool the dumplings off. It's only a matter of time Kayise comes to check if the food is ready. He's busy outside with his father and nephew. They're building a kraal for his goats. He wants to move them from his parents' home and bring them here for obvious reasons. The good thing is that the chicken stew is already cooked.

I go back to the lounge and carry on with my recent read which I've grown addicted on. It's about mistakes of a young wife. I

find it very interesting since I relate. I'm a young wife myself well let's me say I'm about to be in few weeks time. Our wedding is going to be on the weekend of iphasika. Last month which was February we had umembeso ceremony whereby the fiancé was gifting my family especially my parents as a token of gratitude for raising me.

The gifts were blankets, pinafores, mats, doeks, food and drinks. It was a beautiful ceremony but I was gatvol by the fact that even those people abasizakala ngephutha lami were there and asking for second meals. On the week before our wedding I'm going to send umbondo to his homestead. We are going to have a traditional wedding ceremony only and that's the choice we both made.

As I'm reading I can feel someone's presence and when I look up from the screen of my phone I see my father in law peering at me with suspicion.

"Baba."

"Koti."

“Is everything okay?”

He opens his mouth to say something but it seems like words are failing him. I study his face which proves to be pointless as I can't read beyond what he's giving me. He's been acting strange ever since that day of tea spilling. It's like he wants to say something but he's contemplating.

“Ye..yes everything is fine koti,” he says and walks out.

I'm mystified by his behavior. Kayise walks in few seconds later wiping sweat on his forehead with his forearm.

“Ah baby kanti akuvuthwa yini?”

“I'm cooling off the dumplings. I will dish up in a second.”

He walks towards me and gives me a wet kiss on the lips then he looks at the screen of my phone. He always does this

whenever I have my phone in my hand. Surely he thinks Lisi was buried with a phone and I'm chatting with him. Oh may his soul rest in power. I miss him so much and I can't help but feel like their death is on my hands.

I can't make a follow up on the case because the fiancé is watching me like a hawk and he's sure that I don't see that he's taking note of my every move and every interaction with people. Tomorrow is Ndiwe's birthday party and I'm invited of course but I'm not sure he will let me go especially that he doesn't like Ndiwe.

"Let me go check on the dumplings outside." I say and we both walk out.

I check the dumplings while he joins his father and nephew. I take the tray and go back inside the kitchen where I dish up for all of us. Once I'm done I call Kayise and tell him that the food is ready. By the time they get inside the house the basin of water to wash hands and their food is ready on the coffee table.

.....

“Mm-mh baby I’m watching TV.”

It’s around 8pm we just finished eating supper and now I’m watching Generations but this man wants to fuck. I swear there’s something wrong with him. I can’t keep up with his insatiability. Can you believe that we fuck in the morning, afternoon and at night. Yep 3 times a day kuhle komuthi wakadokotela!!

I only get time to rest when I’m at home and sometimes I lie to him and say mama needs me at home just so I get away from him. He doesn’t want me to leave his sight he’s clingy and insecure. That’s the man I’ve turned him into and every now and then it shows. I spend my days wondering if we would ever get to a place where we are undoubtedly over everything that happened?

“Khohlwa oKarabo Moroka baziholela imali yabo,” (Forget about Karabo Moreka she’s getting paid) he says and I can’t help but laugh at him.

“Haibo Kayise it’s been years since Karabo left generations.” I say pushing him as he tries to kiss me again.

“Okusalayo she once played there.”

He can’t keep his hands and lips to himself. I get up from the couch and run away from him. In a second he’s on his feet and chasing after me.

“We are in the house baby you won’t pull Caster Semenya on me.”

I giggle and glance at the staircase.

“Oh my goodness the snake!” I scream and he gives me a chance to scurry away as he looks at the invisible snake.

“You sneaky rat!” I hear him saying behind me and giggle while jumping two steps at once. He’s not getting it tonight ngingashauna! I throw myself into our bedroom and lock it.

“Yeyeye open up.”

“Go sleep in the other room.”

“Baby come on yaz ngiqhanyelwe kanjani.” (....do you know how horny I am.)

“You’re always horny Kayise.”

“Cele uvule tu.” (Please open.)

“Goodnight.”

“Okay we won’t do anything baby.”

I laugh. He thinks he’s clever this one. My pussy needs a breather! I hear his feet shuffling away. Is he giving up already? That was way easy! I undress and take out my pjs in the closet.

“There’s no need for pjs.” Oh no! I turn around and look at him. Damn the door that leads to the balcony wasn’t locked! He has a smirk written all over his face and seems satisfied with himself.

“Kayise.” It comes out as whisper of defeat.

“Yes my love,” he says wiggling his eyebrows as he strides towards to me.

“I didn’t get my afternoon rounds today. It’s going to be a hell of imbhebho tonight!”

He scoops me up and walks to the bed before throwing me on top of it. I giggle as I bounce a bit. In the twinkling of an eye he is in his birthday suit. I never thought I’d get wet at the sight of indoda enqunu empofu.

“Come la!” He says and grabs my ankle dragging me to the edge of the bed before pulling me up for a sloppy kiss that sends

heat through my body. Our bodies are fused together and I can feel his dick smearing pre-cum on my stomach. He he picks me up and I wrap my arms around his neck as well as my legs around his waist as he walks to the vanity table where he places me on it with my butt.

He pulls away his lips from mine and showers my neck with delicate kisses that leaves me gasping in need. I squirm when he sucks on my tits while playing with my pussy with his fingers scissoring my clit between his fingers and finger fucking me.

He withdraws his fingers from my pussy and puts my legs on his shoulders. I don't think I ever stretched my legs like this my bones even popped for a second. I gulp a gasp when I feel him gliding inside of me.

“Fuck I never get enough of that heat inside of you!”

He fucks me his hands gripping hard on my hips. We both find ourselves lost in each other's gaze. This is pure bliss I cannot hold myself anymore from screaming so is he. I don't know if this is going to work but let me take a shot.

“Baby.”

“Yess ahh fuck!”

“It’s Ndiwe’s birthday party tomorrow and her mothers invited me,” I say between my screams of pleasure.

“We’re ...ahhh..going..to go..together.”

How will I have two nyana when he’s there but it’s better then refusing at all. He increases his speed, slamming into me harder and deeper. I feel a sudden wave attacking me and my whole body shakes violently.

“Haweeee Jesooo!” I reach my high and that triggers his. All it takes is few hard and deep thrusts for him to break apart.

“I love you.” He whispers between pants and kisses me before I whisper back that I love him too. He takes me to bed where we have two more rounds until I pass out.

In the morning I’m woken up by him sliding his dick inside of me. Yep I sleep with a dick and wake up with a dick as if it’s a prayer. Sex and prayer what a weird comparison but don’t abazalawane say sleep with a prayer and wake up with a prayer?

We take a bath after our lazy morning glory. The color of the day is yellow, white and black. I’m rocking a black one shoulder cutout waist ruched dress and yellow asymmetric toe loop slide flat sandals. I don’t own heels because I have small feet and usually I never find a beautiful heel that fit me. I cannot wear kids heels at my age. He’s wearing a mustard chino pants and black shirt sleeves rolled up to his elbows. He pairs up his outfit with black five step carvela.

It’s not a big party only family and close friends are going to be there. I make the bed first before we leave. We start at McDs for breakfast since I was lazy to make one.

Arriving at the Dlomo mansion we are ushered to the garden by a caterer where a black non waterproof stretch marquee is erected. The word beautiful doesn't begin to describe the decor which is in color white and yellow with a touch of black here and there. Bukamina is the first one to see me and she runs towards me with a huge smile on her cute face. Oh God she's so heavy but I try to pick her up.

"Hey baby girl."

"Hello Nhle. Ndiwe is going to be happy you came."

"I'm also happy I came."

She's Mam Xitlalli last born and she's a twin with Melikhaya whose Mam Aphiwe's son. They were born on the same day and the age difference between them is few hours. I salute Mr Dlomo for impregnating both of his wives at the same time.

I wonder how he would've dealt with two pregnant wives let alone who are in labour pains. He probably would've gone crazy

but I'm sure as crazy as he was going to be it was going to be the best day of his life. It's so sad he never got that chance but what's sad even more is that Kamina and Likhaya never got a chance to know their dad. Dlomo is dead and ain't feeling anything but what about these two? It must be heart wrenching.

"Nhle!" squeals Mam Aphiwe who immediately wraps me in her arms the moment we get to them.

"I'm so glad you made it! Look at you baby you are so beautiful!"

"Thank you mama. You're also beautiful."

"And she's glowing!" says Mam Xitlalli who takes me to her embrace as well as soon as Mam Aphiwe lets me go. They exchange greetings with Kayise.

“You know I couldn’t believe it when she told us that you took her back. You must really love her huh?” Mam Xitlalli directs her comment to Kayise staring deep in his eyes.

“Love doesn’t begin to describe how I feel about her.”

“Judging by her glow you’re taking good care of her. Keep up the good work boy and just so you know I haven’t pinch someone’s balls with a piler in years...”

“Xitlalli stop it with threats. Muzi I’m sure by now you know that Nhle is like our daughter so that makes you our son. Welcome.”

“Thank you Mrs Dlomo.”

“Let me take you to other men.” Mam Xitlalli says and she leaves with Kayise going to the group of men seated on the far side of my left under the marquee.

“Where’s Ndiwe?” I ask

“Zo is coming with her remember it’s a surprise. You know she doesn’t like to celebrate her birthdays because on her 9th birthday she was burying her mother. Of course we never let her be and that is why it’s an intimate birthday party. We don’t want to overwhelm her.”

“Oh yes she once told me. I know very much how she feels.” I never look forward to mine as well.

“The party is going to start as soon as they arrive. Let me introduce you to everyone.”

She takes my hand and we make our to the marquee where she introduces me to her other family and friends. They’re all welcoming and nice. I like her best friend uncle Jay. I’ve never personally met a gay man. He’s the whole mood I tell you but his husband, uncle Sabelo who happens to be one of the late Mr Dlomo’s friend is reserved. I wonder how do they keep up with each other but they say opposites attract.

“Come sit next to me ntomboo,” he says and I lower myself next to him.

“Umuhle yaz.” (You’re beautiful)

“Thank you.”

“So who’s that marinated steak.” I’m confused for a second until my eyes look at where’s he’s staring at.

“That’s Muzikayise.”

“Yhuu I sbwl him he’s such a succulent steak.”

I giggle. Kayise is homophobic and he’s mine akayazi lento akhuluma ngayo lobaba.

“Jay behave you’re married and he’s her fiancé and very young.” Mam Aphiwe

“I’m just kidding nana hawu!”

I stop myself from laughing at ‘nana’ haibo this woman is in her early forties and she’s given birth not one but three children and miscarried one.

“Where’s the birthday girl I’m thirsty and I won’t have a wine without eating a cake.”

Just then Abuse runs to us and tells us Zo and Ndiwe are here. We all stand up from the chairs and wait for them. Once they appear we all scream ‘surprise!’ she almost faints and when she discerns what’s going on she bursts into a loud sob. You know that ‘yhiiiiii’ type of cry and it’s only today I realize that she’s an ugly crier. She looks like Kayise when he’s reaching his climax. Her mothers are next to her in an instant.

“What’s wrong Zo? What happened?”

“Nothing mama. It just that I woke up feeling down and like something bad is going to happen but what’s happening now is actually the opposite. ” Ndiwe

Awww my friend is dramatic bathong! They take her to special seat and I sit next to her since I happen to be the only friend who was invited and on the other side of her it’s her snobby bitch of a cousin. That moment her mom, aunty Thula is so sweet kanjani. Once we’ve sang her a happy birthday song the speeches starts.

Mam Aphiwe asks me to help her fetch the prezzies inside the house. I hope Ndiwe is going to love the gift I got her. Yaz these rich people you never know what to get them. I use the money I received at my umemulo ceremony I was surprised mama kept it for me.

I bought her imvunulo from Isisa’s mom and a glass of beer since she’s a lover of beer flying fish. It’s personalized our names and a heart in between them. Chocolates are every girl’s favorite there’s no way I couldn’t buy a box of them as well.

“How are you baby?”

“I’m fine mama.”

“Are you sure.”

“Honestly kunzima mama. It hurt that I have to pretend like I didn’t just lost a baby and the father of my baby in just a short space of time. I mourn them in secret and that’s so unfair. They absolutely don’t deserve that.”

“Oh baby come here.”

I walk to her wide open arms and she squeezes me tightly. I take in her warmth and it’s a good feeling ever.

“I don’t understand why do you have to mourn them in private,” she says pushing me away but not completely breaking the embrace.

“No one knows that I miscarried except him. I tried to tell mama but she went ballistic at the mention of Manelisi’s name I didn’t even get a chance to tell her. I don’t want to mess things up again maybe it’s the best thing they don’t know about this. I’m someone’s wife now I cannot openly mourn another man especially the one that almost break our relationship with my fiancé.”

“You’re carrying a lot of pain baby and pretending to be happy while you’re dying inside it’s not healthy for you. How is he treating you yena? Are things okay between the two of you? I mean it can’t be that easy to just move passed the cheating. Men never forgive when it comes to cheating.”

“He’s trying mama I see that and I can imagine how hard it must be for him.”

“Maybe you guys should try marriage counseling before you get married. At least you still have weeks before the wedding.”

“I don’t think he will agree to that he’s a Zulu Village man.”

“Is everything okay here?” I hear Kayise’s voice behind us

“Yes we are okay. Please help us carry these prezzies.” I say to him.

“Okay.”

We carry the gifts and walk to the garden where the party is. Once the reading of the gifts is over we eat over nice music. Ndiwe has been stretching his neck none stop as if she’s expecting someone.

“What’s wrong?”

“Zwelakhe is not here. Was he not invited?”

“He said he’s going to be late he will start somewhere.” The snobby bitch says.

“Okay. I’m glad you’re here babe.”

“I wouldn’t have missed this day.”

“You could’ve told me though.”

This girl is not serious kanti what is a surprise? As the day goes by everyone is having a good time. It’s around 6pm when others go back to their homes and now it’s only the Dlomo family, the grandparents and few of Ndiwe’s cousins who are still here. It’s also time for us to leave. Mam Aphiwe packed us some leftovers I’m glad that I don’t have to cook when I get home.

“Where are they!” The deep voice roars in anger and we all stare at where its coming from. Zwelakhe appears and he looks murderous.

“Buti Zwe you’re late the party is over!” complains Zo.

“You want to know where I was? Well I will tell you my dearest sister! I was meeting the PI I hired to find out who framed me and guess what?”

Oh no please don't tell me this what I think it is.

“What?”

“These bloody people you call family they're the ones that killed Mamoo!”

Everyone exclaims as I let out a drop of pee I wasn't aware I was holding. Zo laughs out loudly while Ndiwe jumps up from her chair and looks at Zwelakhe.

“What are you saying Lakhe?” Ndiwe

“Sikhohlakali sesalukwazi tell your step granddaughter how did you kill her mother and why!!!” He says pulling out a gun and points it at Gogo Ndlela. We all scream in shock.

## ☆ Muzikayise ☆

These people are claiming my wife as their own as if she's an orphan. I wonder what would Mama Qwabe say if she were to hear that she gave birth to a child and now these people are claiming her as theirs as if she's dead. Haibo akuzalelwana! They're a huge family and they have many children so what are their intentions with my wife? This has to be about the public eye. They want to appear as kind hearted people while they're using my wife for clout and good image.

I'm not one who's interested in what famous people do and I don't care about them but I must say that their polygamous marriage got everyone's attention. It was something that people were talking about. I don't know what is the fuss about because it's not like the wives' late husband is the first man owathatha isthembu. Marrying them on the same day and the way they get along could be the reason why people were on and on about them as if their marriage is the first polygamous marriage in the world.

Keeping a good image is the most important thing to them. How sure are we that they get along? Abafazi the women are pretentious. This gender is very dangerous I tell you but if they really do get along then who doesn't know there's umuthi westhembu to make your wives get along. Mr Dlomo was a taxi owner surely he had a sangoma or inyanga yakhe nje yedwa who did things for him. There's absolutely nothing big or to make a fuss about.

I'm the only one who hasn't been enjoying the party I just wanted to go home but I didn't want to spoil my wife's day she seemed to be having a good time. When she finally said we should get going I couldn't be happier. Just when we are about to leave this guy shows up with a gun talking about murder.

"What are you talking about?" asks Gogo Ndlela who he's pointing a gun at. I can see that she's trying to mask the fear.

"Don't you fucking dare play dumb old hag! You know very well what you did to Mamoo!!!" This guy is boiling with anger. I fear what he will do to us. Never trust an angry person with a weapon.

“Wait buti Zwe are you serious?” Zobuhle asks immediately she stops laughing.

“Of course I’m damn serious!”

“Lakhe please tell me you’re joking. That can’t be possible I mean my grandma would...no I refuse to believe that. Gogo what is he talking about?” Ndiwe

“I don’t know my grandchild...”

“Stop denying!!!!!!” His shrill voice reverberates around the Dlomo yard and the sound of the gunshot that follows after that makes everyone scream in fear.

My adrenaline floods in my system as my eyes involuntarily stare at where my wife is standing. I release a breath of temporary relief when I notice that the guy shot the sky. See now the effect of building a house on top of the mountain with not even one neighbor. If they were living in a normal suburb someone would be calling the police now after that gunshot.

“Buti But Zwe please calm down maybe there’s a misunderstanding ....”

“I won’t calm down Zobuhle! I spent years in jail for something I didn’t do because of this family!!!” Now this is deeper and it got nothing to do with us he should let us go.

“Man let my wife and I leave we know nothing about this.” I say

“No one is leaving here until I say so!”

“What about the kids Zwelakhe they are not supposed to see this please let them go inside the house.” Yeyeye spits out the truth and everyone agree with her.

“I’m not going inside the house!” This rude boy says.

His name is Abuse and he's been mean towards me to the point of stepping on my carvela shoes on purpose and pretend like it was a mistake. I don't know what did I do to him but I was so tempted to give him a back clap. Ayikho into engicika like a person who steps on my shoes especially my carvelas.

"Abuse go inside the house my boy okay." Mrs Dlomo, the one who has a funny name says. I'm overwhelmed by an aura of gangsterism that surrounds her.

"What if he hurt all of you mommy." It's not like there's anything you are going to do boy. Just leave maan!

"No one is going to get hurt I promise you my boy. Trust me we are going to sort this out okay." The boy nods hesitantly after receiving a kiss from his mom on the forehead.

"Yandi take the kids and go inside the house." Yeyeye tells the teenage girl who instantly takes the kids and they disappear out of sight.

I travel my eyes from one person to the other and fear is what I see on their faces. Mrs Dlomo with a funny name is the only one who's not showing any emotion of fear.

It's evident that the other Mrs Dlomo is shaking in her boots and I wouldn't be surprised if she just peed on herself on that chair she's sitting on. I'm sure she's even sober now. Does this mean she knows what is this guy talking about?

"So you're denying that you did something to Mamoo salukazi ndini?" Zwelakhe

"Maybe the PI made a mistake it can't be possible," says Uthandiwe. I can't miss the tremor in her voice.

"It's not a mistake!"

"Zwelakhe put the gun down and tell us what that PI of yours found. Holding us at gun point is not necessary. We all want to know what happened to Cebisile." Mkhulu Ndlovu pleads while brushing his wife's back who's panicking.

“I don’t understand why would Gogo kill my mom though it doesn’t make sense Zwelakhe! You need to calm the fuck down!”

“You want to know why? Okay you will know why in a second Ndiwe.” He slides out his phone and makes a call. Telling whoever that is on the other side of the line to come.

“Yeey! Don’t even dare bullshit me Xitlalli do you hear me? I’m not scared of you !!” It’s only then I notice that she was trying to sneak inside the house.

“I want to go pee. You can see we were drinking!”

“That’s none of my business! Sit down!!”

“Voetsek maan you can’t tell me what to do in my home! I want to pee or you want me to pee here?”

“If you want to show your father in law your privates be my guest!”

“Yaz wena uyinja!! We welcomed you in our house and gave you start up capital to start over and build something of your own then you come here in our house hold us at gun point in my daughter’s birthday party and in front my children! You have a nerve!!!”

“Xitlalli cálmate por favor.” (Xitlalli calm down please)

“No mamá, este chico es ingrato.” (No mama this boy is ungrateful)

“Oh please it’s clearly now you didn’t do all of that out of your good heart. You were trying to ease your guilty conscience!!”

“Guilty conscience amasimba! We did this for uZobuhle and we wouldn’t have done it without Uthadiwe’s approval! We did this for our girls!!”

“As if you care about them!!”

“You may fool Ndiwe but not me! You’re the one that killed Cebisile now you’re pushing the blame!!”

A white man in jean

slim fit simple tee and black sneakers walks in.

“Uncle Alex!” Zobuhle and Uthandiwe chorus. The white man looks at them sadly then his eyes lock to the other Mrs Dlomo who has a look of betrayal painted on her face.

“I’m sorry Wewe I know I promised you to never tell a soul and I wasn’t prepared to do so but they have my wife and children. I had to tell them the truth.” The white guy

“What truth? Isn’t this man Cebisile’s ex?” Gogo Ndlovu says for the first time since this drama started.

“Uthandiwe you wanted to know why that old hag killed your mother well this man will tell you. Bob tell her and don’t leave even a single detail.”

“Umh uh. Wewe and I were dating way back before she met your father. I had an identical twin brother who was mentally ill. He was dangerous and had killed many times so my parents took him to a mental hospital in Cape Town. One day he escaped from the hospital and came to turn our lives up and down because he felt like we neglected him and ditched him in a mental hospital. I never told Wewe that I had a twin brother so he threatened me and my parents to take us down. He knew things that I cannot reveal and I had to give him what he wanted and that was Wewe. He...he...uhm...he dated her while Wewe thought she was dating me. My parents promised me that they will make a plan to take him back to the hospital but things escalated fast before I knew it he had Wewe in hostage and he was inflicting pain on her. I wanted to help her so bad and tell her father the truth but my dad sent people to beat me up. I woke up in ICU only to find out that my twin brother was shot by the police and was buried as me. I can say that I was a coward and I should've come to Aphiwe as soon as I woke up and told her the truth after that but I chose to go on with life which was difficult without her. Years later we met and I told her everything that we did. She was shocked obviously because she thought she buried me.”

Shit! Such things really happen in real life I thought these things happen in movies only! To say I'm shocked would be an understatement. Mrs Dlomo is now crying and her sister wife is comforting her. Maybe they really do get along.

"I don't understand still what all of this got to do with mommy's death." Ndiwe says confused as I am.

"So is this why you and mama broke up uncle Alex? She found out that you and mama had history?" Zobuhle

"Partly yes. Uhm it was during that time Ndiwe got raped and she was going through a lot in the process she was pushing me away. On the other side Nkosinathi was also blaming Wewe for what happened to Ndiwe. We happened to be there for each other when our partners were pushing us away and one thing led to another."

Say what?

“Wait..wait...wait white boy what do you mean one thing let to another.” Gogo Ndlovu asks

“Mama you cheated on my father?” Ndiwe

“Baby I’m sorry... I..” she bursts into tears and buries her head on her sister wife’s chest.

“Oh now it makes sense. Cebisile told me and I didn’t know that she was taking about you Aphiwe. I can’t believe you cheated on my son in the process you hurt my daughter! Cebisile was like a daughter to me!!”

“Ngiyaxolisa mama but I didn’t know that they were dating. Bob didn’t tell me not that I’m saying cheating on your son was right...”

“What are you saying pho? Do you know how broken Cebisile was when she found out that her white man cheated on her? She even had a miscarriage!!”

“She was going through a lot gogo. Your son was blaming her for things she had no control over give her a break okay! It’s not like your son was perfect either! He brought Mam Xitlalli in their lives after everything they have been through together!!”  
Kj

“You can’t blame daddy that he ended up falling for another woman while still in love with your mother Kj because she’s the one that called off their wedding! You didn’t see how broken daddy was! That was my first time seeing my dad crying!!”  
Ndiwe

“Surely there must have been a reason! Mom why did you called off the wedding.”

“Good question my boy!” Zwelakhe says with a smirk on his face.

“Uhm..uh..” she’s stuttering

“You stutter now? Tell your son that Cebisile asked you to tell your late husband that you fucked Bob, Alex whatever his name is or else she was going to tell him herself. You chose to lie to him and make up a story because you knew that you and the old hag you call a mother will kill Mamoo so that you can have your late husband to yourself.”

Wow she cheats and lie then she kills someone who has leverage on her.

“Mama is this true?” Zo

“Please tell us it’s not true mama please.” Tears are trolling down Ndiwe’s face.

“Wewe it can’t be true right? I mean you would never do something so monstrous like this right?” Bob or Alex white guy says. Now we are all staring at Mrs Aphiwe Dlomo.

“It’s not true.” We all turn and look at Yeyeye. Ufakazani what does she know?

“Uhm I mean the last time I was here I heard them talking. I’m sorry Mam Xitlalli and Mam Aphiwe but I wasn’t eavesdropping. I was just passing by and I heard you two. They were worried about Uthandiwe that she believes in revenge and the more she grows there are chances that she’s going to want to avenge her parents. They said since she believed that Zwelakhe is not the one that killed her mother then they should find out the truth themselves before Uthandiwe does things that could get her into trouble. Mam Aphiwe even said since it’s been years searching for the killers of her late husband with no fruitless results the least they could do is to find out if Zwelakhe really killed Ndiwe’s mom and if not then who did? Ndiwe deserve a bit of closure maybe she will finally celebrate her birthdays.”

“That’s bullshit it doesn’t prove that she’s not involved!”  
Zwelakhe

“What I heard is two mothers who were concerned about their daughter and willing to get her closure so what do you mean she’s involved? I mean it’s not like they saw me. Why would she want to find the killer if she knew she’s involved?”

“Of course she had to play along to her sister wife. Now that you said that it’s clearly that Xitlalli doesn’t know anything about this but Aphiwe does! She planned all of this with her mother and I’m the one who took the bait!”

Gogo Ndlela stands up from her seat and raises her hands up as Zwelakhe points the gun at her. She’s one of those grannies that are classy and young at heart. Udlise incaza saan and for an old lady she really got a banging body.

“My daughter doesn’t know anything about this I’m the one who did all of this on my own.”

“What? Mama Nooo! I know you’re scared but don’t agree to things you know nothing about.” Mrs Aphiwe Dlomo

“I’m sorry my child I did it for you. I couldn’t stand the watching you miserable without Nkosinathi. She was not going to let you have him since she couldn’t have him either. It was either she dies or you die out of my misery.” Jesus Lord this old woman!

Her daughter is the one that cheated and she killed Ndiwe's mother! See how dangerous this gender is?

"Oh mama how could you do this! I never asked you to kill for me!! If Nkosinathi and I were meant to be together we were going to find our way to each other's arms! You shouldn't have killed her!" Mrs Aphiwe Dlomo

"Ngiyaxolisa mtanami I did what I thought was best for you at that time and...."

"Best? Taking someone's life you call it best?? Oh my God you're so cruel! Your daughter is the one that cheated and you decided to kill Cebisile just so she can have my son? Who does that huh?? Ave uyisikhohlakali Hloniphile! You deserve to rot in jail!!" Gogo Ndlovu bellows angrily as tears stream down on her face.

"You rotten old woman!!" Alex roars angrily and in a twinkling of an eye his hands are wrapped around Gogo Ndlela's neck.

Mkhulu Ndlovu gets up and tries to pull Alex away from Gogo Ndlela but it seems futile. Zwelakhe shoots up the sky and it's only then Alex let's go of the old woman. She coughs holding her neck.

“Stop it Bob! This is my show! You failed Mamoo the day you stick your white dick in Aphiwe's pussy while you were dating her now you're gong to act all macho. Leave my sight your job is done here!”

Alex clicks his tongue and disappears out of sight.

“What did you do to her? How did you kill her?” Uthandiwe says moving closer to her step grandma with tears and mucus running down her face.

“I'm sorry...”

“Don't you fucken dare say that shit! You don't take away someone's life and say sorry! You're so evil! How did you kill my mother and framed Zwelakhe?”

“Baby do you have to know all...”

“Shut up wena! I’m not talking to you but I’m talking to your evil mother! Who killed my mother because of your whoreness!!”

“I can’t deal with this I want to leave please let me go buti Zwe. I want to go to my fiancé this is too much to take. I can’t believe that I loved this old woman thinking that she’s a great grandmother kanti she’s the one that took you and mommy away from me. The..pa...pai...pain she put me through I..I” Zo lets out a sob as she goes down to her knees but Zwelakhe catches her in his arms and holds her tightly.

“She’s cruel she deserves to go to jail and be punished for her sins! Kade emosha lo and never even once has she paid for her sins! It’s about time she face her actions. How many people have suffered because of her wickedness? Call the police Zwelakhe!” Gogo Ndlovu

“I want to know first how did she kill my mother.” Uthandiwe insists as she vigorously wipes her tears away.

“Uhm uh I had someone who was watching at her 24/7 and I had cameras installed inside the house. I knew everything she does and who she interacts with. Funani and I know each other and he owed me a favor. I asked him to hit on your mother. We already knew that Zwelakhe was coming to the party so when he walked in Funani kissed your mother on purpose. Like any boyfriend who would find his girlfriend kissing another man he reacted. The cherry on top was the words he said out of anger and with GBV going on in the world without a doubt he was going to be locked up. An assassin I hired to terminate her suffocated her with a pillow in her sleep. Nsibande as the detective who I was working with made sure that Zwelakhe was found guilty.” She did all of this on purpose. Planned everything why is she crying? It must be crocodile tears.

“Oh my goodness you’re wicked!” screams Uthandiwe and with a move that surprises us she grabs the gun from Zwelakhe who is comforting a crying Zobuhle.

“You think you can kill and get away with it well today you’re meeting your maker!” Ndiwe says pointing the gun at Gogo Ndlela shocking everyone.

“Uthandiwe don’t do that please my grandchild. Calm down please.” Gogo Ndlovu

“No I wont calm down gogo! She killed my mother because of her cheater of a daughter! Who died and made her God huh? I want her to feel the pain my mother felt when she that assassin suffocated her!” She walks closer to Gogo Ndlela who’s crying and has her hands raised up in the air.

“I deserve it sthandwa sami and maybe when you kill me you will finally find closure but what I want you to know is that never was the day that passed without regretting what I did to your mother. I’m sorry from the bottom of my heart and I know there’s nothing I would do that will bring back your mother.”

“Damn right there’s nothing that will bring her back! Now say goodbye to that whore of your daughter!!”

“Don’t kill her Ndiwe. Death is an easy way out.” Zwelakhe

“Buti Zwe is right Ndiwe don’t do it. Don’t stoop to her level.”  
Zobuhle

“Her rotten blood doesn’t deserve to stain your hands Paci ka  
gogo. Jail is what she deserves.” Gogo Ndlovu

“It might seem like it’s the only solution now to kill her but the  
moment you pull that trigger you will regret it.” Yeyeye

Tears are relentlessly flowing down Ndiwe’s face and she’s  
tilting her head back and forth to anyone who’s warning her  
against this. The anger and pain in her eyes is evident. You  
could see that she wants to end this old lady’s life without a  
doubt but they’re confusing her now. In a swift move Gogo  
Ndlela snatches the gun from Ndiwe and points it on the side of  
her own head.

“Mama nooooo don’t do that please!” Mrs Aphiwe Dlomo begs  
her mother.

“I’m sorry for everything I put you through my child and find it in your heart to forgive me. I love you so much and please tell your sisters that I love them.”

A gunshot follows and Mrs Aphiwe Dlomo screams in agony as her mother falls on the ground blood oozing from her head. In a second she’s next to her mother on the ground and trying to wake up

“Mama how could you do this! Wake up pleaseeee!”

The atmosphere turns somber as we all watch her letting out a gut wrenching sob while cradling her mom’s exanimate body. Now this is another turn out of events. Kj walks to his mother and kneels next to her before wrapping his arms around her.

“I’m sorry mommy.”

“It’s all my fault boy.”

“No it’s not mama I’m really sorry.”

“This is it. I’m not sticking around for another drama especially not now when there’s a dead person. My wife and I weren’t here whatever you decide to do with this predicament. Suka Sambe Wami let’s go.” I have had enough of drama today. I want to go to my house, eat, fuck my wife and sleep.

She lets go of Ndiwe who was in her embrace and kisses her forehead then she walks towards me. I take her hand then we make our way to my car. Just as I open the door for her we hear a voice behind us.

“Can I go with you guys. I just need to be away from everything.”

“Of course you can come with us Ndiwe.” Yeyeye says and I glare at her. These people are scandalous I don’t want her to associate with them. They both get at the back seat and I get in front then we leave. I take a cigarette and light it then smoke after rolling the window down.

I can hear Yeyeye comforting Ndiwe who is weeping all over again. I feel sorry for her I really do especially that all of this happened on her birthday but I don't want her to be friends with my wife. In fact I don't want her near these people.

By the time we arrive at home it's going for half past 8. They both walk upstairs while I settle on the couch waiting for her to come back and dish up for me. I'm glad we have leftovers because I really wouldn't have been able to wait for her to cook. I see her descending the stairs and when she walks to the kitchen I follow behind her and find her in the kitchen dishing up.

Did I mention how beautiful she really look in this dress. It fits her like a glove and all her curves are all out on display. Her popping ass has my manhood expanding in my pants. My hands can't help but grab her buttocks which makes her jump a bit.

"I miss you."

I envelope her waist and kiss her nape. She changed her deodorant spray to an expensive perfume and I can't get over

her new scent. It has a blend of intoxicating and seductive notes.

“I’m here baby.”

“I feel like I haven’t seen you the whole day.”

“It’s been a long and helluva day. I’m all sort of feelings you can think of.”

“Don’t worry Khabangobe will take away all those feelings and make you relax.”

“ I will sleep with Ndiwe babe she really needs me.”

“It’s not like you will bring back her mother nor change everything that transpired today. I don’t even understand why did you agree that she must come with us.”

I feel her body tensing up in my arms then she turns around and looks at me.

“I can’t believe you said that Kayise that’s insensitive of you. That girl over there has been nothing but nice to me and when it time for me to reciprocate her love and care I’d do it without any hesitation. If you don’t want us in your house just tell us it’s okay we will go to my parents house.”

“It’s her that I don’t want in my house no in fact I don’t want her in your life. These people has drama and they’re scandalous. Look at what happened today we were held at gun point. Are you telling me that these are the people that you want to keep in your life.”

“Yes they’re the people I want to keep in my life and I have no right to judge them. We don’t call problems upon ourselves Kayise...”

“They brought problems upon themselves. You can’t cheat and cover up your cheating by killing a person! The worst thing that

I ever heard is sending someone to jail for the crime that he never committed!”

“It’s Mam Aphiwe’s mom who did that and now she’s dead. The Dlomo family are the good people Kayise.”

“I can never ever be free and comfortable knowing that you associate with the likes of Aphiwe who cheats and Uthandiwe abuvula indunu to hurt another girl just because she spilled water on her who does that? They will influence you and it doesn’t help that you’re also weak!”

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She blinks superfluously and looks at me with eyes that are shining with tears.

“You see when I was staying in the street sleeping in the toilet and eating in the dirty bins those people took me in and gave me home. They welcomed me with warm hands and showered me with love. I’d be stupid to cut off such people in my life based on mistakes they made in their lives as if I’m perfect. They were there for me when no one was there for me. When the whole world was against me including my own family. A lot could’ve happened to me but they saved me.”

I swallow hard as I stare at her pain filled eyes. I didn’t know she stayed in the street. I thought they took her the very first day she was thrown out of home.

“You...you never told me you stayed in the street Yeyeye.”

“You never asked Kayise just like you never asked if I got raped or not because I know very well that you know my pants and panty were found on top of the mountain.”

“I....” she stops me from talking by raising her hand up.

“It’s okay I understand that you thought I was being a sluttish weak bitch who was just craving to walk half naked in a stormy night. Here’s your food. Goodnight.” she walks away leaving me with shards of glasses in my heart.

☆ Isisa ☆

The baby is growing and my tummy is getting bigger. Now I’m 5 months and few weeks pregnant. I’m always fatigued and I sleep a lot much to mom’s disapproval.

“Vuka! Wake up!”

“Maaa.” I whine.

I can't have a nap without having her to wake me up. She has literally stopped me from taking afternoon naps ngaloyomzuzu they're the best.

“Ufuna lengane ilale mhla uteta?” (You want this baby to sleep during birth.) God my mom with her million pregnancy theories. How can a baby sleep during birth or it's going to be sleep walking or is it sleep sliding? Whatever that it would be doing as it comes out of my vagina while sleeping.

“Gosh mama I'm tired.”

I still feel sleepy and my eyes are heavy.

“Wake up it's 4pm now! It's been long since you have been sleeping!”

What's the exaggeration about? I only slept 3 hours I need another 3 at least. I cover my head with a duvet but she grabs it away from me.

“Isisa ngiyakhuluma njalo.”

I groan and drag myself out of bed. The dampness in my panties reminds me the embarrassing dream I had. I'm having plenty of these dreams lately but every time I wake up it's still embarrassing as fuck it's like someone could see what was I dreaming about.

“I'm coming mama you don't have to wait up for me.”

“You want to go back to sleep I know you.”

Thixo I want to change my damp panty now how will I do that with this woman staring at me. Knowing her she will ask me 21 questions and how will I bring myself to answer her questions. I decide to let my panties be and follow her behind as we head to the kitchen.

“You need to stretch your legs and be active. Here’s the bucket go fetch water at the Qwabe homestead.”

She gives me the 10l bucket because 20l is now hard to carry with this tummy. Despite the conflict between mama and Mam Thembeke we still fetch water from their tank. I think she knows that she was wrong and she has to apologize to mama but she has pride.

Once I’m at the Qwabe homestead I let myself in after knocking without waiting for a response. Mvelo is home alone his parents went to Laydysmith to a traditional pediatrician ukuyokhipha uNdabenhle inyoni.

Yesterday I had to bring Mvelo some food to eat because wow the boy is not domesticated. Mbewu always does things around here. Mina I don’t play like that I teach my little brother how to do chores. He knows how to wash dishes and make an egg now. I’m glad that mama does not have a problem with that. I’m sure Qwabe would go crazy if he can see his son washing dishes. I don’t know who said house chores are for women only.

“Mvelo!” I call out for him as I walk into his bedroom. He’s startled by me which makes him drop something on the floor. My eyes follow it and I freeze.

“Mvelo what are you doing with a gun?”

“Why don’t you knock Isisa!” He takes the gun and puts it into his chest of drawers hiding it with his underwears and socks.

“I knocked but you didn’t answer me.” I walk closer to the bed and put the bucket down before sitting down next to him. He’s wearing sweatpants only and his well defined body is on display.

“Hey why do you have a gun?”

“It’s not mine it’s dad’s. It was his late father’s gun.”

“What are you doing with it?”

“Why are you here? Oh you came to fetch water okay let’s go.”

I pull him down just as he stands up from the bed.

“What’s going on?”

“Nothing Isisa!”

He heaves a sigh and scratches his forehead. He seems agitated and that worries me a lot. I pull his chin so that he’s looking at me.

“Talk to me please.”

“I’m going to kill them! All of them! This is not over!”

“Woah calm down and tell me who’s them and what happened.”

“I found them all three of them...”

“Them?”

“Yes the guys that tried to rape Mbewu. They’re all older than me probably around my elder’s sister’s age. I knew that I won’t be able to fight them I will get them one by one. I had everything planned Isisa like I was ready to beat the shit out of that one that goes by the name Bhekumbuso with my knobkerrie. When I got there I was so terrified and shaking. He laughed at me and the anger in me grew but fear restricted me to react.” The pain seeping out in his voice has my heart bleeding for him. I don’t even know what to say to him

“Say it! Tell me what a stupid and coward of a boy I am. Tell me how much of a failure I am as a brother! I’m useless I couldn’t beat him up even when he told me that he’s going to find her and fuck her harder that she won’t be able to walk and would need a wheelchair chair. I just stood there shaking like a 5 year old and peed on my pants!”

Oh my goodness this is sad.

“Don’t be too harsh on yourself Mvelo. You’re not a failure of a brother. Mbewu is blessed to have a brother like you who would do anything to protect her.”

“I’m sure they’re laughing at me now with his friends and everyone would be talking about me.”

“Hey look at me.”

“Hayi...”

“Look at me Mvelo.”

He sighs and tilts his head to look at me.

“This has nothing to do with you at all. You’re not a coward I told you that these guys use umuthi too much. Clearly this has

umuthi written all over it. They're the ones who are cowards because they use muthi to intimidate people and be feared."

"You think so?"

"I know so."

"You're just trying to make me feel better."

"No that's not what I'm doing I'm just stating the facts but if it's making you to feel better then I'm glad. You are not a failure that's one thing I know. Zumile would be the luckiest girl in the world to have an uncle like you who would protect her at all cost."

He flashes his gorgeous smile. I love how his eyes squints every time he smiles or laughs.

"I pray that she comes out looking like you not her father nekhanda legeja."

A laugh breaks out of me.

“You’re mean!”

“He’s the mean one.”

They don’t get along ever since Mvelo and I grown close.

“You’re so beautiful you know that?”

I can’t help but blush.

“Sometimes.”

“What do I have to do to replace that sometimes with every single second.”

I giggle

“I don’t know honestly you know how insecurities get the better of us most of the times. The fact that Thuthu wanted Mbewenhle but used me to get over her then he cheated on me with Ndiwe play a huge role. Both of these girls are beautiful then there’s me.....” He shuts me up by capturing my lips. It catches me by surprise but I reciprocate the kiss. His lips are soft and welcoming just as I imagine. They taste like a fruit that has a lot of sweet juices. When he breaks the kiss our breathing is a bit ragged.

“Umuhle MaNjinji if I were to go blind I’d still see your beauty as it is in your soul and can be seen only with a heart.”

Awww what is this boy doing to me. I find myself leaning closer to his face and our lips collide in a magical way. We share an intense sensual kiss. His hands are caressing my body and mine are palming his face. God he tastes like a forbidden fruit. So irresistible and intoxicating that I don’t notice we are now naked until I feel the heat of his flesh against mine.

I feel my desire increasing tenfold as he glides his lips on my neck going down to my breasts which are aching and wants

attention. He takes my rock hard nipple in his mouth and I mewl like a cat. Jovoncwele he is doing exactly how he does me in my dreams. By the time he feasts on my other nipple my whole body is quivering and I'm leaking down there. I need more but I'm not sure what is it 'more'

"Mvelooo."

"MaNjinji." His voice is gruff and deep I almost couldn't recognize it.

"I want you." I say and a mixture of lust and hunger flares in his eyes.

"As you wish."

This is the second dick I ever seen in my life and it's quite funny how its size is the same as Thuthu's yet he's younger then him. He holds his cock and directs it inside of me.

“Haaaaa yess!” He grunts throwing his head back for a second as I flinch out of the uncomfortableness. It wasn’t this painful in the dream when he entered me. He starts moving his waist and the pain keep getting worse. No these dreams sold me another dreams!

“Am I hurting you?”

“A bit.” I lie

“I’m sorry I will be gentle.”

He’s careful not to press his weight on top of my tummy as he slides in and out of me going deeper and deeper. It keeps getting better with each thrust and I feel pleasure building up. Soft moans start rolling out of my mouth. How on earth a boy can be this perfect though? Damn he’s such a work of art. Our lips meet once again and our tongues dance in tune of passion. Now this feels more then it did in the dreams. He’s pounding into me and we are both swallowing each other’s groans.

“Hheyi nina nenzani emzini wami?” (Hey you two what are you doing in my house?)

We both jump up in shock and look at Qwabe at the door who has a murderous look on his face.

“Baba...eish...I’m ...Didn’t you say you will come back tomorrow?”

“You’re fucking in my house! Where’s respect huh??nizongazi kahle nina!” he walks out.

“Oh my goodness Mvelo!”

“Hurry up get dressed he’s going to fetch his sjambok!”

I jump down from the bed and pick up my dress on the floor then wear it quickly as he slides into his pants. I’m so terrified this man has no mercy when he beats you.

“Let’s go!”

He grabs my hand and we run out of the house and bump into his mother on the door.

“What’s going on here?”

We don’t say anything but push her aside that she almost fall with Ndabe in her arms. He’s chasing after us cursing none stop and I can’t keep up with my big tummy. Now everyone is out of their houses watching us. God this is embarrassing.

“What’s going on?” Mother asks as she walks towards us. I’m sure she was coming to call me since I’ve been gone for a while.

I wasn’t ready for a response that Qwabe gives her. It’s so loud without a doubt the whole village heard him.

“Ngibathola bebhebhana lapha kwami.” (I found them fucking in my house)

Tjoo where are my ancestors when I need them? Kungani engibukisa nezwe Smakade!

## ☆ Muzikayise ☆

I didn't sleep a wink last night my mind was going on and on about what my wife revealed to me. The truth is I didn't ask her because lately I have been self centered. Trying to move on from the pain she put me through is proving to be onerous because the wound is still fresh and bleeding.

Every now and then my pain is triggered. It's like one way or the other I'm always going to be reminded of what she did to me no matter how I try to block the pain and push away the unpleasant thoughts.

Just like right now she's nude and buttering her body with her body lotion. It's such an alluring view that has my morning erection growing but knowing that some idiot touched all these glorious curves and deflowered her before me kuvusa iminjunju yenhliziyu engizama ukuyithoba.

You know what has to be the hardest thing ever is that my love for her is beyond her flaws and mistakes. This woman is my heartbeat and without her there's literally no life in me.

"Oh you're awake."

"I didn't sleep at all."

"Oh I'm sorry."

"No I'm the one who's sorry."

"What for?"

"Come here please."

I sit on my butt leaning against the headboard. She shuffles her tiny feet towards the bed and sits on the bed facing me. I take her hands and kiss both of them.

“I’m sorry that I didn’t ask what really happened the day you were thrown out of home and how did you survive. I thought the Dlomos took you that very same day but then again I should’ve asked how did your pants and panties ended up on top of the mountain. The honest truth is I have been preoccupied with my pain and everything that I forgot about other important issues. Please forgive me for being egocentric.”

She lets out a slow sigh and looks at me, contrition clouding her eyes. Believe me I also don’t like to remind her of what she did but I cannot shy away from mentioning it when it’s the underlying issue of what we’re dealing with. Let’s be realistic that it’s going to take quite some time to be over everything that happened without any doubt.

“I understand and I’m aware that the pain I inflicted on you is not something that we would be over it overnight. It’s going to take a lot of dedication, commitment, and effort to get over it. I’m just grateful for the second chance you gave me and I promise to never mess it up again. I love you Kayise so much more and I’m sure you don’t believe me when I say this but it’s the truth. I promise to give you my all and spending the rest of

my life showing you how sorry I am.” These are the kind of words that melts my heart and ease the pain in my heart. I grab the back of her neck and capture her lips in mine. I don’t like anything that is minty but it always tastes better in her mouth.

“Tell me what happened and please don’t leave a single detail.”

“It doesn’t matter really Kayi....”

“There’s no such thing Yeyeye I want to know please and if there’s anyone who inflicted pain on you.”

“Okay

” she says and tells me everything that happened holding in her tears but I encourage her to let it all out as I envelope her in my arms. I’m in bits Qwabe went about this the wrong way. What if those bastards raped her? What was going to happen to her if she stayed in the street? I fully understand why she loves the Dlomo family but it doesn’t change how I feel about them.

“I’m sorry my love that all of this happened to you and I wasn’t there to protect you. Please find it in your heart to forgive me for failing you and I promise you that those bastards will get what’s coming to them.”

“I don’t want you to kill for me.” I always wonder why she find it easy to use the word ‘kill’ in one sentence with my name.

“Yeyeye why do you think of the worst about me.”

“Ain’t you’re the one that told me that your love for me give you 3 reasons and one of those reasons is to kill.” Oh she still remembers I love that. It’s the truth but I don’t like the picture I painted on her mind when I said those words.

“They hurt you baby.”

“You’re the same person who was judging Gogo Ndlela.”

“Baby don’t compare these issues. They’re not the same please that old hag covered up her daughter’s whoreness by taking someone’s life. That is fucked up for real.”

“There’s never a good enough reason to kill well except if it’s matter of life or death kind of situation. It’s not like I was raped I was almost raped.”

“Don’t you dare downplay what those assholes put you through. Whether they raped you or not it doesn’t change that they violated you.”

“I brought that on myself so it’s not a big deal really.” Now she’s breaking my heart even more. I pull her back so that she’s looking at me.

“Mbewenhle you didn’t bring any of this to yourself do you hear me?”

“I did...”

“No!...”

“That’s what Mpilenhle said and she’s right! I can’t be weeping about something that I brought to myself and they almost raped me they didn’t rape me!” What’s wrong with that woman? Who says such to her little sister after what she’s been through? I’m not perfect that I know but you don’t say such things.

“Can we please move on from this please,” she whispers and shuts her eyes closed. Tears stream down her face and I wipe them with the back of my palms and kiss her forehead before pulling her to my arms.

“I’m sorry sthandwa sami.” I’m not going to let these dogs get away with this just like that. Even if I don’t kill them but I have to make them to never think of doing it again to her or any girl for that matter. Our sisters are not safe I can’t let this go just like that.

“Ndiwe didn’t sleep the whole night she only got to sleep around 6am so we will go once she’s awake.”

“Go to her home?”

“No to my parents house.”

“I’m sorry about last night and the things I said. This is your house Yeyeye I built it for you. Please don’t go and Ndiwe can stay here as much as she like. They’ve been nothing but good to you it’s only fair you reciprocate.”

She pushes me away and looks at me astoundingly.

“You’re joking right?”

“No baby I’m not I really mean it.”

“Oh baby thank you so much!”

She kisses me all over my face making me to giggle none stop.

“Okay I get it!”

“You’re amazing and I really appreciate you.”

“Oh well can I have my token of appreciation.” I say running my hand between her thighs and fondle her pussy.

“Eyakho bab’ Maseko ithathe.” (It’s yours Bab’Maseko take it) Her seductive tone drives me crazy with lust. I lean over and claim her lips.

“Ngiythathe yonke?” (Should I take all of it?) I mumble against her lips.

“No leave some for other time.”

The kiss intensifies as I take her beneath me caressing every inch of her body. I love the feel of her skin against mine and it makes my body tingle with heat and excitement. She

envelopes my buttocks with her legs pulling me closer to herself and the tip of my stiff cock brushes on her moist folds sending shivers of pleasure through me.

I don't waste anytime but push myself inside of her and groan as her cunt swallows my member squeezing me tightly as I slide all way inside, filling her up. She squirms digging her nails on my biceps. I keep my gaze on her face as I roll my hips. It is a trick that I've mastered to block the pictures of her and him fucking. Seeing her making all sorts of erotic expressions and enjoying my dick as I fuck her comforts me.

Damn she's so fucking good and I can't keep my voice down. Groans are rumbling in my chest and she's also singing my praises which is urging me on. I pull her legs up and hold her underneath her knees as I ram into her harder and faster.

“Ahhh Sidwaba Siluthuli ungibhebha kamnandi!”

She knows that her unfiltered Zulu drives me insane. With every thrust and pump my balls are slapping her ass and the whole room is filled with energy and passion of our love

making. I feel her walls gripping on me hard as she lets out a shrill cry of passion while her body is convulsing violently. Her hot cum spurting all over my dick sends me over the edge. I slam into her as hard as I can and my balls pulse sending a wave of passion careening into my shaft. A gruff whisper escapes my lips as I spill my seeds deep into her. I lay on top of her and seal our love making with a kiss as we are both panting.

“Now that was mind blowing. I love you Ngcamane.”

“I love you too sthandwa sami.”

.....

I spend the whole day busy in my farms and when the time hit 5pm I drive to the Qwabe homestead. My mother in law welcomes me nicely and shows me a seat. I thank her and sit down.

“Can I hold him.”

“Of course you can.”

She gets up from her seat and hands me the little boy. Aw he’s so beautiful one would mistake him as a girl. He makes me broody and gooey. There has to be a possibility that Yeyeye is pregnant now with a lot of fucking we do.

“He looks like a girl.”

“Maybe it’s because he looks like me,” Mam Thembeke says laughing.

“It could be.”

“What brings you here son? Is everything okay at home?”

“Everything is okay mama. Is your husband home?”

“No his heifer gave birth to twins so he went to the veld to fetch the calves.”

“Oh okay I have an issue here mama. So yesterday...” I tell her everything that happened yesterday at the Dlomos and she’s shocked.

“Haibo they didn’t hurt you two? Is my daughter okay?”

“No they didn’t hurt us mama and your daughter is okay. Do you know that they claim her as theirs. These people want to steal your daughter.”

She giggles softly and when she notices that I’m serious she stops.

“Are you serious?”

“Yes mama.”

“Look Muzi judging from what Mbewenhle tells me they’re really nice people so I’m sure treating her like their own doesn’t

mean they want to steal her. I mean how can they steal a whole human being?"

"It's more than just treating her like their own. To them she's literally theirs. Let's just agree mama that at this moment the Dlomos are close to Mbewenhle's heart. They're the people that saved her from worst that could've happened to her when she was staying in the streets and eating in the dirty bins for seven days."

"I thought she was with them the whole time I didn't know that she stayed in the street and ate in the dirty bins for seven days. Oh my goodness umtanami," she says remorse and pain clouding her eyes.

"So mama what if they manipulate her to choose them over her family. She loves that family especially those two women. To her they're her mothers who saved her and loved her when her family threw her out to the streets. I don't think you want to be replaced while you're still alive."

“I remember that she once said I’m not like them I always blow things out of proportion.”

“You see they’re already influencing her to make comparisons. I know they came to her rescue and I’m very grateful but after what happened yesterday are they people we should keep quiet that she associate with?”

“Absolutely not my son. What if you two got hurt yesterday because of their scandals? I will talk to her my boy.”

“That won’t work. How about you call Ndiwe’s mother and tell her how concerned you’re about what happened yesterday. You will explain that you’re not judging her or anything but you prefer they cut ties with your daughter.”

“Oh okay but I don’t have her numbers.”

“I took them from her phone this morning.” I say sliding out my phone and scroll through the contacts then give her the phone.

After they exchanged greetings she expresses her condolences then she tells her everything we discussed.

“What did she say?” I ask when she hangs up.

“She sounds hurt but she understands me and they will respect my wishes.”

“That’s great.”

Now that went well then I anticipated

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

The moment Kayise leaves I take another bath first before eating the leftovers I made for him for breakfast. Now I understand what is the fuss about sex. He really does me good even though sometimes he goes rough on me that all I feel is more pain then pleasure itself but I enjoy his dick.

Once I’m done eating I wash the dishes and clean the house. My house is not dirty I have no children running around and

messing up everything. It doesn't take that long before I'm done. I go up to check on Uthandiwe in the guest room. She was crying the whole night she only got to sleep at 6am. My heart breaks for her I wish I can take her pain away.

See after what transpired yesterday she will never ever celebrate her birthdays. Zwelakhe went about this the wrong way couldn't he wait for today at least. The day was going well and he messed everything up. I find my phone ringing on the pedestal and take it. Mam Xitlalli is calling me.

"Mama," I say as walk down the stairs. Ndiwe is still sleeping and I'm not going to wake her up. She needs to rest and at least when you're sleeping you don't feel any pain but the moment you wake up it all comes back.

"Hey baby how are you."

"I'm well mama and yourself."

"We are trying sis. How's Ndiwe?"

“Last night she couldn’t sleep she only got to sleep at 6am”

“Okay when she wakes up call me sis and thank you so much for saving our asses yesterday.”

“It’s not like it helped mama everything is just a mess.”

“Of course it helped sweetheart. As time goes on Zo and Ndiwe will forgive their mother for cheating on their father but one thing for sure they would never forgive us if they were to find out that we knew all along who killed their mother. You did very well my baby and we really appreciate what you did for us.” I can’t help a smile that embrace my face.

“How did you pulled that story up damn you’re good!” I chortle and she joins me.

“I would be lying mama if I can tell you where did I get it.”

“You’re dangerous my girl!”

“Mama you make me feel bad now.”

“You’re a bad girl!”

“Maaa!”

She laughs out loud. This woman Jehova!

“I have to go sweetheart please take good care of my daughter and call me once she’s awake.”

“Will do mommy. How’s Mam Aphiwe?”

“She’s not taking it well baby but she’s strong she will pull through.”

“Oh I can imagine please send my condolences on my behalf. When is the funeral?”

“I would do sweetheart. Thursday.” Today it’s Saturday so 4 days to go.

“Goodbye.” I hang up and since I’m bored I decide to do the laundry. By 11am I’m done with the laundry and I find Ndiwe watching TV in the lounge.

“Oh you’re awake.”

“Yes.”

Her eyes are swollen and she looks drained. Ndiwe is such a happy soul seeing her like this breaks my heart.

“I will make you something to eat.”

“Don’t you have wine or whiskey?”

“No you know hubby doesn’t drink and he doesn’t want me to drink.”

“I don’t want to eat I need something to numb the pain.”

“Ndiwe...”

“Please Nhle I really need something to numb the pain.”

“Okay have something to eat first then I will go get you something at my dad’s shop.”

She gives me a faint smile.

“You’re an amazing friend.”

“Trust me I don’t measure up to you.”

“Argh suka!”

I go the kitchen to make something to eat for her and when I’m done I go give her the tray.

“Thank you babe.”

“Please finish it.”

“As long as you will get me something to numb the pain.”

“Emotional blackmail you’re so unfair!” I leave her giggling and go get money in our bedroom then go back downstairs.

“I’m coming back.”

“Sure.”

Mnqobi and I exchange greetings when I get to the shop

then I buy 18 pack of flying fish. I hope it would be enough. I say my goodbye to Mnqobi and go back to my house. Once I'm home I put the 12 inside the fridge and head to the lounge with the 6 pack.

"Here you go. Do you want a glass?"

"Thank you so much babe. No I will drink through the dumpies. I hope hubby won't mind that I'm drinking."

"I will deal with him." I settle down next to her.

"Your mother called let me call her back and inform her that you're awake."

"My mom is dead Mbewenhle," she says flatly

"Come on Ndiwe you know what do I mean."

“Don’t call her I don’t want to talk to any of them.” She opens the beer with her teeth and throws the crown cap of the bottle on the floor.

“They’re worried about you.”

“Well I’m fine here. Why you never told me that you heard them talking about me and finding the real killer.”

“I didn’t want them to think I was eavesdropping.”

“You should’ve told me though.”

“I’m sorry I didn’t tell you. I thought they would tell you themselves when the time is right.”

“It’s okay.”

“The funeral is going to be Thursday.”

“I’m not going to that witch’s funeral.”

“Maybe going there will give you closure.”

“I thought finding the truth will bring me closure but instead it opens up wounds I thought are healing Nhle.”

“Oh baby I’m really sorry.”

“That witch’s death is not making it better. I want my mommy back Nhle.” she bursts into tears. I heave a sigh and pull her for a tight squeeze.

“It will get better with time my love. I’m very sorry.”

“I should’ve stopped when you warned me.”

“You didn’t know this is how things would turn out.”

I stroke her back until she's calm down then she continues with her drinks. We talk about anything and everything that is not depressing. She's getting louder with each dumpie she's drinking and her speech is getting slurry. A drunk Ndiwe is funny and crazy. I can't stop laughing my stomach is in knots. I didn't think that she will finish her 18 pack and by the time it's finished she's sloshed and can barely stand.

"I want to r...rest!"

"Come let's go to the bedroom."

I help her up and hook my arm around her waist then lead her upstairs to the guest room where I gently place her on the bed then cover her with a throw. I kiss her forehead and go down to get rid of the bottles before getting started with supper.

.....

It's 7pm now and Kayise is still not back. I miss him now he's been gone for the whole day. I keep myself busy with ironing and packing our clothes in the closet. Uthandiwe is still sleeping I hope she will wake up soon so that she can eat and take a bath. There's someone at the door. I get up from the couch and go open the door.

"Uncle Senzo come in."

I make a space for him to get in and close the door.

"Hello sis."

"Hi uncle how are you?"

"I'm okay and you."

"I'm also okay. Come this side."

I lead him to the lounge and we both settle down opposite to each other.

“Your house is beautiful.”

“Thank you. Can I get you anything to drink or eat?”

“No I’m here to fetch Ndiwe.”

“Oh she’s sleeping uhm she had a lot to drink.”

“I will carry her please show me where she’s sleeping.”

“Hawu malume Senzo there’s no need for that. Let her rest tomorrow my fiancé and I will bring her home.”

“She’s needed at home.”

“Does she have to go while she’s sleeping and drunk.”

“Please show me her room.”

I sigh and take him to the bedroom where Ndiwe is sleeping. She’s totally out and cannot even feel a thing when he carries her. I follow behind him as we walk outside to his car. He places her at the back seat and closes the door.

“Usalekahle sis omncane.” I nod and watch him get inside the car then drive off.

I’m mystified by this

Mam Xitlalli didn’t tell me that uncle Senzo will fetch Ndiwe. I make my way inside and call Mam Xitlalli but she doesn’t answer her phone. I try Mam Aphiwe and receive the same results. They’re probably busy. I decide to call Kayise

“Sthandwa sami”

“Come back now I miss you.”

“I will come back baby.”

“Where are you?”

“I’m at my parents house.”

“Okay.”

Just as I hang up there’s a knock on the door. Another visitor at this time? I know that people can’t help themselves but want to set their feet in my double story house but come on people not at night. It’s kinda creepy. I open the door and to my surprise it’s Zwelakhe.

“Hi can I come in.”

Now this is another surprise. How does he know where do I live?

“Yes you can.”

He walks in and I lead him to the lounge where we both sit down on one couch.

“How are you MaQwabe?”

“I’m well and yourself?”

“What can I say?” he shrugs, it was a stupid question.

“How did you find me?”

“I asked around. Where is your husband?”

“He’s not home. What brings you here?”

“I’m sorry to come unannounced and this late. I couldn’t spend another night without seeing Ndiwe.”

“Ndiwe just left with uncle Senzo.”

“Really?”

“Yes.”

“Oh” I’m not sure what I’m seeing is disappointment on his face or what.

“I also want to apologize to you for everything that happened yesterday. I’m not like that I was just angry.”

“Couldn’t you wait for another day. It was her birthday party Zwelakhe.”

“I know I allowed anger to get the better of me. I’m sorry how is she? Ndiwe that is?”

“How do you think she is? You really messed up big time I think you didn’t plan this well. I believe you could’ve done better than this.”

“I’m sorry I also regret what I did more especially that I hurt Ndiwe.”

“The gun that you were carrying was it even legal? I hope you didn’t clear your name only to send yourself back to jail.”

“Of course it was not illegal but Xitlalli and her friend Zero handled the situation with their police friends. The assassin and the other accomplices were arrested this morning.”

“At least now your name is cleared you can start afresh.”

“Start afresh? They can never bring me back the years I spent in jail. I could be a doctor right now Mbewenhle probably married to Mamoo and have kids.”

“I know but it’s not too late. I mean you’re not that old since your name is cleared you can go back to school.”

“Maybe I can do that but how do I move on from the pain of losing Mamoo and having no one to believe me. The pain of having nothing to do to prove my innocence.

The pain of sucking another man’s dick just to survive and be protected. The pain of hearing another man’s groans in your ears as he fucks you like you’re his bitch. I remember the first time they forced themselves on me Nkosinathi’s words echoed in my ears. He said he wish that they fuck me hard that I won’t be able sit and man they really did. The first week I couldn’t sit let alone pooping I was in so much pain I...” he pauses and laughs so hard.

God my heart is bleeding. Why is he telling me this I mean we don’t know each other to that level of sharing such intense and emotional taxing stuff.

“I’m sorry Zwelakhe I don’t even know what to say. You really went through the most.”

“What I hate even more is that she chose the easy way out. I wanted her suffer just like I did! I wanted her to...” he sighs and looks at me.

“Uhm I’m sorry I just...I don’t know why I’m telling you this because I’ve never shared this with anyone.” He swallows hard pushing back the tears. If he’s saying this so that I can feel special ah well I don’t feel special instead I feel horrible because I don’t know what do or say.

“I understand don’t be sorry. I’m sorry that I have nothing to offer you that can make you feel better. You know you don’t have to keep it together like you’re not hurting. Crying is not wrong and it doesn’t make you less of a man. There’s no such thing as indoda ayikhali ikhalela ngaphakathi. Cry, let it all out, it’s okay. No one can see you here.” He looks at me with a huge smile as teardrops roll down on his face like a waterfall.

“Yes that’s it.” I encourage him.

He buries his head on my bosom and wail like a little boy. God why did I even encourage him to cry! I reluctantly wrap my

hand around his neck and stroke his back with the other hand. When he calms down he pulls his head up and wipes his tears then looks at me.

“I hate you for making me cry like a bitch. Look now ngiconsamafinyila like a little boy.”

I chuckle.

“How are you feeling now.”

“So much better thank you so much.”

“You’re welcome.”

He stares deeply in my eyes and his face is very close. I can feel his breath fanning my face.

“Yeyeye whose car....what the fuck is going on here?”

☆ Isisa ☆

I can't bring myself to look at this woman before me. I cannot tell if she's angry or what but when Bab Qwabe told the whole village what Mvelo and I were up to I saw disappointment flashing across her beautiful face.

"Why do you like to embarrass me Isisa?"

"I'm sorry mama..."

"Nyory that's all you can say?"

What else should I say? Truth be told I'm sorry for embarrassing her only but if we didn't get caught I wouldn't be sorry because I have no regrets with what Mvelo and I did.

“Look at me when I’m talking to you!” I jump a bit on my seat at her shrill voice and look at her.

“Didn’t you embarrass me enough with this pregnancy now you’re sleeping around!”

“I’m not sleeping around mama...”

“Yey shut up!”

This woman confuses me seriously. Is she not the one that was encouraging me to have sex and as good child that I am who listen to her mother I did just that but now she’s complaining.

“You are pregnant with another boy’s baby and you go around and sleep with another one! Where’s yourself respect? I didn’t say you should go around and sleep with small boys!”

“It was one boy not many boys.” I mumble and she gives me an intense stare that sends shivers down my spine.

“Where did I go wrong with you? Don’t you see that you disrespected the Qwabes by sleeping with their son in their house!”

We don’t have our own house where were we supposed to fuck esgangani?

“Not only are you dragging your name down to the mud by sleeping with small boys while you’re pregnant with another boy’s child but mine as well. It’s like I don’t teach you the right way to behave yourself as a young woman. You know very well that mothers in this village don’t trust me with their daughters after what you did. Many maidens pulled out and they now test their virginity at Tugela Ferry kuMama Goqo. You and Mbwenhle brought shame upon us and dragged down ukuhlolwa kwezintombi. She’s lucky that the Maseko boy still wants to marry her and somehow that will restore a bit of her dignity but wena instead of behaving yourself you give the gossipers of this village a reason to talk about you.” Now she’s talking calmly but I can still hear anger in her tone.

“I apologize from the deepest of my heart mama for all the shame I’ve brought upon you and the maidens. I feel like it’s unfair that I’m being judged for falling pregnant while everyone know that I didn’t have sex. People talk and they never stop talking even when do right but in this village it’s worse. We can’t live our lives freely because we are scared we’re going to be judged or disowned by our parents because they’re also scared of what people will say. In this village we conform to “what are people going to say syndrome” and we don’t realize the pressure we put ourselves in. Who doesn’t make mistakes in this world? Why do we celebrate and make fun of other people’s mistakes as if we are perfect? I’m going to be a mother now and my daughter won’t be subjected to this bull if it takes me to take her away from this village I’m more then prepared to do that. I don’t want my daughter to have depression because of what this village thinks of her. I’m going to go apologize to the Qwabes for disrespecting them.”

“Life is not simple as you think it is but I’m glad you’re going to apologize to the Qwabes and I hope you and Mvelo are going to stop this nonsense. He’s your little brother for crying out loud I don’t understand how did you end up opening your legs for him. Are you that horny? The father of the child you’re carrying

wants you back Isisa why don't you give him a chance and he's really trying."

"I don't want him mama."

"Then it's okay you can stay single. You don't have to sleep with your little brother."

"He's not my little brother mama you make it sounds gross."

"He is your little brother and very young for you!"

"Mvelo is a man trapped in young boy's body. He's wise and a true gentleman mama."

"Haibo Isisa are you telling me that you're dating him?"

"Not really but the attraction between us cannot be denied."

“Thixo onefefe! Ingane edlaza cwe le!”

“Mama you’re exaggerating he’s only 4 years younger than me.”

“Hayi nansi imihlola! It’s embarrassing enough that you were caught sleeping with him now you want to date him? What would people say?”

“See what I told you about the ‘abantu bazothini syndrome’. I don’t care what they say mama they’re non factor. My happiness comes first I don’t want to be like Mbewenhle and make other people happy while they don’t give two cents about her happiness.”

“I won’t be embarrassed by you again Isisa do you hear me? As long as you’re staying in my house you won’t do anything that I don’t approve. Mvelo is a young boy you need a boy who’s grown enough and that boy is the father of your child. You think it’s easy to raise a child without a father?”

“Who I date doesn’t have to stop Thuthu from raising his child mama.”

“It will never be the same Isisa. Don’t subject your child to this co-parenting nonsense it never work well. He may take care of his child for few months but once he finds a girlfriend you will see flames my girl!”

“Is that why you stayed with dad even when he cheated on you and infected you with HIV.” I regret saying that the moment it slips out of my mouth.

“Uhm I’m sorry mama I didn’t mean to say that. I will take care of my child.”

“With what? You’re not working!”

“I will find work.”

“Dade wena so there’s a job waiting for you? Tell me Isisa what happened to furthering your studies? So you just gave up your dreams after that bursary rejected you?”

I swallow spit and look down.

“What was I supposed to do you don’t have money to take me to school.”

“Try other bursaries like Nesfathi.”

“NSFAS mama and it’s the one that rejected me.”

“Aw that’s strange because as far as I know Nesfathi gives anyone a chance who’s willing to further their studies.”

“Ay nami angazike.” I get up and leave her before she digs out the truth in me. Once I’m in my bedroom I crawl on top of my bed and lay on it.

Honestly speaking I've never been the one who like school because I never got good grades like Mbewenhle. I was average and when her father deprived her that chance to further her studies it felt unfair to go study and leave her behind while she's the one who wanted this more than me. Now that I'm old enough and I'm about to be a mother I realize what an impetuous decision I made. My phone is ringing and it's a number I can't recognize.

"Hello."

"MaNjinji." I don't know if it's the deep sound of his voice or it's the way how my clan rolls out of my name that has my tummy fluttering.

"Phakathwayo you good."

"Yes I ran to my grandma's house. I'm not going home I will spend few days here until dad calms down." I laugh and he joins me.

“Your father is crazy did he had to chase us with a sjambok like we killed someone.”

“Dad’s language is violence even when it’s not necessary.”

“I left my panties in your bedroom Mvelo and it was on the floor.”

“Eish I will take it once I go back home. No one will enter my bedroom.”

“You don’t know that.”

“Don’t worry about it. Are you guys good though? You didn’t strain yourself by running?”

“No I didn’t we are okay. Thanks for asking.”

“Your mom what did she say?”

“She’s angry of course and she wants me to go apologize to your parents.”

“Do you have to?”

“Well yes.”

“I’m sorry that I won’t be there with you. I need to be away for few days until he calms down. He won’t beat you up especially in front of mama but as for me he will definitely will.”

“It’s okay I understand. Mvelo?”

“MaNjinji.”

“What’s happening between us? Uhm I mean what we did today what does it mean?”

“I don’t know about you but I will speak for myself. I have been trying to suppress my feelings for you for so long but today I couldn’t hold myself. I love you and it would be an honour if you could grant me a chance to show you how much do I love you. I know I’m younger than you but age is really not a factor especially where love is concerned. I just want to show you ukuthi indlovukazi enjangawe iphathwa kanjani.” Oh I’m melting like an ice.

“Okay you caught me off guard I didn’t think you will say that. I thought you will say it was a mistake so let me ponder on it then I will come back to you Phakathwayo.”

“Fair enough but don’t take too long I have to give you that orgasm baba deprived you off.” I giggle naughtily.

We continue to talk and each word coming out of his mouth makes me blush. I’m smitten already and it scares the hell out of me.

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The Magwaza ancestors haven't abandoned me completely. They made Qwabe to go to town so that I can talk to Mam Thembeke only. As embarrassing as it is better her alone than with her husband.

"Unjani mama?"

"What do you want Isisa?" Okay she's angry and it justifiable.

"I came here to apologize for disrespecting you, your husband and your house yesterday. It was uncalled for to do what we did. It's my fault...."

"We Isisa what are your intentions with my son?"

"What do you mean mama?"

"You want Thuthuka to beat up my son because you couldn't close your legs for him?"

“Thuthuka won’t beat up Mvelo. We are not dating he’s just the father of my child nothing more nothing less.”

“It doesn’t change the fact that you are carrying his child. How do you think he will react when he hears that you’re sleeping with my son while you’re carrying his child. In fact what do you want from my son baphelile ontanga?”

“What?” I hear Mbewenhle’s voice saying behind me and when I turn around she’s walking through the door. Eish that ‘what’ sounds like like a disapproval. She walks inside and greets us before settling down next to me.

“Don’t sit down excuse us Mbewenhle. Isisa and I are discussing a serious matter here.”

Mbewenhle looks at me then her mom before leaving us.

“Once again mama I’m sorry for everything. Cha abaphelenga ontanga.”

“So what do you want from him?” I don’t want to be disrespectful to her so I keep quiet.

“Stay away from him okay and focus on your pregnancy.”

“Eh mama. Usalekahle.”

I get up from the couch and leave. As I’m at the gate I hear Mbewenhle calling me but I walk faster. I’m not ready to face her. What am I going to say to her? Maybe I didn’t think this through before I jump into Mvelo’s sheets. The mothers are already not approving our relationship so it’s highly possible that Mbewenhle won’t too. The last thing I want is to fight with her. I can hear her footsteps behind me and when I decide to run she runs pass me and stands in front of me.

“You seriously think ungangishiya especially with this big tummy,” she says and bursts into laughter. At least she’s laughing.

“Why are you running away from me.”

“Uhm I’m not running away I just need to help my mom with something.” I say twiddling with my fingers.

“Yeah right. So what was that about?”

“What?”

“Isisa I’m not your barbie doll.”

“I didn’t plan to fall for him. The thing is when you were missing we grown so close and now here we are.”

“Wow you’re seriously fucking my little brother?”

“Are you mad at me?”

“No I’m not it’s just weird. I mean he’s young and I thought you saw a little brother in him.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be sorry. You said you have feelings for him?”

“Yes.”

“Does he has feelings for you too?”

“Yes he wants us to be in relationship but I don’t think it will work. Our mothers don’t approve.”

“Forget about the mothers and do what makes you two happy. They will adjust as the time goes on.”

“What about you?”

“What about me?”

“Are you happy?”

“Of course I’m happy it’s weird but not in a bad way so I will get used to it. Not only are you my best friend you would also be my sister in law now that strengthens our relationship. We are stuck with each other for life.”

“I’m glad that we have your support I thought you will be mad but I was actually talking about you friend . Are you happy in your marriage?”

“Yes I’m happy friend. In fact happy doesn’t begin to describe how am feeling. I’m over the moon.”

“Well your glow confirms it. I’m glad you are happy.”

“I’m also glad that you’re moving on from Thuthu. He doesn’t deserve you honestly. Lonhle will treat you better and I will make sure of that.”

She walks me home and I tell her about how we were caught red handed by her father yesterday. She's rolling in the aisle. I'm glad that she finds it funny! Yaz uQwabe uheba nje.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

Rage is glinting in his eyes and sending shivers through my body. He terrifies the hell out of me when he's angry. His intense gaze shifts from me to Zwelakhe who instantly stands up.

"Uhm I have to go."

"No so fast man what were you doing to my wife?"

"What do you mean?"

"Ungazongenza islima mhlathi wenja!"

He walks towards to him. In a second I'm on my feet and standing between them. I don't think there's ever a person who's always ready to fight like Kayise.

"Baby Zwelakhe was leaving."

"Leaving how when he was breathing on your face? Don't you dare make me a fool!" He bawls trying to get to Zwelakhe behind me but I gently push him.

"Bra I didn't do anything to your wife we were just talking. Yini awuzithembi? Stop it please it's unattractive and a big turn off. You might end up losing her if you continue with this," Zwelakhe says and walks away.

"You're cheating on me again?"

Gosh I knew that he will say that.

"No I'm not cheating on you Kayise."

“What was he doing here?”

“He came to see Ndiwe.”

“How come I saw him breathing on your face instead of being with Ndiwe? Do you think I’m a fool Mbewenhle?”

“Uncle Senzo fetched Uthandiwe. You’re not a fool Kayise I meant it when I said I will never cheat on you again. He came here looking for Ndiwe then he ended up telling me about his painful experience in jail. I was just comforting him I swear.”

“Oh so you comfort another man in our house?”

“What was I supposed to do Kayise? I’m human and I have compassion so when a person shares deep stuff with me I will definitely comfort him or her. That doesn’t mean I’m cheating on you.”

“Why does he find it easy to share deep stuff with you huh?”

“I don’t know okay I was also surprised.”

“Liar! Men don’t go around and share their deep stuff to just women nje! Obvious there’s something going on between the two of you!!”

He’s boiling with anger and his face is even red now. I don’t know how to make him understand that I didn’t do anything wrong.

“Akusilo iqiniso lelo Kayise. I don’t know why he shared his deep stuff with me and it’s not my fault he did.”

“It’s your damn fault! You are the one who gave him a reason to do that because you can’t resist temptation. You’re so weak and it’s repulsive!”

His words are shards of glasses in my heart. Let me give him a space to breath and collect himself because now this argument

is escalating into a nasty one. I don't want to say things I might regret later.

"Where are you going? I'm still talking to you!" He grabs my wrist and I swivel around to glare at him.

"You seriously think I would cheat on you in our house? What do you take me for? Didn't I call you and said come back I miss you? Am I that stupid to keep a man that I'm cheating with in our house while I know you're on your way home? If I was cheating on you Kayise you wouldn't find out just like you didn't find out with Manelisi! Umemulo is the only thing that got me busted! You were never going to find out! I'm not stupid!" Oh no! I bite my bottom lip hard that I taste blood in mouth. Jizaz what have I just said?

He sniggers bitterly while staring at me with a blend of pain and anger filled in his eyes.

"I'm sorry I didn't mean..."

“Oh damn right you meant that! You’re boasting about your cheating because iyinkunzi yesfebe angisho? The Queen of ubufebe! You know very well how to play your cards and never get caught right?”

God this is what I was preventing from the first place.

“I’m sorry it wasn’t my intention to say that I allowed the words you said to me to get the better of me. Every chance you get you always remind me of how weak I am and it hurts deep down in my heart babe.”

“How do you expect me to react when I see a man so close to your face as if you two were kissing or you wanted to kiss. You make me sound as if I’m overreacting but if it was other way around you’d also question me. What is it that I’m doing wrong? Why am I not enough to you? Don’t I make you happy?” The pain seeping out in his tone breaks my heart to the core.

“There’s nothing you’re doing wrong. You’re more than enough for me and you do make me happy Ngcamane.”

“Then what do you want from me? Tell me what do you want from me and I will give you whatever you want.” I can hear desperation in his voice. I free my hand from his grip and walk closer to him before palming his face.

“I want you to give me a chance to learn to trust me again. It’s not easy I know but I promise to do my best. I’m here to rectify my wrong please give me the benefit of the doubt. It’s a lot to ask I know but if you are going to keep me here while deep down you know that you will never forgive me then no matter what I do would be futile. You won’t see how much I’m trying to glue together the pieces I’ve broken. You will never see me as that beautiful wife you love but a weak bitch that cheated on you. It’s either you give me a room to prove myself to you or you let me go.”

“I don’t want to lose you,” he whispers and a lone tear escape his eye. I wipe it off with my thumb.

“Neither do I but you can’t marry while you’re not willing to forgive me. I need you to prove myself to you but you’re making it difficult for me.”

“I’m willing I swear I am but it’s proving to be a onerous task. I also need you to bear with me okay don’t give up on me I won’t give up on you as well. I love you so much.”

“I know it’s hard but allow our love be the motivation to fight for us okay.”

He nods eagerly like a little boy who’s just promised an ice cream if he does what he’s been told to. I stand with my toes and claim his lips. We share an intense and sensual kiss pouring our hearts into it before shuffling our feet to the back of the couch. He makes me hold onto it while he fiddles with his zipper. The anticipation increases my desire.

He pulls my dress to my waist and slides my panties down to my knees. One hard push he fills me up with his hard dick and I scream. I just knew by that hard entrance that he’s going to fuck me hard that all I feel is pain more than pleasure itself.

The next day fiancé is clingy and wants us to spend the whole day in bed but I’ve been summoned by mama. I wonder what for I hope I’m not in trouble. What shocks me when I get home is that Isisa is fucking my brother. It’s weird honestly but I’m glad that they’re both feeling each other and no one is using the other. I’ve just came back from walking her to her home and she told me how dad caught them. I couldn’t help but crack up. Baba is dramatic.

“Elo punku punku ka sis wakhe nzee

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” I say to my baby brother tickling his chubby cheeks. He’s giggling none stop and drooling. I love his giggles in fact I love everything about him. He’s just the cutest little thing I’ve ever seen. I feel a presence and when I look up mom is staring at us with a smile on her face.

“You know I’m jealous.”

“Jealous about what?”

She walks towards my bed and settles down next to me. Yup she’s still occupying my bedroom. I don’t know if she thinks that dad won’t resist her if she goes back to their bedroom but I think he’s too traditional to have sex with umdlezane.

“I’m the one who called you here but Ndabe is the one that is getting all your attention. I’ve noticed that every time you’re here you just give him all your attention and forget about us.”

“He deserves every attention of mine right my boy?” I tickle him once again and he giggles wiggling his tiny body.

“I miss you.” Okay what’s with this woman?

“Are you dying?”

“What? No I’m not dying. Can’t I tell my daughter that I miss her?”

“Oh but I’m here.”

“I feel like I haven’t seen you in months. I don’t want to lose you mtanami.”

“You’re not going to lose me mama. Where does this come from?”

“You’re pulling away from me. Why didn’t you tell me that you stayed in the streets and ate in the dirty bins.”

“Who told you?”

“It doesn’t matter what matters is that you didn’t tell me Mbewu. I deserve to know as your mother.”

“You thought where I was? Did you perhaps built a house out there for me and stored some food in it just incase dad chase me out of my only home?”

“Don’t talk to me like that! You seem to forget that I’m your mother!”

“You don’t act like my mother you don’t love me.”

“How can you say that Mbewenhle? Of course I love you!” she retorts

“How can you wish death or disappearance upon me if you do love me? Whenever you’re angry you always tell me that you wish I’m the one who disappeared instead of Lwenhle. Things we say when we’re angry most of them we mean them. I don’t

know why I'm even angry at you that you never protected me from your husband when he chased me out of home. You said it yourself ukuthi uswele umgodi wokungilahla so you were finally rid of me. Then I came back from the Dlomos after you begged me to come back home. Not even once have you ever asked me how did I survive out there you just assumed that I was with the Dlomos all along. You asked me about the rape but when I told you that they didn't rape me you just forgot about it. You didn't make any effort to know how did that experience made me feel. The only thing did was to demand that I forgive you just like that because you are sorry. Funny enough when I said I'm sorry you never forgave me. Yaz I wish we never came back from Durban because that was the only time I felt loved by you. Maybe getting up from the wheelchair was a bad idea. I used to think that you somehow drifted away from us because of Lwenhle's disappearance well until I learned that you never loved baba. Azange ungene ngothando emshadweni how can you love us? We are just a reminder of a marriage you never wanted!"

She slaps me hard on my cheek and I see stars. Tears are streaming down her face and her lips are shivering.

“That what you always do, slapping and beating me up if you’re not calling me names as if you’re perfect! You also cheated on baba and fucked uncle G but you never heard me making noise about that!”

“Uthi kwenzenjani Mbewenhle?” ( You said what happened Mbewenhle?)

Simultaneously our heads tilt aside to look at door. Oh nooo!

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I swallow hard terror gripping on me as I stare at my father standing on the door. How am I going to get out of this without causing trouble between them. The last thing I want is to be the cause of their failed marriage

let alone do I want their marriage to fail. In almost 22 years that I've lived in this world they've always been together that it's even impossible to imagine a life with them separated.

"Mbewenhle I'm talking to you repeat what you said." Dad says sternly looking at me intensely.

"Uhm what did you hear baba?" I ask the stupid question not knowing what to say.

"Hey you know very well what you said. Talk now!" He walks inside my bedroom and the look he's giving me is sending chills down my spine.

“Nkosikazi what is this child talking about?”

“I don’t know what she’s talking about Qwabe.” Mama responds with so much confidence but I can hear the tremor in her voice. I look at my brother who’s showing me his gummy smile. Oh how I wish we could exchange places right now.

“So you didn’t cheat on me and you don’t know the man she’s talking about?”

“Hawu kodwa Qwabe how can you ask me that? I don’t know what this child is talking about but I do know the man. He’s the doctor that helped her regain her mobility.”

“I don’t understand why would she lie about something so huge like this? Mbewenhle explain to me why are you accusing your mother of cheating? Is there anything you saw between your mother and that man you’re talking about?”

“There’s nothing to explain it’s all in her head Qwabe. I can’t believe that you seriously think I can cheat on you let alone are we having this conversation. I feel so insulted and disrespected not only by her but both of you right now. Mbewenhle do you see what you’re doing now? Tell your father you’re angry that I didn’t protect you when he chased you out now you’re making up stories!”

Wow this woman! I give her 10/12 yaz for a moment I even thought I didn’t see her fucking with uncle G with my own naked eyes. Baba looks at me with that piercing gaze of his. As dark as he is he looks pale right now and I swear the truth will kill him.

“There’s nothing suspicious I saw between them baba.” I say and look down at my baby brother.

“You made all of this up?”

“Yebo baba.”

“This is unbelievable! What’s wrong with you? Where do you get an audacity to say such things about your mother? What kind of a child are you? Do you realize you almost caused a conflict between us because of your lies! You don’t open legs for the whole village after you sent the flag to the Maseko boy then expect your mother to condone you! You should be grateful that we accepted you back even after the disgrace you brought upon us!”

“I’m sorry baba.”

“Nx!”

He walks to the door and stops on his tracks swiveling around to look at me.

“Come take out the groceries in the car.”

“Eh baba.”

He disappears leaving me with mama who lets out a long sigh of relief.

“Thank you baby for playing along...” I cut her short before she finishes.

“You didn’t tell me we were playing mama the only thing you did was to save yourself while making me look bad to my father.”

“No it wasn’t like that baby...it’s the first thing that came into my mind I’m sorry. Your father can’t find out about this Mbewenhle. Please don’t tell him,” she pleads.

“If I wanted him to find out about this I would’ve told him long ago mama. I understand what this could do to your marriage and Baba’s heart is very weak he won’t handle such betrayal.”

“Thank you so much for understanding sthandwa sami. I hate this tension between us. Can we move on from everything that

happened please. I miss you so much and I want my daughter back.”

“That’s the thing with you mama. You want us to just move on like nothing happened.”

“Jesus Mbewenhle kanti what do you want from me! I’m trying here to fix things between us but you keep spitting that on my face! Ufuna ngenzeni ngempela?”

So she seriously wants us to move on from everything just like that? Why is it hard for adults to say ‘sorry’ to children. At this moment I don’t even want that sorry I just want her to acknowledge the pain she put me through. To tell me that she never meant anything she said and she loves me so much or am I asking a lot? I give her Benhle and go outside to take the groceries from dad’s car then pack it in the cupboards. Once I’m done I announce that I’m leaving.

“You’re leaving just like that? I called you here so that we fix things between us.”

“We are okay mama don’t worry about it.”

I kiss Benhle’s lips then I leave. When I get to my house I don’t find Kayise. I call him and he tells me that he went to the farms. I need to do something for him since I missed his birthday. It was on 5th of January and I was at the Dlomos that time and things between us were very bad. Speaking of the Dinangwe’s let me call Ndiwe. When the call doesn’t go through I call Mam Aphiwe and she answers just as I’m about to give up.

“Hey Nhle.”

“Hi mama how are you?”

“I’m breathing and yourself?”

“I’m okay. I’m sorry for everything that happened.”

“Thank you.”

“How’s Ndiwe? I was trying to call her but her number doesn’t go through. Can I talk to her if she’s nearby.”

“Look Mbewenhle can you please just give us a space. We’re going through a lot right now and we need time to deal with everything as a family,” she says coldly

“Oh I’m sorry I would do just that.”

“Yes please. Stop calling Ndiwe and don’t come to the funeral. In fact forget about us and just focus on your marriage and life okay?” I’m mystified by her tone and attitude.

“Did I do something wrong?”

“No we just need space.”

“Okay...” she hangs up before I even finish.

What did I do? I break my skull trying to figure out what have I done? The coldness in her tone has me tearing up. I didn't know that I'm overcrowding their space. Mhlampe sengikhuluphele sengiyaba mpintsha spesini sabo. Gogo disturbs my crying session. I quickly wipe my tears as if she would see me and answer the phone.

"Gogo."

"Hey sis."

"Lonhle hey."

"Uyakhala?"

"No."

"I know your voice when you're crying Mbewu. What's wrong?"

“I’m fine little brother. I heard dad caught you doing tsibhatsibha on top of Isisa.” He bursts into laughter and I can’t help but join him.

“Babakho unedrama I’m sure itswayi elimenze kanje.” We crack up all over again.

“I will tell him you said so.”

“I’m not scared of him I just respect him. I heard that you are home.”

“I just got back.”

“Eish I wanted you to take Isisa’s panties on the floor in my bedroom and put it in the drawer.”

“Haibo you want me to touch your girlfriend’s panties now.”

“Come on it’s your best friend’s panties.”

“True but who took it out of her? Andizi.”

He laughs out loudly.

“Stop being impossible and help out your only brother.”

“Are you at gogo’s place?”

“Yes I’m giving your old man time to cool off before I go back. So you will do it for me please.”

“Uyahlupha yaz I don’t want to see your mother’s face again.”

“Please I’m begging you.”

“Okay fine but I will go later! Lisazothi ukuhanjwa intuthwane kancane nje lapha phansi.”

He breaks out into laughter.

“You’re crazy! I don’t like what’s going on between you and mama. Why are you only angry at mama but not baba I mean he’s the one that chased you out of home.”

“It’s not that I’m not angry at him too but your father has always been like this what he does doesn’t even surprise me anymore. Am I wrong to expect mama to protect me from him since she knows what kind of a person he is?”

“But you know mama is also scared of him.”

“It’s more than the fact that she didn’t stop him from chasing me out. There’s a lot Lonhle and I don’t want to talk about it.”

I hear him heaving a sigh. This doesn’t sit well with him I’m very much aware of that but there’s nothing I can do. Why should I tell a 47 years old woman what to do? Doesn’t she see what she has to do first to fix our relationship? Umama usile nje I’ve seen many people on social media complaining about parents

who wrong their children and never apologize to them. It hurts that she disregard my feelings but ayikho into engajwaleki.

.....

This blue fitted seshweshwe dress with ruffles and tulle bottom makes me looks gorgeous. It has a matching doek which suits me perfectly. Isisa's mom never cease to amaze me with her remarkable work. That woman is super talent.

"You look so breath taking my baby." Mama says walking in.

I can't help but notice that the more she wants us to go on as if nothing happened it's the more I'm pulling away from her. Nothing she says to me moves me anymore.

"Thank you mama."

"Everything is ready you guys should get going."

“Okay. Where’s Benhle?”

“He’s with mama.”

“How is he feeling now?”

“It seems like these people presence is too heavy on him but he has stopped crying now.”

“That’s better.”

“Mbewenhle.”

“Ma”

“I love you and please behave yourself at your in laws.”

“Don’t worry I won’t embarrass you guys anymore.”

I give her faint smile and walk out. Today it's the day of umbondo. Umbondo is actually a ceremony of sending the grocery to my in laws. As umakoti I have to bring my in laws food because after the wedding I will have to wake up early in the morning and prepare breakfast for the entire family therefore I have to bring my own food. The food would be also cooked in our traditional wedding.

Baba's car couldn't be enough to occupy the grocery so sbari Sbu offered us his van. I'm sure you wonder how much is this grocery if it couldn't fit in my dad's 14 hundred. Well it's a typical stokvel type of grocery. 10 bags of flour, rice, sugar, maize meal etc. Yes every item goes in 10s, 5s

4s or pairs. This has to be one unnecessary ceremony that leaves you broke nje but we can never say no to culture.

Mpilenhle insisted to hire two taxis to take females to the Masekos even though it's a walkable distance. I'm driving with her, Isisa and Mpilenhle's sister in law while other females are in the taxis. They're singing and the hoots are going crazy as we drive to the Maseko homestead.

“I don’t remember you bringing us so much grocery you robbed us Mpilo!” The sister in law says and we all laugh.

“Your family didn’t ask me to.”

“Isn’t what a mokoti has to do before the wedding?”

“It is but such things differs according to places. Here in this village it is a must that a makoti sends umbondo.”

“So much grocery though it can be distributed to 10 people and it can last them for months.”

“It’s not a must to buy so much. It depends on your pockets and remember that this food would be also be cooked at the wedding ceremony.” Mpilenhle and her sister in law continue to talk while Isisa and I are having a conversation of our own.

Arriving at the Maseko homestead we wait at the gate to be welcomed while singing. Every female is carrying any item of food on the head. My aunt helps me carry 20l bucket of

umqombothi (Zulu beer). Mpume is the last born of my elder aunt and she's the one who I whisper to if there's anything I need as I'm not allowed to talk loudly. As umakoti I have to bow down and not look at my in laws.

They welcome us and one of my cousins throw sweets in their yard and the singing hasn't stopped. The ululations echoes around the yard and children are jumping on each other to catch the sweets. We are shown a room to put the grocery and once all that is done there's a lot of dancing and singing.

I couldn't help but melt when I finally see my husband to be in his traditional attire that matches mine. It was supposed to be a small ceremony but in this village you really never invite people bezwa nje usu lunuka they invite themselves.

"You're so beautiful."

"Thank you my husband you are gorgeous."

He leans over and steal a kiss. We watch people dancing and singing as we are seated under the erected tent. After that food is served. I'm glad that the ceremony doesn't take the whole day and everything goes well. Now the only thing left is to get married.

.....

The week rather flew faster after umbondo ceremony.

Today it's my big day and I have an excruciating headache since from yesterday after the elderly gave me the "talk". They were so harsh on me and all the damn time they kept on reminding me about my past mistakes. I couldn't help but cry and when Kayise called me he was worried that he sent some boy to give me a box of chocolates to calm me down. It's like people will never get over what happened. This thing is actually a tag on my forehead. 'Mbewenhle the maiden who screwed another guy while seeing another'

"How's your headache baby?" Mama asks me

“It’s not that bad.”

“Mpilenhle tells me you don’t want to eat. We don’t want you collapsing on your big day.”

“I don’t have appetite mama.”

She heaves a sigh and takes out the beautiful blanket she bought for me then covers me with it.

“Ngiyaziqhenya ngawe mtanami,” (I’m proud of you my baby) she says blinking back tears and the emotion laced in her tone has me feeling emotional.

“You really do?” I couldn’t help but ask

“Yes baby I know I’m not the best mom in the world but that doesn’t mean I don’t acknowledge the strong and remarkable woman you’re growing up to be. Mama loves you so much.”

I cover my face with my hands and burst into tears. I feel her arms wrapping around my body and her lips kissing my forehead. Maybe I'm asking so much from her. The only thing I have to understand is that it's not in our black parents' DNA to apologize to their children. Once I'm calm she takes me to indlu yabadala where we all gather and baba announces to the ancestors that I'm finally leaving to join the Maseko family.

It sinks in that I'm about to be officially be someone's wife. There's something about leaving home I grew up in and joining another family which I can't explain. It's beautiful and scary at the same time but I'm trying my level best not to be anxious I cannot afford to have anxiety attacks on my wedding day.

Once baba is done we all get into cars and taxis drive to the Maseko homestead. It's still early in the morning but you can tell that it's going to be a beautiful sunny day and I'm praying that it won't rain. They say rain is a blessing but come on njengamuphi umakoti ufuna ukunethwa imvula on her wedding day. Mvelonhle had to fetch a cat at my granny's home and hurl it on top of the roof so that it doesn't rain. Hopefully this will work.

On arrival we all step out of the vehicles and wait outside the gate amid singing. Mama covers my head with the blanket wrapped around me. Baba Maseko appears with his people singing and they approach us. He welcomes me as the head of the family and dad also says few words as sign of approving to this beautiful union. The women break into ululations as we all gather and walk through the yard of the Maseko homestead. They show us a room where I sit down and be respectful until the cow is slaughtered by the Masekos to show that they're welcoming me as their bride. When that is done breakfast is served and mama forces me to eat even though I don't have appetite.

After breakfast my bridesmaids and I change into our traditional attire. Five of my cousins which are my aunts' daughters are my bridesmaids. Since Isisa is pregnant Uthandiwe would have been my maid of honor but it is what it is. I won't lie I'm so hurt by that they haven't made contact with me since that day Mam Aphiwe said I must give them space. I tried to call them despite that she said I shouldn't call but I couldn't reach them. It registered to me that they blocked me and want nothing to do with me the moment I saw that Ndiwe blocked me on all of her social media accounts. I still

wonder what have I done to them and I would've preferred if they told me I would've apologized.

I stand before the full length mirror and look at my breathtaking self in isdwaba (leather skirt) and over my white vest that is decorated with beads I have isicwaya which is a skin that covers my chest. There's inkehli on my head with beads covering the top part of my face. I paired up my beautiful outfit with all star white sneaks which has embellishment of beads.

We head out and women starts ululating as I parade the Maseko yard amid singing. The walk comes to a halt in the middle of the yard where the gifting will take place. Mpume who's my maid of honor lay a grass mat for me and I settle down while she holds the umbrella for me since the sun is all out and scorching.

I'm not supposed to talk or look around as a sign of respect but excuse my eyes they had to search for the person they've been longing to see. There he is wearing ibeshu which is made from the calfskin on top he got isembatho to cover his shoulders. He has a handband which is made from cow skin to complete the

look. Oh my strabismus eyed King Zulu man. I couldn't help but return the smile when our eyes meet.

The bridesmaids starts a song and Mpilenhle leads the process of giving the gifts to the Maseko family. The names of the people receiving the gift are called one by one and from the oldest to the youngest. They'd lay on the grass mat and Mpilenhle would cover them with blankets. Once a person has received her/his gift she/he sings and dance as sign of appreciation. The exchange of gifts symbolizes the forming of new bond between the families since Kayise also gave my family gifts on umembeso ceremony.

My husband is the last person to be called. I get up and lay grass mats on the ground for him to walk on leading him to the bed. He gets up from his seat and I take his hand as we head to the bed.

"You make want to sing my African Queen by Platinumz ft Omarion. " he says and I giggle.

"I didn't know you know that song."

“You take me for small wena!”

Gosh I’m not supposed to be laughing like this. Thanks to the singing so they can’t hear me.

“What kind of English is that.”

“You think just because I play maskandi most of the time I don’t know these songs you listen to.”

He settles down on the bed and I take the basin before kneeling on the mat to wash his feet after taking off izinxabulela zakhe. Once I finish I pull the covers for him to get in. He looks at my bridesmaid trying to rattle them and we all laugh. Unyile they’re going to hit him and he won’t do anything about that.

“Ngena Sbari.” Mpilemhle says carrying a thick stick on her hand.

Kayise gives her a look which makes us laugh then he gets into bed. I cover him with duvet then the bridesmaids with other young ladies from my side hit him with sticks. He jumps up and runs away as the women ululate. I insisted that everything we do we should take note of the time because the last thing I want is to have lunch around 4pm when people are already full with nothingness. You don't enjoy the ceremony when you're hungry and I'm glad that we finished umabo on time.

Now we're about to have lunch but my husband and I with his groomsmen and my bridesmaids we change into modern traditional attire. Mine matches with my husband of course and we look like those couple on instagram. The music play and we make a step parading around the yard before going to the stretch tent. The decor is just the way I wanted it. We settle down on the special heart shaped seat and the bridesmaids with groomsmen sit on our each sides. People occupy the other chairs and once the speeches and reading of the gifts are out of the way we eat over soft music playing in the background.

"Thank you so much Sidwaba Siluthuli for making me a woman among women and restoring my dignity. Thank you for giving me another chance and trusting me with your heart again. I promise I would leave no stone unturned into making our

marriage a happy place for both of us. I pledge to be the best, supportive, caring, faithful, obedient wife. I'm insanely in love with you to no point of return."

He smiles taking my hand into his and looks at me deeply in my eyes.

"I'm the one who should be thankful for making me a man among men Yeyeye. There's no way that I couldn't give us another chance because without you my life is like a moonless night and a sunless day. You touch every chord of my soul with your beautiful love. There's no other woman I'd spend the rest of my other than you. I love you so much Mrs Maseko."

I check for coast, everyone is focusing on their food which gives me a chance to steal a kiss. I'm not lucky but I'm absolutely blessed to have this man in my life.

I pop my fingers as I anxiously waits for the five minutes to pass. This has to be the longest five minutes I have ever waited in my life. My alarms rings I breathe in and out then take the two sticks on the pedestal. Disappointment washes over me when look at reflection of one line in both of them. I cover my face with my shaking and heave a sigh.

It's been two years now trying for a baby with no fruitful results. I don't know what's actually wrong because we went to the doctor and nothing wrong was found in both of us. The disappointment in Kayise's eyes every time we check if I'm pregnant breaks my heart hence I decided to check alone this time. I was so sure that I'm pregnant and I will surprise him.

I feel cold hands holding on my knees and when I remove my hands from face I'm welcomed by baby brother who has my body lotion all over his face and clothes. The level of naughtiness in this child amaze me I tell you.

"Ndabenhle!"

"Ngcoba Mbeee!"

"Ngigcoba amasimba!"

He stares at me and I watch him as his lips trembles then a loud cry follows after that. I always shout at him but when he cries it hurts. I take him and calm him down.

"I'm sorry okay don't cry."

He nods and snuggles his head on my chest. I love this little nigga so much to the point that he's always with me then he's with mama. She doesn't mind I think it's because she can see as much I see that the more Benhle is growing it's the more he changes from looking like her to his father. He even has amanhlnhlo nempandla just like his father. Uncle G wayifuzisa kabi ingane ngempandla incane. My phone rings.

"Sis."

"Hey sis I'm coming there and mama asked me to pass by your house and take Ndabe."

"Oh I need to bath him how far are you?"

"You can bath him I'm a bit far."

"Okay sure."

I drop the call and walk downstairs with him in my arms. Kayise is watching soccer.

“Babe can you please look after him I want to prepare his bath. Mpilenhle is coming to fetch him.”

“Is that a pregnancy test?”

It’s only now I notice that Benhle is carrying one of the pregnancy tests.

“Uhm yes.”

“And.”

I heave a sigh

“Of course you’ve told me

” he says disappointedly

At first he used to give me hope but now I see he has reached that point where he's tired of hoping and get disappointed over and over. I put Benhle down and take the pregnancy test from him before going to plug his water. Once it's ready I prepare for his bath then fetch him.

"Mbeee"

"Mhhh"

"Siyaphi?"

Every time when he baths he asks where are we going. In his little mind we bath when we're going somewhere only.

"You're the one who's going to see Azanothe and Avumile."

"Vum Vum and Aza?"

"Yes they brought sweets and chocolates."

“I wan a car.”

“You have tons of car Ndabenhle.”

“Uyancishana Mbeee.” I giggle.

By the time I’m done bathing him Mpilenhle has arrived I can tell by the noise of the two rascals downstairs. In a second they bursts into my bedroom and greets me happily. They’re always jolly. Kids are adorable yazini.

“Kids come let’s go.”

I make my way out and when I’m by the stairs I notice that they’re not following me behind. Jizas these kids! They’re probably playing now just as I’m about to turn back I hear Kayise and Mpilenhle talking lowly as if they don’t want anyone to hear them.

“Find someone else to talk to not me Muzikayise!”

“Oh come on Mpilenhle avoiding each other is suspicious! I just need to talk nothing more nothing less.”

“Have you forgotten the last time we talked our tongues ended up on each other’s throats.”

What?

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☆ Mpilenhle ☆

That kiss is still tormenting me up to day and I'd sacrifice anything to delete that incident but unfortunately that's impractical.

"Don't tell me you don't trust yourself around me."

He does not get it! Just as I'm about to reply Mbewenhle appears from the stairs when our eyes lock my hair on the back stands and I feel a blanket of goosebumps covering my body.

"Hey sis!" I say joyfully hiding the guilt that is gnawing on me.

"Hey sis amasimba! How dare you kiss my husband?"

Oh God she heard us!

"I can explain Mbewenhle."

“You want to explain because you got caught! I can’t believe you two!”

“Babe clam down please it’s not what you think it is. It was just a kiss that meant nothing.” Muzikayise says trying to justify our kiss but my sister is breathing fire.

“A kiss that meant nothing my foot! If it meant nothing you would’ve told me!!”

I get up from the couch and walk towards her.

“We were scared you are going to be mad little sis please forgive me. It was a mistake please believe me when I say it meant nothing.” The tremor in my voice cannot be missed.

“A mistake? It would’ve been a mistake if you kissed some stranger not my husband! How do you even begin to kiss your brother in law? Do you have feelings for him?”

“What? No! Little sis please...”

“When was that?”

“Uhm it was during that time baba chased you out of home and I wanted him to help us find you. It meant nothing I swear. A huge mistake of my life that I regret up to this day.”

“Liar! You wanted him for yourself just say it!”

“That’s not true....”

“Does your mother knows that her saint daughter kissed her bitchy daughter’s husband?”

“Yeyeye...”

“Shut the fuck up Muzikayise I’m coming to you! Mpilenhle does sbari know that his wife kissed her brother in law? If it was nothing then why hide it? Just admit miss holier than thou that

you're not saint after all. See me, you, mama and baba we are all whores! We were all cut from the same cloth...." I shut her up with a back slap and she reels backwards almost falling on the floor.

Fire flickers in her eyes, she runs towards me and with a move that surprises me she kicks me hard on the stomach. I stumble backwards and fall on the floor. In the twinkling of an eye she's on sitting on my stomach and slapping the hell out of me.

"Yeyeye stop it!" Muzikayise

I feel her weight off my body as her husband pulls her away from me.

"Leave me alone Kayise!"

I get up from the floor, regret and mortification washes over me. I never thought my little sister would beat me up like I'm her peer let alone for kissing her husband.

“Aunty Mbewu why are you beating up mommy?” Azanothe

Mbewenhle’s eyes travel from Azanothe to Avumile lastly to Ndabenhle. The shock is evident on their little faces. Tears roll down her face and when she starts hyperventilating she dashes out. Muzikayise is left calling out for her but she’s out of sight in less than no time.

“Mommy are you okay?”

“Yes I’m okay baby. Aunty Mbewu and I were playing. Take your sister and uncle to the car.”

She reluctantly nods and walks out holding Ndabe and Avu in her hands.

“I’m sorry did she hurt you?” Muzi asks placing his hands on my shoulders but I push him away.

“Of course she hurt me! You see what you have done?”

“I’m sorry I didn’t know that she could hear us.”

“This is your damn fault! I don’t understand why you want to talk to me...”

“It is your fault Mpilenhle! You are the one who like talking about this! Can’t we have a conversation without you having to mention our kiss? It’s been two fucking years maan! I just needed someone else to talk to not to fuck get over it you’re not my type!” He chimes in angrily

I stop myself from slapping him and walk out. God my face is burning from those mean claps. I make sure the kids are buckled up then drive home. Tears are stinging in my eyes but I don’t want to let them fall in front of my children. Once I’m home I unbuckle the kids and leave them outside playing and skip inside the house. Mama and baba are arguing and they’re not even aware of my presence.

“She doesn’t mean anything bad nkosikazi she’s just concerned that’s all.”

“Your sister like poking her nose in our affairs and please don’t tell me that you believe her Musawenkosi.”

“I understand what she means Thembeke. This boy is 3 years old now and each passing day he keeps looking like a stranger.”

“What are you saying Qwabe?”

“Nothing but ka Qwabe asinawo thina amanhlonhlo.”

“Aqala ngoNdabenhle ke. I don’t understand why are you allowing your sister to feed you poison. I can have her talking ill of me but not my son. I will sort her out one of these days and she will learn to stay out of my business. Who is she to say Ndabenhle is not a Qwabe? I’m not sleeping with her angangijwayeli kabi.”

I clear my throat to announce my presence. They both look at me then baba gets up on the couch and disappears.

“Why are you guys fighting?” I say walking towards the couch and lower myself on it.

“Your aunts are meddling in my marriage and as your usual your father is entertaining them.”

“They say Ndabe is not baba’s son?”

“Yes can you believe them?”

See me

you, mama and baba are all whores. We were all cut from the same cloth. Those words echoes in my ears. What did she mean? Fine dad cheated on mama and I kissed Muzi what about mama? Does Mbewu know something that we don’t know? Now that this is mentioned it’s only now I noticed that Ndabe doesn’t look like mama anymore nor does he look like baba.

“Then give them what they want.”

“And that is?”

“Proof that he is baba’s child.”

“Hayi I’m not going to do that Mpilenhle. These accusations are an insult.”

“Mama you know how aunts are they won’t stop until you provide proof.”

“I don’t owe them any shit!”

“True but you do owe baba since he also have doubts.”

“Mpilenhle are you hearing yourself right now? You are also suggesting that I cheated on your father?”

“No what I’m trying to say is to stop all these doubts and accusations just do the DNA test once mama.”

“These people are insulting me and if I take my son for DNA test I would be entertaining them and allowing them to walk over my head. As for your father does he think all those nights sweating on top of me won’t have results? Or maybe he thinks he ejaculates water?”

I giggle

“Too much info mama.”

“What happened to your face.”

“Uhm it’s nothing.”

“Please don’t tell me Sbusiso did this to you because I swear I would...”

“It’s not him mama it’s allergy.”

“What kind of allergy is this that shows fingerprints on your flesh.”

I look down as tears sting in my eyes. Pushing them back is proving to be difficult.

“It’s...we...she...I didn’t mean to mama I swear.” I cover my mouth as I burst into a sob.

“Baby what’s wrong? What did you do? Talk to me please.” The worry in her voice is so loud.

She envelopes me in her and comforts me as I wet her pinafore with my tears and snot. This fall out between me and Mbewenhle is a heavy despair in my heart. She’s already distant from me now I know that I’ve lost her good.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I run as if there's something chasing me and I can feel the intensity of my emotions dissipating. On top of the mountain is where my run comes to a halt. I lower myself on the stone panting heavily and wipe the sweat on my forehead with my forearm. I never get used to the view of the village on top of the mountain. Unfortunately life in this village is not as beautiful as its view where I'm sitting.

The side of my cheek where she slapped me is burning and I can't believe she did that when she's actually the one who wronged me. Never in my wildest dreams have I ever thought I'd lay my hands on my elder sister. I was never raised like that and now regret is having a feast on me. That slap evoked anger in me and it came out like a dragon. I wanted to squeeze her into a tiny ball.

This is unbelievable my own sister did me dirty then she tells me that it meant nothing. What does that supposed to mean? You don't go around kissing your sister's man then say it meant nothing! I'm not one to believe that people just do things with no valid reason. Each and every thing we do there's always a reason to validate our actions. I don't know what hurts the most between the betrayal itself and the fact that I feel like I have to overlook this because he also "forgave me" after

breaking his heart. A kiss is nothing compared to what I did but I think it would've hurt less if it was a stranger.

My mind is reeling and my heart is shredded into pieces.

It's times like this I wish I still have my job. Dad said I have to focus on my marriage and gave Lonhle my job at the shop. As if there's anything to focus on. Okay maybe at first there was something to focus on which is proving myself and showing him how sorry I am but in these two years and months we have been married I've come to realize that this marriage was doomed the very first day my eyes laid on Manelisi. Meeting that guy turned my life upside and here I'm alone still enduring the consequences of our impetuous affair.

I get up from the stone and make my way back home. The first thing he does when I get home is to attack me with a hug. He has become aware of my anxiety attacks and how severe at time they get. The last one was triggered by him and up to this day I'm still not over that night. He takes me to the couch and makes me sit down before settling next to me.

“I’m sorry the kiss meant nothing I swear it was just a moment of weakness sthandwa sami. I was in so much pain and I wasn’t thinking straight.”

“Is that you telling me that it’s my fault?”

“No baby that’s not what I’m trying to say. Regardless of the pain I was going through I shouldn’t have done it. I wasn’t supposed to let pain control me.”

“You love her?”

“No baby how can you ask me that?”

“You kissed her Kayise. My blood sister what made you to kiss her in the first place?”

“Pain and weakness Yeyeye. I didn’t mean to I swear.”

“Wow interesting pain and weakness. It made you choose to kiss my sister out of all the girls in the world.”

“It’s not like that baby it could’ve been anyone but she’s the only female that happened to be there. I’m really sorry from the bottom of my heart. You know I would never hurt you intentionally please forgive me.”

“I don’t know Kayise.” I say and get up but he stops me.

“What do you mean you don’t know?”

“Just give me space okay.”

“Space how?”

“I’m going to my grandma’s house...” he interjects

“Baby please don’t do this to me please. Punish me anyhow but not like this. You know I can never survive a second without you.”

“That’s the thing Kayise yaz if you could really try harder then you will realize that you can actually live without me.”

“What does that supposed to mean?” He asks looking at me with intently.

“Kayise how can it be impossible to live without me yet you are failing to see me beyond my mistakes and imperfections.”

“Baby I do see you beyond...”

“Stop doing this please and be real with yourself. You love me and you’re scared to lose me but you can never get over what I did to you. Every now and then that shows. You tried baby I acknowledge that and I can never thank you enough for that but let’s be realistic you can never trust me again. No matter

how loyal I can be you will always doubt me and have your own conclusions.”

“Yeyeye you sound like you’re giving up on us.” The worry in his tone is triggering mine.

“I’m not giving up but let’s be real as long as you’re not over what I did you will always be suspicious of everything I do and that shit is emotionally draining not only to you but to me as well.”

“But baby I’ve forgiven you that I know for sure.”

“Maybe you’ve sthandwa sami but you would never be over everything that happened. I love you so much and you also love me but is that enough? What is love without trust? Maybe they lied when they said love conquers it all because ours hasn’t conquered my infidelity. The moment I’d think we are over everything then something would happen and take us back to square one. We are still stuck where we were 2 years ago.”

“This feels like a break up. Yeyeye are you divorcing me?”

“I don’t know Kayise all I know is that I’m tired okay. Ngikhathele.” The last word comes out as a whisper. I really am tired of his insecurities and accusations.

“You can’t leave me you made like this! You are the one who ruined me you think who will love me like this if you leave me!”

He heaves a sigh and frustratedly brushes his face.

“Look sthandwa sami.”

He takes my hands in his and kisses me then looks at me. His eyes are filled with different emotions but pain is the prominent one.

“I promise to do better please don’t give up on us. You can’t give up on us. Our souls are intertwined together and I made a promise to your soul that I will never have to survive without you. Sthandwa sami all that I am belongs to you and you are my

lifeline. You and I were mean to be together and our love will inspire the world. I can be a jerk at times but I promise to work on myself harder.”

“Kayise....”

“Tell me that you don’t love me anymore.”

I blink back my tears but they fail me and stream down my face. I’m tired but I love him despite everything and he’s right I’m the one who made him the man he is today. I cannot damage him and leave him just like that not that leaving is an option. I don’t want to be labeled as a woman owahlula umendo nor do I want to embarrass my parents.

“I love you” I whisper and another stream of tears rolls down my face which he wipes it off with his palms before claiming my lips.

We share an intense kiss our tongues creating magic that sends spark through my body. He picks me up and walks with me to

our bedroom where he strip us naked and make love to me. Today it's so different then other times we made love. He's handling my body like it is made of glass and he's very cautious not break it. Each stroke is soothing my every bleeding wound, erasing every single doubt and reviving our spark. The love making is so beautifully intense that we are both tearing up. He's reaching the depths of my soul and by the time he reaches his high I've already climaxed 3 times.

.....

“Muzikayise should consider to take another wife who can give him children.”

“He will never do that he loves his wife too much to do that.”

“This is not love idliso nje qha. Who in his right state of mind forgives a woman who cheated on him.”

Funny how often I hear these words from the Maseko elders but they still hurt like they did the very first time I heard them.

Kayise promised me that he won't do such thing to me but at this point I'm afraid that maybe just maybe he's starting to consider to take another wife who will birth him children.

I make my way in and serve the elders the tea then go back to the kitchen where I continue with cooking. The father in law is hosting his annual huge ceremony this weekend and I want this ceremony to be over already because one of these days I won't be able to hold myself from giving Nomathamsanqa piece of my mind. I'm fed up with her attitude now. There's commotion outside and just as I'm about to go check what's going on Kayise walks in.

"Yeyeye let's go."

"I'm not done with cooking."

"I said let's go!!"

I take a first glance at him and notice that his face is red and he's lightly shaking. He stretches out his hand for me and I take it then we head outside going straight to his car.

"Son please don't go," says his mama who looks like she's in a brink of tears.

"I'm leaving mama and you will never see me here ever again!!"

"No my boy please don't say that. Let's get inside and talk."

"Talk? What's there to talk about? You and your husband disgust me!!" He bellows angrily then we get inside the car as his mama begs him to not go. I'm not sure I've ever seen him like this before.

"Is everything okay?" Of course things are not okay. What am I asking but this is me trying to ask what's going on. He looks at me and reaches for my hand before planting a wet peck on it.

“Everything is okay my love.”

How is everything okay when he just told his mom that he will never set his foot in their homestead. You never say such the ancestors might punish you the day you decide to come back. At home the first thing he does is to kiss me and before I know it he’s making to love not to my body only but to my soul as well.

“Let’s leave this village,” he says after our beautiful love making. I giggle thinking maybe he’s joking but when I look at him I realize how serious he is.

“Why?”

“You wanted us to leave right? I’ve decided that we should go. That house you wanted in Durban is it still on sale?”

“I don’t understand Kayise. I mean you love it here.”

“It’s time for a change my love.” He kisses my forehead.

It’s no secret that I want to leave this village but why all of the sudden he wants us to leave?

☆ Mpilenhle ☆

It's not like her to be still in bed at this time and this has been a norm since she arrived two days back which worries her mother.

"Come in," Mpilenhle shouts with her groggy voice. The door swings open and her mother walks in. As she walks closer to the bed she can notice the swollen eyes which is evident that her daughter cried herself to sleep.

"Hey baby."

"Hi Mama."

Mam Thembeke lowers herself to the bed and looks at her daughter.

“What’s wrong it’s been two days now since you have been like this. I’m so worried about you.”

“It’s nothing.”

“If it’s not nothing you wouldn’t be crying yourself to sleep Mpilenhle. Talk to me please if you don’t talk to me then how can I help you. Yaz sthandwa sami no matter how old we can get we always need our mothers by our sides and to talk to them whenever we feel the need to. They might not have all the solutions in the world but knowing that they’ve got our backs is all that we need.”

“The funny thing about what you just said is that no matter what trouble do I find myself into you’re the last person I think of talking to.”

Mpilenhle and her mother look at door where Mbewenhle is looking beautiful in a blush pink chino pants and long sleeves maroon simple tee. She paired up her outfit with black suede brogue shoes.

“What does that supposed to mean Mbewenhle?” Mam Thembeke asks and she couldn’t hide the pain in her tone. Has she failed her daughter to that point?

“Nothing at all. I’m not here to disturb your mother and daughter moment. I’m here to take the kids to town if it’s okay with you two of course. I think they could do with some ice cream after what they saw.”

“What did they see?” Mam Thembeke

The sisters looks at each other. Mpilenhle’s heart sinks to the pit of her stomach at the pain and disappointment reflecting on her little sister’s eyes.

“I’m sorry Mbewenhle from the bottom of my heart. I wish I could reverse time and undo everything.”

“I’m not here for that Mpilenhle.”

“I know but I’m really sorry sis wami. I know what I did is unforgivable...”

“Exactly what you did is unforgivable so let’s move on. Should I take the kids or not?”

“Hayi Mbewenhle don’t talk to your elder sister like that. Where’s your respect?”

“You know mama respect is two way street. I have always respected her and she knows that but after what she did I lost my respect for her.”

“What’s going on between the two of you?”

“Can you please give me the go ahead to take your kids with me.”

“Mbewenhle come here and sit down.”

“Ma I...”

“I said come here and sit down Mbewenhle!” Mam Thembeke raises her voice making Mbewenhle to huff before she walks towards the bed and sits down.

“We are not getting out of this bedroom until we fix whatever that is going on between the two of you. Now start talking and I don’t want to repeat myself.”

“I....it was a mistake mama.”

“I’m getting tired of that song Mpilenhle try something else.”  
Mbewenhle

“What’s are you two talking about?”

Mpilenhle heaves a sigh to gain courage then she tells her mother nothing but the truth. The silence that fills the bedroom after she’s done narrating what happened is replaced by a ‘mpaaaaa’ sound. Her mother just slapped her hard on her

cheek and her vision studs with stars. As much as it caught her up by surprise but she knows that she deserves more than just a clap.

“You have no shame your sister’s husband pho!” Mam Themeka bellows angrily.

“It was a mistake mama and I’m really sorry.”

“A mistake? You didn’t fall and your lips landed on his you literally kissed him Mpilenhle! How could you do this to your sister?”

“I meant no harm I swear it was a moment of weakness. I’m sorry from the deepest of my heart.” Mpilenhle cries as regret washes over her. No amount of sorries could ever make things better or change anything.

“Mbewenhle I’m really sorry my child I can’t believe she did this to you. To say I’m disappointed would be an understatement.

This is so unlike you Mpilenhle so tell me how do you expect things to go on after this huh?"

"I can do anything mama just to show her how sorry I am if only she can give me a chance."

"Baby what do you say?" Mam Thembeke asks looking at Mbewenhle

"She's sorry right? So everything is cool."

More than anyone Mam Thembeke knows that her younger daughter is just saying that to move on from this but deep inside of her she's hurting and she will distance herself even more from Mpilenhle. The last thing she wants is her daughters to hate each other.

"It's going to take so much of you Mpilenhle to reach a stage where Mbewenhle is safe to trust you again and forgive you completely. I don't want you two to hate each other you're

blood sisters you should be holding one another not fighting against each other.”

“I know mama and I’m prepared to do anything to win her trust and forgiveness. I’m sorry sis wami and I love you so much.”

“I will go prepare the children.” Mam Thembeke says getting up from the bed then she disappears leaving the awkward silence behind.

“Wait!” Mpilenhle says stopping her little sister who was about to get up and follow her mother.

“I’m sorry.”

“It’s cool don’t worry about it.”

“I know that I messed things up even more between us and my wish is to fix our relationship.”

“We are cool big sis don’t worry.”

“Mbewenhle stop it please. You know very well that we are not cool. You’re distant I have been trying to reach out to you for two years but you keep pushing me away. I know that we have never had that close relationship before but at this moment I even miss that one we had at least by then I knew that you don’t hate me.”

“I never said I hate you.”

“Then why are you pushing me away?”

“It’s for my own protection Mpilenhle nothing personal. If I don’t protect myself from being hurt who will?”

“You don’t need protection against me little sis. I will never hurt you I love you so much to inflict any pain to you on purpose.”

“Maybe physically but emotionally you have and you didn’t even acknowledge how much you hurt me up to this day which shows me that it was on purpose.”

Mpilenhle sighs heavily as it registers to her that this is deeper than she thought.

“I’m sure it was not intentional little....”

“Oh it was intentional sis. You looked me in the eyes and told me of how much it was my fault that I almost got raped. You disregarded my feelings and downplayed that incident because it was my fault and it didn’t happen. In your eyes it might have been a little thing but it gravely affected me. Just so you know I never wanted you to buy me expensive clothes or lick my booty but I needed your emotional support as my elder sister. You just didn’t care the only thing you did was shoving an apology down my throat and telling me how much everything was my fault as if I denied that. Honestly speaking that was the last thing I needed to be reminded of because I was already going through a lot but it’s cool.” By the time Mbewenhle is finished talking her elder sister is a weeping mess that she can’t even articulate a single sentence.

Now she realizes how egocentric and unfair she was towards her little sister and she doesn't blame her for being distant. Mbewenhle gets up from the bed and walks out of her elder sister's bedroom. She follows the noise of the children which is coming from her parents bedroom. Mam Thembeke is almost done preparing the kids.

"Thanks for preparing them for me."

"No problem sis. How are you feeling?"

"I'm okay."

Mam Thembeke finishes and asks the kids to go outside. She just need a moment with her daughter. The kids runs out making noise as always.

"Come sit here."

Mbewenhle does as she's told and looks at her mom who's studying her. She has never been a difficult child growing up but the more she grows it's the more she's becoming a stranger to Mam Thembeke. Lord knows she's trying but her daughter has built a wall between them and she's failing to break it down and get to her.

"Am I really the last person you think of talking to when you're in trouble?"

"I was kidding mama."

"Udlala kabuhlungu."

"I'm sorry."

She knows that her daughter wasn't playing and it breaks her heart to the core. Now she doesn't even know what to do get through her. Nothing seems to work has she lost her daughter for good?

“Growing up life was never easy for us. Dad left mom with three children for another woman who later ended up killing him. He was useless but that didn’t make his death to hurt less. I don’t know why I believed that maybe one day he was going to come to his senses and come back to us. Seeing my mom suffering and failing to make ends meet was hard for me. I was the most beautiful girl and wanted by every men in this village just like you. There was this man we shared the same dreams but he didn’t have much. In fact he had nothing at all but I liked him. Mama didn’t like him and she made me choose your father since he was coming from a well to do family. Yes I didn’t love your father at first but what I saw in him was a man that my father was never was. A man who was going to provide me with stability and security. The way he took care of my mother and siblings it made me developed feelings for him and from there and then I knew that our children would never sleep with empty stomachs. My daughters would never have to use newspapers as sanitary pads and be a laughing stock at school. He was and still that man who provide for his family no matter what. Yes he complains every time he has to spend just because that how he is. Some things are just habitual nje. I love your father Mbewenhle but I love my children even more. There’s no such thing that you guys remind me of the marriage I never wanted. I love you so much sweetheart.”

Mbewenhle looks at her mom sadly. She didn't know that her grandfather was useless all she knew is that he passed on.

"I'm sorry mama for everything you went through. I can imagine how hard it must have been for you. Don't you regret choosing dad? I mean the man is difficult and too traditional."

Mam Thembeke giggles

"No I don't

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when you love someone you embrace their flaws and imperfections."

"The man what was his name again? Khubonye."

"Yes."

"Do I know him?"

Once again Mama Thembeke giggles.

“Yes but I can’t tell you.”

“Why not? Mama come on.”

“What would you benefit from knowing him?” Now it’s Mbewenhle’s turn to giggle.

“Pretty please Mommy.”

“No I’m not telling you.”

“Is it Uncle G?”

“No it’s not him the very first day you met him I was meeting him for the first time as well.”

“Yeah what I’m saying. He’s younger than you futhi,” Mbewenhle says and her mom giggles shamefully.

Never in her wildest dreams has she ever thought she would sleep with a man younger than her let alone cheating on her husband. As much as Gcobolwakhe is younger than her but he treated her like she’s coming from royalty, like she’s a Queen. Oh bless the woman that is going to be his wife.

“Don’t you miss him?”

“Who?”

“Uncle G.”

“How can you ask me that Mbewenhle?”

“I’m just asking mama. I mean you seemed happy in Durban. It’s like he brought some positive energy around you and it was heart warming to witness that side of you.”

“Really?”

“Yes and I know that you also know that he made you happy.”

“Ay wena ngane I’m not discussing this with you.”

“True let’s stopping discussing this before I find myself betraying father. That man would be miserable without you.”

“I would also be miserable without him hence he can’t find about what happened in Durban.” Mam Thembeke says to herself rather to her daughter.

“I promised you mama that I won’t tell him.”

“I know sis but your aunts are feeding him poison. He also doubts that your little brother is his.”

“Oh I see but how long will you keep this mama.”

“As long as I live Mbewenhle!”

“Maybe it would’ve been possible if Ndabendle is not changing every single day from looking like you to uncle G.”

“I have to do whatever it takes.”

“And that is?”

“I don’t know okay!”

Mbewenhle sighs looking at how stressed out her mother is.

“Your husband is illiterate and doesn’t believe in western things which will make this harder but you can try to fake tests results.”

Mam Thembeke looks at her daughter as her lips curve forming a beautiful smile before squeezing her daughter in her arms.

“You’re such a genius!”

“Mama don’t be too excited you know how difficult your husband is.”

“This will work.” The phone rings disturbing their embrace. Mam Thembeke takes it on the pedestal and answers it.

“Mama.”

“Your brother is getting worse I don’t know what to do now.”

“He must stop smoking weed that’s all.”

“This is serious Thembeke.”

“I’m coming.” Mam Thembeke hangs up.

“Uncle is still hallucinating?”

“It’s the weed he’s smoking.”

“It sounds serious mama and I don’t think weed make people to hallucinate.”

“I don’t know baby. It was lovely to talk with you. We haven’t had such a long conversation for almost two years. Thank you so much.”

“It’s okay mama. I have to go now.”

They both get up and walk out of main bedroom. Mam Thembeke walks her daughter and the kids out then she goes back to the house to borrow Mpilenhle’s car who gladly gives her. Off she goes to her mother’s house where she’s welcomed by her brother’s screams of agony.

She walks to the lounge and finds her mother trying to calm down her brother.

“Hi mama. What’s wrong with him?”

“He says he’s burning. I don’t know what to do anymore.”

“Please help me Thembeke I’m burning! Yoooh mawehh.”

Mam Thembeke stares at her brother who’s wiggling and screaming in agony. Now she can see how serious this is getting by each passing day.

☆ Muzikayise ☆

“The nerve you two have to come here and justify your monstrous actions!”

“We did what we had to do...”

“Had to do? You’re so unbelievable baba! As for you mom I can’t believe you allowed this to happen!”

Their presence is boiling me and I feel like I would explode.

“I also didn’t know my son he told me when everything was already done.”

“And you didn’t do anything about it. You two are repulsive get out of my house and I don’t want to see you in my house ever again!”

“Hey don’t talk to us like that! We are still your parents!” Baba

“I’m so ashamed to call you my parents! You’re so evil! Leave now!!”

“Son please don’t do that.” My mother cries but her tears are not moving me as they always do. The level of cruelty in these people shocks me.

“Mama take your husband and leave my house!”

“Tell us what do you want us to do my son. We will do anything. I don’t want to lose you Muzi. You’re my only son.”

Mama

“Then do the right thing. Confess everything.”

“Uyahlanya wena mfana! Do you realize what you’re asking us to do? You want to ruin our reputation?”

“Until you confess baba then just know that you’ve lost your only son. Now leave!”

“You better keep your mouth shut and not ruin everything for us! Don’t be late for slaughtering

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” baba says getting up and walks out. This man is crazy I’m not going to that stupid ceremony!

“Son...”

“Mama follow your husband please.”

She looks at me sadly and follows her husband. Who are these people? I don't recognize them at all. They fooled us for years. My phone rings I answer it as I walk out making sure that I lock the door first.

“I'm coming baby.” I say and hang up then drive off. I find them already waiting for me. She buckles the kids then joins me in the front. I drive to Dundee.

“Have you thought about what I asked you baby.”

“Yes I don't understand why do you want us to move all of the sudden Kayise.”

“I told you baby it's time for a change.”

I just want to be far away from my parents and their evilness and as much as I want them to confess this will mess everything maybe things are better this way.

“What about our house?”

“We can leave it unoccupied and when you’re visiting your parents we can stay in it.”

“What happened between you and your parents.”

“They want me to marry another woman.”

“That’s not true Kayise. Your mother loves me and she doesn’t entertain what your father and elders are saying.”

“Of course mama doesn’t want that.”

“Then tell me the truth please. I see whatever that is going on is huge. You swore to never set your foot in your parent’s house baby.”

This is the hardest situation I ever been. How long will I keep on lying to her? I feel so bad to keep this from her but I can’t bring myself to tell her.

“I swear baby there’s nothing more.”

I feel her intense gaze on me but I don’t dare look at her because she will read through my eyes that I’m lying. This one knows me more I know myself.

We start at KFC to eat and when we finish eating Yeyeye goes to buy the ice cream for the kids while I go wait for them outside. Some little boy runs in front of me bumps into me smearing the ice cream on my jeans.

“Oh my goodness I’m really sorry. Lwandile why don’t you watch where you are going! Look what you’ve done!” Says this beautiful woman dressed in a sangoma attire.

“I’m sorry mama.”

“Apologize to uncle.”

“I’m sorry uncle.”

“It’s okay my boy.”

“I’m really sorry here’s the tissue.”

She hands me the tissue and I’m surprised when she takes my hand and holds it for little while while staring deep in my eyes then she burps loudly.

“Uhm I’m really sorry.” She quickly lets go of my hand as if it was burning her.

“It’s okay.”

“Sorry once again. Lwandile let’s go.”

“You saw something right?”

“Saw what?”

“Come on that moment you just had holding my hand. You had a vision.”

“I have to go.”

“Please don’t do this to me. I can even pay you. How much is your consultation.”

“No you don’t have to. You and your wife are trying to conceive right?”

“Yes it’s been two years now.”

“She won’t conceive until she do right by her baby,” she says and walks away not giving me a chance to ask what baby she’s talking about.

“Close your mouth a fly will go in.” Yeyeye says poking me and I chuckle

“I’m confused. There was a sangoma here and she said you won’t conceive until you do right by your baby.”

“That what she said?”

“Yes hayi ngathi imbuqe yesangoma le. You don’t have a baby nje.” I say dismissively though I can’t help but notice the look of worry plastered on her face.

“Why are you worried she’s one of those chancers.”

She starts popping her fingers and I just knew there's something going on.

"Yeyeye do you know what's the sangoma is talking about?"

"Uhm I think."

"You think?"

"I had a miscarriage Kayise."

## ☆ Muzikayise ☆

I don't understand my mind is reeling with unanswered questions that only she can answer but now is not the right time. The last thing I want is to argue with my wife in front the kids. I can feel her stolen glances on me as I focus on the road. We are driving back now and I can't wait to get home already so that she can take me out of this confusion.

"Stop popping your finger joints you are making noise." I say and take a glance at her.

The fear in her eyes unsettles me. Did she miscarried my baby and decided to keep that from me? On arrival I drop off the kids first at the Qwabe homestead then drive to my house.

"Kayise I'm sorry."

"What are you sorry for Mbewenhle?"

“For not telling you about the miscarriage.”

“What miscarriage huh? When did all of this happened and how come I didn’t notice anything? I don’t fucking understand what’s going on?”

“The day you fetched me at the Dlomos I had lost her few days back.”

“Oh it wasn’t mine.” I cannot miss the pain in my voice. Even in his grave this asswipe still makes my life hell. If I had powers I’d wake him up and kill him with my own hands.

“Uhm yes it was Manelisi’s.”

It hurt more then it could’ve if it was mine. The bastard not only did he took her innocence he also left his seed inside of her.

“Why you didn’t tell me?”

“I didn’t think it mattered.”

“You think didn’t it mattered? That’s bullshit! I have every right to know especially now that this is affecting us!”

“I’m sorry Sidwaba Silithuli honestly I was scared to tell you,” she says with a tremor in her voice.

“So you chose to hide a whole human being just because you lost her. What kind of a mother are you? You didn’t look like someone who had lost a baby.”

Oh is it me who didn’t notice?

“Tell me how you would’ve felt Kayise to see me weeping and grieving a baby that was not yours?”

“It would’ve hurt me but what the use Yeyeye especially now that we can’t have baby because of your late baby.”

“You’re just saying that because you don’t know how you become when you’re angry. I was scared you’re going to ‘cleanse me’ I was scared you’re going to make me stand in the storm at night while you know very well that storm is my biggest fear. I might’ve hidden this from everyone but that doesn’t mean I don’t think about my baby. I had to mourn her in secret because I was scared of your reaction and I didn’t want to make things worse then they were already are.”

“I said I’m sorry about making you stand in the storm I allowed my emotions to get the better of me. The thought of losing you Yeyeye drives me crazy.” I hate being desperate and vulnerable in front of her. Maybe it gives her that satisfaction hence she sounds like she’s giving up on us lately.

“I know you’re sorry but you punished me for a mere character in one of the books that I was reading.”

“I didn’t know it was a character in a book but you have to put yourself in my shoes. How you would’ve felt seeing a conversation between me and my friend fantasizing about some girl.”

“It was just a character Kayise he doesn’t exist!”

“Don’t raise your voice at me!”

“Gosh you’re messed up!”

“You messed me up Mbewenhle now deal with me! I don’t understand how did we get here because we were talking about your baby but let me tell you this. Character in a book or not it’s not nice to hear your wife fantasizing about another man. At the end of the day these characters are not just imagination of writers there are people who they draw inspiration from. What happens one day when you meet this man that matches exactly the character you were fantasizing about?”

“If you weren’t snooping on my phone from the word go you wouldn’t have seen all of that. I’m tired of walking on eggshells around you Kayise. There are things I can’t protect you from especially if you are going to snoop around. I love reading and obviously there are going to be characters that I love but that

doesn't mean I'm going to cheat on you. I'm sure you also meet plenty of women who you find them attractive but you don't cheat on me with them. Look I'm sorry that I didn't tell you about the baby but you also have to put yourself in my shoes."

"You made me believe that we are going to have our first born Yeyeye. You didn't tell me that you're already a mother!"

"Well I'm sorry but as I said I wanted to keep peace in our marriage. See even now we are fighting whether I told you then still we were going to fight. I'm tired of constantly fighting. Have you realized that you spent so much time keeping tabs on me and snooping around that you've forgotten about most important things in our marriage such as making each other happy and spoiling each other. I miss my strabismus eyed man the one I felt in love with, the one who pampers me, buys me gifts, tells me how beautiful I am

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the one that jokes around with me and tickles me. It brings me so much pain that I'm the reason behind the change in you but you have a choice to try harder and change if not for me for our marriage." With that said she steps out of the car and bangs the

door behind her. I heave a sigh and reverse out of the yard. At the gate I meet my father's brother and pull over.

"Babomncane," I say after lowering the window.

"Hey son. I'm here to see you are you going somewhere?"

"I'm just taking a drive baba my mind is all over the place."

"Can I get in."

"Yes you can."

He walks to the other side and gets inside of the car then I drive off.

"What brings you in my house."

"Your father..." I cut him short

“Let me guess he sent you.”

“Not really but he told me what happened.”

“Baba don’t tell me you also know about this.”

“I didn’t know son until now but I was not surprised. Your father miraculously became rich.”

“I can’t believe him baba how could he do this.”

“Money is the root of evil things son I understand where he’s coming from. Life was hard way back we were nothing and no one respected us in this village. People saw us as those ‘argha shame people’ and when he became filthy rich people started respecting us. He brought the Maseko surname the dignity that it has now.”

“I rather be poor and have no dignity then resort to such cruelty baba. You don’t know how hard it is for me whenever my wife asks me why I’m fighting with my parents. Out of all people I’m the one who know her pain.”

“I can imagine my son but confessing won’t help either instead it will ruin things not for your father only but for everyone including you. Do you think your wife will look at you the same way after this? She won’t want anything to do with the Masekos including you.”

“Baba you’re saying this because you’re also benefiting from his riches not that you care about my marriage!”

“Of course I care. See when you forgave her I knew that you love her. The Maseko surname will be dragged down to the mud. Your father could go to jail and we will be the talk of this village. Think about this son.”

“You’re putting me in a very difficult situation how do I keep on lying to my wife huh? Jail is what baba deserves!”

“It’s not lying son but withholding information from her that would break her more then it could do any help to her.”

“It’s not easy as you say baba...”

“You want to lose her?”

“Of course you know that’s a last thing I want. I’m nothing without that girl.”

“You wanted to talk to me last week but you couldn’t reach me.”

“When Ncane cheated on you how did you completely moved on and forgave her.”

I’m the only one who knows that ncane cheated on him and I couldn’t help myself but ask. How does he do it he makes it look so easy. Lord knows I’m trying but other days it’s a battle.

“It wasn’t easy my boy but I understood that a man provides and I wasn’t that man. I had nothing our kids were not going to eat and dress my love for her only.”

“That’s the thing babomncane Yeyeye doesn’t have a good enough reason for cheating. There’s no reason at all that bastard was even poor. It’s not money she was looking for from him.”

“There’s never a good enough reason for cheating Muzi. You had a choice to leave this girl but you chose to marry her and that gave you no choice but to love and accept her with her flaws and imperfections. You’re going to go crazy if you’re going to ask yourself questions that she can’t answer herself. If there’s no reason clear it was a moment of weakness. If you want peace and to be happy in your marriage then you have to let go of everything.”

“I’m trying baba God knows I really am but just when I thought I’m over everything then something would trigger me.”

“Then let her go.”

“I can’t I love her baba.”

“You would lose her either way if you’re not going to learn to trust her again. Muzi the moment you forgive someone when they’ve hurt you it means you let go everything they’ve done to you clearly you haven’t forgiven her. If your fear of losing her is not a motivation enough for you let go of everything then I don’t know boy. It’s been two years soften your heart now.”

I think Durban would do us good. New beginnings, new place and new life is what we need. We would be away from everyone and everything that happened.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

It’s midnight and my husband hasn’t come back home since he drove out after our argument in the car. I have been trying to call him but his phone is ringing unanswered. I called Thuthu

thinking maybe he's there because I saw him leaving with his uncle but Thuthu said uncle came back alone. Anxiety is nibbling on me what if something bad happened to him? What if he's with some girl? That thought alone is one that I don't want to entertain.

"Baby!!!" I jerk up from the couch and rush to the kitchen where his voice is coming from and it sounds strange.

"Hello my beautiful wife," he slurs and staggers almost falling but he balances then he laughs out loudly.

"Kayise what's wrong? You are you drunk?"

"I had one glass sthandwa sami. I wanted to see what is the fuss about alcohol and damn ziyawuta!"

"You don't drink Kayise."

"Here I brought you these."

He hands me a bottle of champagne, box of chocolates and box of earrings. This is so sweet I haven't received a gift from him ever since but I'm surprised why he bought me a bottle of alcoholic champagne.

"I want you to know that I love you suka sambe wami and I really appreciate you. I promise you from now on I'm going to make you the happiest wife in the world."

"Thank you so much but why a bottle of champagne?"

"I want you to cook with it," he says and we both laugh.

"How much did you have? You're so drunk and this is my first time seeing you like this."

"I heard that alcohol makes you forget about your problems a bit. I wanted forget about mine as well."

“Come let’s me take you the lounge you can barely stand.” I put my things on the counter and hold him as I lead him to the couch.

“Don’t you want to eat?”

“I want meat did you cook some?”

“Yes.”

“Bring it here.”

I go to the kitchen and dish up for him then go back to the lounge to serve him.

“Thank you sthandwa sami. Woza ngiqabule kancane.”

I giggle and sit on his lap circling my arm around his neck while his wraps around my waist. We share a kiss the taste of the alcohol in his mouth makes the kiss erotic.

“I love you.”

“I love you too.”

“I’m sorry about the baby you lost. I can imagine how you felt when you lost it. I don’t want us to fight anymore now that we know what’s wrong let’s fix this. We have to go to the sangoma who would confirm everything and let us know what we have to do but usually when you had a miscarriage you do cleansing and naming ceremony.”

Is this alcohol talking or he really means this? My husband that left here was fuming with anger. If it’s alcohol then he should drink everyday.

“Thank you so much my husband this really means a lot to me.”

“I want us to do this as fast as we can so that we can move to Durban.”

“Baby you’re serious about this?”

“Like a heart attack sthandwa sami. I feel like we need this relocation and it would do us good.”

“Why do I get the feeling that you are running us away from something.”

“Something horrible is going to happen baby I can feel it in my gut and I’m so scared of losing you.” The last sentence comes out as a whisper.

I frame his face so that he’s looking at me and stare at his glistening eyes. The terror in his eyes is perturbing. What’s going on kanti?

“What’s going on sthandwa sami talk to me please.”

“Please promise me that you’re not going to leave me no matter what.”

“I won’t leave you mnyeni wami.”

“No matter what?”

“Yes.”

“Say bhadlabhadla matshe amahlophe akashembe.”

I giggle and say as I’m told.

“Baby don’t say that when you don’t meant it. Unyazi will punish you.”

“You’re not a unyazi believer but I mean it baby.”

He captures my lips in his and what is supposed to be just a kiss ends up to an intense love making

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“Are you sure you don’t want me to come with you?” Kayise asks taking my hand in his and kisses it.

We just came from the sangoma in Tugela Ferry. I don’t know how does Kayise knows him but they seemed to be close. I was shocked to see a guy about my age but I’m satisfied with everything he said. I couldn’t help but shed a tear when he told me that he was a boy.

“Yes baby I have to deal with my family.”

“We are going to get through this together.”

He’s been very supportive and I thought it was alcohol talking the night before last one. We spent the whole day in doors yesterday I was nursing his hangover and the drama in this man. It was like he’s suffering from a chronic disease hence we only got time today to go to the sangoma. We share an intense kiss and he’s having a hard time to let me go because I’m going to spend the night home.

“Do you have to sleep. I mean it can’t be that the ceremony is tomorrow.”

“Yes but we want it to be soon as possible baby. I can’t come here on the day of the ceremony.”

“Okay.”

“Don’t sulk I love you.”

“I love you too.”

I lean over to kiss him again then step out of the car. He hoots once then drive away while I make my way inside the yard. The kids are playing outside and when they see me they run to me. That moment I have nothing in my hands but I give them money to go buy lollipops.

“Take me Mbeee!” He says raising up his hands for me to take him.

“You’re not going with Vum Vum and Azanothe to buy lollipops.”

“No I want you.”

“We won’t buy it for you Ndabe if you’re not coming with us.”  
Avumile

“Mbeee they don’t want to buy lollipop for me.”

“Moss you don’t want to come with us?” Avumile says cheekily. This girl thinks Benhle is her age.

“Mbeee.” That’s Benhle urging me to reprimand them kodwa naye why he doesn’t want to go.

“Wena uyathanda ukutefa mawubona uAunty Mbewu!” (You like being a cry baby when you see aunty Mbewu) Azanothe.

“Please buy him as well I’m begging you my puddings. Both of you will keep the change okay.”

“Of course we were going to buy the lollipop for him we just wanted you to say so.” Avumile says and I giggle.

They walk away while I pick up Benhle and puts him on the side of my waist. He snuggles his head on my shoulder. Okay he’s being his needy self. To think I used to say I will hate him because of how mama was slaving me around when she was pregnant with him but the first day my eyes laid on him my heart was stolen.

Mama and baba are watching TV. Now that I’m here I’m scared what would be their reaction especially baba’s. I’m so scared of this man and it’s not even funny anymore. I greet them and settle down on the couch putting Benhle on my lap.

“What brings you here ntombi yami?” The anger dissipated over the months after my wedding. Now he’s proud to call me ‘ntombi yami’

“Haw Qwabe can’t our daughter visit us.”

“And leave her husband with who?”

“He’s with his family too baba.” Of course it’s a lie. Kayise meant it when he said he’s not going to set his foot there. Yesterday it was the ceremony but we didn’t go there.

“Oh yes and ain’t you supposed to be there?”

“Musawenkosi can you stop this please. You sound as if you don’t want her to visit us. This is her home at the end of the day.”

“That’s not my intention at all MaNdwandwe I’m just concerned that the Maseko paid lobola for their bride I mean

the ceremony was just yesterday I'm sure there are things she's supposed to be helping out with."

"Don't worry about that baba. I know my role as their bride everything is under control."

"I didn't see you guys there though."

"We were there baba you just didn't see us."

"Let me go get you something to eat my baby."

"Can we talk first mama."

They both look at me and I sigh heavily. I hope they won't eat me alive.

"Uhm Kayise and I went to the sangoma regarding the inability to conceive and we find a reason behind that."

“Witchcraft what else could it be. You went to the doctor and nothing wrong was found,” says mama

“These doctors know nothing. What is the reason ntombi yami.”

“Uhm uh.” I clear my throat and look at them as they both look at me expectantly.

“I had a miscarriage before Kayise and I got back together. Yes the baby was Manelis’s. The sangoma said we have do some rituals and ceremony.”

The shock in both of them is clouding in their faces but mama’s is soon replaced by pain.

“Why are we only hearing this now Mbewenhle?” I’m uncertain of his tone whether he’s angry or what.

“I’m sorry baba. I was scared to tell you guys.”

“Does your husband knows about this?”

“Yes he does baba.”

He heaves a sigh and shakes his head.

“He also didn’t tell you to come and tell us so that we can do everything that is supposed to be done?”

“I just came here because I need you and mama to perform the rituals for me.” Of course I’m diverting. My husband and I are okay I don’t need a third person making noise about something we’ve already talked about.

“It was a blessing in disguise that you lost the baby.” Ouch now that cuts deep to the core how could he say that?

“Haibo Musawenkosi how can you say that about our grandchild.”

“Aw Muzi was never going to marry her while pregnant. The child was going to be a constant reminder of what she did to him.”

“A baby is a blessing from God and ancestors Qwabe regardless of the circumstances of how it was conceived.”

“This baby was going to be good as a bastard child MaNdwandwe yenzekahle yachitheka. It was bad enough that she cheated bringing a proof of her infidelity in her marriage was going to be despicable.”

Wow he’s calling my baby ‘despicable’ but he also had a bastard child. The nerve of this man and I don’t know why up to this day it is still impossible to be immune to whatever he says. He agrees to do the rituals for me so tomorrow the preparations are starting. This went better than I expected.

I excuse myself to put Benhle to bed. My heart shrinks as I look at him sleeping peacefully with his mouth slightly open. He's innocent in all of this and he didn't choose to be born in such circumstances. Dad doesn't have to find out about this because he's capable of mistreating him. I fear that I won't be able to protect him from dad should the truth come out and I don't trust mom that she will protect him either. This woman has never protected us from him but we are his children imagine when he finds out that he's not his.

"Can I come in." Mama asks but she's already inside. She shuffles her feet towards the bed and settles on it.

"Can I take him."

She looks at me confusion clouding her face.

"Benhle

we technically raised this baby together I'm sure you trust me with him. I want him to officially live with me."

“Of course we raised him together but baby you have to focus on building your own family.”

“He’s my family mama.”

“Why do you want to take him.”

“I don’t trust anyone with him except you but I know how do you get when it comes to baba. You never stood up for us to him. I don’t want Benhle to be subjected to your husband’s vileness especially should the truth comes out.”

“You make your father sounds like some evil man Mbewenhle and I don’t like that. Your father loves you all it is how he was raised that is playing a major role in how he raised all of you. To him he doesn’t see anything wrong because that’s how his father raised him. There’s no truth that will come out and I will protect my son why are you doubting my parenting skills? You think you are a better mom then me?”

I know I can be a better mom. It's not a secret that Kayise scares me when he's angry but I will be damned when it comes to my children. I'm going to protect those little ones until I have no breath in me.

"No I wasn't given a chance to mother my baby so I wouldn't know that I'm a better mom than you."

"You lost a baby Mbewenhle and I'm the last person to find out about this after two years for crying out loud!"

"It's not like you cared mama!"

"Of course I cared! How can you say I never cared?"

"If you cared you would've gave me a chance to listen to me when I told you about this but no you didn't want to hear a thing. I told you I went to see Manelisi because I wanted to tell him something I thought you should know as well but you just went ballistic on me."

“You should’ve told me though Mbewenhle.” She whispers as she briskly wipes her tears away.

“I tried mama but I was scared to tell you after your first reaction. I didn’t want to mess things up once again.”

“Is there anything that I’ve ever done right in your eyes as your mother? It seems like the more I try it’s the more I do you wrong and push you away from me.”

She’s really trying but I feel like imizamo yakhe izoba yize lezo up until we address issues that are holding me back.

“It brings me pain that you went through the worst pain a female could ever go through but I was never available for you when you needed me. You were not joking when you said I’m the last person you think of when you find yourself into trouble now this is just a confirmation. I’ve failed you once again and it seems like I will never get it right with you. I want you to know that I’m sorry from the bottom of my heart and I pray that one day you find it in your heart to forgive me. I can imagine how

hard it must have been for you having to pretend you didn't lose any child just because you're scared of our reactions."

"Hard doesn't begin to describe how I felt. Having to hide the fact that I lost him made me feel awful because it like he's a little dirty secret that no one should know about. It haunted me every single day and I never openly mourn him. I failed him when he was in my tummy and when I lost him I kept him as a secret. No wonder I can't conceive this is his wrath and I deserve it."

"No you don't deserve this please don't talk like that and it's not your fault."

"The expired food I found in the dirty bins could've been the reason that put him in harms way or the smell of those dirty toilets that I was sleeping in or the emotional distress I had or the wine I drank the day I lost him. It could've been one of those things if not all of them are the reason I lost him. It is my fault mama." I burst into tears and she pulls me in her arms.

“No it’s not your fault sis it’s mine. Put a blame on me. I should’ve protected you from all of this. I hate myself for contributing towards your pain and I will never forgive myself for this.”

I do partly blame her but that does not mean I dismiss my actions. I’m the one who brought harm to my baby the day I made wrong decisions that landed me on the street. It doesn’t matter that the morning pill didn’t work.

“Ungakhali mtanami it’s going to get better.”

First time I cry openly about the loss of my baby I was never given a chance to mother let alone to acknowledge his existence in my tummy until I had to lose him.

.....

It’s the day of the ceremony and I must say it’s a very cold day. Mama throws a towel to me and I catch it.

“Undress and wrap your body with this.”

“Why?”

“Uyogeza ngaphandle ntombi.”

“In this weather mama?”

I know it’s a cleansing ceremony but I thought I will bath inside the house then discard the used water outside the yard.

“There’s no other way my girl.”

Yoooh my baby is really punishing me. It’s very cold and drizzling a bit. I don’t understand how is that possible because it’s almost winter now.

“Pour some hot water for her mama.” Mpilenhle

“Hayi ufuna ukubhedisa izinto uzobuya ewotha ukhona nje umlilo.”

I huff and undress then follow her as we go outside where she takes the basin that is filled with cold water mixed with umswane and goat’s bile. We walk outside the yard then she tells me to bath. The water is so damn cold and the weather is making it worse. It doesn’t help that I get cold easily. I almost run away when she pours the water on my shoulders. Once we are done I wrap the towel around my shivering body and walk back inside the yard without looking back.

Mpilenhle has already taken out my new clothes to wear. She’s trying to rekindle our relationship and we talked things through. I forgave her but I don’t think I will ever get over the kiss. That is one thing I can’t move on from.

“You have to mourn and respect your child by not engaging in any sexual activities for 3 months,” says mama and I exclaims in shock.

“3 months?”

Mpilenhle bursts into laughter.

“You heard me Mbewenhle.”

“I’m married mama.”

“So? Akuqali ngawe ukushada.”

Yhooo. Kayise will never survive 3 months without sex and I know he will tempt me. Gosh I might find myself giving in. 3 months is too long.

“Not all of us are married to old men who does missionary position always.” I mumble under my breath and Mpilinhle laughs.

“What are you saying Mbewenhle?”

“You look beautiful today mama.” I say giving her a wild smile. She chuckles shaking his head.

“Come we have to do the naming ritual. Do you have a name that you’re going to give him?”

“Yes.”

“Don’t name him after his father please.”

“Why not mama?”

“I was just saying.”

“So what’s the name?”

“Zukhanye njalo sbani sami.”

“Awwww I like it little sis.”

“Me too it’s beautiful.”

“She should teach your husband some creativity hayi labo nhle nhle nhle nhle.”

We crack into laughter.

“Haibo y’all have beautiful names ever.”

“Hayi do we all have be Nhles.” Mipilenhle complains

“Uyacramma ubaba.”

“Hayi nina just leave my husband alone!”

My sister and I giggle as we follow mama. We go to endlini yabada where there’s a set up emsamu of all the yummy things kids loves. There are also candles that are lighted. Baba lights

impepho and I hand him the new baby's clothes then addresses my son letting him know that his name is Zukhanye Qwabe.

"Wena usile! Where do you get that baba does missionary position always." Mpilenhle asks me. Now are cooking in the rondoal. I can't help but giggle.

"I heard her telling mom Nomsa in Durban."

"You're lying!"

"I'm telling you and he doesn't even muff her."

"The image of baba eating mom's pussy with his mouth is one that I can't picture. He's too traditional for such."

"I'm sure he even thinks it's repulsive."

Mpilenhla cackles into laughter and I join her. I can't believe we are seriously talking about our parents sex life.

“Sies you two are discussing things mom and dad are doing in their bedroom you’re so twisted. What kind of children are you.” Mvelonhle’s says walking into the rondoval.

“Ay wena why are you eavesdropping.”

“I’m hungry.”

“There’s your food over there.”

He goes to take food and settles down on the bench then eat as we all engage in a conversation as siblings which is something we haven’t done in a while.

The following day we invite the children to sing and dance then eat. It’s such a beautiful sight though it makes me a little emotional but I’m happy that finally my baby’s spirit is going to Rest In Peace and nothing will hinder the light that he is to shine bright always and forever.

.....

“Thank you for the lovely day little sis.”

“I also had a great time and thanks for these.”

“Don’t mention it.”

We are coming Newcastle. She asks me out and I couldn’t say no. I must admit we had fun and we even watched a movie then made some shopping. I bought Kayise a fragrance, an ashtray and a lighter.

“We should do this some other time again please.”

Now she’s pushing it but we will see.

“Sure.”

I step out of the car and wave at her then she drives off as I walk inside the yard with my shopping bags. My father in law's car is here and I'm wearing pants. Fuck I didn't even bought a dress or skirt here. What kind of a makoti I am bakithi.

Kayise never prohibited me from wearing pants well except when we are going to his parents house or if they come here. I will just greet and rush to the bedroom to change. When I get in I'm welcomed by commotion. My father in law has my husband pressed against the wall and he's bleeding.

"It's fine beat me up until I die but that won't change how cruel you're Khubonye! Thanks God I made my own money and you didn't help me out with your filthy money!!"

That name? Was my mom talking about my father in law? Khubonye is Maseko's clan! Why didn't I think of this?

I don't even know what to do I mean what if a father is just disciplining his son. He punches him again and I feel the pain on my jaw on behalf of my husband.

“See the filthy money you’re talking about? It raised you! You’re this old today because of that money you ungrateful disrespectful bastard!!”

“I use to look up to your kanti weeeeh uyisikhohlakali senja esathwala ngengane cwee! Do you know how hard it is for me to look my wife in the eyes and pretend as if I don’t know what happened to her twin? The closure she’s been looking for years I cannot give it to her because I can’t lose her. You’re so evil and I hate you!!!”

## ☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I stand rooted on the door shock attacking every sense of my being and leaves my insides contracting in cold. I'm not sure my heart is beating I think for a moment it stops as my brain registers what my ears just heard. "run and never look back" is what my mind tells me the moment it snaps out of funk. I waste no time but rush out ensuring that they don't see me.

Tears flow down like a deluge of rain and clouds my vision. His words are ringing in my ears "I use to look up to your kanti weeeeh uyisikhohlakali senja esathwala ngengane ehlaza cwee! Do you know how hard it is for me to look my wife in the eyes and pretend as if I don't know what happened to her twin? The closure she's been looking for years I cannot give it to her because I can't lose her. You're so evil and I hate you!!!"

No no no this can't be true! Ndwalenhle is still out there and one day she's going to find her way back home. I should've known if she's dead right? I mean I'm her twin and we both laid in our mother's womb. We are one person. She's my other half

and I'm her other half. "See the filthy money you're talking about? It raised you! You're this old today because of that money you ungrateful disrespectful bastard!!" It's how unrepentant he sounds that fills me up with rage and immense pain.

My ears heard everything and my mind is piecing the puzzle together but my heart is in denial. It still believe that there's some misapprehension. Induna will never do something heinous like this. He's a very respectful man in this community and everyone looks up to him. I didn't hear right my ears are playing tricks with me. "Don't tell me you don't see that uthwele lomuntu. Where does he get these riches when he never worked even a day and don't tell me he accumulated all these through his position." Gogo once said this to mama. God nooo!

This must be the reason why Kayise is at loggerheads with his parents and I heard in his voice when he was shouting at his father that this is also a despair in his heart but my problem is that he is also keeping this from me because he's scared of losing me. The same person that knows how much this has been affecting me and how much I have been looking for closure for years. God why do you hate me this much to make

me get married to one of the people that are the reason behind our sorrow and unanswered questions of years.

The weight of the shopping bags that I'm carrying seems to be too much for my shaking hands or is it my whole body that is shaking? I'm not sure of my surroundings but I can hear familiar little laughter and it motivates me to move forward though my legs feel numb. Relief surges through me that I made it home when I hear my mom's panic voice.

"What's going on Mbewnhle?"

"They killed her mama!"

"Calm down sthandwa sami and tell me what's going on."

"Bathwala ngaye that's why they're filthy rich!" I scream in anguish and block my ears with my hands as I hear my husband's voice echoing in my ears. Please stop!! My mind is swirling and my breaths are shallow. The world suddenly goes black.

My eyes feel heavy and it's a bit of difficultly to open them. After several times trying they finally blink open and when I scan them around I realize that I'm in the hospital.

"Hey Mrs Maseko," says the fat short nurse with a hideous haircut. How did her kids allow her to come to work with this haircut or their intention was to make fun of their mother.

"Hi." I say after removing the oxygen mask.

"Let me go call the doctor."

"Can I have water first please."

"Sure I will fetch it for you. How are you feeling though?"

"I'm feeling a bit drowsy and my heart is very heavy."

“Your family is worried about you and your husband is going crazy.”

“Oh uhm how did I get here.” I ask hoping that she will tell me something different from what my mind remembers.

“You mom said you came home crying hysterically and said something about someone who was murdered for riches then you fainted.”

Sorrow surges through every cell of my body. How could he? What kind of an animal is he?

“Where are they now?”

“In the waiting area waiting for you to wake up.”

“Can you not allow them in please.”

She frowns at me looking funnier with that haircut.

“I’m not ready to face them I just need time on my own to gather my thoughts and strength.”

“I understand Mrs Maseko but if what your mom said is true and you know something you should not keep quiet about it.”

“That’s the thing nurse...” I pause and read her name tag  
“Nkomzwayo. I don’t remember saying that.”

“Mmmm when you do remember just know that law can never fail to take it course.”

Which world is this woman living in? How many people are in jail for crimes they didn’t commit? Zwelakhe spent years in jail for a crime he ever committed! Ndalwenhle disappeared 14 years ago but we never had anything about her case! What law? Fuck law! Fuck everyone! Fuck you!

She shakes her hips away leaving me drowning in misery. I’ve been yearning for years to know what happened to my twin

sister but now that I know I'm battling to deal with this ordeal. They say truth set you free but let's all admit that before it set you free it slaps very hard and leaves you drowning in sorrow. I don't know what I'm going to do but what I know is justice must be served one way or the other and I'm going to make sure of that.

☆ Mpilenhle ☆

Muzikayise is starting to irk her by asking her mother one and the same thing over and over. The up and down he's doing is making her dizzy. They're all worried but they're seated quietly and waiting for the doctor's feedback not pacing up and down.

"Are you sure mama you don't remember even a single word she said?" Muzikayise asks for the umpteenth times looking at his mother in law who's distraught.

"Jesus Muzikayise! Mama said she wasn't making sense but she was crying how many times do you want mama to repeat this over and over?" Yells Mpilenhle

clearly she couldn't hide her exasperation.

“Don't shout at me! I'm worried about my wife and I have every right to know what landed her in the hospital. She told me that she's going out with you qwiqiqi she's here in the hospital.”

“Ukhuluma amasende akho ke manje. Why would I hurt my own sister?”

“Because you want me!”

Mpilenhle laughs out loudly and looks at him incredulously. This guy thinks he's shit and all neh. One lousy kiss now she wants him? What a w-o-w!

“Want you? Stop whatever you're smoking it's too strong for you!”

“Vele you want me!”

“Ngikufuna nani ngempela Muzikayise ngoba phela unenxemu uzogēja imbobo yenkomo yami!”

Muzikayise clenches his jaw, for the first in his life someone mocks him about his eye and it offends him. Mam Thembeke is so engrossed in the state her daughter was and the words she said that she’s not aware of these two fighting until she hears Mpilenhle screaming.

“What’s wrong?”

“He wants to beat me up mama!” Mpilenhle says hiding behind her mother.

“Muzi what is it now? You want to beat my daughter up in front of me.”

“She’s lying mama. I don’t beat up women but Mpilenhle is very rude.”

Mam Thembeke looks at her daughter with “what is he talking about” look but she can never tells her mother what she said. This woman won’t mind to slap her in front of these people.

“I wasn’t rude mama I was trying to tell him that I didn’t do anything to Mbewenhle. I just dropped her off at their house and left.”

Muzikayise’s heart skips a beat could it be possible that she heard them? It’s over she will never forgive her for this. Why didn’t he tell her when he got time now she would think he was also involved in this. Fuck his father! These doctors better wake up his wife so that he can talk to her and explain to her that he got nothing to do with this. He goes to the front and ask for the feedback from the receptionist.

“Wait...”

“I have been waiting I want to no scratch that I demand to see my wife now!” He cuts her short

“Bhuti ngithe linda...”

“bhuti uthuvi I’m not your brother! I said I want my wife now!”

The receptionist tells him that she will go find out so he must go wait with others. He doesn’t go back until she sees her walking out of her desk and disappearing into the wards.

“Shouting like that wasn’t necessary. You are putting my sister’s life in danger. These nurses might abuse her or give her wrong medication you know how public hospitals are.”

“Can you shut up Mpilenhle.”

“Why don’t you have medical aid? It’s not like you don’t afford it.”

“Mpilenhle awume nawe please.” Mam Thembeke rebukes her daughter who immediately shuts her pap hole. The doctor appears and the mother and daughter stands up.

“Doctor we have been waiting for so long now.”

“I’m sorry we are short staffed today due to taxi drivers strike so after attending your wife I had to rush to another patient.”

“Thina silinde ke?” (So we should wait for you?)

“Muzi let the doctor speak. How is my daughter?”

The doctor explains that Mbewenhle suffered psychologic shock but she’s going to be okay as they gave her oxygen and fluids to circulate blood through her system.

“Can we see her?”

“No not today come back tomorrow.”

“Doctor please.” Muzkiyase pleads desperately

“I’m sorry just go home and come back tomorrow.”

“Why don’t we come in the evening during visiting hours.”

“As I said Mr Maseko tomorrow,” The doctor says and walks away. Muzikayise cannot wait for tomorrow but he can’t defy doctor orders.

“At least she’s going to be okay she really scared me.” Mam Thembeke consoles herself and walks out. The other two follow behind her. Muzi jumps in his car as Mam Thembeke and Miplenhle gets in her car then they drive back to their homes.

“What do you think happened mama?”

“I don’t know Mpilenhle but she was hysterical and saying they killed her. I don’t know who?”

“This is confusing but I dropped her in house maybe whatever that she heard or saw happened in her house.”

“But what that could it be?”

“I don’t know or maybe she received some bad news on her phone. We should check it when we get home.”

“You might be onto something.”

The first thing they do when they arrive is to check Mbewwnhle’s phone but they cannot open it as it requires her fingerprint or passcode of which they both don’t know. What stresses them more is that even the following day when they go there they’re told the same thing as yesterday. Now they feel like the doctor is not being truthful and he’s hiding something. Muzikayise almost beat up him. They all drive back with heavy hearts and sinking in confusion.

“This is unbelievable! Didn’t he say we must come today?”

“What if they found some chronic diseases and your sister told them not to tell us. Mbewenhle can die alone without telling us while we are here as her family and we can try to help. Ay lengane angiyazi injani mina.” Mam Thembeke says defeated not knowing that she will be beyond the word defeated when she gets home.

On arrival her brother is waiting for him and he’s in a blue bvd only the one that has car cartoons nogal.

“Haibo Malume!” Exclaims Mpilenhle when she sees her uncle.

“Thubelihle what are you doing here?”

“He came looking for you Mama and I’ve sent the kids to Isisa because they were really disturbed.” Mvelonhle replies to his mom.

“How is Mbewenhle?”

“They didn’t allow us to see her again.”

“How come?”

“We also don’t know little brother. I’m going to fetch the kids.”

Mpilehle walks out while her brother walks to his bedroom distracted by the news his mom and sister are bearing.

“What’s wrong with you how can you come all the way from home naked?” Mam Thembeke shouts at her brother who doesn’t even see that he’s in a bvd only.

“I need your help sis please help me.”

“Wena you should stop smoking weed!”

“Stop saying that you’re making me angry because you know very well what’s going on!”

“Oh come on this is just in your imagination! Be a man Thubelihle!”

“I know who can help us but you have to take me there and pay him because I don’t have money.”

“No no no what is third person for now?”

“It’s the only way to get rid of...”

“That’s too risky!”

“He’s a traditional healer. I’m begging you I don’t remember when was the last time I had peace in my life. I can’t leave like his anymore.”

“Okay fine don’t cry awube indoda uqine!”

“No matter what I can do for you I will never be the brother that you’re proud of but it doesn’t matter anymore. I’m not

sure if I ever told you this but I love you so much and sometimes I wish you gave me a chance and you would've seen that I'm really not a bad person."

"You're not going while you're naked. Let me get some of my husband's old clothes." Mam Thembeka says dismissing her brother and walks to her bedroom where she searches for an old trunk that she keeps her husband's old clothes.

She's not sure if they are going to fit him since he's lost so much weight over the two years. After taking out a jean and t-shirt she closes the trunk and puts it back then she goes back to the lounge but finds her brother gone.

Her children helps her to search for him but they don't find him even when she calls her mother she tells her that he hasn't arrived home. They all hope that he's still on his way back home but hours keeps moving with no sign of him until the next day MaNdwandwe is woken up by a man bearing news that goes against nature. No mother should bury her child.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

“Mrs Maseko I cannot keep you any longer now and lie to your family. I should’ve discharged you yesterday.”

“I know doctor and I’m very sorry for putting you in this trouble just one more day and tomorrow I will be ready to go home pretty please.”

“Okay fine but if tomorrow I will still be alive.”

“Why are you saying that?” I can hear the concern in my voice.

“Your husband will kill me. Heeey akezwa mshini loya muntu,” he says and we both laugh.

“I’m sorry for all of this but he won’t kill you it’s just that I’m the air that he breathes so he’s definitely suffocating when he can’t see me.”

“Wow love is beautiful hey.”

“True.”

“Keep well Mrs Maseko I will come to check you up later.”

“Thank you once again doctor.”

“Let me just say you’re one lucky patient I don’t usually do this,” he winks at me and walks out.

I need this time alone to think. This is huge and I cannot just blurt it out without proof. Would baba believe me when I tell him or he would think sengivukwe ubufebe bami and now I’m making up stories to end my marriage? What are the chances that mama would believe that the man she loved and shared the same dreams with is the one that took her daughter for

some rituals to become rich? Mpilenhle and Mvelonhle can believe me but their reactions towards this can come back to bite us.

I need to be smart about this and not act haphazardly. I want to strip him off and expose his nakedness to the world. The whole village must know what kind of a man he is and a leader he is. Now my problem is how am I going to do that? Especially now that my husband is at loggerheads with his parents. How would I expose him without getting close to him? Don't they say keep your friends close but your enemies closer?

I wonder if his wife is also involved in this? Yaz I used to think my mom is sweet but not until I met Kayise's mom. I've never met a kind woman like that one and how she didn't despise me just like her daughters after cheating on her son is a mystery to me. Maybe it's guilty conscience, she's in this with her husband and they're enjoying money that they made with my twin sister's blood! The wound is opened and bare it's like there's no skin over it and the wind makes it bleed immensely. I bite my lip hard stopping myself from crying but it proves to be futile. I slide under the sheets and weep. God please numb the pain it's more than my heart can take.

“Mbewu.”

What is he doing here? I quickly wipe my tears under the covers and fling away the blanket.

“Lonhle what are you doing here?”

“I came to see you.”

“How did they allow you in?”

“I sneaked in I had to see you Mbewu.”

He settles down on the little space on my bed and looks at me. More like studying me but I look down.

“You know that I love you right?”

“And I love you too little brother.”

“Mama is worried that maybe they diagnosed you with some chronic disease and you asked them to hide it from us.”

“No I’m fine Lonhle.”

“Whatever it is we would deal with it together please don’t hide anything to us. Don’t deprive us a chance to be there for you in time of need mtaka ma.” The worry in his voice breaks my heart. I reach for his hands and squeeze them.

“I would never hide that I’m sick Lonhle. I’m okay ngiphila njengosheleni.”

“Then what’s wrong? What happened?”

“I will tell you when the time is right.”

“Kodwa Mbewu...”

“You need to trust me on this Mvelonhle.”

“I also need you to trust me please. The pain in your eyes is evocative and it breaks my heart that you’re depriving me a chance to carry it with you.”

I heave a sigh. Gosh this boy can so challenging! I want to tell him but I know him. He will take baba’s gun and go straight to the Maseko homestead then kill everyone. Before someone die we have to know each an every detail of what happened. Is she still alive and kept somewhere as umkhovu or she’s dead. If she’s dead where is her body? We need to dig it up and give her the funeral that she deserves.

“Talk to me sis please.” He wipes the tears that are falling on my face. I can’t help myself when I think of her especially now that I know what happened to her. I don’t have strength but I owe it to her to expose this man.

“Not now Lonhle please don’t put me under pressure it’s also not easy on me.”

“Is Muzi beating you up?”

“No you’re the first person that would know if he is.”

“Okay I will let it go for now.”

“Please promise me that you won’t tell anyone about this conversation. You’re the only one I’m telling that there’s something but I cannot tell you now.”

“It’s not like you’re telling me anything.”

“Lonhle.”

“Okay fine.”

“Thank you.”

“Uhm there’s something else that I have to tell you?”

“What is it?”

“Malume passed on.”

“Lonhle nooo!” I cover my mouth with my hands as shock paralyzes me.

“Eh kubi sis but he is in peace now. The demons that were haunting him made his life a living hell.”

“Yaz I was planning to go see him Lonhle.”

“I’m sorry sis.”

He pulls me to his arms as I cry all over again. I never talked much about uncle because there wasn’t much to say about him except that he loved weed and women. The were times he’d manipulate us so that we can give him money to buy weed but

he was never that uncle who is aggressive and all. He was an interesting funny character.

Once I'm calm I tell him to go find the doctor and when he comes back with him I tell the doctor what's going on and I want to go home. He sympathizes with us and expresses his condolences before discharging me. I call my husband to come and fetch us.

I don't know what will happen to our marriage but for now my main focus is to making sure that my family knows what happened to my twin sister and do that without them having to doubt me. My husband arrives and squeezes me in his arms.

"Are you okay?"

"Yes I'm fine and you?"

"I was going crazy without you," he says staring deep in my eyes. The red eyes and tired face is the evidence that he hasn't been sleeping for days.

He greets Lonhle then opens the door for me. I jump inside as my brother gets in the back. After my husband closes the door he goes to the other side and gets in as well. Off we go home, his hand tucked in mine as if I will run away.

“I don’t want to strain you so let’s start at town to buy something that we would eat until you fully recover.”

“I’m okay Kayise and I have to be home to help out with everything since my uncle passed on.”

“I’ve just heard when I was driving here. I’m really sorry baby.”

“Thank you baby.”

“Mvelonhle my condolences.”

“What can we say sbari such is life.”

“But baby do you have to overwork yourself I mean you just got discharged today.”

“Trust me sthandwa sami I’m okay. I just fainted that’s all.”

He doesn’t say anything but focuses on the road. I just know that he’s not happy with this. Ah well it is what it is and I don’t think I would be able to look at him in the eyes and not ask him about Ndalwenhle. On arrival Lonhle jumps out of the car and leaves me with my husband in the car.

“Talk to me.”

“About?”

“What landed you in the hospital.”

“There’s nothing baby except that I saw a video on Facebook that triggered my anxiety attacks.”

He's not tearing his eyes away on me nor am I. I need him to believe me.

"Are you sure."

"Yes baby I'm sure or is there anything you want tell me?"

"What do you mean?"

I clear my throat. Fuck!

"I mean anything that happened while I was in the hospital."

"Oh uhm there's nothing my love. I promise you." The uneasiness in his voice is loud. So he's still not going to tell me vele.

"Okay sthandwa sami. Thanks for fetching us you're my rock."

He smiles wild but I notice sadness clouding his eyes. I take his hand and kiss it.

“I have to go.”

“How about I drive you to your grandma’s house everyday and fetch you at night. I cannot spend more nights without you sthandwa sami.”

“Well we can do that but today ngifuna ukuncela kumama.”

“Nami ngingawo amabele nje

” he says suckling and I can’t help but laugh.

“Ngifuna la engancela kuwo sthandwa sami.”

“Hayi suka!”

“It’s just for one night.”

“I’ve already spent two without you baby.”

“I know and I’m sorry but I love you.”

“I love you too. Come here.”

I lean closer we share a kiss then I step out of the car. He hoots once then drive off as I walk through the yard. Mvelonhle is alone.

“I’m sure they all went to grandma’s house. Don’t you want something to eat then we will also go there. There are leftovers in the fridge I can warm them up for you.”

“I’m not hungry we can go.”

We lock the doors and walk to my grandma’s home while conversing.

“How are things between you and Isisa?”

“She’s acting funny these days.”

“Funny how?”

“She’s difficult nje.”

“Maybe she’s stressed out.”

“Yeah maybe.”

The moment we get inside the kitchen mama attacks me with a hug.

“How are you baby?”

“I’m okay mama. I’m really sorry about uncle.”

“Thank you sis.”

“Where’s gogo?”

“In the bedroom.”

“I will go greet her.”

I walk to the bedroom and greet the women then settle down on the mattress next to gogo before giving her a side hug.

“Thanks for coming nunu.”

I remove the pieces of tissue on her face and hug her once again.

.....

The making and serving of tea is what we do the whole day as people keep on coming in and going. Mama and Mpilenhle asked me about what triggered my shock and I had to make up a story. At 4:30pm I decide to sneak out without anyone seeing me. Once I'm home I go to endlini yabadala and take impepha, snuff and lighter then go to the veld. I kneel down and light impepho then sprinkle snuff around the burning impepha.

“Ndalwenhle it's me Mbewenhle your twin sister if you can hear me sis please give me strength and show me a way to handle this. I don't know what to do but what I know is wherever you are you are not free nor are you in peace. Guide me and lead the way MaQwabe. I'm pleading with you Khondlo, Mnguni ka Yeyeye. You don't have to fight alone I'm here to help you dadewethu the only thing I need from you is to show me how, please I'm begging you.”

I wipe my tears and leave. I don't know where did I get this from nor do I know if it will help but let's be hopeful. I need her guidance.

The rest of the week pass with nothing and not even a single sign. To say I'm sad would be an understatement. The hardest

thing that I ever had to do in my life is to look at my husband every single day and pretend that I know nothing about what his father did and that he knows but he's not telling me.

I don't know how many times I stopped myself from telling him my piece of mind. Kayise is selfish the only reason he's not telling me is that he's scared of losing me. What about me huh? What about my family and the pain his father put us through? Why can't he do the right thing if he really detest his father?

"Are you done?"

"Yes we can go." I say already making my way to the door. We came back from my uncle's vigil around 4am just to rest for few hours. It's been a draining week. He unlocks his car then we both get inside.

"Are you okay."

"It's my uncle's funeral Kayise how can I be okay?"

“Of course baby I’m really sorry.”

I know I’ve been impossible lately I’m just going through a lot and everything is taking a huge toll on me.

“No I’m the one who’s sorry it’s been a draining and emotional week.”

“I know sthandwa sami but all shall pass.”

He reaches for my hand and kisses it then we drive to my grandma’s house. We arrive on time just when he’s about to be viewed. Gogo’s cry breaks my heart to the core. No mother should bury her child. This is painful and I cannot begin to comprehend the pain she’s going through.

The service begins and I’m stupefied to see so much people but then again we all know how those people who are never taken serious in their homes they are loved and known by many people. I see my parents in law arriving and I stop Kayise from getting up. The last thing we need is drama. If I can control

myself so can he. Gosh I want to run to that man and strangle him to death.

Mama's tribute got all me teary. She wants to turn back the hands of time and be the sister that he needed. She apologizes for failing him and never giving him a chance to understand him. After the reading of obituary we all go to the far end of the yard where mkhulu and my elder uncle were buried.

Seeing his coffin descending into the hole compels a loud sob to escape my mouth. I feel deep dejection and hopelessness attacking me at once. I'm not sure if the world is closing in on me or I'm the one who's disappearing from the world. Everything is too much I can't take it anymore.

Mama takes me to her bedroom and cradles me like a baby. I didn't realize how much I needed this soothing up until right in this moment. When I tell her that my head is excruciating she gives me some pills to take. It's not that long after taking them I feel the urge to sleep. She takes off my shoes and covers me with fleece blanket then caresses me until I doze off.

I'm disturbed by a painful cry that keeps slicing deeper in my heart. My legs involuntarily moves to the direction where it's coming from and suddenly pick up the pace when I see that it's her. Just as I'm close she gets up and walks away. I run after her calling out for her name but she's walking faster.

"Please don't leave me I'm begging you!"

My pleads are unheard. She disappears in this big beautiful house. This is the only way to bring her back home. I some up the courage and walk inside. I bump into this woman dressed in a sangoma attire. There are beads and goat skins in her wrists. I already have million insults in my mind that I'm going to throw at her if she doesn't give me my twin sister back but her presence demands respect.

"Hi. Uhm..uhm I saw someone familiar getting in here."

"You must be Mbewenhle Qwabe."

“Where is my twin sister?” I ask looking around searching a glimpse of her.

“You’re not going to find here my girl. I don’t go around taking young girls to become rich. I’m not that cruel and even if I wanted to my ancestors would turn against me.”

“But I saw her getting inside of here please she’s been missing for years now we really need her to come back home. You’re also a woman I’m sure you can imagine how how it’s like....”

“Ntombazane just like I said angithelwe mina futhi angeke ngithwale ngengane encane but you’re at the right place. Follow me,” she walks away leaving me trapped in confusion. I’m not sure it’s a right thing to follow her.

“MaMngomezulu indumandumane yesangoma ula ofanele ubekhona,” (MaMngomezulu is a powerful sangoma who are where you are supposed to be) says this young woman who’s also wearing sangoma attire. I don’t know where did she come from. She squeezes my shoulder and goes to where the sangoma disappeared to.

“Mbewenhle! Mbewenhle!” Someone is shaking me and when I open my eyes I see my mom’s worried face.

“Hey wake up it was just a dream.”

I look around and realize that I’m in mama’s bedroom in gogo’s house. The light is on is it dark already?

“What time is now?”

“Going for 12.”

“In the afternoon?”

“No 12 midnight.”

“I slept that long?”

“You were tired my baby and I didn’t want to disturb you.”

“MaMngomezulu.” A whisper rolls out of my lips as my brain tries to make out of the dream I just had.

“What?”

Where will I find this woman in this huge world? There are so many MaMngomezulu’s where do I begin searching? This is going to be harder than I thought.

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☆ Isisa ☆

I refresh my emails for the umpteenth time but there are no new emails. Disappointment washes over me I wonder Bab Magwaza uthule uthini when his daughter can't even get at least a cleaning job? Maybe he's busy fucking around even underground or maybe he's dead again. AIDS killed him for the second time now. I have zero respect for that man even when he's dead and I fail to understand how is mom still able to talk about him as if he was a loving husband. Oh maybe it's because I used to witness their arguments fights and my mom's tears when he was alive.

No one prepared me the difficulties and responsibilities that comes with being a mother especially when the father of your child is acting up. Ever since he has a girlfriend now he's no longer available for his son not only financially but physically and emotionally as well. That moment our son loves him so much. I don't know if he's pussy whipped or plainly stupid. The last straw was when he told me that I should call his girlfriend when I need something from him. WTF bazalwane I didn't make this baby with his slut!

I chose to stop bothering him maybe one day he will wake up and realize what he has done but it doesn't hurt any less seeing my son crying for his father but he doesn't avail himself for him. The day I gave birth mom made me to choose between her to continue to take care of me and I will take care of my baby or she takes care of my son and stop taking care of me. Like any mother I chose my son over my needs. The woman is sticking to our agreement and it's not even funny anymore. Especially now that she made Jabu to choose between her man and us. To mama no child of hers would marry an ex-con. Jabu chose her man of course and I haven't seen her for a year now nor have we contacted each other. It's so hard for me because I'm caught up in the middle and I don't know what to do.

I'm struggling to make ends meet on my own. Jabu used to take care of me since mom is taking care of my son. My baby boy wears converse sneakers while I'm wearing tommy sneakers. I don't know if she's punishing me or she's trying to toughen me up cha I must say kuyazwela manje. If it's not for my boyfriend I don't know what I'd be. The same boyfriend that I'm hiding from my mom because she believes that "he's young" for me. I swear one of these days I'm the one who has to choose and I don't know how will I choose between my mom that I love so

much and who's taking care of my son and the man that I love so much and who provides for me.

Mvelo walked in my life and made me view love in another perspective. That guy is my future and now I understand what do they mean when they say people fall in love in mysterious way. I never looked at him the way I look at him now let alone loving him. I love him so much even though he annoys me lately. I don't know what's going on I'd miss him badly and when he's here he'd annoy me to the core. Yesterday we had a fight and I know that he's super mad when I don't wake up with a good morning text. I won't tell you what is the fight about because I also don't know maybe khona osifaka isichitho. This is the only way to explain this.

I always get away with many things when we fight let me be the bigger person and go apologize. I change into an off shoulder short bodycon tartan dress and let my twist lose. That's how he likes it because he enjoys ramming into me from behind while grabbing on it. Gosh he dicks me down really good and the thought of it has my bean throbbing. Once I'm done I take my phone and head out. Mama is cooking in the kitchen.

“Where are you going looking beautiful like this.”

To the man that buys me clothes to look this beautiful. Of course I can't say that.

“To see Mbewenhle.”

“Aw really?”

“Yes mama where's Lumi?”

“We met his father on our way back from town and he took him.”

“Mama why did you give him. Thuthu has no right to see him. It's been months without supporting his child.”

“You know how Luminjalo is when he sees his father. He was going to cry.”

“I don’t care mama! I’m going to fetch him!”

“Isisa at the end of the day he’s his father you can’t keep him away from him.”

“I’m not keeping him away from him mama he’s the one that doesn’t want his child.”

“That boy loves his son. I don’t know kubesekwenzekani I think that girlfriend of his is the problem here. Just let the boy be please.”

I’m so irritated and I can’t even help it. I tell her that I’m coming back and leave without waiting for her response. So baby took over Mbewenhle’s job at his father’s shop and my man doesn’t play like his sister. He pays himself and he doesn’t care what his father said.

“Sawbona Phakathwayo.”

He looks up from his phone and stares at me for a second then look back on the screen of the phone like I'm not even here. See if there's a person that knows how to pull silence treatment it's him. Yoooh kuze kuhlabe enhlizweni.

"Babe I'm sorry."

It's like I'm not talking to him. I'm not even sure what am I sorry for.

"Mvelo."

"What are you sorry for Isisa?"

"Uhm that we are fighting."

"Why are we fighting?"

"Can you please open the burglar I want to come that side being here make me feel like I'm a buyer."

He gets up from his chair and goes to open the burglar for me then I make my way in. I grab the other chair and sit next to him before placing my phone on the counter.

“Ngiyaxolisa.”

“I asked you why are we fighting?”

“Uhm..I..” I stutter as I crack my skull trying to remember what are we fighting for but nothing comes in my mind.

“See you don’t even remember.”

“I’m sorry Mvelo honestly I don’t remember.”

“You are impossible lately Isisa. Nothing I say or do makes you happy. One minute you wants me the second you want to puke when you look at me. I’m not even sure what do you want from me.”

“I’m sorry...”

“Stop saying sorry and tell me why are you behaving like this? Awusangifuni?” (...you don’t want me anymore?)

“Baby I would never not want you. I’m sorry maybe it’s the stress of not getting a job and the fact that my son cries for his father but he’s not available. I’m really sorry sthandwa sami.”

He heaves a sigh and scratches his forehead then caresses my cheek.

“No I’m the one who’s sorry. Don’t stress too much you will find the job sthandwa sami as for Thuthuka why don’t you want me to give him 3 punches and he will throw up the love position his girlfriend fed him.”

I can’t help but laugh. That’s one of the things I love about him. He makes me laugh and happy without even trying hard.

“I don’t like violence baby.”

“It would be for the good course.”

We both laugh then he leans over and kisses me. I feel his hand sliding between thighs and open them to give him access. I’m always ready for him any time and any day. We have done it here for several times and almost got caught. It’s the thrill of the possibility of being caught for me.

“You not wearing any panties. Ahhh you know what that does to me.”

He rasps and devours my lips as he flicks my bean with his finger causing me to tremble due the pleasure. I can hear the drunkards singing on the alcohol side of the store and that thought drives me wild. He pulls me up and turns me around making me to balance my hand on the chair before pulling my dress up. Now it’s bunched up around my waist and bare boody is exposed to him. I let out a sharp breath as he spanks my butt twice.

The anticipation of him to enter me as I feel him fiddling with his zipper is unbearable. Can he get inside already. I feel his shaft at my opening and bite my bottom lip. He pushes himself sinking deep in me. I scream as I dig my nails on the stool.

“Ah fuck!”

He rams into me hard and fast. His fingers finds my clits and works on it.

“You like that?”

My phone rings but we don't pay attention to it. We have to be quick before some gets in and sees us.

“Yes baby fuck me harder!”

He doesn't need me to tell him twice. Our mutual groans of pleasure fills the whole store as he fuck me hard and deep that I feel his cock at the back of my womb. Each stroke is sending me to paradise I feel my whole body shivering and my knees

wobbling as I give in to mind numbing orgasm. It doesn't take him long to follow after me emptying his seeds deep into me. He withdraws and gives me tissues to wipe the juices that are flowing down my thighs. We fix ourselves.

“Hayi nina niyahlupha!” Mngobi says as he walks in and we giggle. He used to court me and I like how matured he is. If it was someone else he would've hated me that I keep on changing boys while I know how he feels about me.

“Eish ndoda I'm sorry. She's just irresistible.”

“Haisuka I will tell Qwabe you are making it hard for me to work.” He jokes and walks out.

“I love you Manjinji.”

“I love you too Phakathwayo.”

He kisses me then I check on my phone. There are missed calls from Thuthu. Since he has my son with him I call him back.

“I’ve been trying to call you why you’re not answering your damn phone!”

“Don’t shout at me. What do you want?”

“I’m rushing Lumi to the hospital he swallowed a battery.”

“What? A battery? What battery Thuthuka and where were you!”

“I don’t know Isisa and shouting me it’s the last thing I need right now!”

I hang up. My hands are shaking terribly and tears already stinging in my eyes.

“What’s wrong baby.”

“Lumi swallowed a battery and Thuthuka is rushing him to the hospital. I don’t understand what battery that could fit in his little mouth....” I burst into tears and he pulls me in his arms.

“Sshh don’t cry he will be okay.”

My worry is how will we get there as fast as possible since public transport can be a bit of a problem.

“Let me call Muzi to lend me one of his car so that we can drive the fast as possible.”

Oh my man! I’m not lucky but I’m blessed to have him in my life.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

“Yhuu hayi Mbewenhle I’m tired, hungry and horny. Can we stop this now,” complains my sister and I just glance at her. Did she had to include ‘horny’ while she knows that some of us are mourning.

“Stop complaining Mpilenhle.”

“No you stop bullying me. It’s been a whole week looking for this MaMngomezulu sangoma but we can’t find her. The worse part of this is that you don’t want to tell me why are we looking for this specific sangoma.”

“I told you nje you will know when the time is right Mpilenhle. I understand driving around like this and searching is arduous but please don’t give up now. Maybe we should drive to Durban...”

“What? Uyahlanya! We have already drove the whole Msinga Dundee now we are about to finish Newcastle. Do you know how big Durban is? Look sis I want to rekindle our relationship but I can’t take this.”

I hate to admit that she’s right. There’s no way that we can find this sangoma. The whole week we have been searching for her and come back at night everyday. It’s been an exhausting week ever I’m giving up now. It’s baffles me that Ndalwenhle wants me to find a sangoma that is not even at Msinga. Driving

around the world looking for a songoma sounds absurd and impractical.

She's driving us back to her house. On arrival we get inside the house and find Sbari with his friends watching soccer and making noise. I greet them and walk straight to my bedroom to take my toiletries then go to the bathroom to take a shower.

Realizing that it's proving to be impossible to do what my sister wants me to do in order to help her is like shards of glass in my heart. The evil man will go on unpunished just like that and no one will know what he really did to my twin sister. Without proof or confession this information I know is good as an accusation.

I can't stop my mind from having these scenarios playing in my head that fill me up with rage and pain. How did he do it? When she disappeared did she get to him alive or dead? If alive did he remove her body parts while she was still alive screaming her lungs out and begging him not to hurt her? I can feel how scared and pained she was. How did Lisi's grandma turned out to be the one to get sick while the real Satan wasn't affected even a bit. I try to suppress a sob but I'm not winning.

“Mbewenhle,” my sister says on the other side of the door.

“Uhm yes.”

“Are you crying?”

“No I’m not.”

“I want to order in what would you like to eat?”

“Anything.”

“I’m down for burgers.”

“They’re okay.”

“Okay.”

Once I finish showering I lotion my body and get dressed into pjs. I join Mpilenhle and her husband in the lounge. They're eating snacks and drinking ciders. At least alcohol will take my minds away from thinking. 30 minutes later the burgers arrive. We waste no time and dig in while conversing in general.

It's so funny that with each dumpie my mind is going wild thinking about how I can't let that man get away with this. Fine he cannot be exposed but I have to avenge my sister and I'm ready for the consequences. The more I'm getting drunk it's the more this plan is making perfect sense in my head.

I thought when I wake up the following day I will have a change of mind and all of that was just alcohol but no clearly it wasn't alcohol. Mpilenhle is driving me home I asks her to stop by the street vendors to buy something first then we drive home.

"Why do you want that sangoma Mbewenhle?"

"It doesn't matter anymore."

“You owe me at least an explanation. I’ve been driving around like a maniac looking for a sangoma you never met but only saw in your dream.”

“I didn’t force you though.”

“Uyadelala yaz!” (You’re rude!)

At home I get started with dinner when I don’t find my husband. I know he will be angry at me but this is the only way. I invited his parents to come join us for dinner. Since they are old fashioned people they won’t understand what is an invite for dinner. I had to lie and say Kayise want to apologize to them and want to fix things.

Tonight my life is about to change immensely and I’m ready as long as my mission turns out successful. I will have no regret. By the time I’m done my husband returns home.

“Hey my love.”

“Hey baby.”

He looks exhausted. I walk to him and give him a tight squeeze.

“What’s wrong my love.”

“You don’t know?”

“Know what?”

“Lumi is in the hospital Yeyeye he swallowed a battery.”

“Oh my goodness no one told me how is he?”

“It sound critical they have to transfer to him Greys hospital in Pietermaritzburg for the removal surgery of the battery.”

“Oh no!”

I take my phone and call Isisa but she's not answering her phone. I try my brother and he answers just when I'm about to give up.

"Sis."

"How's Isisa? Are you with her?"

"I've just checked up on her and her little brother told me that she's sleeping."

"Why you didn't tell me Lonhle!"

"I'm sorry there was a lot in my mind."

"I'm coming now."

“I think we should let her rest sis she’s been crying since yesterday.”

“Okay I understand.”

“Thanks for calling.”

“Don’t mention it.”

I hang up and put my phone on the counter. This is sad Isisa would go crazy if the unthinkable happens to that boy.

“The boy will be okay.” Kayise assures me when he notifies how worried I’m. That’s my godson it would kill me to lose him.

“He has to be.

“I’m starving what did you cook?”

“We are having guests today please behave yourself.”

“What guests?”

“You will see.”

At 7pm my parents in law arrives and I welcome them nicely.

“Babe when are these guests of yours coming I’m hungr...”

Kayise pauses as he walks inside the kitchen.

“Mama and Baba what are you doing here?”

“I invited them to have supper with us. Come this side mama no baba.”

I walk them to the dining room and they settle down on chairs then I walk to the kitchen to dish up but I find a fuming Kayise.

“What the fuck is wrong with you huh? What is it that you don’t understand that I don’t want these people in my life!”

“That’s a thing Kayise you never gave me enough reason for me to understand.”

“I told you that they want me to....”

“You know that’s not true Muzikayise. This topic is not new and you’ve never been this angry to the point of cutting them off.”

“Oh so you say I’m lying.”

“Ain’t you?”

“No I’m not lying.”

“Well there’s no need to cut them off your life. Please make peace with your parents sthandwa sami. I don’t want to be the reason you guys are at loggerheads.”

“But baby...”

“If I can get over this so can you baby. I’m begging you Sidwaba Siluthuli.”

I walk close to him and kiss him briskly.

“Please do this for me.”

“You don’t understand Yeyeye.”

“Then make me understand.”

He looks at me deeply and sighs.

“You know what let’s go eat that dinner with peace but don’t expect more then that from me.”

“Okay we can do that.”

He walks to the dining room while I dish up for everyone. I start serving my husband first before serving the father in law making sure that he gets the plate that he deserves. My mother in law is the last person I serve after that I sit down and join them. Praying before eating is not our thing so we dig in.

“Thanks for inviting us makoti.”

“I’m glad that you came mama.”

“So son you’ve come to your senses and ready to move on.”

The audacity of this man but seeing him eating like he hasn’t been eating for a decade makes me smile inwardly.

“Baba don’t be confused my wife is the one that called you guys here because this feud between us bothers her and she wants us to fix things but it’s too soon. I’m sitting here dining with you because of her.”

“You have a clever and beautiful wife it would be a pity to lose her.” What does this old hag means? Does he wants to make me vanish too?

“Uhm your potato pap is very nice my child you should give me the recipe,” Mother in law tries to redirect the mood. Now I’m convinced that she knows just by how uncomfortable she is right now.

His plate is almost finish but I don’t see any sign of sickness or pain on him. That moment I’m ready with my speech and prepared for whatever happens to me but this bastard seems okay. Haibo are his insides made of iron?

We finish dinner and they thank me for the lovely food and leave. No this can’t be possible! I’m trapped in confusion. Hayi lobaba uyathakatha! I wash dishes while my husband takes a bath. This doesn’t make sense at all. Rat poison awudabuli or is he immune to poison?

“Trust me awudabuli ngempela.” A voice behind me says. I swivel around. Here stands the woman in my dream that I’ve been searching everywhere.

“MaMngomezulu. How...how did you get here?”

“You were supposed to find me but I had to find you first before you do something stupid.”

“So you really exist.”

“Lose the thoughts you have about terminating your father in law. It’s not wise but I must say you’re so brave.”

“That man is made of iron he can’t be terminated.”

She laughs and looks at me intently.

“That’s not rat poison.”

“What does that supposed to mean?”

“I gave that woman insizi to sell it to you instead of rat poison.”

God I was sure that woman gave me an expired rat poison and tomorrow I was planning to go back to Newcastle and ask for my R20 back. It doesn't matter that going there cost more then R20.

“You're so funny but don't worry that black powder will make him have beautiful dreams tonight. See you tomorrow.” With that said she walks out leaving me stunned.

☆ Isisa ☆

The hardest thing a mother has to go through in life is to watch your child being hospitalized and having nothing to do to help. Impotent is how I feel right now. The button battery was lodged in his esophagus and fortunately enough we arrived before the two hours were over which is the time that shouldn't pass before the battery is removed after being swallowed. A battery releases alkali which is a substance that can burn the esophagus and that could result into having a part of esophagus removed or bleeding to death.

It was safe for them to remove button battery and there isn't any severe damage hence they didn't sent him to Greys Hospital in Pietermaritzburg. I'm glad that Thuthuka's nephew saw him putting it in his mouth and we were able to get help in time. I don't know what I would've done if the unthinkable happened to my baby boy. There's something about being a mother that I cannot explain. I thought I knew what is unconditional love is until I held my little Luminjalo for the first time in my arms. That boy is my life.

“Stop blaming the boy it was an innocent mistake.”

“A mistake that could’ve costed me my child mama.”

“Blame me then. I’m the one who gave Luminjalo to Thuthu without your knowledge.”

“Why are you defending him mama?”

“I’m not defending him. I know that he hasn’t been supporting Lumi for months but that doesn’t mean I will forget how he’s been supporting him since birth.”

As I’m about respond I’m distracted by my ringing phone.

“We should go Mvelo is outside.”

I make my way out. Today he’s driving Mpilenhle’s car. I jump inside the car and baby kiss him quickly.

“How are you feeling my love.”

“I feel sick but I will be okay.”

“Did you get enough sleep though.”

“Yes I did. Are you good?”

“Yes. Mama is not coming?”

“She is I’m sure she’s locking the doors.”

Just then mama appears walking towards the car and greets Mvelo after getting in. We drive to the hospital.

“Do you have driver’s license Mvelonhle?” Mama asks and I can’t help but roll my eyes.

“Yes mama I do.”

“Oh ay phela we don’t want to put you into trouble.”

“Don’t worry mama my driver’s license is one year old now and I have been driving ever since I got it. Driving the same car.”

On arrival Mvelonhle gets out to open the door for me.

“Heee abanjani abavulelwa iminyango?” Asks mama already getting out of the car.

“I was going to open the door for you as well mama.” I can hear in his voice that he’s lying.

He closes the door and I throw him a look just as he holds my waist. He needs to control himself. Mama cannot find out about our relationship at least not now. I’m not ready to deal with her wrath. He clears his throat and allows me to lead the way.

“Uhm Isisa.”

“Yes.”

“Your uhm behind.”

I look at where he’s staring at and see a huge stain of blood on my dress. My periods are irregular and very light ever since I’ve been on pill. He takes off his bomber jacket and wraps it around my waist.

“What’s going on now?” Mama says when she notices that we have stopped on our tracks. I look at her and momentarily closes my eyes as the world spins.

“Babe are you okay?”

“Stop calling me babe in front of mama!” I say through my gritted teeth. Mom walks towards us and looks at us for answers.

“What’s happening Isisa.”

“She’s bleeding.” The panic in his voice has me chuckling. You’d swear I’m dying.

“Isisa don’t you feel your body when you’re about to have periods and be ready for them.”

“It shouldn’t be this heavy.”

Worry clouds her face as she looks at blood running down my leg. They decide to take me inside and I’m taken for examination immediately.

.....

I can't believe that I came here to see my son now I'm also hospitalized. I hear voices and when I look up to the door my eyes are met by Mvelo's harrowing gaze. The doctor follows behind them.

"Hey baby how are you feeling?" Mama says and lowers herself to the chair.

"Okay I guess. How's Lumi?"

"I'm coming from him now he was still sleeping but his doctor said he's recovering." Mvelo

"What's wrong with my daughter doctor."

"The underlying cause of her bleeding is threatened miscarriage."

"Threatened miscarriage? I'm not sure I understand doctor."

Miscarriage only means one thing or is there another meaning of this word?

“Threatened miscarriage refers to vaginal bleeding and it usually happens during the first 3 months of pregnancy or 20 weeks. The opening of your cervix is still closed but that doesn’t mean you will not miscarry nor does it mean you will miscarry.”

“So you’re saying that she’s pregnant?” Mama

“Yes she’s 18 weeks pregnant.”

No!

“I’m on pill doctor that can’t be possible.”

“Contraceptive pills are accurate when are used correctly.”

Oh my goodness my mind freezes for a moment.

“Doc what can be done to stop the miscarriage then?” Mvelo

“There’s nothing we can do to stop the threatened miscarriage. When a woman has no chromosomal abnormalities and is healthy like Miss Magwaza it’s really hard to tell what is the cause of the miscarriage however stress  
smalls falls or injuries can place a woman at an increased risk during the first trimester.”

“Nothing at all doctor?” The worry in Mvelo’s cannot be missed. Clearly this baby means so much to him while I on the other side...I don’t know. I can’t be pregnant again my son is only 2 years old and I’m not working. One is already a lot of work how will I manage 2?

“Unfortunately no. I can only suggest bed rest and we can hope for the best.” The doctor says wrapping up his update then he asks us to be excused. I feel Mama’s eyes burrowing into me and I’m so afraid to look up at her.

“You’re pregnant again Isisa!”

I swallow thick saliva twiddling my fingers.

“I’m sorry mama.”

“Nyory? Is that all you can say? Luminjalo is 2 years old already uyamlamanisa? You never heard of condoms because clearly you cannot take the pills correctly?”

I was heedless I know but it wasn’t my intention to skip some days and time here and there.

“Who’s the father? The last time I heard Thuthuka is with someone else.”

I look at Mvelo and not say anything.

“Who is the father?”

“It’s him mama.”

“Did you have to wait for him to have a girlfriend first then open your legs for him? Hhhu ay wehlule Isisa!”

Oh God she thinks I meant Thuthu when I said ‘him’

“I’m not going to play with this boy anymore.”

Mvelo cannot take this anymore. His eyes are piercing on me and demanding me to tell mama who is ‘him’ but I’m afraid.

“At least it’s the same father you’re still young to have two children let alone with different fathers.”

I nod at mama with a forged smile and that infuriates Mvelo even more. He instantly walks out without saying a word. God what I have done?

Continuation of 62

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

The aim was to poison that toe nail of chimpanzee and when he starts getting sick and sweating profusely I was going to stand up and tell him my piece of mind. Then I was going to look at my husband and tell him that I know that he knows but he's not telling me lastly I was going to move to my mother in law. I was going to tell her how she fooled me and made believe that she loves me while she knew everything. I had every insults there ever is in this world prepared in my head and I was ready to dish out.

By that moment the mother in law would be crying helplessly trying to help her dying husband. On the other side my dear husband begging me to forgive him. Telling me that he was scared to lose me and how much he hates his parents for this bla bla bla. I'd look all three of them in the eyes and tell them that I fed the Satan rat poison and how funny it is that an evil man like him it only takes R20 to be rid of permanently. Lastly I'd tell them that it's up to them to decide what to do with my life. Whether they kill me or send me to jail I was ready for

anything but there was this huge part of me that was telling me that because of guilt they were going to let me be.

Damn I'm sure I would've felt like a leading character in a movie. Then MaMngomezulu had to play me. Now I'm curious what is she going to do. Why does Lwenhle trusts her so much that she's the one that is going to help me expose that monster. How does he sleep at night? Did he ever loved my mom or he was just fooling her? I fail to understand how can he sacrifice the daughter of the woman he loved for riches? Or was it bitterness that he couldn't get married to mama? He had to hit her where it hurts the most.

The day this comes out sizopetuka isgodi and my heart aches for my family. I'm praying that at least she's still alive and hidden in that hut that no one goes into except him and his wife. I'm sure MaMngomezulu can work out on a plan to cast away the spell on her and bring us back the human version of my beloved twin sister that we all know.

“Mmh-mhh Kayise.”

“Baby please.”

“You know we can’t.”

“Just a little please.”

He slides his hand between my thighs and I trapped it between them before it reaches my pussy.

“Don’t make this hard.”

“It’s not like he will know he was a baby.”

“I owe him and myself to respect him Kayise.”

“3 months is too long Yeyeye how can I survive without your pussy?”

“Never was the day that passed without you fucking me tomula lapho.”

“You’re not funny.”

“I’m not trying to be funny either.”

“See things like this are making it hard for me. Every now and then I have to be reminded that you fucked another boy. Two years we have been trying to make a baby without fruitful results then we discovered the underlying reason. Now I can’t fuck my wife for 3 months because she’s mourning the results of her infidelity. Tell me how do I move on huh?”

It surprises me that I’m not hurt by his words. I know that back then it would’ve hurt me but today it doesn’t.

“I’m not doing this with you it’s too early.” I say rolling out of bed but he grabs me.

“I’m still talking to you Yeyeye don’t walk out on me.”

“I don’t want to talk.”

“We don’t have to talk sthandwa sami.”

He gets on top of me and kisses me roughly that I taste blood. I feel his hand fiddling with his hard rod and push him.

“Kayise we can’t.”

“Just the tip baby please.”

“No Muzikayise.”

“I want you so bad.”

We struggle with each other as I try to push him away from me but he’s too strong and heavy. His cock pushes into my barely

wet pussy and I scream in pain while he grunts in pleasure of that first thrust.

“I will be quick baby.”

He holds my wrists and presses them above my head on the bed then begins to buck his hips. Each thrust is so painful and it's no use to fight because clearly he's not going to stop. We can't actually means we can't do anything to him. I don't expect him to respect the memory of Zekhanye but for him to use force kills me to the core. It's an emotional tornado that leaves me shredded in pieces. I just lay and allow him to do whatever that satisfies him until his body convulses as he releases his load inside of me.

“See I wasn't lying that I would be quick.”

He kisses my cheek and rolls down from me. I get up and pull my robe before going downstairs to prepare the bath water for us. Once they are ready we take a bath.

I furnish first and after getting dressed I go prepare breakfast for him. It's not that long before I hear his footsteps behind me. His arms wraps around my waist and my body involuntarily cringe.

"Are you okay."

He kisses the back of my neck and I nod my head. I don't understand how can he ask me that. Doesn't he see anything wrong with what he did?

"Here's your breakfast."

"You're not eating?"

"No I'm not hungry."

He goes to the counter chair and sits down then eats. When he finishes we start by fetching Thuthu then drive to the hospital. He looks so messed up regardless of how I feel about him I feel sorry for him now.

“How are you holding up boy.”

“Am I a bad father malumes?”

“Yes you’re.” I wasn’t asked but hey I couldn’t help myself.

“I’m not talking to you Mbewenhle vele you don’t like me so I don’t expect you to say anything good about me. Just so you know I also don’t like you especially after you broke my uncle’s heart.”

“Thuthuka you are out of line now!”

“Malume...”

“Apologize to her!”

“He doesn’t have to apologize Kayise. This got nothing to do with disliking each other Thuthuka. A father who neglects his child is a bad father mawukuthi kuyancinza lokho emasendeni nwaya baba but that’s a fact!”

“Mbewenhle you will not talk to my nephew like that!”

Argh this moment reminds me why it’s important to have my own things because right now I wouldn’t be forced to ride with these two. Their presence is suffocating me! The drive is the longest of my life but we eventually arrive. We find Isisa playing with her son but I’m disturbed by the IV line on her hand and hospital dress she’s wearing.

“Friend are you okay?”

“Yes I’m okay friend.”

She gets up and we share a hug. Thuthu takes his son who seems happy to see his father. I ask Isisa to take a walk and give them a chance to bond.

“And then you’re also hospitalized and I wasn’t told. You also didn’t tell me about Luminjalo. Kushuth I’m going to be that person who’s going to arrive when it’s already late even if I could’ve helped.”

“That’s not true friend you know when you’re panicking your mind just freeze and doesn’t function at all. I’m really sorry please forgive me.”

“I forgive you.”

“You have to mbhemu you’re also distant lately and I feel like there’s something that you’re not telling me. I don’t buy that shit that you don’t remember hearing yourself saying anything about someone who was sacrificed for riches.”

“I will tell you when the time is right.”

“Come on Mbewenhle I hate this thing of yours keeping things from me.”

“I apologized Isisa for not telling you about the miscarriage.”

“You’re not making me forget easy about it if you keep on hiding things from me. You know the hardest thing is that I can see that whatever that you’re hiding is draining you my friend. Let me carry your burden with you please.”

“I need you to trust me that when the time is right you will know.”

She releases a low disappointment sigh. I take her hand in mine.

“Don’t you want to tell me why are you hospitalized?”

“No you’re also hiding things from me.”

“Hawu Isisa.”

“Don’t hawu me. We hide things from each other now isn’t it.”

“You’re unfair this is your health we are talking about.”

“Wasn’t it about your health as well when you woke up in the hospital after whatever that happened. Yaz uyangicika ukuthi uzofa nje singazi ukuthi ubulwa yini buka wonde kanjani!”  
(...You annoy me because one of these days you will die and we won’t know what killed you. Look at how much you’ve lost weight!)

“I’m not dying.”

“Emotionally you’re don’t you dare kill yourself I will wake you up and kill you myself!”

I can’t help but laugh.

“I miss you friend.”

“Voetsek!”

“I love you too.”

She chuckles then we fall into comfortable silence as we keep walking on the corridor then she eventually breaks the silence.

“I’m pregnant.”

“Really?”

“Yes”

“Oh my goodness!”

I squeeze her in my arms. Lonhle is having a baby oh my!

“Don’t be happy because your brother wherever he is he’s fuming.”

“What happened? Doesn’t he want the baby?”

“No.” She goes on and tells me what happened.

“He will come around don’t worry.”

“You would’ve seen how he looked at me friend.”

“Kanti you’re going to keep your relationship in private till when Isisa? There’s a baby on the way now there’s no way you can keep this relationship private.”

“I know I’m just not even sure what do.”

“I hope you’re not saying what I think you’re saying.”

“I don’t know okay all I know is that baby number 2 is the last thing I need right. I can’t even take care of my son Mbewu how

will I take care of another baby. I don't think mama will take care of this one too if she learns that she's not Thuthu's baby."

"Well thina ka Qwabe we will take care of our baby you don't have to worry don't you dare think of terminating. You will hurt my brother Isisa. He already lost the first child don't do that to him please."

"You make it sound easy your mother already doesn't approve of our relationship."

"That's got nothing to do with providing for the baby though."

"I love your brother so much Mbewu but I'm scared that I'm about to lose my mother. She's already disappointed that I'm pregnant again imagine when she knows the truth. I swear she will make me choose like Jabu I can't do that."

"Oh friend I'm sorry but I think when there's a baby involved she will have no choice but to let you guys be. I mean it's not

like you're committing a sin you just love each other. Don't cry everything will be okay."

I pull her into my arms and envelope her. It's so wrong to choose for your children who they should be in love with. It's clear that Isisa's mom wants her to be with Thuthu because he's coming from a well to do family and she wants her grandson to grow up in a loving home of two parents. It doesn't matter if Isisa is not happy she has to do it for her son just like she did for her children. The only thing that man did was to leave her with children and a disease. It baffles me why parents want us to make the same mistakes they did.

Gogo made mama to choose baba but she wanted another man. What if mama wanted me so bad to be with Muzikayise so that she can ease her conscience for choosing baba who was wealthy over Khubonye who was poor? But then again it's not like she hook me up with Kayise. What if when the opportunity presented itself and she couldn't let it pass her? For the first time I'm asking myself if I ever loved Kayise? What if I never loved him I was in love with the idea of marriage and clouded by how proud my parents were when they learned about his proposal?

Baba raised his daughters with the mentality that being married and bearing children is the only achievement a girl child could have. Mpilenhle never had a problem with that hence it was so easy for her then there's me who wanted something else than what my father wanted from me. I wanted education, luxury life and traveling the world. When he learned that he chose to destroy all of that for me and mama couldn't do anything to stop him.

I had no choice but to be the child that he wants me to be. I wanted to make him proud just like how Mpilenhle made him proud but the question is how long will I live to make my parents proud?

.....

"Come on in." I say opening the door for her but she refuses.

"There's no time my girl we have to go."

"Go where?"

“To do what I was called here to do.”

“Let me go switch off the stove.”

“Okay and please change your pants into a skirt.”

I nod and go switch of the stove. I was preparing supper I will continue when I come back from only MaMngomezulu knows where. I expected her 3 days back but she’s only showing up today and I was doubting that I ever saw her that night. I run upstairs and change my pants into a skirt then go to her outside. She’s driving a Range Rover I don’t know if it’s a latest or what but it’s really beautiful and I’ve mentioned before that I’m not good with cars.

I get inside the car it smells lovely and it warms. The sun is almost about to set and we all know how cold it get in winter during this time. She starts the car and drives off.

“I thought I was dreaming that you came that night.”

“The ancestors are the ones who run my life my girl. It wouldn’t have helped to show up while they haven’t showed me what to do.”

“I understand.”

It must be scary to be sangoma though.

“I used to think so too when I learnt that I’m the chosen one.”

No this should be illegal, reading minds that is. I cannot think in peace without being afraid that she will know what I’m thinking.

“My gift was discovered when I was still in my mom’s tummy. My mom’s father in law wanted to sacrifice with me to be rich but my grandma rescued my mom before they cut her tummy open.”

“Yhooo your grandfather was cruel I hope he was locked up.”

“Yes he was but he didn’t even last years in jail he died.”

“No offense but good riddance!”

She chuckles

“Oh MaMngomezulu before we do anything further can you tell me how much would you cost me?”

“My price is not expensive.”

“Okay how much?”

“I need you to choose yourself for once in your life.”

Okay now that is confusing.

“Is that your price?”

“Yes.”

“That’s a weird price though.”

“Would you do that for me?”

“I will try.”

“Don’t try because I’m also not going to try. Be fair MaQwabe.”

“Okay I would do that.”

What a price I wonder if I will be able to keep the end of my bargain. Choosing myself is not easy as it sounds. There’s a lot at stake. Her phone rings and it’s connected to the Bluetooth.

“Asemahlemangomezulu!” A cheeky voice of a woman says on the other side.

“What have I done now KitKat?”

“Are you asking me that?”

“Okay I’m sorry but mama you know what happens when duty calls.”

The woman heaves a sigh on the other side.

“I know but you went to the mall and never came back home. You got us worried especially when we couldn’t get you on the phone.”

“You know that when I’m working I need no distraction. My mind

spirit and body has to be fully focused on the task I’m given.”

“It sounds like a heavy task.”

“It is but they’re always with me and they will never forsake me.”

“Where are you? Your father and I want to come there.”

“Mama...”

“Hayi Asemahle I lost my mother because of these tasks! I’m not losing you too!”

“Now you see why I don’t communicate with you when I’m on duty. Umoya wami akumele uxoveke goodbye!”

The rest of the drive is silence she pulls over in this forest I’ve never been but it’s not that far from the village. I wonder what are we doing here. We step out of the car and I follow her as she walks to the boot. She takes out a container of snuff in a bag and opens it before inhaling it.

“Where are we?”

“I’m also not sure but I was shown that where she is.”

She takes the bag and ishoba before closing the boot then we walk through the forest. Out of the sudden she pauses and starts grunting for a moment waving the shoba in the air.

“Here, this is where they buried her body,” she says between groans and points with her shoba right where I’m standing.

I move away slowly as my whole body starts shaking and tears stinging in my eyes. I flump on the ground with my knees. It’s unbelievable that after almost 14 years finally I’m seeing where the bone of my bones was buried. It’s like I’m losing her for the first time and grief is like a road of shards that can be only travelled upon barefoot.

“I’m so sorry Ndwalenhle!!”

I dig the ground where they buried her with my fingers as a gut wrenching sob escapes my lips. MaMngomezulu holds my hands stopping me from digging and holds me tightly in her arms.

☆ Isisa ☆

The bleeding hasn't ceased yet but it's light now which is the reason I'm still in the hospital 3 days later. I feel awful that there's this little part of me that wants me to miss carry this baby. What kind of a mother does that make me? Heavy Sigh!

"Open your mouth boy."

He opens his mouth and I slide a spoonful of yogurt in his mouth. It's still a struggle for him to eat since his esophagus was affected a bit. The doctor suggested that I should give him fluids and soft food like yogurt and soft porridge. It seems like he's going to stay here longer than I expected but I don't mind as long as he's going to be okay.

Thuthu is not going to have him ever again and I don't care that it was an honest mistake. Life doesn't give second chances to everyone what will happen next time when another innocent mistake happens? When you have a child around, you have to be too careful especially Lumi who touches everything and put everything he touches in his mouth.

Mvelo walks in carrying a cloud of balloons that are written 'get well soon my boy'. I haven't seen him ever since that day he stormed out. I tried to call him but he hasn't been answering my calls nor replying to my texts. Seeing him makes my heart skip a bit. He looks so gorgeous. Lumi beams at him and jumps up for the balloons. They get along very well he's so good with him and I have no doubt that he will be a good father to his child.

"Hello my boy."

"Eyo boy."

Mvelo chuckles as he stretches his hand with his thumb up to my son who links his tiny thumb against Mvelo's.

"I've got you balloons."

"Bhaluls."

Mvelo and I laugh which makes the little one to join us.

“Yes balloons. Hold here.” He makes him to hold the stick of the cloud of balloons. That moment my son is squealing excitedly. I can’t help a smile that breaks across my face.

“Manjinji.”

Oh at least I’m still called by my clan. He’s calm down now.

“Phakathwayo.”

“You good?”

“Yeah I’m just happy to see you. I miss you so much.”

“How’s the baby?”

“So far still good though the bleeding hasn’t stopped but it’s light now.”

“Oh okay.”

“Look I’m sorry about that day. I should’ve told mama.”

“Why you didn’t tell her?”

“I’m scared Mvelo. You know that mama doesn’t support this relationship...”

“Oh so kwamele uphisane ngomtanami?”

“No babe you are putting this in bad way. I just let her believe what she wants to believe.”

“To believe that my baby is Thuthu’s for how long Isisa huh?”

“Why don’t you understand that I’m scared to tell her. I love you Mvelo and I don’t want to lose you as much as I don’t want to lose my mother.”

“Why would you lose her?”

“She was against our relationship from the day your father saw us having sex. I told you about Jabu and the last thing I want is to be put in a position where I have to choose between you and mama.”

“So you’re telling me that you will give Thuthuka my baby?”

“Jesus you don’t get it do you?”

“I get your point Isisa but what I don’t get is that in all of this where do I stand with my baby? I respected you when you said you want to keep our relationship private but one thing that I won’t allow is to watch you depriving me a chance to be a father to my child just because you’re scared to disclose our

relationship to your mom. See that child you're carrying is mine and I'm ready to lose anyone for him."

"Lose anyone then what huh? You can't provide our baby with the money you steal from your father's store forever Mvelo! What will happen when your father notice that you have been stealing money from his store? How are you going to take care of our baby huh?"

"You're moving too fast! I thought all of this is because you're scared of your mom that she will make you choose now you are telling me something else. Which is which kahle kahle?"

"Everything Mvelo! Odds are against us! Having this baby is not so wise at all! Maybe the threatened miscarriage is a sign that we shouldn't have this baby."

"And you'd be so damn happy if you miss carry isn't it?"

I try to open my mouth to talk but words are stuck in my throat. He chuckles pain clouding his eyes and walks away bumping

into my mother. That look on her face is the evidence that she heard everything. Oh God take me now I cannot dead with all of this.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I watch through my teary eyes as MaMngomezulu does her rituals on...I don't know what to call it because I feel

like it would be an insult to call it a grave. Once she's done we go back to the car and leave. The drive is filled with my snuffles I can't stop crying.

"I'm sorry."

"It's not your fault."

"Now I realize that I was abruptly I should've prepared you first before bringing you there."

I don't think she would've prepared me enough. No amount of preparation could've have made me ready for this turmoil. I feel her warm hand squeezing mine and tilt my head to look at her.

“You've been seeking for answers for years and now you know the truth I'm sure it's not what you anticipated. I know there was a side of you that thought that she's still out there alive and she will find her way home. I'm sorry that the reality is nothing what you wished you for and it has brought you nothing but immense pain. Not everyone get to know what happened to their love ones after they went missing I think you should consider yourself lucky that now you know even though it's not what you were hoping for. It took years I know but everything happens for the reason my girl. As soon as we are done with everything you can begin the healing journey.”

It's like she pressed a button. A gut wrenching sob escapes my lips as our childhood memories flashes in my mind. We were happy children and we connected like two magnets. Our fights never lasted a minute. I would've love to have my twin sister by my side as we both navigate through this life thing. Life would've turn differently if that bastard didn't take her away from us. Gosh I hate him so much together with his wife! What

kind of a woman is she huh? In fact I hate all the Masekos. I'm even starting to hate my husband.

"Why her? Why not me?"

"It could've been you but it was her. So basically there's no specific reason but it had to be one of the two of you."

"My mom told me that man loved her and they shared same dreams. What he did do we still call it love?"

"Only him can answer that my girl."

"Will I ever get that chance to ask him that?"

"Time will tell."

"What time? I don't have time MaMngomezulu I want that bastard to be exposed. I want the whole world to know what an evil man he is!"

“You manage to keep quiet and not tell a soul about this even your family because you knew that without proof no one is going to believe that a respected man in the community did this. Be patient and trust the process.”

She hands me a box of tissues. I take it and wipe my tears before blowing my nose.

“Thank you.”

I realize now that we are not driving back to the village.

“Are we going somewhere else for some rituals?”

“No I’m not letting you go home emotionally wrecked like this especially not to your husband. I’m sure by tomorrow you will be calm and thinking rationally. Please let him know that you’re not coming home.”

“I didn’t bring my phone with me. It was on the charger when we left.”

“Okay take mine and call him. I’m sure you know his numbers by your head.”

“Yes I do.”

I take her phone and call him. The sound of it ringing through the speakers of the car makes me cringe. I don’t want this woman to hear my husband’s response because I know him. It won’t be something pleasant at all.

“Hello.”

“Hey.”

“Yeyeye is that you?”

“Yes it’s me.”

“Which number are you calling me with?”

“Mvelonhle’s new number. Are you back home?”

“No I’m on my way home miss me already?” I can hear a smile in his voice. Knowing him that smile can turn into a roar the second I tell him I’m not coming home.

“Uhm I just want to let you know that I’m going to spend a night home. Mama is not feeling well and baba is not home so I have be here as well.”

“Oh what’s wrong with her?”

“I don’t know she’s vomiting blood.”

“Haibo baby that sound serious. I will pass by there to see her.”

“No! Umh I mean you don’t have to sthandwa sami. I’m sure you had a long day at the farms and need to rest.”

“Yes I’m tired but I can see my mother in law for two if not four minutes then go back home to sleep,” he says between a yawn.

“Go rest my love. The food is on the stove you will just warm it up. The only thing that is not perfectly cooked is butternut I had to leave it when I receive the call from Mpilenhle. I know how you love it I’m sorry.”

“Don’t worry my love. Thank you for taking care of me. You’re loved yezwa.”

“I know I have to go now.” I hang up before he says anything and let out a breath I’ve been holding. Wheeew that went better.

Now we are at drive thru of McDonald’s once we get our meal we drive off. As we driving through Aviary Hill she presses a

remote and the gate slides open in one of the double story houses. She drives inside the yard and parks before this beautiful double story.

“We are home.”

We step out of the car and walk to the entrance. Turning on the lights is the first thing she does when we get in. Wow I thought there's no money in traditional healing career. Those who are monied usually bathwele could it be that she's also...

“This is my great grandparents house. Gogo was a lawyer and Mkhulu was a doctor.”

Oh God I keep forgetting that she can hear my busy mind! She's a middle aged woman herself how old are her great grand parents

Advertisement

125 years old?

“They have a beautiful. Won't they mind to see me here?”

“They’re late,” she says placing the paper bag on the counter then goes to the sink to wash her hands.

“I’m sorry to hear that.”

“Thank you. I’m starving I haven’t eaten anything the whole day. I will keep your burger in the microwave...”

“You don’t have to I’m also hungry.”

I wash the hands as well then follow behind her with our drinks. We settle down on the couch then she takes our burgers out of the paper bag. A big picture of an old couple catches my eyes on the wall.

“Is that your great grandparents.”

“Yes.”

I watch her as she spreads sauces on her fries then she begins eating.

“They looked very good together. Your great grandma was beautiful. I can only imagine how she must’ve looked like in her youth. Indoniyamanzi uqobo lwayo.” I take my burger and eat as well.

“And her name was Ndoniyamanzi. She was really beautiful funny enough she didn’t believe that up until she met her husband. You know stigma of dark complexion. When you’re dark you’re considered ugly especially back then now our dark skinned Queens are embracing their skin and beauty. My great grandparents were the glue and pillars of strength of the family, when they died we were all lost.”

“I can imagine. So you stay here?”

“No I live in Johannesburg. We use this house when we are here in Newcastle.”

“No one stays here?”

“No but we do most of our family gatherings here 6 times a year. This is the main Sithole household we cannot just sell it or leave it unattended. Every now and then we gather here for ancestral rituals or ceremonies. We also celebrate their anniversary here.”

“You are telling me that you came all the way from Johannesburg to me?”

“Yes I travel anywhere I’m summoned to my girl. When duty calls I have to avail myself.”

“It sounds like an arduous job to be a sangoma.”

“Every job has its challenges.”

But being sangoma seems worse though. Imagine going to the mall to do your things then suddenly you have to change your route and go to another province. I cannot can shame!

“How do I go on and be happily married after what his father did to my twin sister?”

She wipes the sauce on the corner of her mouth with a serviette and looks at me intently.

“He wasn’t part of this.”

“I know but now he knows and he’s not telling me anything.”

“Probably because he wants to protect you.”

“Protect me from what? He knows how much I’ve been seeking answers and closure.”

“It’s not easy like that MaQwabe. This man is your husband and his father is the cause of your grief. The chances of you leaving him are so high and he’s surely scared to lose you.”

“I think keeping this from me is what makes him to lose me even more. He’s thinking about himself only.”

“We all become selfish especially when we are protecting our love ones and keeping them with us since life seems impossible without them.”

“So you’re saying I shouldn’t fault him in this?”

“He’s wrong for keeping this from you however I understand his reasons. I have no right to tell you what to do or how to feel. You’re not wrong for feeling the way you do.”

“Honestly there hasn’t been any peace in our marriage we are constantly fighting but after discovering this? For the first time I find myself asking if I truly do love him?”

“Did you find your answer?”

“No it’s just a question that crossed my mind and I left it like that because there’s this part of me that is so afraid to tap into my feelings.”

“You need an internal search my child. Have a meeting with your inner self and dive deep into the deepest corners of your conscience and understand yourself at a profound level so that you can live with purpose. Put yourself first and it’s okay to be selfish when it comes to your peace of mind.”

“Thank you so much for wise words.”

“One thing that I can advice you is that don’t let what your father in law did to be the center of your decision making because at the end of the day you were always meant to be a Mrs Maseko.”

“What does that supposed to mean?” I ask but she changes the topic and now I’m left wondering if I’m wrong for having second thoughts about my marriage.

.....

There's a heavy presence hovering over me and the floral scent filling my nostrils is the confirmation that I'm not dreaming. I blink my eyes open and they're met by this old woman. She smiles faintly when our eyes meet.

"Good morning."

"Uhm morning."

I sit on my butt and rub the fog in my eyes then look at her. She's the likes of Angela Bassett. The old age doesn't away her beauty.

"How are you?"

"I'm well and yourself gogo?"

"I'm not okay."

“Oh uhm I’m sure you are looking for MaMngomezulu. She’s in the room next door.”

“I’m actually looking for you.”

“Oh.”

How does this old woman know me? Maybe she’s mistaking me with someone else.

“How old are you”

“Turning 25 this year.”

“Do you have a child.”

“Yes but he’s late.”

“I’m sorry to hear that trust me I know the feeling and I believe you will also understand why I’m doing this.”

Okay...

“See my mother was a prophet a very powerful one at that. I remember this one time she had to rescue my sister’s mother who was captured by a witch doctor for years. He brainwashed

her and made her a servant. Obvious he was not going to let his servant go without a fight . The fear of watching your mom going and knowing that she may or not come back. That is one of the things we had to deal with throughout mom's prophecy journey. She always came back until this other day. I happened to be the one who accompanied her that day. I don't know why but I remember that I woke up with uneasiness in my heart. A 16 year old girl had izilwane or demons and mom's task was to cast away the demons from her. They were so stubborn and angry when they got out of the girl they strangled my mom to death. I have never felt so helpless like that in my life. Fighting demons is very hard because these things are invisible I would've shot them once and for all."

She heaves a heavy sigh and blinks back her tears then looks at me.

"Imagine when I got home and my father asked me where is his wife? I couldn't bring myself to tell him lucky I had called my husband who took care of the situation. Dad couldn't believe that his mommy Queen is gone. He asked us to take him to the mortuary for him to believe it but up to this day I still regret taking him there because that was also the end of him as well. At first glance of his wife he collapsed and he was rushed to hospital. He had cardiac arrest. How unfair life is that within few hours I lost both of my parents. I always knew they would

never survive without each other but I never imagined that they will die on the same day and buried on the same day.”

I can't begin how it must have been like to lose your parents on the same day.

“I found out about about Asemahle's calling before she was born and when it was time for her to start her training I was very supportive. Even now I still support her but deep down I'm scared that one of these days my daughter will go to one of these tasks that ancestors wants her to do and the next thing I would be called to come and take my baby to the morgue. I heard her when I was talking to the phone that whatever that she's helping you with is very heavy and dangerous. I can't lose my daughter just like I lost my mother. Please take everything that belong to you and leave. Never contact my child ever again.”

Oh now that she's saying it I can see MaMngomezulu in her. I don't know how to react. I thought I've found help now this.

“I'm sorry for everything that happened to your parents gogo I cannot begin to imagine the pain you and your family went through. I understand why you are doing this and I cannot fault you however leaving won't help. She will find me just like she found me in the first place.”

“Let me worry about that just go now before she comes back from the river.”

“But gogo....”

“Go now! I’m not losing my child too because of you! The ancestors proved me that there are tasks that are beyond them as well so please hamba ntombazanyane!”

I don’t need her to tell me twice. All odds are against me Mr God why are you protecting this man? Just when I thought he will be busted then this?

☆ Muzikayise ☆

The house is lonely without his wife he never get use to the loneliness when she’s not home. He tosses the remote control away not finding anything to watch on TV not that he was going to watch anyway. His wife is the one who always force him to watch these soapies and series. He reaches for his phone and calls Mpilenhle.

“Sbari.”

“How are you?”

“I’m okay and yourself?”

“I’m also fine can I speak to my wife.”

“She’s not here.”

“I’m not joking Mpilenhle.”

“Why would I joke? Mbewu is not here.”

“Oh okay.”

He hangs up and calls the number his wife called her with but it sends him to voicemail. Anxiety kicks in as a hurricane of thoughts reels in his mind. She can’t do this to him AGAIN or would she? He calls Mpilenhle again with hope that she will tell him that she was pulling his leg but sadly she tells him the same thing.

She left her phone on the charger he can't even call her. He reaches for it and takes it out of the charger. WhatsApp is the first app he logs into and scrolls through it but there's nothing suspicious. There's also nothing in her Facebook Messenger. The tons of messages from guys that are trying their lucks are still unanswered. Maybe she deleted everything surely she wouldn't leave anything suspicious carelessly. He gets up pacing up and down as anger boils up. No he needs to calm down surely there's an explanation for this but why lie about it?

Time is ticking on the wall and with each passing second his mind can't stop playing these pictures of his wife with another man. Probably now they are having another round. He tries to calm himself down but the inferno is more than his heart could manage. He settles down on the couch and starts smoking.

How could he be a fool and trust her again? They told him that if she cheated on him what would stop him from cheating again but he ignored them because he didn't want to hear that. Once again he calls the number but still he receives the same results. Pain comes in waves and chokes the breath from his body.

Pull yourself together Muzikayise don't allow her to break you down again! He chastises himself. One cigarette after another until he finishes the whole packet of 20. The following day he wakes up and realizes that he fall asleep on the couch. Clearly he wasn't dreaming it really happened. He takes his car keys and phone on the glass table and walks out but just as he's about to drive out the old lady from next door who usually asks food from them greets him.

"Sawbona mtanami."

"Hi mama how are you?"

"I'm good my boy and yourself?"

"I'm also good."

"I'm sorry to bother you early in the morning. Can please give me some sugar my child. I wanted to come yesterday but I saw

your wife getting into a car then it took off before I could get here.”

“What kind of a car?” He asks a stupid question. How can an old woman know that?

“Those big cars it was red in color.”

Mpilehle is the one that drives a red BMW X6 could it be possible that she was pulling a leg. He takes two 200 notes in the car and gives the woman.

“Please send the kids to go buy sugar for you mama and some things you need.”

“Oh thank you so much my child. May God bless you!”

“It a pleasure mama.”

The old woman says her goodbyes and walks away as he gets in the car and drives straight to the Qwabe homestead. He finds them having breakfast in the rondoal his wife is missing probably she's in the main house. They welcome him and hands him a bench to sit down.

“What brings you here ndodana.” Qwabe

“To see mama

my wife told me that she's sick and vomiting blood.”

They all look at him confusion clouding their faces.

“MaNdwandwe are you sick? How come I know nothing about this.”

“No I'm not sick this is news to me as well.” Mama Qwabe

“Aw this is confusing because she called me yesterday around 6pm and told me that she’s spending a night here to look after you mama.”

“Are you telling me that Mbewenhle didn’t sleep home last night?” Qwabe asks already thinking of the worst of his daughter.

“No he didn’t and my neighbor told me that she left with a red big car. I thought she left with Mpilenhle since her car is big and red.”

“Heee madoda lengane ifeba kuphi manje!”

“Before we jump into conclusions did you call her first?” Mama Qwabe

“She left her phone in the charger.”

“I swear I’m going to kill that child why does she like to embarrass me like this huh?” Qwabe roars in anger.

“I know how it looks like baba but I don’t think she’s up to something no good wherever she is.”

“Don’t defend her Mpilenhle! You’re here and she’s whatever she is whoring around!”

“Mbewenhle has been acting strange baba. She asked me to help her look for a sangoma she....”

“I don’t want to hear it! Once a whore always a whore! Son when she gets back send her straight to me I will deal with her!”

Just as Muzikayise is about to asks Mpilenhle his phone rings. He asks to be excused and walks outside to answer the unknown number.

“Hello”

“Muzi.” His heart skips a bit at the crying voice of his mom.

“Mama what’s wrong?”

“Please come home I’m begging you my son.”

“What happened?”

“Just come my son it’s very urgent.”

“Okay I’m coming mama don’t cry.”

He hangs up and informs the Qwabe family that he has to rush home. Without a waste of time he drives to his parents home. The shock state he finds his sisters in makes his heart pounds harder against his chest. He jogs to his parents bedroom and knocks.

“Come in.” Mama Maseko says on the other side.

Muzikayise pushes the door open and walks in. His eyes lands on husband who's grunting while scratching his eyes and genitals and biting his tongue.

"What's going on mama?"

"I don't know khehla it all started with dreams from the night we came from your house then in the wee hours of the morning he woke me up when I turned the lights on. I found him scratching himself vigorously and moaning in pain."

"Baba what's going on."

"I..don't..know...son...please...help...me."

Maseko replies between biting his tongue and blood is dripping out of his mouth. The itch is excruciating and unbearable especially in his genitals. He slides his hand under his underwear and scratches his manhood. The more he scratches he can feel something in his hand. He takes his hand out of his boxer and it comes back with flesh and worms. They all scream in shock looking at the worms moving in his hand.

## ☆ Muzikayise ☆

The sisters heard the screams and they all run to their parents' bedroom and burst inside without knocking. Maseko's body is shaking in shock and his eyes are bulging out of his sockets as he looks at the worms moving in his hands. Did they all come out of his genitals? This can't be possible! He shakes his hand trying to get off the worms from his hand.

“What's going on?” Nomvula

Mam Sonto and her son look at the ladies standing at the door then look at each other. The overprotectiveness in them kick in. They can't let them see this.

“Sis Nomvula please take my sisters and leave with them.”

Muzikayise

“Why what's going on with baba?” Cries Ndongoloza.

Every household there's intandokazi of each parent and she's intandokazi kababakhe. It doesn't start with Bab Khubonye to love a child so much more than he loves his own children and it won't end with him. It happens all the time especially when you know nothing about it. Being the last born is also a contributory factor.

"Ndondoloza don't come near. Please Nomvula listen to your brother."

"Mama I'm not a child okay! I..."

"Nomvula don't challenge me! I said take your sisters and leave with them!"

"I always knew that the person who matters in this household is Muzikayise because he's a son. Since we are daughters we don't matter it doesn't matter that me and Nomvula are older than him!" Bongeka. This one is the black sheep of the family.

“That’s not true Bongeka! I don’t understand what that got to do with this?”

“It got to do with everything mama. He’s here and allowed to know what’s going with baba while you’re chasing us away.”

“Mom is protecting you sis Bongeka...”

“Protecting me from what Muzi? What is it that you can handle that I cannot handle? The last time I checked I’m older than you but because I’m a woman I don’t matter and my feelings are not considered. You know what it’s fine I’m leaving. Do whatever that makes you happy I’m not getting involved. I don’t know why am I even concerned what’s going on with baba when he doesn’t care about me.”

“Really sis Bongeki? Do you have to talk about this now? Dad is sick and you’re here whining. Not everything is about you! Life doesn’t revolve around you! Dad is our main concern now not you stop being selfish!” Ndongoloza bellows angrily.

“It’s easy for you to say that because you’re loved. Intandokazi kababa. Some of us are not treated fairly because we are not boys. Isono sethu ukuthi asilengisi.” With that said Bongeka walks out leaving the ambience somber.

Nomvula looks at her mother then tells her younger sisters that they must vacate the main bedroom. They respect their elder sister so they all leave even though they’re trapped in worry.

“Someone is bewitching me. Take me to Shwabade.”

“I don’t think this is witchcraft. Your sins are catching up with you baba.” Muzi spits out the truth that his father doesn’t want to hear.

“Ungazobheda wena!”

“You know what I’m leaving...”

“Muzi please don’t do that my boy. We need you here.”

“But your husband doesn’t need me mama....”

“Of course he does he’s taking his frustrations on you. Please my son drive us to Shwabade.”

Muzikayise heaves a sigh and nods. If there’s one person that can get through him it’s his mom. The love and respect he has for this woman is not measurable. Mam Sonto dresses up her husband then they drive to Shwabade, their family sangoma.

He also stays in the village but not that far. His household is secluded from everyone. It’s in the middle of the forest. The same forest the Qwabe twin was buried into. Up to this day Muzi doesn’t understand why would he build a house in the middle of the forest.

On arrival Shwabade welcomes them. He already knew that they’re coming. ‘The boys’ told him about what has transpired. Bab Khubonye is still scratching himself none stop and his wife is wiping the blood that is coming out of his mouth as he’s biting his tongue

trying to scratch the itch on it.

“They know, the Qwabes know about their daughter.”

The three of them look at Shwabade with shock.

“What do you mean they know? I’m coming from them now and they didn’t say anything.” Muzikayise

“I don’t know son but someone knows and they even know where she’s buried. Balicuphile ithuna lakhe and now she’s fighting back,” Shwabade says

“It’s you Muzikayise! You told your wife!”

“I didn’t baba!”

“Clearly it’s her that knows if her family doesn’t know.”

Muzikayise looks at his father and remembers that Mpilenhle mentioned something about his wife asking help to find a sangoma. Why would she want to find a sangoma? Something is going on. It can't be a coincidence. His heart skips a beat at the thought of his wife knowing about this.

“So what's going to happen now Shwabade?” Mam Sonto

“My hands are tied that sangoma is very powerful. We will fight a losing battle.”

“Hheyi you can't tell me that Shwabade! You need to fix this!”  
Bab Khubonye

“How can I fix this? It's not my fault that you were careless! I told you from the word go that allowing your son to marry the twin is not wise but you continued. Look now?”

Muzikayise chuckles in disbelief. Now it all makes sense why his father never wanted him to marry Mbewenhle.

“Our son loves her Shwabade...”

“There are so many girls in the world! I’m not going to jail for your heedlessness! Ngabe sabafaka isichitho bahlukana kudala labantu!” Shwabade says as if what he just said is normal which makes Muzikayise boils up with anger.

“You’re cruel! What kind of a songoma are you?!Sikhohlakali ndini!”

“Khubonye reprimand your boy. I’m not going to watch him spit nonsense in my territory. He will walk out of here in a body a bag.” Calmly but sternly Shwabade says staring at Muzikayise who’s shaking in his boot. He’s not one who get rattled easily but this man is creepy and is capable of doing outrageous things.

“Muzi behave yourself. No one is going to jail Shwabade. You have to do whatever it takes to take down that sangoma. You won’t tell me that she’s powerful after the money I have been paying you every month for years. We are all going to lose here ndoda do something I don’t care what.”

“I can try but I have to be true to you that it won’t be easy.  
Uyasazi isangoma esathwasa emanzini sinamandla anjani?  
What about the alive twin?”

“What about my wife?”

“She’s going to be problem since she knows.”

“Anything that is standing in our way eliminate it Shwabada I  
mean anything!” Bab Khubonye.

“What? Baba nooo!”

“She’s the one that started playing with fire!”

“Baba please you can’t do that. Mama please talk to him.”  
Muzikayise pleads with his mother who’s stopped by her  
husband from talking just as she’s about to open her mouth.

“No this girl is poking her nose in my business and want to destroy me. She has to die!”

“What kind of a father are you huh? How dare you do this? I thought you loved Mam Thembeke! How can you put her in so much pain. Is it not enough that you took her...”

“Shwabade bring your assistants to take him. He’s making noise.”

Shwabade calls out for his assistants and without a waste of time they take Muzikayise who’s wiggling and begging them not to kill his wife.

“Mama please talk to them please.” He begs tears streaming down on his face. They take him and lock him up in the hut.

“Sokhaya is all of this necessary?” Mam Sonto asks. The tremor in her voice is audible.

“Yes it is necessary. Are you happy to see me like this?”

“No but....”

“Get down with business Shwabade.”

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I understand where that old woman is coming from I really do but chasing me out like that was uncalled for. She has no right to interfere. What her daughter does with her patients got nothing to do with her. I'm not the one who chose MaMngomezulu out of all the sangomas in the world and I don't know why she's the chosen one to help me. I'm boiling with anger and the sun is scorching but finally I'm at the rank now. At least she gave me money.

I'm famished let me get something to eat first before going home. I follow a mouthwatering aroma coming from one of the kitchens. My walk cease at Mazet's kitchen. This woman

welcomes me with a huge smile plastered on her face. I hope her food is not ugly as her.

After sharing pleasantries I buy pap and beef meal.

“How much is each plate?”

“R60”

I can't help but widen my eyes. R60 for a mere take away of pap and beef. Shwele!!

“Why are you widening your eyes? Maize meal is very expensive I don't even want to mention beef!”

“Hayi kodwa ubiza kakhulu mama R30 is okay.”

“Yey ntombazana you can't come here and tell me how should I price my food! If you're not buying leave!”

I will rather buy pie and drink at Amigos. I will even get a change. I turn to walk out and bump into someone.

“Fuck! I’m sorry.” The voice sounds familiar. I back away and look at the person.

“Nhle hey!” He beams excitedly.

Wow I can’t believe it! How old is he now 15 years old? He’s so grown he even has beard now!

“Abuse hey! How are you?”

“I’m okay and yourself?”

“I’m fine we missed you hey.”

Aw really? The same people that decided to cut me off without a valid reason. He should try something else.

“Gosh you’ve grown so much!”

He giggles shyly and looks at the ugly woman.

“Aunty Mazet your husband asked me to fetch his food.”

“Why is he not coming here?”

“You know how uncle Senzo is.”

Wait is this woman uncle Senzo’s wife?

“Tell him to come fetch it and take this friend of yours out of my kitchen she’s rude!”

“That’s so not Nhle. She’s humble.”

“Humble my foot!”

I stifle a giggle as I walk out with Abuse following behind me.

“What did you do?”

“I just told her that her plate is expensive.”

He laughs and I can't help but join him. Gosh I can't get over how grown he is now and I must say he looks hot. A 15 year old inner me is drooling over him.

“You're look amazing can I get a hug?”

I walk closer to him then he envelopes me in his arms. He even smells nice! His hands slide from my waist down to my butt and squeeze it.

“Awuyeki ukusa!” I say pushing him away and he laughs sheepishly.

“How have you been my yoki yoki.”

“Okay however I wish you guys told me what did I do and I would’ve apologized.”

“You didn’t do anything Nhle.”

“Then why did you guys cut me off. Ndiwe even blocked me on all social media accounts. I thought all you guys wanted was a space but...” A loud sound of a hoot disturbs me. We both look at the car. It’s Mam Aphiwe.

“Abuse come get in the car!”

There’s this part of me that wants to greet but I’m afraid to get a cold shoulder.

“Mama I...”

“Now!”

“You didn’t do anything okay. We love you Nhle but your family doesn’t want us in your life. Take care.” He kisses my cheek and gets in the car then it drives off leaving me trapped in confusion.

.....

On arrival I decide to start at home first before going to my house. I need to know what did they do to the Dlomos. I knew that there’s something going on but I didn’t think it could involve my family. As I’m trudging to the main house I hear my dad’s raised voice.

“I don’t believe in doctors MaNdwandwe! This piece of paper doesn’t prove that Ndabenhle is my son!”

I knew that he would be this difficult. Sometimes I wish I can live in his head and see what’s going on in there. It’s seems like dad’s mind defies logic.

“You don’t know what do you want from me Qwabe! You accused me of cheating now I’m giving you the proof you are denying it!”

“I want to consultant a sangoma and she can tell me if this child is mine or not.”

“Jesus Qwabe you’re so impossible. You believe a sangoma over DNA test ave uyiqaba.”

“Uthi kunjani?”

Mama doesn’t say anything. I decide to make my way in. They both look at me and I notice the anger in baba’s eyes.

“Uphumaphi wena!” (Where are you coming from?)

“In my house.”

“Okay let me rephrase where did you sleep?”

I swallow thick saliva as my heart begins to pound hard against my chest. How does he know?

“Uhm home.”

“Stop lying! Your husband was here and he told us you didn’t sleep home!”

“Where were you baby?” Mama asks calmly.

“Baby? Is this how you should be addressing a child that slept around and left her husband in the house!”

Dad always thinks of the worst always!

“Give her a chance to explain Qwabe surely there’s an explanation!”

“What explanation! Since when now does whoring has an explanation?”

In a second he’s on his feet and walking towards me. He grabs my hand just as I’m about to run away.

“Baba I wasn’t whoring I swear.”

“You didn’t sleep home Mbewenhle and your husband came here looking for you because you lied and said you are here! You like throwing our name into the mud with your whore tendencies! I see you didn’t learn your lesson when I chased you out. Today I’m going to beat ubufebe out of you!!” He’s yelling while pulling me to his bedroom. I’m crying and begging mama to talk to her husband.

“Qwabe awume maan!”

“Lengane iyafeba emendweni wena uthi angiyeke!! Are you listening to yourself right now?”

“Let her explain!”

“Explain what? So that she can lie to us! We all know what she’s been up to! Ngizobuqeda ubufebe namhlanje!”

He closes the door and locks before mama could get in then he takes the sjambok on top of the wardrobe.

“Baba I’m sorry...”

“Nyorry? You sleep around and leave your husband in the bed then you tell me sorry?”

He begins to beat me up and I’m screaming in agony. Now it’s clear to me that he’s not going to listen to me even if I try to explain nor would he stop beating me.

“Didn’t I ask you if you’re sure about marrying Muzikayise? Now you’re humiliating me! How do you want the Masekos to look at us huh!”

“Why do you care how do they look at you baba! These people are cruel! The last thing you should be caring about is how do they look at you!!”

“You have a nerve to talk shit! You go around whoring then you call your in laws cruel! You want them to celebrate your slutish behavior huh!!”

I’m in agony and my skin feels like it’s peeling off. Mama is banging on the door telling him to stop but her pleas are unheard. He beat me up with a sjambok like I’m a thief who stole something that belong to him. Even if I was whoring it’s my pussy and my body. A hot liquid runs down my legs. I’m wiggling none stop trying to block the sjambok from reaching my skin but it’s in vain.

The floor is slippery because of my urine and balancing is proving to be difficult. I slip and fall down to the floor.

We hear a loud bang then the door burst open. Mama and Lonhle get inside of the bedroom. The first thing Lonhle does is to jump on baba and takes the sjambok.

“It’s enough now! You want to kill her?” Mama

“I might as well kill her! Ihlazo lengane leli!”

Mama crawls on the floor next to me and pulls me in her arms as I bawl my eyes out.

“I wasn’t whoring mama. I slept at the sangoma’s place. She was helping me so that the truth can come out about what happened to Ndalwenhle but her mom chased me out. Now I don’t know what to do I tried God knows how much I tried to give Lwenhle justice but I failed her once again.”

“What are you talking about baby.”

“I know what happened to Ndalwenhle.”

“What happened?” Mama and Lonhle asks in unison.

MaMngomezulu was my only hope but now that her mom is going to make sure that she’s not going to help me. I don’t know what to do I might as well tell them the truth. I narrate everything not leaving a single detail.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

It was no use at all to keep this from her family now that MaMngomezulu is no longer going to help her. She's not expecting anyone to believe her since there's no proof but she has told them and now it's up to them to believe her or not. There's somber silence lingering in the room after she's done narrating everything. Their brains are processing the shocking and heart wrenching news.

"Why you didn't tell us Mbewenhle?" Qwabe asks when he gains his voice though the tremor in it is so loud. His body is literally shaking and a single vein is popping on his forehead. He's not sure if he's boiling up with anger or he's drowning in deep dejection but whatever that is he's not familiar with this feeling. It's choking breath from his body.

"You were not going to believe me without proof baba hence I needed something tangible for you to believe me."

“Of course I was going to believe you! You had no right to keep this from us!!”

Mbewenhle vigorously wipes her tears and frees herself from her mom’s embrace before getting up from the floor.

“You’re just saying that but you don’t meant it baba. You were never going to believe me. Didn’t I try to explain to you few minutes ago but you didn’t listen to me instead you went on and beat me up. You concluded that I didn’t sleep home because I was whoring. That’s the same thing I thought about when I found out about this that you will think I’m bad mouthing my in laws because I’ve met a new man and I want to whore around and humiliate you. Everything is all about you baba and what hurts the most is that you never take a second and hear what do we have to say. You don’t know the great lengths I go to make you proud of me like you’re proud of Mpilenhle. What’s the use of trying to make you happy when you don’t care about my happiness? I’m only hurting myself more when I try to make you happy because you don’t even acknowledge my efforts nor do you appreciate. It’s all about you and protecting your image to the public eye.”

She wipes a stream of tears flowing down her face. To say Mam Thembeke is shocked to hear her daughter talking to her husband like this would be putting it lightly but Mvelonhle couldn't be more prouder of his sister for finally standing up for herself to their father.

“I've been living my life the way you want it and I did all of that out of respect but now ngiyayehla mina lenqola ngoba imizamo yami iyize leze. No matter what I can do you will always see me as a whore of a child that humiliated you in front of the whole village. You will always see me as the child that has to endure your bad parenting and keep quiet about it. You will always see me as a child who has no feelings and who's immune to your unfair treatment. If you didn't check yourself the day Lonhle decided to kill his child just because he's scared of your reaction I bet you will never realize how much of a toxic parent are you. This life you want me to live it's not for me I was cut out for finer things life could offer. The same finer things you deprived me off by refusing me to further my studies just because all you see in me is a child that has to grow your kraal and bear you grandchildren. I'm done baba from now on I'm choosing myself. Do whatever that makes you happy with me but I'm done. Even if you decide to kill me I will still choose me on the other side of the world.”

If the situation allows Mvelonhle he would be clapping hands for his sister while Mam Thembeke is expecting a retaliation from her husband. Astoundingly Bab Musawenkosi vacates the room and goes straight to the Maseko homestead. He doesn't need a gun or any weapon he's going to kill Khubonye with his bare hands.

He's never felt so stupid like he is right now. For years he's been wondering where his daughter is while all along her blood is making that wicked man wealthy. The lobola was it paid by the same money that was made by the blood of his twin daughter? This man is truly taking him for a ride! He's prepared to go to jail for this.

Meanwhile Mvelonhle is preparing hot water for his sister to soak her aching body while Mam Thembeke is wiping her daughter's pee on the floor in her bedroom. Tears can't stop rolling down her face. She's battling to believe this. How could Khubonye do this to her? So much cruelty in one man just because she didn't choose him! Now she realizes why her mother never loved him and why she always accused him of

being rich through ukuthwala. The pain that man put her through is beyond comprehension.

Once she's done rinsing the mop she goes to her daughter's bedroom where she finds her weeping inside of the big basin. The bath salt her brother poured into the water is making her body to throb more but that pain is nothing then the one she's feeling in her heart. Why does she feel bad for telling her father the truth? Or maybe it's the way she dished out the truth she could have done it in a more respectful way.

Mam Thembeke kneels on the floor and takes the bath cloth in the water before smoothing it on her daughter's bruised flesh. Just like her husband she's also blazing with indignation that Mbewenhle didn't tell her the sooner she found out about this but she knows better that she's to blame. If only she was the mother that is open to her children her daughter would've found it easy to come to her but either way she still asks.

"What about me?"

"Ma."

“You said your father wasn’t going to believe you. What about me? You could’ve told me.”

“What are chances of you that you were going to believe that a man that you loved and shared same dreams with sacrificed your daughter to become rich.”

“I might have not given you a chance to speak to me or listen to you in the past but I’ve never not believe you when you tell me something Mbewenhle.”

“That’s true. I’m really sorry for keeping this from you mama.”

They fall into silence until they are done. Mbewenhle looks for her clothes in her wardrobe while her mother discards the water. She get dressed and walks to her parents bedroom where she knocks once and gets inside.

“Mama I’m leaving.”

Mama Thembeke briskly wipes her tears and looks at her daughter.

“Where are you going?”

“To my house.”

“You’re not going there Mbewenhle. I cannot watch you go to those people. What if they hurt you too. I can’t lose you too.”  
The last sentence comes out as a whisper.

“I’m not going to them mama but to my husband. He didn’t know all of this and he’s going to protect me should anything happen to me.”

Mbewenhle heaves a sigh as she looks at her mother who’s shaking her head in disapproval and choking on her own tears. She walks towards the bed and settles on it next to her before taking the album from her mom.

It's funny how they're so identical. The type of buy get one for free kind of twins but her mother always knew how to differentiate them. Now she's staring at Ndalwenhle's picture it's the same picture as Mbewenhle's and they even had a same pose but Mam Thembeke knew which is her late daughter.

"I'm really sorry mama for the pain you're going through right now. I cannot begin to imagine it and this also the reason I was hesitant to share this because I was trying to protect you guys from this pain. Of course I was never going to protect you guys forever at some point you had to find out about this."

"I can't believe that a person can be so cruel to such extension. She was a child only 10 years old and..." she swallows hard trying to block a sob from escaping but it's in vain. Mbewenhle's heart breaks even more seeing her mother breaking down like this. She pulls her mom's head to her chest and strokes her back.

"Ngiyaxolisa mama," she says, tears bursting out like a waterfall.

The door swings open and Mpilenhle walks in looking at her mother and sister.

“Is it true? Mvelonhle just told me please tell me it’s not true Mbewu.” Already she’s crying but she’s desperate for her sister to tell her that it’s a joke.

“I wish I was sis.”

“Nooooo!”

She walks towards the bed and settles on the edge of the bed and cries her lungs out.

“I never liked that man and I always knew that these ceremonies he hosts every year there is something sinister about them but I never thought that the reason behind them is my own flesh and blood.” The pain in Mpilenhle’s voice cannot be missed.

“To think all this time we have been searching but she’s been here right under our nose and her blood has been making money for that evil man! Why did that sangoma swap the rat poison that man deserves to rot in hell!”

“The sangoma did right my daughter can’t have his evil blood on her hands.”

“As for Muzikayise’s mother I can’t believe her. What kind of a woman she is? She’s a disgrace to womanhood and motherhood.”

“I want to see where’s she’s buried.”

“I’m not sure it’s a right thing to do after the sangoma did her rituals. Maybe going there will interrupt the process mama.”

“It’s not like she’s going to continue with whatever she was doing please my child take me to your twin sister.”

“I also wants to see where she’s buried maybe that’s when I will believe it.” Mvelonhle says as he walks inside the bedroom. His eyes are bloodshot red it’s evident that he’s been crying.

“Okay I can take you guys there.”

“Now.” Mam Thembeke emphasises.

Mbewenhle nods even though she’s not sure about this nor does she feel okay. Going there needs all the strength she doesn’t have right now. They all get up and walk to Mpilenhle’s car with the kids. She directs them to the forest and once they are there they leave the kids in the car and follow behind Mbewenhle who feels so weak.

“Here she is. This is where they buried her.”

Mam Thembeke goes down to her knees and bawl her eyes out. She can feel it in her gut that the person lying underneath the ground is her own flesh and blood. Ithambo lamathambo akhe. Her beloved twin daughter that she carried for 9 months raised

for 10 years then she was snatched away from her just to make the man that claimed to love her wealthy. Fine they were so young and surely that love died but to sacrifice with her daughter it's beyond the word inhuman.

Mpilenhle kneels down next to her mother just as the other two does the same and comfort each other. God knows they always wanted to know what happened to Ndalwenhle but nothing could've prepared them for such heart-rending outcome. It's been almost 14 years but the pain feels the same as the day she disappeared.

Out of the blue the clouds gather and turn grey as the wind waves the tree branches. They all get up quickly and rush to the car where they find the kids holding on one another and terrified. Ndabenhle jumps on Mbewenhle who cradles him in her arms while the other two snuggles on the grandmother. In the middle of the road a scream escapes Mbewenhle mouth as an excruciating pain attacks her body.

“What's wrong?” Mam Thembeke

“I don’t feel so good ma...” she’s cut mid sentence as her intestines turn.

“What’s happening?”

“I...I...” she gags profusely trying to hold herself but all the food she ate fills her mouth she throws up splattering her bloody puke on Ndabenhle who screams at the sight of blood.

“Drive fast Mpilenhle!”

“Mama igazi Mbeee uphuma gazi!!” A hysterical Ndabenhle says. The little boy is scared of blood.

“Hang in there my baby we’re getting home just now.” Mam Thembeke says stroking her daughter’s back who throwing up blood.

“Mpilenhle!”

“I’m trying mama the storm is making it hard to drive. I can’t see it’s foggy!”

“Let’s swap Mpilenhle.” Mvelonhle suggests to his sister who instantly stops the car then they swap the seats.

Mvelonhle takes over and drives through the mist of the storm as the thunder rumbles across the mountain. Once they are home they carry Mbewenhle who’s weak and drenched with blood all over her dress. They place her on the couch then Mam Thembeke fetches water while Mvelonhle is cradling his sister.

“Tell me anything don’t close your eyes please.”

“Lonhle I’m dying please help me,” she cries in pain

“What should I do sis.”

“You....” she gags and throws up all over again. Mam Thembeke comes back with water and helps her daughter drink but she throws up the water she just drank.

“I’m not ready to die mama.”

“You’re not dying baby.” A panicking mom assures her daughter though she doesn’t know what’s going on and the amount of blood she’s vomiting is terrifying her.

“What’s going on?” Qwabe asks as he emerges from the passage.

“You are going on! See what you did! You beat her up now she’s vomiting blood!” Mvelonhle bellows angrily.

“Ntomb yami.” Qwabe crouches before the couch and looks at her daughter remorse clouding his face.

“Let’s take her to the hospital if she lose so much blood we might lose her.” Mpilenhle

“That’s not a good idea.” A voice says behind them says. They all turn and look at her as she walks towards them. Mbewenhle blinks her eyes open and sees her.

“MaMngomezulu you found me once again.”

“I always finish what I started my girl. Please take her to endlini yabada and be quick we are running out of time.”

“Who are you?” Qwabe

“We will do the introduction after sir we don’t have time! Take her to the room where you communicate with the ancestors now!”

Without a waste of time Mvelonhle carries his sister to eyisini where he lays her on the grass mat. They all gather together as MaMngomezulu takes out insizi from her bags makes Mbewenhle to lick it.

“Please bring me water

needles, red candles, two knives and hot coal lokushunqisa.  
Hurry up boy!”

Mvelonhle scurries out.

“What’s going on makhosi? What’s happening to my  
daughter?” Qwab

“They know that she knows and they are attacking us. No one  
can touch me I’m highly protected but I can’t say the same  
about your daughter.”

“Uyanya uKhubonye! He needs to come back where he is and  
face me like a man!”

“I understand your anguish sir but now we need to save your  
daughter first. Please tell your brother to hurry up.”

MaMngomezulu says directing her last sentence to Mpilenhle  
who rushes out after that.

“Please save my daughter makhosi.” Cries Mam Thembeke. She can’t lose another daughter because of that cruel man.

Mbewenhle screams in agony and vomits. This time she’s throwing up huge blood clots. MaMngomezulu lights imphepho and waves the smoke to Mbewenhle’s direction calling her ancestors together with the Qwabe ancestors to work together and save Mbewenhle. Jesus where are these children with the things she needs! They all panic as they look at Mbewenhle convulsing her eyes rolling to the back.

“Mbewu! Baby! No no no! Do something makhosi please!”

MaMngomezulu prays harder to God and to the ancestors tears streaming down her face. They cannot fail her now she needs them more than ever. This poor child cannot die in her hands while they trust her with her life. At long last Mpilenhle and Mvelonhle walks in. Now Mbewenhle has stopped convulsing and she’s lying on the floor not moving an inch nor breathing.

“What took you so long!” Qwabe

“What’s going on sangoma why she’s not breathing?” Mam Thembeke asks MaMngomezuli who shakes her head sadly and looks down as tears roll down her face.

☆ Muzikayise ☆

He’s been screaming none stop banging the door but his screams are unheard. The thunder is rumbling and the darkness has consumed the whole village which makes it more dark in the hut they’ve locked him in. The only thing that is bringing light is the small window. He walks towards the window and throws a punch. It cracks as the glasses cut his fist. He slides his bleeding hand and opens the window since you can open it on the outside before squeezing himself out it.

It’s raining heavily and he’s not even sure which one of the huts is the one that his parents and Shwabade are in. He has no plan but he’s going to interrupt whatever they are doing. Meanwhile Shwabade is stabbing an spear into a calabash where’s the mixture of muti inside while grunting and speaking in tongues.

He can see everything that is happening on the magic mirror. His face melt into an evil smile as he looks through the mirror.

“Is it done?” Maseko asks anxiously seeing him smiling. The itch has stopped due to the sticky muti Shwabade applied on him.

Mam Sonto’s heart is with her son who’s locked up and God knows what are those assistants are doing to her son. She can’t stop thinking about what he said. So her husband went through such length to hurt Thembela just because she didn’t choose him? Clearly he’s not over her.

The door bursts open just Muzikayise is about to get in. The lightening illuminates across the sky and forms a huge ball of fire. It flutters in the air heading straight into the hut and strikes Shwabade. He screams in anguish and his skin turns dark in an instant as it burns then he collapses on the floor skyward. His eyes are wide open so is mouth. Maseko crawls towards him and shakes him but he’s not responding.

“Hey! Wake up! You can’t die now! What am I going to do?”

“He’s gone Maseko I think it’s time all of this end now.” Mam Sonto

“You’re talking nonsense! Do you realize what going to happen to me? What about you and our kids? We are going to lose everything!”

“I’m no longer part of this now. Do whatever that makes you happy I’m done. Son take me home.” With that said she gets up and walks out leaving her husband in misery.

What is he going to do now? The itch starts all over again and this time it’s not playing with him. It’s not a coincidence that the eyes, tongue and private part that he cut off from the little girl are the same things that are itching mercilessly. One of the assistants walks in and when he realizes that Shwabade is no more he calls the other assistants and they beat the shit out of Maseko.

## ☆ Mbewenhle ☆

Screams of agony breaks into the room at the sangoma's demeanor. Even the head of the family is wiping tears surreptitiously but they're refusing to stay discreet. Seeing the elders crying the kids join in but Azanothe is old enough to understand what's going on. Kids of today know a lot of things before they're even told by their parents.

MaMngomezulu has never dealt with such throughout her journey of being a sangoma and for a moment she's doubting her capabilities. How can the ancestors give her such an onerous task. She's not God she's just a sangoma and there are fights that are beyond her. Seeing Mam Thembeke cradling her daughter in her arms and wailing in agony feels like shards of glass in her guts. She's a mother too and she can't begin to imagine the pain of losing a child. This family is going through a lot already and losing this poor child is the last thing they need.

She says a silence prayer within herself and takes out her necklace. It's a special necklace made of red and white beads with a pedant of a horse tooth. It's for her protection. She slides it into Mbewenhle's neck and grabs a saucer emsamo before sprinkling some black muti on it. She pours water in the saucer and takes the needles arranging them on the saucer into a circle.

"Can you please undress her. Leave the underwear only."

Mam Thembeke and Mpilenhle help each with undressing Mbewenhle and when they are done the sangoma takes a knife and dips it on the saucer before poking Mbewenhle's body. She keeps on dipping the knife on the saucer and pokes her body while shouting and chasing away the evil spirits. Once that is out of the way she sprinkles izinyamazame on the hot coal and waves the smoke to Mbewenhle's face and body.

"Mama Mbee kavuki," says the little boy not sure what's going on but somehow it worries him that his sister is not waking up.

"She's tired boy."

MaMngomezulu pours another muti on the saucer and takes out another one putting it in her mouth then she walks out. Not minding the heavy rain. In the middle of the yard is where she puts the saucer down and starts spitting the muti on all four directions while stabbing into the air. Then she takes the saucer and stabs the air with a knife on all four directions after dipping it in the saucer. She does all of this shouting and grunting.

The Qwabe family is looking at her through the door and wondering if she's not scared of this menacing rain. The thunder rumbles across the mountains and the lightning illuminates on the sky. She grunts even louder flumping on the ground with her knees and cries her lungs out. Her job is to heal protect and save not to take life but she was defending herself and Mbewenhle. There's no other way she could've done this but that doesn't make her feel better.

She remembers that they're watching her so she pulls herself together and gets up then walks towards the room where she lights imphepho and waves the smoke to Mbewenhle's face who coughs a few seconds later as the smoke chokes her.

“Baby you’re awake!” Mam Thembeke screams with relief and joy alerting others. They all look at Mbewenhle who blinks her eyes open as she coughs.

“Ntuthu yamxhila susa!” Says Ndabanhle pushing the sangoma’s hand that has a burning incense.

They all laugh and that warms MaMngomezulu’s heart. She shouldn’t feel bad she saved the person that she was supposed to save. In a war you never fight fair because if you fight fair you will never win.

“How are you feeling?” MaMngomezulu

“Weak but okay.” Mbewenhle responds lazily.

“Please go make her water with sugar and salt in a jug.”

Mpilenhle gets up from the floor and walks out leaving her family fussing over Mbewenhle.

“Are you not hungry ntombi yami? Mvelonhle go tell Mpilenhle to make your sister eggs. They’re in the bin in the rondoal. She must take 4 of them. Ngiyawazi njalo awungaki!” Qwabe says and laughter breaks into the room.

“I’m not hungry baba.” She’s not hungry but her father mustn’t think that he will bribe her with chicken eggs. Not that she’s expecting an apology from her father she knows what kind of a man is but that doesn’t mean she’s over what happened.

“There’s a tub of yoghurt in the fridge should Mvelonhle get it for you baby?”

“No mama I’m fine really.”

“What about biltong? I can drive to buy it for you.” Mvelonhle

“Come on guys what with food.” Mbewenhle says laughing.

“We thought you are dead aunty Mbewu so we are happy to see you alive.” Azanothe

Mbewenhle smiles emotionally.

“Food is the only thing you can give me? You guys are not serious how about you offer me money. I could do with 10k.”

“Unganya!” Qwabe

The room erupts into laughter as Mpilenhle walks in with a jug. The sangoma orders Mbewenhle to drink half of the water to gain strength.

“Thank you so much makhosi for saving our daughter. How much should we give you?” Asks Mam Thembeke

“Don’t worry Mbewenhle will pay me.”

“You have money Mbewu?”

“What kind of a question is that mama?”

“It’s a question that needs an answer you’re not working nje.”

“Are you working? No you don’t but you do have money right and besides her price is not money. Please don’t ask me what is her price then if it’s not money because it’s between me and her.”

They all look at Mbewenhle suspiciously and nod even though they’re dying to know what is the price.

“My job is done now I should get going.”

“My daughter told me that you were helping her to reveal the truth and you are the one that showed her where her twin was buried so what happens now? Is she still safe since you said they’re attacking back.” Qwabe

“Yes that’s true and I’d advise the family to not do anything that you would regret later. I understand your anguish but I need you all to trust me. Mbewenhle is safe now.”

“You’re saying we should just sit and do nothing as if we don’t know what that man did?”

“Yes I prefer that way and let everything unfolds on their own time sir.”

“We don’t even inform the police?” Mpilenhle

“What will you say to them? The police will want proof.”

“What’s your plan actually?” Mam Thembeke

“My plan is to let your daughter fight back for herself. Ngimichuphile and whoever is responsible for her death will never find peace. If you decide to exhume her body and give her a dignified funeral once the truth is revealed please let me know so that I can reverse the spell. Angeke umamukele kahle

umndenini wakhe uma esempini kuzomele ngimkhulule. Her soul has been restless for years it's about time she rests in peace so that Mbewenhle can have a peaceful life as well."

"In other words my life hasn't been peaceful because her soul is not resting in peace?"

"You two are one and when her soul is not resting in peace your life won't be peaceful as well."

"Wow," whispers Mbewenhle in awe.

"I would like to prepare you some tea and biscuits makhosi if you don't mind. You can come to the rondoal. It's warm there because there's fire. You must be feeling cold after standing in the rain." Mam Thembeke offers and the sangoma couldn't refuse the gesture though she doesn't eat on duty but she's done now a cup of tea and biscuits will do.

She's stalling to go back to her great grandparents lonely house because her conscience won't let her rest even though she

knows that it was defence. The fall out she had with her mother after chasing out her patient is unsettling her. They both said words to each other that they are both regretting now. After all it's all coming from a good place, what her mother did that is. She understands where her mom is coming from but she didn't have to do that. There's a part of her that wish to find her mother still in her great grandparents house. Now she needs her emotional support more then ever. Surely for someone who has taken a life before her mother will know how to make her feel better.

Mam Thembeke walks out with her children and grandkids leaving her husband with MaMngomezulu. Qwabe looks at her as she packs her containers of muti into her bag. He has seen thousands of sangomas but he's never seen such a beautiful one. She's wet and the dress she's wearing is tugging on her body that he could see her nipples poking through the fabric of her dress. Could it possible that she's not wearing any bra underneath that dress or she has big nipples. He clears his throat as his conscience reminds him what he's doing is wrong in so many levels. The throat clearing catches MaMngomezulu's attention that she looks up at him expectantly.

“Uhm can I ask you something?”

“Yes you can Mr Qwabe.”

“The...the.. last born.” Suddenly he’s stuttering and he doesn’t know where does it comes from.

“How much is your consultation I need to know if the little boy is my biological son.”

MaMngomezulu looks at him intently. She’s not here to destroy a family already she’s feeling bad for life of a man that is gone.

“Why would you think he’s not your biological son?”

“He doesn’t look like me nor any of my family members. Uze unamanhlonhlo kwaQwabe asinawo.”

“What about your wife’s side of the family. Maybe he looks like one of them. You can’t judge a child based on his looks that

he's not yours. He could be a mixture of your wife's forefathers and yours."

"That's true hence I want a consultation from you."

"You will make the little boy fall ill if you keep on having doubts that he's your son."

"So he's really mine?"

"Were you not there since birth and raised him up to this far."

"I was and did."

"So he's your son."

"Are you sure?"

"Go do a DNA test then."

Qwabe returns the intense stare that the sangoma is giving him then his eyes catch the water that is falling from her loose dreadlocks and sliding down to her chest disappearing on her breasts underneath the dress.

“I’m sure your wife is done preparing tea. Excuse me.” She gets up and walks out going to the rondo leaving Qwabe with his own thoughts.

There’s something perturbing about the conversation he just had with the sangoma but she also mentioned the DA test his wife did which says Ndabenhle is his son. He doesn’t trust these tests. Why does it have to be a DA test why not an ANC test? But the last thing he wants is his son to fall ill because of his doubts so from now on he’s going to forget about this and love his son. The beautiful sangoma said he is his right?

Continuation of 66

☆ Muzikayise ☆

He can feel his mom's eyes boring his skin as he's driving through the mist of the storm. His bruised and bleeding hand hurts so bad but it's nothing compared to the pain he's feeling in his heart. He's not sure if that sangoma succeeded in killing his wife and that thought is the one that he doesn't want to entertain but anxiety is having a feast on him.

"Did they kill her?"

"I don't know."

"How could you watch them kill my wife in front of you mama!"

"How could you not tell me that your father loves Thembeke!"

Oh this is the reason she's been staring at him angrily.

“Seriously now? You cannot compare that with my wife’s life mama! What’s wrong with you?”

“You can’t raise your voice at me! I’m your mother and I deserve your respect!”

“No you don’t deserve my respect not after you were an accomplice in dad’s crimes!”

“I already told you that he told me after he was done Muzikayise there’s nothing I could’ve done!”

“Of course there is something you could’ve done which is reporting him to the police.”

“It’s not easy as you say. He’s my husband and I love him Muzikayise. I’m not saying what he did is right but I understand where’s coming from. He did this for us my boy.”

“Are you listening to yourself right now? He killed an innocent child to become rich and you’re telling me that he did this for

us? He was already Induna when he did this and we weren't rich but we had all the basics!"

"Yes the peanuts that the chief is paying him were able to buy us the necessities but it wasn't enough! Don't get me wrong my son but you know how cruel people are when you have nothing. They treat you like dirt! He was tired of that life and seeing his peers making it big while he had nothing. Even the chief himself made him Induna because he could see that he's smart but he still treated him like nothing. Your father saw an opportunity my son and got tempted unfortunately now we cannot turn back the hands of time."

"Smart where? There hasn't been any developments in this village! Buphi ubuhlakani okhuluma ngabo? People are talking mama and they're not happy!"

"He just an Induna and his power is limited. There's nothing he can do beyond his duties."

"The duties that he is not fulfilling. Let's just say it mama that when baba got his "big break" he forgot about the people of

this village and enjoyed his wealth. He loves it when people are bowing down for him just because he is rich. He actually don't care about them."

"Why would he care about the same people ababembuka ngathi ifinyila elihlaza lilunguza ekhaleni engakacebi?"

"Wow you serious condone his evil deeds!"

"No I'm not but I'm trying to show you that life is not black and white Muzikayise. Sometimes you have to do what you have to do unfortunately now that he's busted and he has to face the consequences of that. If only you didn't bring us that girl into our lives we wouldn't be here."

Muzikayise chuckles in disbelief. Who is this woman? He always thought she's the sweetest!

"Oh so now it's my fault. Are you not the one who was gushing over her. MaQwabe this MaQwabe that hehe hehe"

“I thought she’s a nice girl until she cheated on you and I didn’t know that your father loves her mother.”

“Wow you’re unbelievable! Didn’t you cheat on baba?”

“Uyadakwa manje! You cannot compare my situation with hers. You poured all your heart to that girl and what did she do? She never appreciated you my boy it’s high time you let her go.”

“The point is you cheated on him just like he cheated on you. Don’t be a judge judy on my wife while you also have your skeletons. You also stayed with father even after everything he did to you because you love him so I’m also with her because I love her. I will not let her go especially not when she found out that your evil husband is the one that is behind her twin sister’s disappearance and death.”

“Why you didn’t tell me that your father wants her mother.”

“He doesn’t want her mama. He just told me that he was also crushing on her like any other men in this village but Qwabe won her heart because he had money.”

“She was beautiful and every men wanted her but I didn’t know your father as well.” Muzikayise cannot miss the pain in his mom’s voice.

“Don’t be sad probably that love died long time ago.”

“I thought he did all of this because he allowed poverty to get the better of him not that he wanted to hurt Thembeka because she chose Musawenkosi.”

“But that doesn’t mean he doesn’t love you mama. He did say that he will always cherish you because you accepted and loved him while he had nothing.”

“He still cheated though.”

He drops her at the gate and drives to his house. He's hoping to find his wife waiting for him but when he gets there everything is still as he left it in the morning. Clearly she didn't come back home. He heaves a sigh and takes her phone then calls Mvelonhle with her phone.

"Sis I'm in my bedroom."

"Hey it's Muzikayise."

"Oh."

He could hear in his voice that he's not the Mvelo he knows. That "oh" is so cold. Could it be possible that he also knows? They're so close with Mbewenhle she probably told him

"Is my wife back home?"

"Yes she's in the rondoal."

“Can I speak to her please.”

“I’m sleeping.”

“I’m begging you Mvelonhle. I just need to hear her voice.” The last sentence comes out as a whisper of defeat.

Mvelonhle sighs on the other side of the line and rolls out of bed then slides into his push ins. He makes his way to the rondoval. The rain has stopped now. He gives Mbewenhle the phone and goes back to his bedroom. He’s also going through his personal issues. Isisa dumped him last night.

“Hello.” Mbewenhle says stepping out of the rondoval. Hearing her voice makes his heart to skips two beats. Thank God she’s still alive.

“Sthandwa sami. How are you?”

“I’m okay and yourself?”

“I miss you when are you coming home?”

“I’m not feeling well I just need to be with my parents.”

“What’s wrong?” He asks panicking.

“I don’t know but I will be fine.”

“I’m your husband and I’m supposed to be looking after you when you’re not feeling well.”

“I know Kayise but I want to be home now.” He can sense that cold wall between them or is it his imagination?

“Ngiyakuthanda.” (I love you)

“Ngiyazi.” (I know)

At least she knows even though that's not the response he anticipated.

"I want to hold you in my arms and kiss you even for a minute please."

"I feel weak Kayise I don't have strength."

A sad sigh escapes his lips as he feels needless piercing in his heart.

"Oh okay have a good sleep when you sleep."

"Same goes to you." She hangs up first even though she's not the one that called. Shwabade wasn't lying that she really knows! It explains how cold she is and she didn't tell him that she loves him too. How long has she known about this and why she's not saying anything?

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Mam Sonto looks at her husband getting dressed and shakes her head in disapproval.

“Do you have to go?”

“Yes I have to address my community regarding the developments that are about to take place in this village.”

“What if the itch starts all over again?”

“It’s been 5 days now and I haven’t had any itch.”

He hasn’t had any itch since 5 days back but the worms are still there moving in his manhood and his eyelids now have sores hence he will be wearing sunglasses today. He’s pretending to be strong but deep down he’s drowning and he doesn’t know what’s he going to do now since Shwabade is gone. He’s been expecting Qwabe since his daughters told him that he was here looking for him and that he looked angry. A part of him doesn’t

believe that he knows. It's been 5 days already and he hasn't showed up.

"What about the smell?"

"What smell."

Mam Sonto sighs heavily not knowing how can she tell her husband that he's smelling awful. It probably the sores in his manhood that are smelling. He can't smell himself but others can and the daughters have been asking their mother questions she cannot answer.

"Don't forget to spray your perfume." She reminds him because he always forgets. He's not used to perfumes but his wife buys him anyway and today he really needs it.

"Maseko."

"Ma"

“Did you do all of this to hurt Thembeke just because she didn’t choose you?”

“No of course not.”

“Then why her child.”

“Let’s not talk about this please. You have nothing to feel jealous about.” He walks towards her and places his hands on her shoulders looking deep in her eyes that are glimmering with tears.

“You’re the only woman I love wholeheartedly. Thembeke was just a silly crush.”

Mam Sonto pouts her lips trying to cover her nose from the awful smell but Bab Khubonye leans over to plant a peck on her lips. Then he takes his car keys and leaves. On arrival the community is already waiting for him. He joins the few elders of

the community in the front who look at each other and surreptitiously cover their noses.

“Greetings everyone. I’m sorry to be late. Since I’ve...” He pauses mid sentence as the Qwabe family walk in. They glance at him and find their seats. Once they’re seated Muzikayise makes his way in as well. He decided to use this opportunity to see his wife since he hasn’t seen her for days. Mvelonhle is the one that told him that they are attending his father’s meeting.

They lock eyes and his heart melts at the sight of his wife. God he missed her so much and this distant between them is killing him. If only he had guts to confront her maybe they will be able to move on. He doesn’t go to his sisters but makes his way towards the Qwabe family and sits next to his wife before greeting his in laws. He tugs his hand on his wife’s and smiles at her who returns a fake one.

“As I was saying good people. I have great news there...” he’s disturbs by the men next to him who are waving their hands on their noses.

“Elders can I speak please.”

“You’re stinking!”

He chuckles lightly and continues with his speech.

“We all know that there’s a mine that is going to open...” Once again he’s cut short by an itch in his balls. He tries to compose himself but the itch doesn’t give him an opportunity to speak. Ngathi uncinzwa izintombi zakaZulu.

He scratches himself over his pants but it feels like it’s not enough until he unbuckles his pants and shoves it down to his knees then starts scratching his genitals like a lunatic. The crowd exclaims in shock and there are those who are taking pictures and videos of him while others are laughing.

His children are gripped with mortification. The eldest daughter and youngest rush to the front to their father. They try to take him out but it proves to be futile because he is fighting and scratching himself vigorously.

“Don’t take him out! Let his coals burn him in front of the whole community!” Mbewenhle says and gets up from the chair. As she strides towards the front all Maseko could see is a little girl he cut off her tongue

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eyes and private parts 14 years ago while she was still alive and kicking.

“Tell them what did you do!” Mbewenhle

“I’m sorry I didn’t mean to kill you!” Maseko

Everyone is trapped in confusion. What does he mean that he didn’t mean to kill her when she’s alive. The Qwabe family walk to the front and ambush Maseko with questions.

“I’m really sorry from the bottom of my heart. Nothing can justify what I did to your twin daughter.”

“Stop saying sorry and tell us what did you do!” Mpilenhle

“Do we have to do this here and now?” Muzikayise asks feeling sorry for his father. God knows he want him to be punished but not to be humiliated like this in front of the people that respect him.

“Yes we are going to do this now Kayise. The village has to know that the man they call Induna and respect so much is evil!” The anger in Mbewenhle’s eyes unsettles Muzikayise. He feels like it directed to him.

Maseko can’t stop scratching himself now he’s on the floor wiggling and grunting. The itch now is all over his body and he doesn’t know where to scratch.

“I’m really sorry!”

“What did you do to my daughter Khubonye!”

“I sacrificed with her to become wealthy I’m sorry.” Everyone shriek with terror including the Maseko daughters. They look at their brother and his demeanor is the confirmation they need.

“I’m a monster and I deserve to rot in hell.”

“Baba this is not true?” Ndongoloza asks desperately wanting her father to tell her that it’s not true.

“It’s true my daughter I’m really sorry. I became rich through ukuthwala ngewele laka Qwabe. I was working together with Shwabade. A songoma that pulled off this ritual. That storm was no coincidence it was meant for disguise. The twin was taken by ‘his boys’ and they brought her to his house. He needed a few parts of her body to perform the ritual and I was required to cut off her tongue, eyes and her private parts while her blood was still warm and she was still alive.”

“Baba noooo!” Nomathamsanqa yelps as the Qwabe family shed tears at the picture Maseko just painted in their minds about the death of their flesh and blood.

“After that we buried her body in the forest then Shwabade did something with the body parts with his muti then he told me to bury them in my house. I buried them in my hut and that how the it was activated. I’m really sorry Qwabe family from the deepest of my heart. You can kill me I deserve it.”

“You’re bitter and cruel I can’t believe that I ever thought you are a good man!” Mam Thembeke bellows angrily and wipes tears and mucus on her face.

“I made peace with the fact that you chose Musawenkosi over me and I understood that I had nothing to provide you with. I’m sorry that it had to be your child but they were the only twins I knew. I had to choose a twin because they are a blessing or my own blood. I’m really sorry for the pain I put you through you MaNdwandwe.”

Qwabe loses it and punches him on his face. Muzikayise pulls him as he about to throw another punch

“Calm down baba please.”

“Don’t you dare tell me to calm down Muzi! He killed my daughter! Do you know the pain he put my family through!”

“I can imagine Bab Qwabe but violence won’t solve anything”

“Solve? There’s nothing we can solve here boy! My daughter is dead and she will never wake up. Don’t talk nonsense!!” Qwabe roars

“How come Gogo Maphumulo is the one that took the blame when you are all behind this?” Mbewenhle directs her question to her father in law.

“She knew everything and we had to shut her up for good.”

“But how...” Muzikayise cuts off his wife

“It’s enough now! I won’t stand here and watch y’all humiliate my father like this!”

“Your father is a murder! Uthwala ngezingane our children are not safe! We must deal with him!” A man says through the crowd and everyone scream in approval.

“Makashayweee!” Another voice breaks through the crowd and the whole community approve. In blink of an eye the whole community is beating the hell out of Maseko and his daughters are crying while Muzikayise is trying to call the police. Mvelonhle appears with his sister’s spare tyre and a lighter. People scream with cheer.

“Makashiswe ukhohlakele kabi!”

Everyone is throwing insults at Maseko as they pour him with petrol. This is what he deserves and he’s ready to meet his maker Satan.

## ☆ Muzikayise ☆

Seeing the community beating my father and not being able to help him is like a shard of glasses in my heart. I've called the police and the chief but they haven't arrived yet.

"Bhuti save him please!" Cries Ndongoloza

"The police are coming they will handle this. If I intervene they will beat me up too."

"They want to burn him alive!" A hear Nomathamsanqa's scream behind me and turn to look at the crowd.

God no! I know what he did is cruel and unforgivable but to die like this. Just in that moment the chief arrives and rushes to the crowd. He manages to calm them down by telling them they will be locked up for taking law into their own hands. The police arrive and ask questions which we answer. They question my father as well and he agrees to the crime he committed.

“Who beat him? He smells petrol

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” Asks the police officer

“Does it matter he’s a bloody toe nail of Satan!” Says the detective of a woman.

“Taking law into your own hands is an often detective...”

“Don’t tell me something that I already know Nxumalo cuff this asshole!”

They cuff my father and drag him to the van.

“Baba!” Ndongoloza

“I’m sorry my children for the humiliation and pain I’ve brought upon you. Tell your mother that I love her so much.” Baba says

as they shove him inside the van. Ndondoloza buries her face on my chest and cries.

“I’m sorry baby sis.”

I take her to my car and call my other sisters then I drive them home. The drive is somber and filled with snuffles. We find mama watching TV. Ndondoloza runs to her and throws herself next her on the couch before wailing loudly.

“What’s going on Muzi? Where’s your father?”

“They arrested him mama.” Nomvula says and sits down releasing a huge sigh.

“Did you know mama?” Bongeka

Just then Thuthuka barges in and his eyes are bulging out of his sockets. He was visiting his grandparents at the Ngema homestead.

“Guys I’ve just saw mkhulu trending on social media? Is this true?”

“Unfortunately it’s true my son we are coming there and the police took him.” Nomvula

“Oh Jesus!”

He settles down on the couch and buries his head on his hands.

“Mama you won’t ask us why is dad arrested?” Bongeka

“Bongeka can you leave mom alone!” I yell

“Wow I can’t believe that you and mama knew about this. God you’re so evil just like baba! I feel sorry for the Qwabe family.”

“Sis Bongeka why do you feel sorry for them huh? Those people humiliated our father!” Ndongoloza

“Humiliation is nothing compared to what he did to them. 14 years Ndongoloza that family have been wondering what happened to the twin while her body parts are right underneath the rug in your father’s hut.”

“They should’ve not humiliated him in front of people. It’s obvious now that they’re the one who made him sick. Did you see how that bitch Mbewenhle sprung up to question him the moment the itch started.”

“I don’t blame them I would’ve done the same as well. No blood of mine will be killed and I will do nothing. There’s nothing you can say that can justify what your evil father did.”

“They were not supposed to humiliate him like that. It’s serves them right futhi!”

“Haibo Ndongoloza!”

“Vele or you rather he sacrificed with one of us?”

“Obvious it wasn’t going to be you because you are his beloved. I wish he sacrificed with me. The itch and worms are nothing. Bengizompokela anye nyi!

“You two shut up now!!!” Mama shouts at Bongeka and Ndondoloza then she disappears.

I get up from the couch and go to inform babomncane over the phone. To say he’s sadden would be an understatement. Tomorrow we are going to go and see him. I also feel bad how everything transpired but hey it is what it is.

“I’m shocked Malumes.” Thuthu says joining me in my bedroom.

“I was also shocked like that when I found out.”

“How long have you known.”

“I found out that week of the ceremony. That’s why I didn’t come. All along he’s been fooling us saying that he’s thanking ancestors for protecting us while all these ceremonies are part of the deal.”

“Wow. I don’t see you and Mbewenhle surviving after this.”

“I’m going to fight for her boy with everything I’ve got.”

“Good luck.”

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I can’t believe that within hours he’s been locked up he looks like he has aged 5 years or is it my imagination?

“Thanks for coming to see me.”

“I’m really sorry zalo.” Bab Mkhuthuzi says to Baba.

“Don’t be zalo I got myself into this. Please take care of my wife and kids. Son I also trust you to take care of your mom and sisters. I’m not sure what’s going to happen now with everything we have but chances of everything to demolish are so high. Your mom and sisters are going to need you more then ever.”

“I hear you baba and don’t worry I will take care of them.”

“If you love her don’t let her go okay? Don’t let this be the end of your marriage.”

“Eh baba.”

“I love you son.” with that said he gets up wincing in pain and asks the police to take him back to the cell. Babomncane and I leave with our hearts on our knees.

On arrival at the Qwabe homestead we greet. The daggers the wife is shooting at us. If looks can kill we would be dead.

“What brings you here Maseko?” Qwabe

“I’m sorry to come unannounced. We apologize from the deepest of our hearts for everything my brother did...”

“Your apology won’t wake up my baby!” Mam Thembeke

“I know Mama Qwabe and I do wish there’s something I can do. What brought me here is my son. His wife hasn’t been home for days now and he’s worried that what his father did might be the reason. On his behalf all I’m saying is that what my brother did shouldn’t affect their marriage. I’m here to beg you Qwabe and your wife that my son shouldn’t be punished for his father’s sins. He is innocent and he still loves your daughter so much. Please see it in your heart to look him beyond his father’s sins. He’s still that son in law who is in love with your daughter and willing to build family with her.”

Qwabe sighs and looks at us intently.

“Honestly Maseko I was angry and I’m still am that I wanted nothing to do with the Masekos but now that you’re saying this I couldn’t agree more. We cannot punish our children. They love each other and they didn’t know about this. It will be unfair to expect them to be enemies.”

I sigh in relief. This is going better than I expected. My wife walks in and pauses on her tracks. Clearly she didn’t expect to see us. I didn’t notice how much she’s lost weight until right in this moment.

“Sanibonani.”

We greet her back.

“Come sit down ntombi yami.”

Mbewenhle settles down next to her mom and looks down. Her father explains to her why we are here.

“I hear you baba.”

“You’re not obliged to do so my child. This is also hard to you and we cannot expect you to just be okay with it. Fine he’s innocent but still he’s a Maseko. If you are not feeling this marriage anymore it’s okay don’t be scared to tell us.” Mam Thembeke’s words hit home

“MaNdwandwe what are you saying? If she’s not feeling this marriage kwani? This boy didn’t do anything he shouldn’t be punished for his father’s sin. He’s been nothing but a great husband to our daughter and he’s still willing to love her till forever.”

“Qwabe our daughter is not a robot. She has feelings and we have to let her make her own decisions. You were angry angisho nawe and you wanted to send the lobola back naye ke she has to be feeling some type of way about this.”

“So you’re encouraging her to leave her husband for something he’s not involved in while she forgave him for cheating?”

The anger flashes in Mam Thembeke's eyes and I see my wife looking down shamefully.

"Yaz..."

"It's okay mama my husband and I have a lot to talk about." She says looking at me intensely and I feel shivers running down my spine. God don't let her leave me.

"Are you sure baby?"

"Yes mama."

"Good choice ntombi yami."

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Now we are home and silence between us is worrying me. I take her hands in mine and look at her.

“I’m sorry about....”

“Why you didn’t tell me?”

“Babe I was scared to lose you.”

“Kayise you knew how much I wanted this. It has been one of my biggest dreams and you decided to keep it for me.”

“I’m sorry baby I love you so much and when I think of losing you I lose my mind.”

“Oh really the way you were defending your father yesterday.”

“I’m not happy with what he did but at the end of the day he is still my father. I’m really sorry for the pain he put you and family through. Please forgive me.”

“I don’t know Kayise this is too much. If you can keep such to me what more you will keep from me? You were thinking about yourself only not about me.”

“Babe if tables were turned it wouldn’t be easy for you as well to tell me. Try to put yourself in my shoes. Please don’t leave me sthandwa sami. I’m nothing without you.”

“I need time and space to think about this.”

“Baby no don’t do this to me. I’m sorry and I promise to be transparent to you.”

“Kayise this is not just about what your father did to my twin sister or about you keeping this from me but it’s about our marriage as a whole. Let’s be honest Kayise our marriage is draining and emotionally taxing.”

“I know baby and I put a blame on me. I promise to work on myself. Maybe this happened for a reason baby to show us that our love is stronger and can survive storms and hurricanes.”

“Kayise...”

“I love you Mbewenhke. I’m hopeless without you please ungayiphuli nhliziyo yami.”

I go down and kneel between her thighs then cup her face.

“This is me baby asking for forgiveness and pouring my heart out to you. You promised me that you will never give up on me, us please MaQwabe.”

“Muzi....” I shut her up with a kiss and when she responds I knew that her heart still beats for me

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER SIXTY SEVEN

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

The yard is buzzing and scattered with children playing. I need a moment to myself but I cannot just disappear while it's busy like this. People are coming in and out to offer their condolences. As per norm we return the favor with tea and cakes.

The burial of my beloved twin sister is in three days and one would think now that we know everything that happened and we are going to be able to point where she's laid to rest it's all over now.

Unfortunately it's not over regardless that it's been years but discovering the truth grew the pain. It is in waves that are so strong and they come at us menacing to drown us. Trying to ride the waves is proving to be fruitless.

"They're back you should prepare their tea." Mpilenhle

The elders and MaMngomezulu are coming from the forest where she's buried for the withdrawal of the spell. She insisted that it must be done three days prior the exhumation and the burial.

The procedure of the exhumation didn't take long it only took a few weeks since this case is treated with substance and delicacy. It evoked emotions across the world as it trended on social media. How sad it is that she got to be the talk of the world because of her tragic death not her achievements.

Isisa and I make the tea while Mpilenhle is cooking with our cousins. Once we are done we serve the elders tea and scones. My parents insisted to give MaMngomezulu something as a token of gratitude even though she said she doesn't want anything. I'm not sure how much they are giving her but what I know is that on top of that money mama bought a blanket and a dinner set.

“You really shouldn't have Qwabe family.”

“We had to after everything you’ve done for us. Imimoya yethu izothola ukuphumula manje ngoba sobesazi ukuthi ithambo lethu lilelekuphi.” Baba

“Thank you so much we are glad that we could help but the person you should be also thankful to is your daughter. This wasn’t easy for her and she’s so young but she managed to handle this.” MaMngomezulu says looking at me with a faint smile. I’m not sure I’ve ever seen such a beautiful sangoma in my life.

“You’re the one who did all of this by yourself though.” Dad’s sister says. The iciness in her voice can freeze the water in an ice cube tray.

“She’s really brave this one.” Gogo says and that proud smile plastered on her face melts my heart. Isisa and I get up and walk out.

“Though I’m angry at you for keeping this from me but I’m proud of you friend.”

“You are giving me credit for nothing honestly. MaMngomezulu deserves every credit.”

“Trust me friend everything wouldn’t have transpired the way they did if it wasn’t for how you handled this. Maybe if you confronted him he would’ve killed you too and no one would’ve know what happened to you and Ndalwenhle.”

“Eh friend the way he was not showing an ounce of penitence when I heard him arguing with my husband I knew that I had to be careful about this.”

My husband’s van pull over outside the gate then Lonhle steps out of it to open the gate.

“I should get going now.”

“You are leaving because Mvelonhle is here. When will you two fix this? It’s been weeks now Isisa and it’s not nice to see my brother heartbroken. He loves you why can’t you see that?”

“I love him too Mbewenhle but you know mama...”

“Yoooh that song of yours is getting old now. You knew from the very beginning that your mom doesn’t approve of this relationship but you continued to date my brother. Why did you string him along if you knew that you will ditch him like a used condom the moment your mother finds out about this.”

“You’re being insensitive now....”

“No Isisa I have to tell you the truth. He loves you so much and if there comes a time where he has to choose he will choose you and kids why it’s hard for you to see that?”

“You’re taking his side that’s very clear so I won’t bother and explain to you because you won’t hear me

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” she says and walks away but I grab her wrist.

“What Mbewu?”

“Make me understand Isisa. I understand his side I need to understand yours as well. ”

She wrests her wrist from my hand and continues with her walk. Gosh these two are stressing the hell out of me. They are both miserable without each other but they don't want to admit it. I run after her and catch up with her. We walk in silence for few seconds then she breaks it.

“My mom is the only person I've got. I have no where to go if I choose to go against her Mbewu. I'm the one who's going to be homeless not him.”

“So you rather lose him? I thought you love him?”

“Of course I do Mbewu but it's not easy. He doesn't even have a proper job to provide for us. At least with my mom I know that my kids would be taken care of and I would have a roof over my head.”

“Your mom is so unfair. What is it that he has against Mvelonhle? He makes you happy Isisa isn’t that enough?”

“She’s says he is young for me.”

“Hayi your mom wants you to go back to Thuthuka that’s all. It’s not like Lonhle is 15 years old. As for the proper job did you run it past him?”

“Your brother is happy with his job at your father’s shop and he’s not prepared to do anything else.”

“Friend when you dated him you knew that he’s younger then you obviously there are things that he will reason slowly then you. As his girlfriend that loves him so much you need to mould him into the man that you want him to be. Don’t get me wrong I’m not saying you should change my brother but talk to him. Make him realize the importance of doing this and that. Kanti what do you guys talk about after those steamy sessions?”

She giggles and slaps me on my arm playfully.

“We talk about anything.”

“Well use that time to talk to him about important things that he needs to work on. They agree to anything after or during to sex. One thing I know about my brother is that he listens when you’re advising him and he’s not stubborn. He might be the head but without a neck he’s nothing. The neck is in control of the movement of the head and that is you my friend. The guy loves you he worships these rugged grounds of Mozane you walk on and there’s nothing he wouldn’t do to make you happy. Always bear in mind that he’s younger than you and he’s a boy. You know they say girls grow up faster than boys.”

“Wow Mama Maseko you’re talking like a true wife yaz. Marriage made you smart.”

I giggle as I poke her with my elbow. Seriously now?

“I’ve always been smart what are you talking about bitch!”

“You’re booksmart my friend and the likes of you usually life shows them flames.”

I can’t help but laugh.

“That’s stereotypical of you!”

She joins me in laughter.

“Thanks for the advice Mama Maseko I will make good use of it.”

“Pleasure is all mine Mama Qwabe.”

“Not yet slow down speed kills,” she says and we both laugh. We share a hug then I go back home.

My husband is drinking tea and scones in an opened garage. He’s done offloading the woods. I make my way to him.

“You are still good?”

“No.” He puts the tea on the tray and pulls me to his lap.

“Kayise any elder can walk in or pass by.”

“It’s not like we are having sex. You are just sitting on my lap.”

He frames my face and kisses me deeply.

“Now I’m fine.”

This man doesn’t understand the meaning of space. He practically begged me until I agreed. I don’t know how it called “space” when we are still living together and sleeping together. In this passed weeks I’ve realized that what his father did got nothing to do with how I feel about this marriage.

It's about how he will never move on from everything I've done to him. It's about how I will always be reminded of my past. It's about how I will always feel indebted to him just because he "forgave me". It's about how he accuses me of things that I know nothing of. It's about how he doesn't trust me and keep tabs on me. It's about how I will never have my own freedom as long as I'm tied to him. It's about....

"I love you so much." His voice is filled with emotions. It's like he can sense the internal battles I'm dealing with lately. Our lips fuse together and we share another kiss which we break after we hear someone clearing their throats. I jump up from his lap and look down gripped with embarrassment.

"Hi Mr Maseko Junior." MaMngomezulu

"Greetings Ma."

"How are you?"

"I'm good Ma and yourself?"

“I’m fine. You do know that you don’t need any muthi to fight?”

“I’m not sure I’m following makhosi.” Muzikayise

“Well that doesn’t matter what matters is that when your father submitted to dark forces he forsaken his ancestors. Now that your father is in jail as the son you have to fix all of this.”

“How do I go about that makhosi?”

“Go to someone for a consultation and they will take you through everything that needs to be done. Mbewenhle don’t forget our deal.” With that said she leaves.

.....

I didn’t expect so much people to come. I’m even worried that the food won’t be enough. It’s the burial day of my twin sister and today I woke up with a heavy despair in my heart. The

service is nothing other than a short and sweet sorrowful service.

I've been strong for the passed three days but when the coffin descends to the ground it takes me back from the day of the storm to how she was murdered. I feel my chest tightening like someone is squeezing it tightly.

By the time we are pouring sand into the grave Mama is crying her lungs and I can barely breathe. I go to Isisa and whisper in her ear.

"Please ensure that my husband and my sisters in law eat."

"Where are you going?"

"I need a moment to myself."

"You will be fine though?"

“I’ve got this.”

I hear my husband calling me as I disappear in between the houses.

“You don’t have to be alone baby. I’m here for you just breathe.”

“I....need...this...run...”

I check the coast and jump the fence then run like someone is chasing me. The pictures of the day she disappeared can’t stop playing in my mind. I up my pace and don’t even pause on my usual spot on the mountain.

My run comes to a halt when the intense closeness in my chest dissipates. I flump on the ground with my knees and let out the tears I’ve been holding for the three days.

I feel a blanket of goosebumps covering my body as strong arms engulfs me from behind. An unfamiliar masculine scent

hovers over me and a flutter of butterflies is dancing in my tummy at the feel of warm breath against the side of my neck.

“It’s going to be okay dombolo lami.” My heart literally stop beating at the sound of that voice and at that pet name as the hair on my back stands. I twist almost breaking my neck to look behind me. God no no no please don’t play like this!

## ☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I always knew that this is a village of spooks but I never thought they roam around in broad daylight. Jehova ngenziwani emini kwaga! I'm a shaking mess and getting up is proving to be difficult. He covers my mouth with his hand blocking my screams.

"Wenhle calm down it's me your biltong. I'm not dead I'm alive."

I shake my head as tears stroll down my face. God this is witchcraft on another level.

"I'm going to remove my hand from your mouth and you won't scream right," he says staring deeply in my eyes. His eyes are still cute and small just as I remember them. He slowly removes his hand on my hand and I start screaming all over again.

“Wenhle maan!” He covers my mouth with his hand once again and looks at me vexed.

“I’m alive dombolo lami I’m not a spook. I understand that you’re spooked and if I were you I’d feel the same but I need you to trust me. Do you trust me?”

The last time I trusted him I ended up facing the humiliation alone because he went AWOL on me how do I begin to trust a ghost version of him?

“MaQwabe come on. Even if I’m a spook I wouldn’t come in broad daylight like this.” The desperation in his voice reminds me the times he’d bare his soul to me telling me how much he loves me. He pulls away his hands on my mouth and we stare at each other intensely.

My mind stammers for a moment as it process what my eyes are seeing. I run my hands on his face savoring every inch of it. It’s really him death didn’t change him not even a bit okay that’s a lie. It changed him now he’s more handsome then I ever remember and his skin is flawless and rich. I swear they

bath in milk underground. Maybe death is not so bad after all. My hands cease moving and lingers on his stubble.

“Lisi.” I whisper and bite my bottom lip trying to stop it from trembling.

“Yes it’s me.”

“This is really you mqwebu wami?”

Oh here goes that smiles of his. Now it comes from deep inside of him lighting up in his eyes and extends into every part of him.

“In flesh dombolo lami.”

Fresh tears run down my face but now they are of joy. I pull him closer for an embrace and he envelopes me. Gosh his arms still feels like home. I’m a sobbing mess against his now broad chest and he’s stroking my back while whispering sweet words in my ears.

The thought of the pain I felt when I heard about is passing then he's going to show up like nothing happened. I push him but he tightens his arms holding me for dear life. How could he do this to me? I bite his chest and he groans in pain pushing me away.

“What the fuck!”

“You're egocentric! Do you know the pain I went through after you and gogo's passing? I was beyond broken Lisi! I blamed myself because Blessing said if you didn't come back from Dundee to look for me nothing could've happened to you! Two years Lisi! Two fucking years and now I'm starting to be used to your death then you show up as if nothing happened! I felt like I lost a piece of my heart Manelisi! I've never been complete ever since you died! The least you could've done is to give me a heads up not let me drown in misery and guilt for two fucking years!”

I get up and run home. I can hear him calling out my name but I don't even bother stop. He's running after me but he's failing to catch up with me as I pull on my last speed. How can a person

play dead for two years? Two fucking years! It doesn't matter to him that I already lost my son few days back before his "passing".

"Where did you disappeared to?" Mpilenhle asks worry clouding her face.

"I needed a moment to myself."

"Are you okay now?"

" I'm fine."

"Come here."

She opens her arms wild and I walk to them then she squeezes me in her arms. My sister changes perfume every now and then. I'm not sure which one I love more on her collection of perfumes but I'm definitely stealing this one.

“You smell nice.” I say pulling away from the embrace.

“You smell sweat. Go wipe the sweat on your face and neck while I go dish up for you.”

“Did my husband and his sisters eat?”

“I dished up for you husband.”

“What about his sisters.”

“Hayi these girls are full of attitude maan especially the younger one.”

“Don’t give them a reason to talk more.”

“I dished up for your husband because he’s with my husband. Osi bakhe bazokopa indunu banuke.” She walks away leaving me laughing. Gosh this woman!

I go to my bedroom and look for a towel to wipe the sweat on the back of my neck and on my face. I look myself in the mirror once I'm done wiping myself and inhale deeply. I can still smell him on me and I know how obsessed he is with smelling nice. You can distinguish between a cheap and an expensive scent. This one it definitely costed him a fortune.

Surely this means whatever hole he crawl out of life is not bad as it used to be. My eyes momentarily close as I take in his scent. I feel his arms wrapping around me and relax in them. I never thought you can find a home in one's arms.

Frederick William Robertson once said. 'Home is the one place in all this world where hearts are sure of each other. It is the place of confidence. It is the place where we tear off that mask of guarded and suspicious coldness which the world forces us to wear in self-defense, and where we pour out the unreserved communications of full and confiding hearts. It is the spot where expressions of tenderness gush out without any sensation of awkwardness and without any dread of ridicule.' Does it mean Manelisi is my home?

“Are you feeling okay now?”

My eyes snap open and look at Kayise on the mirror who’s standing behind me with his arms wrapped around me.

“Uhm yes I’m okay.”

I move away from his arms and hang the towel.

“Are you sure you okay?”

He stares at me intently that I feel uncomfortable.

“Yes baby. Did you eat?”

“Yes your sister dished up for me. I’m leaving now should I fetch you later?”

“I have to help out with taking back things we borrowed from our neighbors but tomorrow I will be all yours I promise.”

I walk towards him and wrap my arms around his waist before kissing him. I hate how he’s looking at me it’s like he can sense that something happened on the mountain.

“Okay sthandwa sami I would be waiting for you

” he says brushing my arms while staring deep in my eyes.

“You know that a sun and a moon never change with time.”

“Yes my love I know.”

“That’s my love for you. It will always remain unchanged, unaltered and everlasting.”

I truly don’t deserve him. God knows that I don’t have doubts when it comes to him loving me but only if it was enough for him to be over the pain and humiliation I put him through.

“Ain’t I the luckiest bitch in the world!” I say giggling

“You’re not a bitch.”

“Come on I won’t feel bad.”

“But you’re not a bitch baby. You’re a remarkable beautiful and intelligent woman.”

“You called me one though.”

“When?”

I chuckle

“It doesn’t matter anymore I know you didn’t mean it. You were angry and going through the most. Thanks for coming with your sisters I really appreciate the support.”

“Don’t mention it baby.”

We share a kiss and he grabs my butt squeezing it tightly then I hear him groaning in my mouth.

“Can it be tomorrow already I miss you.”

“Be patient.”

After that morning he took the cookie by force I didn’t see the need to continue with mourning because clearly he wasn’t going to let me. I wanted so bad to mourn for my boy but I decided to submit to him to avoid feeling like he’s forcing himself on me.

We walk out of my bedroom and pump into my mother. She looks at us suspiciously. Gosh I know what she’s thinking I can tell by that look she’s giving us.

“Haibo 3 month’s its not over yet!”

“Uhm I came to say goodbye to her now I’m leaving.”

“In her bedroom? Hayibo Muzikayise you’re gallivanting in my house like it’s yours!”

“Mama you’re taking things out of proportion now. We didn’t do anything. What do you take us for? It’s my twin sister’s funeral for crying out loud.”

I take my husband’s hand and walk out with him. We laugh the moment we are out of her sight.

“She seriously think we?”

“Yep.”

“Wow.”

I walk him to the car and find his sisters already waiting for him in the car.

“I almost sent Ndondoloza to fetch you.” Nomathamsanqa

“Did you ladies eat?”

“Are you even supposed to be asking that? You’re the one who was supposed to serve us.” Ndondoloza

“Ay kahle ukuphapha Ndondoloza. You’re the last person I’d serve wena. Sis Nomvula, Sis Bongeka & Sis Nomthamsanqa did you eat?”

“Yes sis thank you.” Sis Nomvula says.

“Thank you for coming I really appreciate it.”

“No problem skoni sami.” Bongeka.

My husband kisses my cheek and gets inside the car then drives out. I search for Isisa and find her trying to stop a fight between Lonhle and some guy in the backyard.

“What’s going on? Lonhle stop it! Why are you two fighting?”

“He’s the one that started beating me up!” Says the guy.

“Lonhle! Really now? It’s our sister’s funeral for crying out loud you can’t be acting like a hooligan!”

“I’m sorry sis I didn’t mean to. Isn’t this bitch busy kissing another guy in my father’s homestead. If she can’t respect me the least she could do is to respect my father’s home. Nx!”

He walks away and the guy follows behind him. I look at Isisa.

“I came to say thank you for serving my sisters in law.” I say and walk away but she stops me by grabbing my hand.

“It’s not what you think it is Mbewu.”

“I’m not thinking anything Isisa. Let me go I have a brother to check up on the one that you just broke his heart.”

I walk to my brother’s bedroom and find him sitting on his bed with his head buried on his hands. I settle down on the bed and stroke his back.

“She’s moving on while my heart is bleeding.” He trails off.

“Maybe it’s not what you think it is.”

“They were kissing Mbewu what’s there to think about? What makes me angry is that she couldn’t even wait to get out of my father’s house before she kiss boys!”

“I’m sorry little bro.”

There’s a knock on the door then it swings open. Isisa walks in.

“What do you want Isisa? Go back to your boyfriend!”

“Mvelo....”

“Leave!”

Isisa sighs and walks out leaving me comforting my brother. I can’t choose for my brother who to fall in love with but when things like this happens not only does it ruin their relationship but mine as well with Isisa. I won’t stand watching my brother heartbroken like this but still love Isisa

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER SIXTY EIGHT

It's been a long day sending things back to the neighbors which we borrowed to use for the funeral drained me. Most of the relatives left yesterday after the funeral only a few are left. Phone pings. I reach for it and open the Facebook Messenger App.

"Hi it's Manelisi I know you're angry but can you please let me explain."

I tell him that I don't want to hear anything. I'm super mad at him for doing this to me. I was in pain and grieving a man that is alive mxm.

"I promise you after you hear me out I won't bother you. Pretty please MaQwabe you deserve to know what happened."

He has point. I really deserve to know what happened especially after the pain his death put me through.

"Okay."

“Let’s meet in the veld.”

“Now?”

“If that’s fine by you.”

“I’m coming.”

I take my duffle bag and phone then go tell mama and my sister that I’m leaving.

“Muzi is going to fetch you?” Mama

“No I will walk.”

“Let me drive you.”

“No don’t worry sis thank you.”

I walk to the door then pause as a thought cross my mind.

“Is there anything that y’all have to tell me about the Dlomos?”

They both look at me. I’m unable to decipher their facial expression it’s just blank.

“Nothing why?”

“Are you sure mama?”

“Yes I’m sure baby why are you asking?”

“I met one of them and he told me that my family doesn’t want them in my life. I don’t understand how that can be possible I mean all that family did was to help me.”

“Maybe you misunderstand him baby.”

“Mmh okay goodbye.”

I walk out and kiss the kids goodbye but Benhle wants to leave with me.

“I will come for you tomorrow boy.”

“No!”

He holds on my knee and cries his lungs out. Now he’s making me feel bad. I can’t go with him especially that I’m going to see Lisi first.

“What’s going on?” Baba

“He wants to leave with aunt Mbewu!” The two rascals screams. Baba takes Benhle who’s screaming and raising her hands for me.

“She will come back my boy don’t cry. Go ntombi yami he will calm down.”

I leave with my heart on the knees. Anxiety has be by nipples I’m not sure if it’s because of what he’s going to tell me or someone might see us and tell my husband. I see a car parked under the tree. It’s one if those fancy bakkie. He’s standing next to it with his hands tucked in his pants and his ankles crossed. He should stop looking at me I will trip and fall.

“Hey.”

“Hello.”

We stare at each other and the beat of my heart begins to pound abnormal. I tear my eyes away from his gaze and stare at his adiddas white trefoil crew neck sweatshirt that fits him like his second skin. I can bet with my last money he visit gym frequently now. His chest is broad so are his shoulders and his bulging biceps are visible. I catch a glimpse of his hairy thigh through the torn black jean he’s wearing. It’s tugging on him and perfectly displaying his front bulge.

“Thank you for coming,” he says and pulls me closer. I melt like an ice in his arms. He’s sniffing me savoring my scent. We break the hug then he scoops me up putting me on the bonnet of the car.

“You’re comfortable?”

“Yes.” I say pushing my dress down as it raised up when he was scooping me.

“Can I.” He takes my duffle bag and goes to the passenger side of the car where he comes back with a picnic basket. He places it next to me and joins me on the car bonnet. He pours juice into paper glasses and takes out biltong and samosas before placing the basket on the head to in the car behind us.

“How are you MaQwabe,” he says shifting, closing the space between us. I feel heat spreading through my body as the sides of our bodies rub on each other.

“I’m okay.”

“You’re not going to ask me how am I.”

“Izipoko nazo zinempilo.”

He looks at me and laugh. I take a bite of my samosa and chew.

“I’m also okay dombolo lami especially that I’m with you right now.”

“Mmmh.”

“Don’t be mad at me please.”

“How can I not be mad mina ngithi usawujwayela nomgodi yaz.”

He’s cackling. I’m not sure what’s funny.

“You’re still funny.”

I sip on my juice and look at him

“Where have you been Lisi.”

“Johannesburg.”

“Really?”

“Yes I had to run away because my life was in danger here.”

“What happened that night.”

“In the middle of the night someone covered my mouth and my head with something. He dragged me into another room where he tied me on grams wheelchair. I did try to fight but it was in vain. I don’t know what happened next but all I remember is

smelling smoke. I panicked and screamed. The smoke was suffocating me and I couldn't breathe. I manage to unfasten my arm and remove the sack on my head. My eyes were met by huge flames in my grandma's bedroom. I untied myself after a struggle and run to her bedroom. The flames were huge I...I couldn't save her Wenhle it was already late." His voice is trailing off and it like he's running out of breath with words coming out of his mouth. I can feel his pain in the depth of my heart.

"I crumbled on the floor and cried my eyes out. She was my everything the reason to hold on. I didn't care if I died but when the fire caught my back it was like she was the one telling me to get up and run. That's how I survived."

"Oh my goodness Lisi. I'm really sorry."

"I'm okay now but I miss her."

"How did you get to the hospital in the middle of the night?"

“I didn’t go to the hospital. Mam Mthiyane nursed my wound.”

“So the Zondo family knew all along that you’re alive?”

“Yes we had to lie for my safety Wenhle.”

“I can’t believe you right now!”

“I’m sorry okay but stop making this about you! I lost my grandma in a fire because someone wanted me dead! My safety is the only thing I thought about and you were the least of my worries!”

Ouch that hit home I don’t want to lie but it’s the fact.

“I’m sorry about gogo and for the pain you went through. I can’t begin to imagine it.” I squeeze his thigh. He looks at me and wipes my tears.

“Don’t cry I’m okay now and I hate talking about this if you don’t mind can we talk about something else.”

“I should get going now.”

“Come on Wenhle I missed you. Didn’t you miss me?”

“Of course I missed you. Why did you come back now after two years.”

“I came back for two reasons but I will tell you about them later now let’s talk about you. How’s everything? Any babies?”

He takes the grapes in the basket and feed me.

“Everything is okay I guess. No I don’t have a baby.”

“What about the little boy you’re are always taking pictures with?”

“That’s baby brother.”

“Oh yes your mom was pregnant.”

We catch up over the food he brought. I’m glad that things finally worked out for him. Gogo is a good ancestor umkhanyisele izinto zakhe. He seems happy and deserves it. If there’s one person that deserves happiness it’s him.

“I’m glad you’re happy.”

“I am happy but not completely without you.”

We are now lying with our backs staring on the sky. I tilt my head aside and meet his intense gaze. I’m not sure of the conversation our eyes are having but it’s deep and making my heart to beat abnormal. I close my eyes enjoying the warmth of his palm against the side of my face.

“You’re so beautiful.”

I open my eyes and look at him moistening his lips with his tongue. He leaves a glistening sheen over them making them so enticing and irresistible. Du-Du that’s my heart calling Dudu as he leans his face closer to mine. I swipe my tongue over my lips getting them ready for the kiss and close my eyes.

“You should go back home now your husband must be worried” he whispers.

I open my eyes and look at his eyes then his lips before he pulls away jumping down. He carries me and I get a chance to sniff him as I bury my head on his neck. He places me on the passenger seat and closes the door then he goes to take the basket and put it on the back seat. He gets in and drives off.

“It’s your car?”

“Yes.”

“It’s beautiful.”

“I’m still paying it though.”

“How much is it?”

“350k. It’s a second hand car.”

“Second hand but it cost so much?”

He laughs out loudly

“Haibo dombolo lami this an Amarok V6 2019 model I got it at a cheap price.”

“Yhoo how much do you earn kanti?”

“Open the glove box and take my pay slip there”

I open the glove box and browse through the documents.

“It’s the one in an envelope.”

I take the envelope and something falls on the carpet. It’s a picture of a man. I pick it up and look at it surprised.

“What are you doing with this picture.”

“Dombolo lami I said take the envelope not the picture.”

“Manelisi where did you get this picture!”

“Why are you shouting? I got it from the PI.”

“For what?”

“Wenhle please I don’t want to talk about this now.”

“What games are you playing at?”

“I’m playing no games!”

“Then what are you doing with this picture!”

“This is the man that burnt us!”

What?

“You’re lying!”

“That PI is the best why would he lie?”

No no no this can’t be happening!

“Stop the car!”

“Why?”

“Stop the car now!”

He stops the car and I step out and rush home with the picture in my hand. On the way I’m trying to make sense of this. How is this possible? Why would he do this?

“Mbeee!” Squeals Benhle when he sees me but I pass him like I don’t see him and go the lounge.

“Where’s mama?”

“Oh you’re back? She’s in the toilet.” Mpilenhle

I don’t even wait for her to come back. The house is filled with many people and I need privacy. She’s locking the door of the toilet.

“Baby I thought...” she stops mid sentence when I show her the picture.

“And then?”

“It was you who sent him to burn Manelisi and his grandma alive.”

“Mbewenhle where do you get this nonsense?”

“Mama it was you. It can't be a coincidence that this is the man that burn their house. Why would malume burn them without your influence.”

“Hayi ukhuluma umsango!”

“I heard you talking with Mam Nomsa the day before yesterday Mama. Malume, Gogo Maphumulo, Maseko and Manelisi in one sentence how is that possible? I heard in your conversation that something is haunting you and when I walked in you two changed the topic.”

“Haibo Mbewenhle I didn’t know that it’s a crime to say their names in one sentence.”

“I’m going to tell baba.” She grabs my hand before I even get that far.

“Don’t you dare do that. I will rake this yard with your fat ass!”

“Tell me the truth mama I swear I won’t tell anyone.”

“I’m sorry my baby,” She whispers blinking rapidly as tears fill her eyes.

“Mama nooo!”

I shake my head as tears sting in my eyes.

“I was angry and avenging your twin sister I didn’t...”

“Mama wenzeni” I say with a near tears voice (Mom what have you done)

“Ngiyaxolisa sthandwa sami...”

I remove her grip on my hand and walk away. Tears flowing down my face. God what’s happening with people around me!

☆ Manelisi ☆

I don't understand what was that about and why did she leave with my picture. I decide to drive after her because I really need it. This picture is one reason of the two why I chose to pay this village a visit after being declared 'dead' two years ago. God is my witness I hate this village with everything in me but I couldn't just let the man that took my Gogo's life go unpunished. He needs to let me know first why then he will die a painful death like my grandma.

I'm not a vengeful person nor do I like violence but some things compel you to be the person that you're not. That woman was my Queen and she didn't deserve to die especially not like that. This man is going to taste his own medicine. I've been here for 3 days now and I even attended the twin's funeral but I was in a disguise and no one could've recognized me. I don't know how much I stopped myself throughout the service from running to her and squeezing her in my arms.

Today I had a wonderful moment with her but sadly it ended up a bit tense and I have no idea why. That picture freaked her out and I'm yet to find out why. That's if she tells me. I park a bit far away but where I have a clear view of the Qwabe homestead. This is a risk, the last thing I want is to be seen and recognized. Hopefully these tinted windows would be useful today.

There's a phone ringing but I don't remember changing my tone. I reach for my phone and it turns out it's not the one ringing. I listen carefully and take her duffle bag. The phone is ringing inside. I take it out and glance at the screen. 'Kayise' flashes on the screen. How unromantic couldn't she save him with 'Hubby' or at least 'Nxemu Wami'. I laugh at the thought and answer the phone.

"Mbewenhle's phone hello?"

"Hi can I speak to my wife." That's 'my wife' sounds so territorial.

"She's out I will tell her to call you back."

“Can I ask who am I speaking to?”

“Her cousin.”

“But your voice man...I swear I’ve heard it somewhere.”

“Okay goodbye.” I hang up and slides the phone inside her bag. Her panty catches my eyes among other ladies stuff. I pull it out and sniff it. Jesus what the fuck am I doing! Clumsily, I put it back and the phone then zip the bag.

She’s walking out of her homestead with a little boy on her waist. I bring the engine to life before following her. She has a beautiful walk I can imagine her on heels. Once we are away from the eyes of the people I roll down the window and call out her name.

“Lisi why are you following me! We can’t be seen together!”

“I know but I had to give you your bag.”

“Oh yes.”

She stops walking as I pull over next to her then climb out of the car with her duffle bag.

“Here.”

“Thank you,” she says and I notice that she’s avoiding my eyes.

“You also have what belong to me.”

“I left it at home I’m sorry.”

“Why would you do that Wenhle that picture is very important to me.”

“Why? What are you planing to do with it?”

“Why are you so concern about this picture? Do you know who’s that man?”

She looks everywhere but me. I walk closer to her and frame her face so that she’s looking at me. She’s still the most beautiful girl I’ve ever laid my eyes on. Tears are glimmering in her eyes and the sorrow clouding them worries me.

“Talk to me dombolo lami.”

“I know him.”

Oh yeah? One blink and her tears escapes. I catch them with my thumbs and wipe them off.

“Yakhala uMbeee susa!!” The little boy says pulling my wrist away. Ah so protective of his sister that’s cute. I remove my hands from her and look at her.

“He’s my uncle, my mother’s brother.” It comes out in a whisper. I’m still processing this when she goes on.

“I’m sorry Lisi from the bottom of my heart. I would understand if you don’t want anything to do with me after this. See what hurts the most is that your grandma died for the sins that were committed by my father in law. He confessed that your grandma knew everything hence they had to shut her up for good. It’s all his doing my biltong your grandma couldn’t walk nor speak because of him. That’s man is evil! Not that I’m justifying what my uncle did. He was also evil for playing God with people’s lives I guess he got what he deserved.”

This is the least of my expectations. Now this changes everything especially my reasons for the visit.

“Why that night after so many years?” The tremor in my voice is the evident of my anger.

“I guess finding out that you’re the guy I slept with triggered emotions, unanswered questions and grief. I’m really sorry for everything. Meeting me was definitely a curse in your life how I wish we can unmeet and life to go back to how it was before you met me.”

I swallow hard at how pained her voice sounds. As much as I would like to agree with her but I can't. Meeting her changed my life in a way that no one can understand not even her. I lost my grandma but things worked out for the better for me. It hurts to say it but it's the fact that I can't run away from that it took my grandma to pass away for my life to turn around. The old lady is sending blessings on blessings on me. She's always with me and I'm so grateful to her to be ithonga lami elihle however I so wish she was here with me to get the fruits of her hard work for raising me. But then again if she was still alive things wouldn't have turned out this way.

"What do you mean he got what he deserved?"

"He passed on two months back. He was haunted by demons. Now it makes sense why he was always screaming that he's burning. The fire that he burnt you guys with is the one that was burning him. Your grandma is indeed a powerful prophet."

Disappointment washes over me and I feel a lump in my throat threatening to choke me. I was supposed to give him the taste of his medicine! I can't believe I failed gogo once again! Truth is

I learned who is behind my grams death months back but I wasn't ready to come back here. Seeing dombolo lami's twin's tragic death trending on social media motivated me to come.

"Lisi I'm sorry

" she says behind me as I get in my car. Her sorry won't do me fokol!

"Lisi..."

"Phuma kimi Mbewenhle!"

I start my car and drive home. I'm trembling with anger and pain. I hate the turnout of events I was so ready to watch that bastard die like I saw my grandma dying. I start at grandma's grave and kneel before it.

"Gogo it's me again Manelisi. I'm sorry that I failed you once again. I just..." I swallow the lump in my throat pushing back the tears that are threatening to escape.

“I’m so sorry from the bottom of my heart.” I get up and get in my car then drive to the Zondo homestead. Bab Mthiyane is fixing the cattle’s kraal and I feel bad that he’s doing it alone.

“Oh son you’re back.”

“Yes why you didn’t tell me that you’re going to fix the kraal? I wouldn’t have left.”

“I know nothing could’ve stopped you from seeing that girl. I don’t understand what has to happen for you to stay away from that girl.”

“I’m not coming from her baba.”

“You’re lying Manelisi! Once again she hurt you isn’t it? I can see how pained you are right now.”

He was against me coming back home so I came unannounced.

“She’s someone’s wife Manelisi and I thought you’re over her what is this now huh? Stop thinking with your dick! We lost your grandma now you want us to lose you too? This time that boy will make sure you die if he ever finds out that you’re alive. Give me the piler.”

“I’m done looking over my shoulder baba and besides Muzi is not the one that killed gogo.”

I pick up the piler in his toolbox and hand it to him.

“Who killed her?”

“It’s Mbewenhle’s uncle.”

“You’re lying! Is this about the twin?”

“Yes apparently. I’m so angry that he’s dead!”

“Now it explains how his death was sudden. Those who knew him said he was complaining about burning on his body and he was in a brink of going crazy. I wasted my pity on him. It serves him right! Who died and made him God? Now what does his family has to say since it was revealed that it’s not your grandma that was behind the twin’s disappearance?”

“Clearly now they’re swallowing their words but they don’t have guts to apologize. Even if they do have guts who would they apologize to because all they know is that me and grandma are dead. I also found that induna is the one that made gogo disable because she knew about what that evil man did to the twin.”

“Hayibo this keeps getting deeper! I’ve never seen such a cruel man like that one! He deserves to rot in jail! I wish they throw the key away!”

“I want to go see him baba.”

“What would you do to him? He’s now locked up in jail and he got what he deserves. Both of these men got what they

deserve. Your grandma haunted them until they got their punishment. I'm sure she's at peace now and so you should be. She knew that you would want to avenge her and chose to handle this by herself because she doesn't want blood on your hands. Let it go and move on now my son," he says and squeezes my shoulder.

I nod and briskly wipe the tear that just escaped on my left eye. He's making sense it's not like there's something I can do to him while locked up. Jail is what he deserves actually not death. I hope they bhebhanize him in there until he lose control of poop!

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

He left me like that and that 'Phuma kimi Mbewenhle' feels like a knife thrusting in my heart. I feel awful that I put all the blame on my uncle and left my mother while she's the one who orchestrated this. I hate what my mom did but the thought of her locked up has me shaking in my boots.

The mortification and pain my family would go through if she were to go to jail. I'm worried more about this little man I'm carrying. We are inseparable but that doesn't mean he loves mama less. I couldn't bear the thought of him growing up without mom. It's so unfair that uncle is the only one that got punishment while the person behind this is mama.

I can't believe that she's capable of doing something fiendish like this. Ask me why am I judging her? Am I not the one who wanted to poison my father in law? I'm not better than her. Talking about the apple not falling far from the tree. Maybe our reasons for resorting to such inhuman deeds may be understandable but it doesn't make it right. We are both evil in the eyes of the Lord but she's worse because she took someone's life who was not guilty.

The pain and anger in Lisi's eyes is still vivid in my mind and I know without a doubt that he doesn't want anything to do with me now. Not that I blame him who would stick around with someone whom her uncle killed the beloved grandma because of hearsay? I say hearsay because it's something that was said by the sangoma not proven.

The weight of this little ntwana is getting heavy now and I just know that he has dozed off. I put him on my back and hold the bag with my hand as I walk to my house. It's been a draining couple of weeks, exhaustion and stress are having a feast on me. If only I can sleep and not wake for a month just to ease all the emotions threatening to drown me. I'm so tired even my tiredness is tired.

I'm welcomed by a pile of crockery in the kitchen mind you I've been gone for two days only. What was he doing with all these dishes? I so wish we can get takeaways today I don't have energy to cook nor wash the dishes but knowing how my husband doesn't like fast food I should just suck it up

"Hey baby." I say as I walk to the lounge.

He's watching TV but at the sound of my voice his eyes land on me. Something is going on with him I can tell by how visible his hypertropia is right now.

"Hey."

That's cold for someone who couldn't wait for me to come back home.

"He's sleeping I will go put him on the bed."

I make my way upstairs and gently place him in my bed before covering him with a fleece blanket. I take my phone in the bag and walk downstairs to join my husband.

"Are you good?"

"Yes I'm fine."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes why?"

"I'm just asking. Let me go cook for supper." I lean over and kiss him but he doesn't kiss me back. O-kay...I get up and go to the kitchen. The dishes are the first thing I get started with.

“I called, did your cousin tell you?” His voice forces me to turn around and look at him. He’s standing on the doorway and his eyes boring to me.

“You called my cousin?”

“No I called your phone and he answered.”

“What did he say?”

“That you’re out but you will call me back.”

No please don’t tell me that Lisi answered his call!

“Oh he didn’t tell me.”

“Which cousin is that?”

“Huh?”

“I’m asking which cousin is that. I thought all of your cousins left yesterday.”

“Cebo didn’t go Kayise.”

“Oh really if I can go to your parents house now I will find him?”

“No he’s gone now. They just left.”

He chuckles and momentarily looks up to the roof before staring at me.

“Mbewenhle please don’t lie to me.”

“Uqalile ke Muzikayise. It hasn’t been a second I’m home you are accusing me.”

“I’m sorry maybe I’m losing my mind but I swear Cebo’s voice sounds so familiar.”

My heart skips a beat. Manelisi though why did he answer my phone!

“You know Cebo probably it’s because of that baby.” I say releasing a nervous giggle.

“No I have never heard his voice but the one on the phone. I know it but how is it possible?”

I shrug my shoulders and swivel around to continue with what I was doing. His footsteps shuffle towards me and when they cease I see his hand reaching for my phone on the counter. Shit I didn’t delete my conversation with Manelisi!

“It has no battery!” I say snatching it away from him. He looks at me, eyebrow raised.

“Let me see.”

“Why do want my phone?”

“Since when do you ask me that now?”

“Since today.”

“You’re hiding something isn’t it?”

“No I’m not hiding anything Kayise. See you’re starting.”

“Give me the phone Mbewenhle.”

“Hayi.”

He chuckles and attempts to take the phone away from me but I pull it away. We struggle on the phone and when I realize that I’m losing I drop it on the water that I’m not washing dishes with. Anger flashes in his eyes.

“I knew that I’m not losing my mind! It was him isn’t it?”

“Him who?”

“That asshole you gave your virginity to?”

“Haibo Kayise Manelisi is dead! Are you hearing yourself right now?”

“Then who was it?”

“No one!”

“You’re lying there can’t be nothing but you dropped your phone into the water! There’s no definitely someone else!!”

“You promised me that you will work on yourself but look at you right now!”

“Yey don’t you dare make me a fool! I’m not your fool what did I say to you huh? Didn’t I tell you that I won’t have a cheating wife?”

“You did but....”

“You don’t listen! I see I don’t fuck you enough! Loving is you all I ever do! The problem is that ngikbhebha kancane!”

He pushes the dish filled with crockery with one hand and it falls on the floor. The plates and cups shatter in pieces as the waters splutters on the floor. I gasp with shock and shiver with fear. He bends me, pushing my upper body to the counter and pulls up my dress.

“Manje uhamba ugijimisana namapipi abolile langaphandle!”

In a blink of a second my panties is on my knees and he is grilling into my barely wet cookie.

“Awukwazi ukuhlala njengentombi huh?”

“I do.”

He grasps on my hair pulling my head backwards as he fucks me harder. Each thrust feels like it’s tearing my womb and pussy apart. His groans of pleasure matches my screams of pain. This is what I endure for hours that follows. Now we are in the guest room and he’s still pounding on me. Here goes a crossed eye chimpanzee convulsing on top of me as it shoots its load into me.

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER SIXTY NINE

I'm lazing around and I don't have energy to do anything. My whole body is aching but the pussy is even worse. He dozed off in evening yesterday after fucking me 'enough' and didn't wake up for supper. I let him be and woke up my baby brother. We both retired to sleep after eating supper. Today I woke up with no sight of him.

I think he went to the farm I'm not sure and he left his phone on the charger which is the one I'm using right now to log into my Facebook. There's nothing interesting people keep sharing one and same thing. Then there are those who are posting thousands of similar pictures everyday and expect us to react because they also react on our posts. Just because on the first picture utshekise unyawo it doesn't mean the second one is different because you're standing straight. As long as you're still wearing same clothes and taking pictures in one place it's still one and the same picture hayibo safa! Now my thumb is tired of reacting.

I won't mention the ones who got PhD in sharing. The Kings and Queens of sharing who share 50 posts that are only two minutes apart. Now I'm not even sure which one to entertain

first. My news feed is filled with your shared posts and for a moment I'm thinking I'm on your timeline. Ngisabathe nangu Nhlanhla Darkie Elihle Msibi with her post. I scroll down hoping that it was the last post kanti lutho mtaka God nali idarkie elihle once again! Shweeele smakade yazi sofa sibancane. Let me leave the other Facebookers I will come back to them some other time since now I have to attend someone on the door.

“Hello aunty Mbewu!”

“Where's Ndabe!”

Two rascals screams and disappears out of my sight before I can even say anything. They're with mama and she's driving Mpilenhle's car. I don't know what she's doing here and the first thing I'm supposed to say is 'ufunani la' but hey she's still my mother.

She gets inside after I open the door for her. We settle on the high chairs in the kitchen since the kids are making noise in the lounge.

“How are you my baby?”

“I’m fine. Tea? Juice?”

“No I’m fine I just need to talk to you. Where’s your husband?”

“He’s not home.”

“Okay...umh...” She clears her throat and looks at me.

“I’m sorry about the way you find out about this. The last thing I wanted is for anyone to find out especially my children. Now the way you look at me will never be the same. I was angry and hurt Mbewu especially after that boy slept with you. It evoked the pain of losing your twin sister. The nerve he had for fucking you after what his grandma did....” I cut her short

“So are you telling me that I also should be punished for what you did?”

“No of course not. I can never bear that mtanami. My sins are mine alone and my children shouldn’t suffer for them.”

“Yet Lisi suffered for his grandma’s sins that she never committed.”

“I’m a hypocrite I know and now I feel horrible that I didn’t listen to you when you said it’s not her. I was consumed with the fact that the sangoma said it’s her little did I knew that it’s the same sangoma that was working together with that Satan.”

“How do you know that?”

“I went to see him few weeks back and he told me.”

“Why did you go there?”

“I wanted to see how does the overall looks on him and it really suit him. Now my only prayer is that he stays there forever. The world is a better place without him.”

She releases a sigh and reaches for my hand.

“I’m sorry for always disappointing you and failing you. Please don’t tell anyone about this I’m begging you my child. I could go to jail and I won’t survive in there. Ngiyacela sthandwa sami.”

“How many secrets do I have to keep for you mama?”

“Mbewenhle...”

“I won’t tell anyone I don’t want my baby brother to grow up without his mother.”

“Oh thank you so much my baby! I promise to do better.” Tears roll down her face.

“Start by telling me what happened to the Dlomos.”

She let's go of my hands and look everywhere but me. If that isn't guilt then I don't know what is it.

"Mama."

"I was scared to lose you Mbewenhle. Your husband came to my house the following day after the shooting saga that happened there and told me about it."

Wow I should've known that Kayise is involved in this. It explains how he suddenly changed his tune about them.

"Scared to lose me how mama? You cut ties with people that helped your daughter when your husband threw her out to the street?"

"Muzi made me realize that I could lose you to them. You hated me Mbewenhle and I was scared to lose you. If opportunity presented itself you wouldn't have hesitated to choose them over us. I did all of this out of fear and I'm really sorry."

Gosh I can't believe this woman. As for Muzikayise all I have to say is wow... I don't understand why the Dlomos are a threat to him. So literally I don't have to associate with anyone in this world?

"I have to meet up with my husband in town." It's a lie of course. I just want her to be out of my sight. How could she do this? The Dlomos could've least told me. Mxm!

"Baby..."

"Mama time is against me please."

"I'm sorry Mbewenhle."

"Yaz mama I waited for you to say 'sorry' for two years after I voiced out how hurt and broken I am that you wished I'm the one who disappeared instead of Ndalwenhle but you never did. Lento isaseyisilonda esingapheli futhi esophayo enhlizweni yami. Then you wonder why I say you don't love me. You never said this five alphabet word that I desperately needed you to

say. Which makes me believe that you are not regretful. It is actually how you feel about me and you meant it. You're always complaining about how I'm not meeting you half way yet you fail to see the real reason why I keep pulling away from you. All I ever wanted from you is to tell me that you didn't mean it and you love me but it's okay. I've learnt to live with the fact that you don't want me. I also wish I'm the one who died instead of Ndalwenhle. Surely she would've made you proud because I'm a disappointment of a child that you wish died. Umnyeni wami ungilindile edolobheni kwamele ngihambe." I wipe my tears and go get the kids in the lounge. Ndabenhle wants to leave with them.

"Baby...."

"Goodbye mama."

She wipes the tears in her eyes and walks away with the children. I go to the lounge and curl myself up on the couch and wail. When will I ever be happy? It's one thing after another. I thought MaMngomezulu said my life would be peaceful now what is this? I need a distraction so I take Kayise's phone to read one of Mike Maphoto reads on google but there's a

message on my inbox. It's a response from Manelisi. I wrote him an essay this morning apologizing for how everything turned out and I thought he won't respond me. My heart is beating fast as I'm reading his message. He wants us to meet and without thinking much about it I agree.

I go upstairs to change into jean, black long sleeves tee and maroon body warmer which compliments my beanie and thigh suede boots. I make it a note to plait my hair

before ubusika buhamba nezinwele zami. Already sekuqala injibhabha. I delete my Facebook account on my husband's phone and make sure that I'm not leaving anything suspicious then leave. Today he said I must meet him in the bust stop not the veld. He opens the door for me from inside and I jump in then he drives off.

"Hello."

"Hi MaQwabe."

"I'm sorry...."

“It’s not your fault please stop apologizing for things that got nothing to do with you. I won’t lie to you I’m so hurt that my grandma passed on for something she didn’t do and your uncle is the one that caused me this intense pain but it is what it is. You’re the great example of this situation right now and I’m taking notes.”

“What do you mean by your last sentence.”

“You’re still married to Muzi yet his father is the one that killed your twin sister.”

“Oh that.”

“Yes that.”

We fall into comfortable silence. Today he’s wearing a blue faded jean

white sneakers and blue nike bomber jacket. The way he’s holding the steering wheel and his hand shifting the gear every

now and then makes driving look so foreign to me in a way that has me drooling. There's totally something wrong with me!

"Where are we going?"

"Dundee."

"Don't you have music?" I ask already pressing the power button on the radio. I'm feeling comfortable and free already in his car. Njabulo by Nomcebo bursts through the speakers. So much volume! I lower it and start the song from the beginning.

♪♪ Wena ubona injabulo

Ubabaza ubuhle

Kepha ikhona indaba

Indaba isenzweni

Inhliziyo yami ibalisa njalo

Inhliziyo yami ikhala njalo

Inhliziyo yami ibalisa njalo

Inhliziyo yami ikhala njalo

Nhliiiziyo yami

Nhliiiziyo yami

Nhliiiziyo yami

Nhliiiziyo yami 

“Dombolo lami.” The worry in his voice compels me to open my eyes that’s when I see that the car has stopped moving and he’s looking at me with worry.

“Please don’t cry it’s going to be okay,” he says wiping my tears. I can’t believe I’ve been singing while crying.

“I’m fine drive.” I forge a smile he’s not convinced but he continues to drive.

“I’m changing this song because it’s making you cry. In fact I will delete it.”

I chuckle at how serious he sounds right now. We start at Talana Museum. It's unbelievable that I've never been here before but it's close by. It was name after a hill at the base which the museum is situated in. Talana means the shelf where precious items are stored. After an interesting visit in the museum we go to this restaurant that I'm not familiar with where we eat our food over a chat and laughter.

I don't remember when was the last time I was this happy in my life. In winter sun sets quickly now we have to go back. He holds me horizontal on his back like I'm a sack of potato as he walks to his car.

"If you dare drop me I will deal with you Lisi." He pretends to drop me and I scream holding on him tightly.

"Miss I will deal with you Lisi is now screaming like a hyena."

I giggle and pinch him. When we get to his car he puts me down and scoops me up again putting me on the bonnet of the car. He stands between my thighs and looks at me in the eyes.

“How are you feeling now?”

“In this moment I’m happy.”

“Is it?”

“Yeah and I wish we don’t have to go back.” I regret saying that the moment it slips out of my mouth.

“We could have many more of these moments if only you agree.”

“What do you mean?”

“Remember the two reasons why I’m here?”

“You said you will tell me about them later.”

“Well one reason is that I came to avenge my grandma but unfortunately I found out that she avenged herself already. Now my second reason is you.”

“Me?”

“I’m not completely happy without you fulfilling your dreams. It’s time you spread your wings MaQwabe. Come with me to Johannesburg.”

I giggle

“Lisi I cant just up and leave with you. I’m married and I have my family here.”

“Are you happy?”

“Lisi...”

“If you’re happy you would’ve just said yes Mbewenhle. Why stay in a marriage where there’s no happiness? I don’t want to mention your family because if they care about you they would’ve supported you and helped you to achieve your dreams. They would’ve cared about your happiness. Your parents still believe that the only thing a girl child can achieve is marriage and having children.

In this day and age imagine but you’re the one who can free yourself from this Mbewenhle. You’re the only one who can break the circle and you will be an inspiration to the kids that are following behind us in this village. I believe in you dombolo lami. Come with me please but I’m not going to force you to anything you don’t want.”

By the time he’s done I’m a crying mess. I hate that he’s making sense but it’s not easy as it seems. Kayise will never let me go just like that. He’s made it clear that he doesn’t see any reason for me to work or study because he can take care of me. Typical village man! The next thing he would do is to go tell my parents and baba would come flying with his sjambok to beat me up. He will tell me that the only reason I want to leave is to whore around. So is Kayise and I feel so indebted to him because of the man I’ve changed him to be. All odds are against me.

.....

Tears stream down my face as I shove the note underneath the pillow. These couple of passed days he's been coming home drunk. I kiss his lips and whisper in his ear.

"I'm sorry Sidwaba Siluthuli."

I go downstairs and look around my house for the last before making my way out. Time is 3 in the morning and it's so cold. Lisi is parked on the gate. My luggages are already in his car. Yesterday I had the whole day packing I even went to home to get few of my things including the trunk I found in Lisi's home.

I was grateful that mama wasn't there because she's been a nuisance. Why apologize now when I've already told her. I wanted her to see her wrong without me correcting it. Now I'm not sure if she even meant it. I left a note for Lonhle as well and hopefully by the time the sun rise he would've read it.

He opens the door for me and I jump in then he closes the door before going to his side. Thanks God it's warm inside his car.

"Are you good?" He asks as we are driving away from the village.

"Yes I'm good." I say and discreetly wipe my tears. After so much of contemplation in the couple of passed days I finally accepted his offer. Why does it hurts so bad to finally choose myself above everything and everyone?

☆ Isisa ☆

A knock snaps me out of my deep sleep and when I attentively listen I realize that it's on the window which is weird because the only person who knocks on the window while everyone knocks on the door is not talking to me. I roll out of bed before going to the window and fling the curtain away. My heart skips two beats at his sight. I open the window for him then he jumps inside.

While I close the window he walks towards the bed I presume. There's nothing he said not even a hello it's absolutely clear that he's seething but I don't blame him. I'm just happy to see him here maybe this means he's ready to hear me out.

I turn around and find him sitting on the bed with his head buried on his hands. I know that our break up is affecting him as much as it does to me but there's more going on I can feel it in my gut. Slowly I walk towards him suddenly afraid what I will hear from him.

“Phakathwayo.” I whisper as I kneel before him and uncover his face so he’s looking at me. My heart begins to pound hard against my chest at the tears shining in his eyes.

“Mvelo what’s going on?”

He sits up straight and takes out the a folded paper in his pants then hands it to me. My hand is suddenly shaking as I take it. I get up from the cold floor and settle down next him on the bed. I unfold the paper and I’m met by Mbewenhle’s ugly hand writing. It’s no secret that my bestie is smart but her hand writing is like she sticks the pen in her asshole and write.

I remember when I used to laugh at her about her hand writing she’d say she’s a dentist. Ain’t all doctors give us that excuse? Who said doctors should have hideous hand writing? Okay wait why would Mbewenhle write a note? Is she committing suicide? No I’m not ready to read this Mvelo must tell me what’s going on.

“Is she killing herself?” I cannot hide the tremor in my voice.

“No read MaNjinji.”

I swallow thick sour saliva and look at the piece of paper in my hand.

‘Khondlo

I knew that by the time the sun rise you would’ve read this letter because you wake up early to take the cattle to the veld. First let me tell you that I can never thank you enough for the brother that you’re. I couldn’t ask for a better brother. I know what happened when you wanted to avenge me to the guys that tried to rape me and I also know that you ended up working together with my husband to give them a lesson.

If you ever doubted what a good brother you’re then remember those moments. Especially the one where you were dishing out secrets of the people in my defense at my umemulo ceremony or the one where you kept me locked up in your bedroom after I was exposed or how about you remember the time you went to buy a morning after pill for me and chocolates. See that there are countless moments I could

mention to show you what an amazing brother you are please never doubt that.

I've decided to chase after my dreams little bro. It's been so long living my life to make our parents happy. Now it's about time I choose Mbewenhle. I've neglected her psychological and emotional needs for so long. I'm sorry that I have to go about this the only way I know that it would work for me which is running away. You know how our parents are especially baba. It had to be this or not at all. Don't worry about me I would be safe and well taken care of. When I'm ready for everything I promise that I will make contact with you but for now I need you to understand that I can't contact you nor would I tell you where am I.

Don't give up on Isisa, she loves you. I understand that she's afraid to lose her mother. Unlike me Lonhle you're a boy and baba would never stop you from doing anything that can help you to provide for your family because that's what males are meant for. You about to have your family now boy it's about time you think wisely. This thing of relaxing so much because your future is secured since you will inherit baba's businesses has to stop. Why not build your own legacy for your children.

Be a man and make me proud. I promise wherever I am I'm going to make you proud too.

Please do me these two favors. Don't deprive Isisa a chance to flourish and fulfill her dreams. Support her through everything she wants that is going to empower and lift her up. Please apologize for me to her for not telling her before I went through with this. Another favor that I need you to do for me is to look after Benhle. Guide him and always protect him. You know that mama find it hard to stand up to father but please do stand up for him to our father. I love you so much Khondlo till we meet again.

Love Mbewenhle'

Tears are streaming down my face as anger and pain attack me.

"Wow I can't believe this!"

"Me too what is that made her to run away?"

“It’s selfishness of course. I’m sure she probably reconnected with the Dlomos and they promised her heaven and earth now she chose to ditch us like used condoms!”

“Baby...I mean Isisa don’t talk like that. What if we are the ones who failed her? Maybe there’s something that was going on with her that made her to run away and she’s just saying this so that we do not worry.”

“Ay if that’s so then it serves her right. We always tried our best to be there for her but she pushed us away and hid things from us. How were we supposed to know then? Akahambe bayomcutha phambili!”

I can’t believe that she just decided to run away and leave me but I stayed for her. I chose her over my dreams! Clearly I never meant anything to her!

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

“Uzokhala size sifike eGoli vele?” I take a glance at him and I’m not sure of his facial expression but his voice has a hint of annoyance in it. It’s not like I’m making noise my tears don’t want to cease and they’re flowing down my face. I don’t respond to him lest I say something that I’m going to regret because at this moment I feel like he’s being insensitive.

See other girls out there when they’re going to the city to fulfill their dreams their parents would be there for their daughter. It’s such a bittersweet moment for them that their little girl has grown and it’s about time she spread her wings. Hugs and kisses are exchanged while mom and daughter shed some tears. The parents would watch their daughter getting into the bus or car and as it drives away till there’s no sight of it. But not Mbewenhle she has to run away. Or maybe I watch movies too much.

This is the big step of my life and it would’ve been nice to have my family’s support. Unfortunately for me making this massive step of my life is about to cost me my family. I know that once they discern the truth I would be dead to them especially to my father. As usual to him this would be about him and what

people are going to say. It would be about what an ungrateful wife I am for leaving a man that has given me a second chance after my shenanigans.

As for my mother? I'm not sure with that one. She's many things that I don't understand at times but one thing that I'm sure about is that whatever she will feel about this won't favor me. I was even surprised when she told baba that if I'm not feeling my marriage anymore I shouldn't be afraid to say it but then again I remembered that she said that because she hates every Maseko breathing person after what Kayise's father did. It's not about me but about her favorite twin daughter that she wish is the one that is alive instead of me.

Lonhle will have to forgive me for this. I know it won't be easy for him but he's grown now. He's a young man that is about to have a family. He needs to be strong and learn to live without me. It will kill him to have no clue where am I but it's the only way to have peace. The last thing I want is for Qwabe to come here with his sjambok and force me to go back to my husband.

Mpilenhle would be okay, she's always the strongest one whenever the family is going through something. The pillar of

strength for everyone. Maybe this will give her a chance to explore whatever that is going on between her and my husband. I don't believe that you can accidentally kiss someone without having feelings for him. It may be not real feelings but lust. Umhalela kanjani usbali? It's not like she was drunk I'd blame alcohol. When I see sbari Sbu I don't see someone who I can have a 'meaningless kiss' with even if I'm drunk. I remember when Thuthu kissed me I didn't respond to the kiss. I may be a confused whore but I don't do meaningless things.

I just feel sorry for Benhle but he's still young he will probably forgot about me. I'm still mad at Isisa but I feel awful I mean that girl chose to abandon her dreams for me. She had a chance to go study but dropped that idea because of me. It might have been a dumb decision but the point is she did it for me. Now that I got an opportunity to explore I don't even bother to let her know but run away. We are besties for crying out loud! Ain't she supposed to be the one who knows about this before anyone else? I feel like a bad friend. Maybe I never deserved her anyway.

We have been on the road for about two hours and now he's just pulled over at the garage. Time must be around 5 to half past now but it's still dark. It winter after all. He gets out of the

car and talks to the petrol attendant before coming to my side and open the door.

“Come.”

I climb out of the car then he closes the door. Gosh it's so freaking cold. He fixes my beanie and looks at me in the eyes. I can see his gorgeous face thanks to the lights in the garage.

“Look I didn't mean to sound insensitive or anything. I can imagine how hard it must be for you to leave your life behind and go to start another life in a city you have never been. It must be scary and thank you so much for trusting me that much. I promise you dombolo lami you won't will feel like you're alone. I may be not your family but I always hold your hand through everything even on the darkest night or heavy storms. You helped me when I had nothing and gave me hope it's only fair I return the favor.”

“I hear you.”

“It’s just that awukhali kamnandi. It’s hurt me now I feel like I’m forcing you. If you want us to go back we can go back.”

“No there’s no turning back now.”

He smiles and wipes my tears with the back of his palms before taking my hands into his. A smile on his face spreads into a grin as he looks at the the ring in my thumb.

“You still have it?”

“Yeah and I’ve been wearing it from the day ‘you passed on’ I only take it out when I’m doing laundry.”

“Wow that’s beautiful. I have always dreamt of roadtrip with you and this is our first one. Can you please stop crying now and let’s enjoy our road trip. I even used N17 road because it’s 5 hours drive.”

“Okay I’m sorry.”

“Don’t apologize I understand dombolo lami but let’s save some for the joy you are about to have.”

I can’t help but nod with a smile on my face. There’s nothing as sexy as a man who supports your visions and has so much confidence in your abilities. That shit triggers whore tendencies in a woman. Now I’m thinking about a quickie in a restroom just for the road.

“That’s my girl.”

He leans over and plants a kiss on my forehead. Lucky forehead couldn’t that be my lips or better yet my pussy. Okay I need to stop it now! Gosh what’s with me? He hugs me tightly in his arms and I momentarily close my arms as I revel in his embrace.

“Let’s go get something to eat

” he says breaking the hug and holds my hand as we walk to the garage store. I’m not hungry it’s still early but he doesn’t want

to listen. We take pies and a lot of goodies that can feed the whole country. He pays then we go back to the car. The petrol attendant is pumping the tyres and once he's done we continue with our journey.

“So what's your plan Mr Maphumulo?”

“About?”

“Me of course I mean the year has started already and we are approaching mid year. There's probably no school that can accept me at this time.”

“I don't want you to just start school already. I want you to explore the City first and get used to it so these months will be for that purpose. Who knows maybe you might discover that being dentist it's just your dream but you are destined for something else. I will get you a career advisor though.”

“I like your plan and I'm more than satisfied with it.”

“Oh well I’m glad Miss Qwabe. I just can’t wait to see you successful.” I can hear the smile in his voice.

“Can I turn on the music.”

“Oh today you’re asking but that day I saw your little fingers turning on my radio.”

I giggle

“I don’t have little fingers!”

“Yes do sis you know what surprises me about you is that you’re tall yet you have small feet and hands. That’s not normal wacishe wakhubazeka yaz.”

I can’t help but burst into laughter. That’s absurd who said tall people can’t have small feet and hands.

“You’re the one who has a crippled mindset!”

He laughs out loudly and I join him. The rest of the trip we are conversing one topic after another over the goodies he bought and music that is playing softly. He's always able to take my mind away from thinking.

I don't know when do I fall asleep but I'm woken up by Lisi who tells me that we've arrived. I wipe the drool in the corner of my mouth and look around. We are parked before this beautiful gigantic building.

"What time is it now?"

"It's going for half past eight. Come you will sleep in your bedroom. I have to go to work now."

"Hawu I thought you're not going to work today."

"I've received a call from my boss."

So I'm going to be alone in his apartment the whole day? What a way for Johannesburg to welcome me. I step out of the car and gaze around. The cold breeze slaps differently you can tell that it's Johannesburg breeze and I can feel the activation of mara and neh in my system. Mara inhloko yami ibuhlungu futhi ngifuna amacanda neh. I swear my ancestors won't recognize me which is a good thing neh just in case lekhehla eliwuCwabe decides to go to the sangoma to locate me.

Yoooh mara ama bag angaka! They are three in total so he carries two while I carry one. We make our way and use the elevator to go up. He presses the 3rd floor and when the lift stops and opens we step out of it. I'm surprised that he doesn't use the key to unlock or anything to get in. We are welcomed by a light skinned beautiful lady.

"Hey I thought we will find you asleep," says Lisi clearly not surprised as I am that there's a lady in here. The lady beams excitedly like a little child seeing an ice shop.

"Oh no the moment you told me that you're about to leave I had to wake up and prepare for your cousin's bedroom."

Cousin?

“Thank you so much. I really appreciate that.” Lisi

“Don’t mention it. I’m Asalinto Ntakana soon to be Asalinto Maphumulo,” she shows me her glimmering rock with a beautiful wide smile plastered on her face.

“I’m so pleased to meet you finally! You can call me Sally though!” Gosh where does this lady gets the energy from so early in the morning.

I open my mouth to say something but words form a huge ball in my throat that is menacing to choke me to death. Her voice is echoing in my ears ‘soon to be Asalinto Maphumulo’ and my eyes are glued on that beautiful diamond ring on her hand.

## ☆ Muzikayise ☆

Hangover has me by the balls. The room is spinning I think the alcohol is still in my system. Fuck! I force myself up and shuffle to the bucket we use for urinating. I pee and once I'm done I shake my dick and spit the sour saliva inside. I can't believe that I've turned into a man who drinks everyday to calm down my raging thoughts. When I'm sober I feel like I'm losing my mind. I can't stop thinking about that voice I heard and to make the situation worse is that she threw her phone inside the water when I wanted it.

What drives me insane is that I know I'm not stupid nor am I paranoid but there's this little part of me that says what if I'm wrong? What if I'm making something out of nothing like I did with some character man in these thing she reads. I still remember that day like it was yesterday I was so angry and hurt. I made her stand in the storm in the middle of the night knowing very well how scared of it she is. I never thought how serious these attacks she suffers until that night. I almost lost her for something she didn't do.

Loving Mbewenhle is all I ever do. Fine I have my insecurities because of what she did to me but I've never failed to show her how much do I love her. I pour every ounce of love to that woman hence I think sex could be the only reason she could cheat. One thing I know about women is that being faithful in a relationship is not hard to them not unless if they're not getting enough sex. Unlike us men we literally have no reason for cheating. Our unfaithfulness is always based on lust. No that I'm saying I've cheated on her. She's one woman I've never cheated on and look the joke is on who now?

As I'm getting dressed a piece of paper under the pillow catches my attention. I toss the pillow away and take it. I unfold it I expected a little something written maybe informing me that she went to her parents house or something but it's literally a letter.

'Sidwaba Siluthuli

I'm writing this letter to you with tears streaming down my face while listening to Separated by Usher. The song couldn't describe our situation better. The past few weeks I've been going on and on about the first day we met. That day was a

deja vu the difference is that you saved me. Our first encounter was never a coincidence sthandwa sami. It was a plan written in heaven by God or on the other side of the world by the ancestors. They brought us together so that my twin sister can find peace and my family would find closure.

I can never apologize enough for the pain that I've put you through Sidwaba Siluthuli nor can I thank you enough for accepting me back and giving our relationship a second chance. I've never doubted your love for me and the feeling was supposed to be mutual but I made you doubt and question my love for you. The truth is if I loved you enough I wouldn't have think of hurting you the way I did. I know that's not what you want to hear but it's the truth my love. You need to accept that I've never loved you enough nor have I deserved you from the first place.

Instead of loving you the way you deserve to be loved I ripped out your heart and shredded it into pieces before stepping on it with my foot then left it to rot. Now I'm giving you a chance to find someone who deserves you. Someone who wouldn't find it so easy to hurt you like the way I did.

A lot has happened in our marriage and I can't blame you for the way you treated me because I'm the one who damaged you. I know the loving man that you were before everything. I pray that you find healing if not for yourself to go back to that man you were before for the woman that you're going to meet. It would be unfair on her for you to bleed on her while I'm the one you cut you.

I'm sorry that we had to separate this way but it's for the best for both of us. I had to take a stand and fight for both of us before we both completely lose our sanity. You have convinced yourself that you can't live without me but it's not true. You actually can remember you did before me. Let me go my love so that you can find the one for you.

I knew you would never let me go just like that hence I decided to leave without your blessings and I'm sorry for that. The good thing is our marriage is in accordance with customary law so that allows you have another wife should you want to. Thank you so much for loving me. We had great moments but it's about time me we move on. Please don't look for me just let me go. Go your way and I will go mine we are better separated.

Love Mbewenhle Qwabe'

No no no I'm still drunk! I run downstairs with the letter and get a jug of water. I go outside and pour it on my head and face then go back to read the letter again. I still can't believe it even when I've read it for the second time. She left me? I go upstairs to finish getting dressed and search her clothes in our closet but most of them are gone! I don't waste time but drive to the Qwabe household.

The family welcomes me nicely as if they have no idea what's going on. So they're allowing and supporting their daughter to just leave me like that after the sacrifices I've made for her and after the pain she put me through?

"How are you son."

"I'm not okay baba."

"What is it my son? Is my daughter giving you problems?"

“That’s exactly the reason she ran away baba. You always assume the worst of her. ” Shouts Mvelo. Of course he knows!

“What do you mean she ran away Mvelonhle.” Mama Qwabe asks. Why is she acting clueless? It can’t be a coincidence that few weeks back she said her daughter must leave me then now she’s gone.

“I woke up to this letter.”

I hand it to Bab Qwabe but he hands it to Mvelo to read it loud for him. They’re all appalled but I’m not convinced with Mama Qwabe.

“Mvelonhle how do you know about this? Why you didn’t tell us?”

“I also woke up to the same letter baba.”

“Where is it?” Mam Thembeke

“Here.” He slides it out of his pants pocket.

“Can I see?”

“No! I will read it for you!”

He reads the letter loud as well. It sinks in to me that she’s really gone but where did she go to?

“Mbewenhle knows no one expect the Dlomos. Where could she be?”

“Why are you acting so surprised? You helped her mama. You have never treated me the same ever since you found out what happened to Ndalwendle. Don’t play dumb with me please just give me my wife back please.”

“Muzikayise I have no idea where she is. Wherever she is she’s mad at me. She knows about the Dlomos maybe that’s the reason she left.”

Why do I find it hard to believe her.

“Baba Qwabe please talk to your wife I promise to treat her better this time. All of this written here is not true. I know that my wife loves me so much.”

“MaNdwandwe you did this?”

“Musawenkosi how can you even ask that? I also don’t know where she is!” she says with a near tears voice. Crocodile tears.

“Then how is possible that she’s gone after you said she must leave him. People would think she left him for another man since we all know what she has done before! You want to embarrass me in front of the community huh?”

“Jesus I also don’t know her whereabouts why can’t you believe me!!” Now she’s crying.

“I want this child back do you hear me? You will tell her wherever you send her to come back! What are you teaching our daughter? That’s it’s okay to run away and leave her husband Imfundiso enjani na le?”

“Mama said she doesn’t know baba why can’t you hear that?”  
Mvelonhle

“Wena thula!” (You shut up!) A slaps lands on Mvelonhle face and he blinks more then necessary before walking out with his letter.

“Son give us a moment. I promise your wife will be home by the end of today.” I get up and leave with my heart on the knees.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I'm mystified why I wasn't told about this and what irks the hell out of me is that he told me everything he wanted me to know except this. It is without a doubt that he did it on purpose. Now I look like a fool in front of this beautiful lady who seems to be informed about me while I know nothing about her.

"Are you okay?" The lady asks me. I swallow the ball in my throat and stage a smile

"I'm more than okay. I guess MZALA told you who am I

" I say looking at Lisi who avoids eye contact with me "But let me introduce myself to you. I'm Mbewenhle Qwabe."

I stretch my hand for handshake but instead she hugs me. She's smells iGoli nje and makes me feel so little not even an ant can amount to how small I feel right now.

"Gosh I'm so glad to finally meet you. I have heard a lot about you!"

“Oh really MZALA didn’t tell me about you but I guess he wanted to surprise me.”

Manelisi clears his throat and gives me a look that I’m not even sure what it’s means.

“Babe can you show Wenhle to her bedroom. I just need to take a quick shower I’m needed at work.” He leaves the bags on the floor and rushes away leaving me with his fiancée.

“Come Mbewenhle.”

She takes my bags and leads me to the bedroom as we are walking there she shows me the bathroom first before we go to the bedroom. It’s beautiful and spacious. I love the cocoon like feel with its deep hue of gray. The bedding is white and night stands are made of wood.

“This is your bedroom and I hope you’re going to enjoy your stays here.”

“Thank you.”

“Let me give you space.”

Oh please do. I look at her huge jiggling ass as she walks out. Isinqa enjani na lesi? Siyabikizela doesn't she know that a butt have to be firm hayi ubiki biki. You need to calm yourself down Mbewenhle!

I lower myself on the bed and do some breathing exercises. I never expected him to stay single forever but a heads up would have been nice. I wouldn't even bothered to come here. When I'm calm I walk back to the kitchen and stop on my track when I hear them talking.

“I'm sorry baby.”

“It's okay I will call in sick and stay with her.”

“Are you sure about that.”

“Of course I’m sure baby.”

She fixes his tie then they share a kiss. I clear my throat making my presence noticed. They break the kiss and look at me.

“You don’t have to miss work because of me. I’m a big girl.”

“Oh no I wouldn’t let you stay alone on your first day in Johannesburg. I brought some work home so it’s fine.”

“I’m off.”

He rushes out. It’s like he’s running away from me. Why can’t he look at me in the eyes argh! I’m always a fool when it’s comes to Manelisi! I believe and listen anything he says without even thinking hard about it. This is the same person that has disappointed me more then once but look where I am.

“Are you okay?”

“Yes I’m fine I just need to nap but it would be unfair of me to sleep while you didn’t go to work because of me.”

“Oh no don’t worry about that darling. You can go sleep I will do some work.”

“Thank you.”

“Please feel at home Mbewenhle. If you are hungry there’s food in the fridge.”

I nod my head

“Your name is beautiful like you. I’m definitely naming my daughter Mbewenhle.”

That ball comes back again and clogs my throat. I’m blinking more than necessary to push back the tears.

“You’re pregnant?”

“No silly but hopefully I will come back from our honeymoon pregnant,” she beams. Is she always energetic or it’s all fake? Damn this Xhosa woman is unleashing a bitter bitch in me and I hate that.

“Nice.” I fake a smile. I swear will grow iziqhomo zamesesi with all the fake smiles I’m going to be doing here.

“I’m sorry about your twin sister.”

“Thank you. I should go get some sleeping.”

“Oh yes sorry! Once I talk I don’t stop!” She says giggling and I stage another smile before going to the bedroom I would be using. I fleetingly close my eyes as I lean against the door. It’s not supposed to hurt this much it was bound to happen at some point.

I take out my warm pjs and slip into them before sliding into bed. My mind is reeling I don't know how does sleep claim me but I'm grateful because the few hours I've been sleeping I got a break from the heartache. One thing I know is that going back is not an option I'd rather go back to the street. I'm not going back home as a cleaner just like somebody told Kwesta's mom when he decided to follow his dreams.

I'm starving and time on my watchwrist is 12pm.

I roll out of bed and make it before shuffling to the bathroom to pee. After washing my hands I go to the kitchen to make something to eat but I find Lisi making some bunny chow.

"Hey you're awake."

"You're back MZALA where's your fiancée?"

He clears his throat and orders me to sit down but I just glare at him. The nerve!

"Didn't you see the need to tell me that you're engaged Lisi?"

“I’m sorry Wenhle....”

“Oh please! You are not sorry Lisi you did this on purpose so that I can watch you loving someone else and feel how it was like when I chose Muzikayise over you!”

“That’s not true....”

“Lies! Lies after lies!”

“I didn’t lie to you okay! I just withheld that information because I knew you wouldn’t come with me!”

“Damn right I wouldn’t have come Manelisi!”

“Exactly! I was not going to be able to watch you miss such a great opportunity to fulfill your dreams because of the fact that I have someone in my life. This was all for you dombolo lami.”

“You don’t get it do you? I ended my marriage Lisi and left my family behind because of the dreams you sold to me! Now how do I even begin to trust you that you are going to keep the end of the bargain because you keep proving to me that I cannot trust you.”

“Dombolo lami...” he walks towards me and cups my face. We staring are each other and chests are heaving.

“I know I have done you wrong in the past that’s why I brought you here because I want to rectify my mistakes. I want to give you a better future.”

“How are you going to do that while you have someone else in your life. Someone you’re going to get married to Lisi.”

“I think you got all of this wrong dombolo lami. A lot happened between us and unfortunately some things have to stay just the way they’re ‘past’. The only thing I can give you right now is support and better future.”

His words are an assagai stuck in my heart perhaps in time its edges are going to get blunt but for now I will revel in the pain because I deserve it.

“You should’ve prepared me for all of this before taking me here. I knew that at some point you will move on and find someone else. So it would’ve been unfair of me and illogical to expect you to wait for me to get married and when my marriage shows me fame I expect you to take me back. The least you could’ve done is to emotionally prepare me because you know how I feel about you. I’ve never stopped loving you Lisi. Remember all this time I’ve been thinking that you’re dead then you showed up I realize you still have the same effect you had on me. You propose that I come live here with you and I was like universe I see what you’re doing and this time I’m not letting him go but hey it is what it is. I’m not mad at you for moving on but I’m mad that you chose to keep it from me. I would try my level best to be uMZALA and not come between you and your wife. She’s beautiful and seems like a nice person. You guys would have beautiful children. Thanks for doing this for me but I don’t think it’s a good idea. Just bear with me for a while until I find a job then I will vacate your apartment.”

He grabs my hand as I walk away but I wrest his grip on my hand.

“Dombolo lami wait I.....”

“I get it loud and clear don’t worry. The last thing I’d want is for us to be enemies MZALA. We would do this in a most peaceful way.”

I walk back to my bedroom and crawl on the bed then bawl my eyes out

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER SEVENTY ONE

☆ Mpilenhle ☆

She rolls her eyes to the back of her head as her body becomes rigid. A wave washes over her leaving a blanket of goosebumps on her body then it gushes down to her palace. Her husband pounds her even harder and she squirms before she reaches her high. It's doesn't take that long for her husband to pulls his ugly-cumming-face and shoots his load into her.

Their breathing is ragged and they're now lying on the bed after the intense love making. Mpilenhle is feeling sleepy. Her husband looks at her admirably and kisses her forehead. He loves this woman with everything in him. Growing up he had low self esteem due to his looks and it didn't help that they teased him at school. Scoring a girl for himself was difficult but he told himself that the least he could do is to study hard to secure himself great life in future. Don't they say you can't be ugly and be broke too.

After his first big break that's when girls started throwing themselves on him left, right and center. Oh man how he was

reveling in the sudden interest of girls in him. Today he'd sleep with this one and tomorrow another one and so on. They were about 7 of them and he made sure to maintain all of them. From Peruvian weaves to baecations in Dubai. He'd fool himself that they wanted him because they love him but deep down he knew that all they wanted from him is soft life.

When he realized that he's spent so much money and his business was losing money in a short period of time after being launched he had to man up. The girls started pulling away one by one from him as he couldn't buy then what they wanted anymore. One of those girls turned out to be his baby mama. The same one that stabbed his wife. He had to do damage control otherwise he was going to lose his business. His mother came into his rescue of course after a lecture. He's an apple of her eyes

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the only son out of 3 children.

One of his friends was getting married to some lady in Msinga and that how he met the other half of his heart, Mpilenhle Qwabe. Yes they met in a wedding. He's not sure if it's her beautiful smile that got him smitten or how humble and

respectful she was. You could tell that she's coming from a respectful family. Up to this day he still asks himself how did she love him for who he is not what he has. It has to be a blessing not lucky to have this beautiful woman in his life. Today he's proud of his looks and has learnt to love and accept himself the way he is because of this woman. She fulfill his psychological and emotional needs and takes care of him in more ways then one.

"Why are staring at me like that?" Mpilenhle

"I love you so much. Thank you so much for being my wife and loving me. Thanks for the beautiful children. You guys are the best thing that has ever happened to me."

"Awww baby I love you too." She leans over and kisses him.

"When are we having a boy now?"

"Hayi baby I'm not going to labour ward."

“But baby I want a boy.”

“You do have a boy Sbusiso.”

“I want ours not with that sick woman.”

“Please just one.”

“You’re spoiling this moment...” she’s cut short by her phone ringing. She fiddles her hands on the bedside table and takes her phone.

“Mvelonhle.”

“Your phone have been off the whole day Mpilenhle.”

“I’m sorry I left it in my husband’s car yesterday and he swapped his car with his friend. He only brought it today, what’s up little bro.”

“Mbewenhle ran away.”

“What do you mean she ran away?”

“I woke up to a note this morning. I’m going to send it to you on WhatsApp so we were wondering that if she didn’t tell you anything?”

Mpilenhle jerks up and sits on her butts as shock washes over her.

“No she didn’t tell me anything. Are you sure she left or someone put her into this.”

“Yesterday she came to take most of her clothes and claimed she need them. She even took the trunk she asked me to keep it for her two years back. It was only me and her who knew where it is. If someone put her up to it I’m sure she wouldn’t even take that trunk with her. She left a note for Muzikayise

too which tells him to move on with his life. It's seem like there's a lot that has been happening in her marriage."

"I'm coming now."

"Okay."

She hangs up and fill up her husband about the news she just heard.

"Mbewenhle's life has no peace at all!"

"Tell me about it. I need to go find out what happened."

"Don't sleep please. I need you home."

"I won't sleep."

She rolls out of bed and run to the en-suit bathroom where she takes a quick shower. Once she's done she lotions her body and slips into tracksuits then puts on her sneakers.

"I'm off baby."

"Drive safely!"

They share a kiss then she takes her car keys and phone before heading out. In the meanwhile Mam Thembeke is going through the pictures of her daughter from the day she was born in the album to the recent picture which is on her phone. How she wish she could turn back the hands of time and make better decisions. God is her witness she never meant to say those words to her daughter. It was just anger talking and now she realize the damage she has done.

As for apologizing it was just ignorance. It's not that she meant what she said. She has to admit that Mbewenhle makes motherhood or parenting very challenging unlike Mpilenhle. Lord knows she tried to adjust herself to be the mom that her daughter could be proud to call her a mother but it always

backfired. Now she perceives the biggest mistake she did which is to think talking about everything is the solution when the actual fact is that talking only doesn't help when the parties involved don't take accountability of their mistakes whether they are older or not.

Her daughter is an example of today's kid who wants her parents to apologize to her if they've done her wrong and that is foreign to Mam Thembeke. Growing up she never held a grudge for her mom or at least she thought so. There are moments she would look at her mom babying her grandchildren and wonder what happened to her mom who was angisipetuli isgharma kind of mom. Maybe that's why most of their generation is damaged.

They had to brush off things that were meant to be addressed and dealt with in the name of respecting their elders. Confronting an elder was a sin. They were regarded as people who make no mistakes and know what they were doing. Everything has an effect no matter how little it is or how disregard it was during that moment one way or the other it's going to have an impact in the long run hence whenever we don't understand things that are happening in the present we have to revisit our past so that we can understand our future.

No one is perfect we all makes mistakes and life doesn't have a manual.

There's a knock on the door. She wipes her tears and closes the album before putting in on the coffee table with her phone. She gets up and goes to the door to attend whoever that is on the door. It's wide open because she's been watching over her last born playing outside alone. She freezes as shock attacks every nerve of her body when a tall muscular man stands before her with her little boy in his one arm who's playing with the man's beard with his tiny hands.

“Gco...Gco...Gcobolwakhe.”

## CHAPTER SEVENTY TWO

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

“Wenhle?” he’s knocking on the door and I’m so tempted to scream like a spoilt brat ‘Go away!’ but hey this is not my place. I have to behave myself ngicushisiwe maybe one day I would say that in my own house. I won’t allow this pain I’m feeling right now to make me give up on my dreams. I left home and going back as nothing is not an option so making it no matter how hard it get is not a choice but a must. I don’t know where to start to look for a job. I have never even made a CV and I don’t even have money for printing and making copies.

“Can I come in please.”

The door is not locked why can’t he just barge in I mean this is his apartment.

“I’m back baby!” His fiancée’s chirpy voice says. I hear Lisi’s footsteps shuffling away.

Okay you need to pull yourself together baby girl. He's taken and seems happy with his wife now focus on why you are here. Remember that the moment the news starts spreading in the village that you left your husband there are many who would be saying mean things about you and they will expect you to come back as nothing. Don't give them that satisfaction. Celebrate your freedom and work on yourself.

There's a knock on the door then it swings open. I jerk up my head to look who that is. It's the Mrs Maphumulo be. She looks gorgeous in a maroon high neck mutton sleeves bodycon dress. It sits above her knees and her wide hips and butt are out to play. She paired it up with black heels which are making a clicking sound against the floor as she walks to the bed. I actually see what Lisi see in her and her warmly and bubbly character is what makes her even more beautiful.

"Hey."

I discreetly wipe my tears and sit with my butt. She lowers herself on bed next to me and looks at me.

“You are crying?”

“No I wasn’t crying. I have eyes problem.”

“Mane told me.”

“Oh”

God I’m sure she’s here to kick me out. No woman will want her fiancé to accommodate an ex. He shouldn’t have brought me here in the first place and lied to her.

“Don’t be scared we are going to protect you okay. No one is going to take you here without your will. I can imagine how hard it must be for you having an abusive husband who your family side with.”

Really now? What the fuck bazalwane?

“Thank you.”

“If you need to talk I’m here for you okay. I’ve been in an abusive relationship before that shit ruin you for life. Therapy helped me a lot I think you should also try it and see if it works for you.”

“I hate talking to strangers.”

“I was also like that before but it really helps babe.”

“Thanks for your concern I will be fine. Can I unpack.”

“You don’t have to ask sweetheart like I said feel at home. In fact let me help you unpack.”

“No it’s okay really.”

“I’m sorry if I’m coming to you too hard it’s just that I’m happy to finally meet Mane’s family member. He has met my family

but I haven't met his this bothers me. I didn't even know about you until your twin sister's death that trended on social media. That's when he told me that you're his cousin."

"He will take you to them when he's ready. They are not his biological family but they are like a family to him so give him time. I mean you two can't get married without lobola negotiations taking place and all of that."

She heaves a sigh and smiles faintly.

"You're definitely right. Let me go prepare dinner. If you have laundry let me know. We have a lady that comes here once a week to do our laundry."

Oh she doesn't do the laundry herself? Why allow another woman to touch your man's clothes? But hey city ladies do things different from village ladies.

"For now I don't but thank you I will do my own laundry."

“Don’t be silly she’s getting paid for her job. We are creating employment. Life is tough out there.”

“True it’s very tough. I also have some CVs to print and send out.”

“You want a job.”

“Yes I will appreciate everything even a cleaning job. I cannot expect you and Lisi to cater me forever.”

“Come on Mbewenhle I thought for the time being you are waiting for next year to start school you will be enjoying the change of scenery. I even plans for us baby! I’m going to take you to fun places. You need to unwind and have fun a bit before you start school because once you start it time for fun will be limited. Stop being too serious and loosen up maan!”

I can’t help but laugh at how she just said that. She seems like a nice person. Maybe it’s not so bad after all to have ‘MZAL’ SALLY’ by my side.

“Okay I hear you but I still I want a job. I also want to help out with grocery at least and I’m not changing my mind on that one.”

“You such a bore! Give me a sample of your full details that are need to be on the CV I will sort it out and send your copies to any job vacancy myself.”

“You’d do that for me?”

“Yes why not?”

“Thank you so much.”

“It’s no biggie babe. Let me go cook.” She gets up walks out. I roll out of bed and start unpacking my clothes then put them in the closet. I smell his cologne and my body breaks into goosebumps. Gosh I hate the effect he has on me!

“Can I come in.”

“You’re already inside.”

He walks towards me and stands next to me as I continue with the task at hand.

“I’m sorry for keeping the fact that I’m engaged.”

“It’s fine.”

“No it’s not fine Wenhle I hurt your feelings and I apologize for that. I didn’t know that you still have feelings for me.

Ngiyaxolisa kakhulu I realize how wrong and insensitive I was for not giving you the heads up.”

“No I’m the one who assumed, come to think of it you didn’t tell me you want me. It just that when you told me that you came for me and you are not completely happy without me I assumed the literally meaning of that since we have a past.

Now I know where do you stand with me and I'm so happy for you really."

He bites his bottom lip and locks his eyes with mine that are filled with emotions I cannot pin point.

"You don't have to move out though I brought you here and I'm going to fulfill my promise to you which is giving you a better future."

"Don't worry about that NSFAS will do that for me. As for moving out it's a must. I don't want to crowd you two and I'm worried how would your fiancée feel should she find out that you lied to her and said I'm your cousin. It's better I distance myself from you guys and find my own space. I just have to find a job first."

"She won't know. I don't want you to move out please don't reject my offer. I wanna do this for you dombolo lami let me please."

“Look I get that you feel bad for how you treated me in the past and I forgive you for that. I mean come on I wouldn’t be here if I haven’t forgiven you. Don’t feel indebted to me Lisi you don’t owe me anything.”

“You don’t get it!” I’m taken aback by his raised voice. I thought we are talking nicely what with the shouting now?

“I’m sorry I didn’t mean to shout. Excuse me.” He walks away but I call him before he gets to the door.

“I have something for you.”

He swivels around and looks at me.

“I found this trunk in your home it was the only thing that didn’t burn so I kept it. I don’t know why but I felt the need to.”

I walk towards him with the trunk and hand it to him.

“Oh thank you so much for doing that

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mom used it to keep her accessories. If there’s a person I’d want to have these accessories it’s you dombolo lami. Take it please.”

“Thank you but I can’t take it. Your fiancée is the one that deserves to keep these accessories.”

“But I want you to have it.”

“I’m sorry but I can’t accept it.”

He looks at me sadly and disappointment clouds his face.

“Thanks.” With that said he walks out and I continue with packing my clothes in the closet. Later I join Sally in the kitchen and help her out. At 7:30pm we eat supper.

“Babe are you okay?” Sally asks her fiancé when she notices that he’s not himself.

“Yes babe I’m okay why?”

“You’re too silent for my liking.”

“It’s been a long day that’s all.”

Once we finish I wash the dishes then retire to sleep. Just as I’m 5 seconds in my sleep I hear screams which snaps me out of my sleep. I listen attentively only to realize that it’s sexual screams. I’m next door for crying out can’t they keep it down! The louder they get my heart is breaking in pieces. I sleep with a broken heart.

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I thought as days go by I would be used to this setting but I’m still not. Everyday the pain is getting worse in my heart. To see

them touchy freely and listening to their sexual noise is pouring salt in my wound.

“Oh fuck me harder baby! Yesss right there!” I can even hear the sound of their flesh slapping.

I wear my sneakers and leave. I need a run it will ease these emotions that are threatening to drown me. I’m a bit used to this place now and I love that their apartment is not close to the busy area which makes it easy for me to do my runs whenever I want to ease my emotions.

The more her moans and dirty talk echoes in my ears it’s the more I up my speed. This is the only time I feel like I’m in control. Where I know that no one can catch me if I don’t want to. That floating in the sky feel like is amazing. There’s a car following me and my paranoia kicks in immediately. This is Johannesburg where crime is real. Not forgetting that it’s the evening now and it’s starting to get dark but the street lights are producing the light.

Every turn I take it's right behind me now I'm even scared that I will get lost and not find my way back to the apartment. I turn back it's has stopped now and there's someone coming out of it. This gives me time to lose whoever that person is but when I turn back once again he's running after me. God this could be the end of me? I'm getting tired and I cannot keep up.

"I'm not going to hurt you wait up please!" I'm surprised that it's a voice of a woman

"What do you want from me!"

"Wait please so that I can explain to you. That's why I chose to run after you with my feet and leave the car so that you can see that I'm not harmful. The securities patrol every now and then here. Trust me you are safe!"

Why should I trust her maybe this is her trick to inject me with some injection and sell me to the highest bidder. It's not my intention to stop but I'm tired now.

“Damn girl you’re our next Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce,” She says panting trying to catch her breath as I do so.

“What do you want? Why are you running after me?”

“I’m Matshidiso Chabeli.” She stretches her hand for a handshake but I just look at it. What if she has isulubezi?

“Oka-y I have been watching you running the couple of days ago and I’m very impressed with your speed. I’m a running coach and I own a club for females only. I’m all about empowering imbokodo.”

“Oh um I guess I should take that as a compliment.”

“Oh hell yeah sprinters are not made but they are born. You have an amazing talent. If you would like to explore and expose your talent give me a call.” She slides out a small card and hands it to me.

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER SEVENTY TWO

☆ Mpilenhle ☆

Mam Thembeke stutters as she watches the man she thought will always remain a past. What is he doing here? How did he find her? They agreed to cut communication the moment they separated but Bab Gcobolwakhe didn't keep the end of his bargain. He kept blowing her phone with calls and messages which left her with no choice but to block him.

"Hello Thembeke " It comes out in a soft tone instead of a harsher tone he intended. Seeing her beautiful face after so long mollifies the anger in him and he hates that. She kept his son from him for years dammit!

"What...what are you doing here?" Mam Thembeke stutters once again still not believing what is before her eyes and it's so creepy how do these two look alike.

"I came for my son!"

“What son?”

“Don’t infuriate me any further Thembeke I’m already angry at you!”

“You have no right to come here and shout at me for things I know nothing about! Give me back my son!”

She attempts to take her son from him but the little boy refuses.

“Yey wena come here! This is a stranger!”

“I can’t believe you right now! Are you seriously going to pretend as if you don’t know what I’m talking about?”

“Leave my house!”

“You are testing me wena! Where’s your husband? Does he know that this is my son?” He pushes himself inside of the house as anger travels through every cell of his body.

“My husband is not home leave Gcobolwakhe this is not your son!”

“Aw really? So explain to me how is it possible that he’s my duplicate?”

“People look the same Gcobolwakhe and I don’t have to explain my son’s paternity to you! We fucked and that’s all but we didn’t make a baby together even if we did I was not going to have a reminder of my infidelity!”

Bab Gcobolwakhe chuckles as he fleetingly squeezes his nose bridge then he looks at her. He can’t believe that she’s denying.

“Prove it to me that he’s not mine!”

“I don’t owe you anything nor do I have to prove it to you because you’re non factor. Don’t come here with such accusations. What will my husband say if he can hear you claim his son as yours. You want to ruin my marriage? In fact how did you even reach that conclusion?”

“I have no doubts that he’s mine and you know it very well! You know what maybe we can hear what your husband has to say about this. I will wait for him.” He goes to the couch and settles down pulling his son to his lap who seems so comfortable in him like he knows him. It must be the blood running in their veins that is connecting.

“You won’t do no such thing! Leave my house now!”

“Or what?”

“This is not the suburbs where you live Gcobelwakhe! Here we burn people who are trespassing!”

Bab Gcobolwakhe laughs out loudly and plays with his son who's giggling none stop.

"Gcobolwakhe give me my baby and leave!"

"Yey I'm not going anywhere without my child!"

"You won't get him!"

Now they're fighting over the little boy like little kids and he's wailing loudly. Mpilenhle can hear the commotion inside the house just as she parks her car next to the Mercedes-Benz E 350. She steps out of the car and quickly dashes inside only to find a man he doesn't know fighting with her mom over Ndabenhle.

"What's going on here!" She has to raise her voice so that they can hear her. They both turn to look at her and she immediately picks up the similarity between her baby brother and the man. The boy is a spitting image of his father.

“Uhm uhm Mpilenhle.” Mam Thembeke

“Kwenzenjani mama? Who is this man and why you two are fighting over my baby brother? Can't you both hear that he's crying clearly you are hurting him!”

Mortification washes over the duo. Mr Magagula hands over the boy to his mom and leaves without saying a word. Things turned out very badly he didn't expect this. Maybe a part of him understands that she kept his son from him because she doesn't want to destroy her marriage but for her to behave like this threw him off. He groans in frustration as he punches the steering wheel. Fuck Thembeke! For always being able to turn his life upside down and leave him to lick his wound alone. He's going to fight for his son with everything he has!

He starts his car and drives away while Mpilenhle is questioning her mother. She's so defensive which is alarming and Mpilenhle can't get over how Ndabenhle is an exact copy of that man. Mbewenhle's words ring in her ears “You see me, you, mama and baba are the same! We are all whores..” There's definitely something she knows hence she started having little respect for their mother talking to her however it suited her. This probably

happened while they were in Durban. Qwabe's sisters still believe that Ndabenhle is not a Qwabe even after the DNA proof was shown to them. Her mind is piecing up the puzzle but she's not sure she's ready to handle the complete puzzle.

"Mpilenhle uzongidina! You came here to insult me in my house?"

"No I'm sorry I was just asking."

"Ubuza amasimba! Thula phela Ndabenhle!" The little boy cries even louder.

"Funa uMbeee!"

"Come to me boy." Mpilenhle

"Mh-mh Mbeeee!"

They both try to reason with him but he's not hearing anything.

“God kanti what happened mama?”

Mam Thembeke explains to her daughter about today's morning events

sadness evident in her voice.

“There's a lot that we don't know about their marriage mama and if she stated it in the letter that she won't blame him for the way he treated her clearly Mbewenhle wasn't happy in her marriage. Usually men don't forgive cheating easily how did Muzi forgave her? What if he's been abusing her?”

“That's what has been going on and on in my mind but Muzikayise claims that everything she wrote there are lies. It must have been that bad for her to run away and what hurts me more is that she didn't confide in us and thought running away is the only solution. God I'm such a clown of a mother!” Tears burst forth like a river. Mpilenhle doesn't know who to calm down between her mother and brother.

“You’re not a clown Mama. Don’t blame yourself for this. I’m the witness I saw how you tried your best to fix the broken relationship between the two of you but she kept pushing you away.”

“I failed to guide her as her mother and said evil things to her hence she kept pulling away. She thinks I don’t love her Mpilenhle and it hurts so bad because that’s not true. If I was a good mother to her she wouldn’t thought running away is better then coming to me as her mother. Clearly I never gave her that security and protection that she trust this evil world over me. She rather be out there where we don’t even know instead of us.”

“One thing I won’t do is to watch you to blame yourself for Mbewenhle’s selfishness. Mama you did your best to be the good mother to her but what did she do? She’s the one who’s been secretive about everything going on in her life. I’m so tired of Mbewenhle with her bratty tendencies honestly. Even if things were bad in her marriage couldn’t at least talk to Mvelonhle about it instead of running away. Now we are running around like headless chickens looking for someone who left willingly. This is bullshit! Stop worrying yourself about her

and let her be. She made her choice kuzomqoqa ukuhlwa and she will come back home.”

“I couldn’t have said it better my daughter. Yaz wena ungifuzile impela. Lendaba ka Mbewenhle yokusisanganisa amakhanda ngamasimba nje! Clearly she is out there whoring! She mustn’t dare come back here not after the humiliation she’s putting us through. Who runs away and leave her marriage? What irks me the most is that I asked her if she really want to marry Muzikayise and she said yes now this? Hhayi akahambe ayofa!!!” Qwabe says as he walks in with Mvelonhle. They both settle down on the couch.

“You didn’t find her?” Mam Thembeke asks the obvious question.

“No we didn’t find her. Those women said they haven’t heard from her for two years now since you asked them to stay away from your daughter.”

“Which women?”

“Uthandiwe’s mothers. Muzikayise gave us their address.”  
Mvelonhle

“Let just forget about her and move on with our lives.  
Uzikhethele yena ukuhamba!” Mpilenhle couldn’t agree more  
with her father.

“You and Mpilenhle don’t get it that she was scared to come to  
us and tell us that she’s not happy in her marriage because of  
how we handle things in this household. We never created a  
good environment for her where she feels safe to let us in on  
whatever is going on in her life. We failed our daughter Qwabe  
let’s admit that!”

“Unhappy in her marriage? Hayi there’s no such thing stop  
defending her. Muzikayise loves her! He took her as a  
humiliation as she is and married her is this how she thanks him  
by running away? Umbukisa nezwe once again! Hayi that boy is  
better off without lesifebe sakho sanondindwa!!”

“Maybe baba and sis are right mama. Mbewenhle is egocentric!  
Whatever that happened in her marriage that wasn’t making

her happy she should have told me. I have never turned my back on her but she couldn't trust me enough to confide in me at least. We would've solved everything but instead she chose to leave us with these stupid notes! Now we are worried about her if she's okay wherever she is while this is the decision she chose to make. I hate her for doing this to us running away is not an option!" Mvelo expresses his emotions and walks out leaving his mother shocked. She expected him to defend his sister as always. Maybe they are all right about how wrong she went about this but that doesn't change how Mam Thembeke feels about this.

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It's been almost a week now since Mbewenhle disappeared and the Qwabe family don't care expect Mam Thembeke who's drowning in sorrow. How would she ever forgive herself? She should've protected her from all of this surely things would've turned out different.

She looks around making sure no one is noticing her before getting inside the car. A huge part of her knew that the way she dealt with Gcobolwakhe is wrong and there's absolutely no way

he would let it go just like that. She unblocked him yesterday and called him so that they can meet in Pomeroy.

“Hi.”

“Hello.”

“Look I’m sorry about the way I handled things that day. I was just shocked.”

“Why did you call me Thembeke,” he asks clearly running out of patience.

“How did you find out about this?” This is the question she’s been asking herself. There are three people who know her secret it’s Nomsa, Mbewenhle and MaZwide. Her aunt will never do that to her so is Nomsa. Mbewenhle has proved that she wouldn’t also do that but after their last conversation. Maybe she did this to spite her.

“Is that why you called me? I thought you’re giving me my son. Anyway I saw Mbewenhle’s pictures on Facebook. Her account popped up on people you may know and it’s her profile picture that caught my eye. On that picture she’s with her baby brother who looks exactly like me. There more I scrolled through her pictures I couldn’t be more sure that he’s mine.” He explains to her but she’s lost about Facebook and everything. She’s not part of it but she knows that it’s a social media thing.

“Well he’s not yours Gcobolwakhe. Here are the results of the DNA test. Read them and go back to wherever you are coming from before you destroy my marriage for nothing.”

He laughs out loudly and looks at her unbelievably why she’s still lying baffles him and it’s antagonize him.

“I’m not your illiterate husband Thembeke these are fake results!”

“That’s not true!”

“Stop denying dammit! You see now you leave me with no choice. I know that you are involved in killing the grandma and grandson. I have proof that could land you to jail!”

She gulps down the air as shock attacks her. How does he know?

“Oh now I have your attention do I? This is what you’re going to do. You’re going sign your parental rights over to me and let me raise my son on my own or else I’m going to sing which is which?”

☆ Isisa ☆

“Wake up!” Mama says pulling the blanket away from me that moment it’s so cold.

“Mama.” I whine with annoyance. This is abuse!

“Wake up and get dressed!”

“Where are we going?”

“It’s time the Qwabe’s know what their son have done.”

Oh shit! I thought this moment will never come. She supposed to have taken me there the moment she found out that I’m pregnant because I was 4 months pregnant already but I think she didn’t take me there because my tummy wasn’t that visible. It’s unbelievable that I’m approaching my 6th month now. When I was pregnant with Lumi I was so huge by this time

but now my bump is like I'm 3 months pregnant. Cashile is the name her father has given her. That one with his funny names!

I love that our break up didn't stop him from taking his responsibility. He's really supportive and insisted that I do my checks up at the gynecologist instead of the clinic. Of course he does cover the costs. He's emotionally and physically available for me even though I broke his heart by dumping him. Mama was angry as expected when she learned that Mvelo is the father of my baby hence I broke up with him.

We are now going to the Qwabe homestead. The morning winter breeze is not friendly against my skin. It's still dark by the way. Whoever came up with a rule that isisu sibikwa izintatha didn't think about this. Imagine waking up early in the morning just to hear that your child is now having sex. I wish I can give Mvelo a heads up so that he can wear layers and layers of clothes just in case his father beat him up.

They're surprised to see us at this time of the morning. Mom doesn't waste time after the exchange of greetings she tells them the reason we are here. To say they're shocked would be putting it lightly. I don't understand why because they know we

fucked did they think we will stop. Mam Thembeke calls him and when he takes one glance at us he stops on his tracks. He better not run away!

“Come here wena!” Qwabe.

Mvelonhle swallows spit and settles down next to his mom.

“You made Isisa pregnant?”

“Yebo baba,” he says looking down.

“Heee uzoyondla ngani lengane Mvelonhle huh?” (How will you provide for the baby...)

“Since I have a child on the way I think it’s better you start paying me for working at your store.”

“Uyanya!”

“Why not baba. I’m working hard there especially now that Mngqobi got a new job. It’s not easy to run both the grocery and alcohol sides of the store.”

“I don’t give a damn about that! I’m not going to pay you! When you made a girl pregnant knowing very well that you don’t have any source of income what were you thinking?”

“It’s not like you also worked in your life baba. You inherited this from your father.”

“Hey ungazodakwa wena! Don’t talk about things you know nothing about! I worked very hard to earn everything own. I was right by my father’s side and working my butt off to build the Qwabe legacy. I didn’t get paid even a cent so why should I pay you? You’re helping out at the store because it feeds you!”

They keep on going back and forth until Mam Thembeke intervenes then she apologizes to mom on behalf of her son for this. They agreed on the damages and everything. I couldn’t be happier when the meeting goes better than I expected.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

“On your marks.” The official says. We all have our feet place on the blocks fingers are on the ground behind the starting line and hands are slightly wider than shoulder width.

“Set.”

We all move up our hips are slightly above shoulder level and feet pushed hard into the block as we hold our breath getting ready for the 100m sprint. A pistol goes off and the race begins. I run as fast as my legs could carry me trying to maintain my speed. The crowd go crazy as I reach the finishing line first.

The love and cheering I’m getting is super amazing. Who would’ve thought Mbewenhle Qwabe could be best female sprinter. My tears are refusing to be kept at bay. I cover my eyes with my hands and cry. This is the best moment of my life. When I remove my hands from my eyes the light shines bright

blinding my eyes. I shut my eyes closed for a moment then open them.

How disappointing it is to realize that I'm not in the field but on the bed. The sun rays are penetrating through the window which tells me that it's the morning. It's unbelievable that the woman I met yesterday got into me in the matter of seconds. Already I have dreams now. Urgh what if she's a scam? What if she's selling me dreams I mean come on I know that I can run but I can never reach Shelly-Ann Fraser level, well Pryce is her marital surname.

Damn that woman is the fastest female in the world and she even broke Usain Bolt's record for a number of gold medals in the world championships. Did I mention that she's the only woman to win a World Championships title after becoming a mother. Yes she's a mom baby! An epitome of triumph in motherhood. I think when God made Zulu people he poured an ounce of racism in them but my racism is failing to strike when it comes to this Jamaican woman. Now that I've been compared to her I think I'm going to like her.

I reach for the business card on the bedside table and look at it. Maybe meeting her and finding out what does she has to offer me won't hurt. The problem is I don't own a phone. Story of my life! How many phones have I owned so far but they never last. Mam Aphiwe would be disappointed to hear that the iphone 11 she bought for me I dropped it into the water because I didn't want my husband to see my conversation with my ghost-virginity-breaker. Who does that? That shit earned me a 'enough fuck' that was I lacking hence I was chasing rotten dicks out there. I will laugh about this one day.

I put back the card on the bedside table and roll out of bed before making it. I always enjoy my company alone when the love birds are at work and I even wish they get hit by the train on their way back home because my pain is triggered by how they are always lovey dovey and fucking every change they get. Okay that's extreme I don't want them to get hit by the train I just wish I don't have to witness Lisi loving someone else when I'm the one who should be at the receiving end of his love.

When I'm done cleaning the whole place except their bedroom I take a shower. Well I respect their bedroom I can't be cleaning it that's not right. After showering I slip into tracksuits and

fluffy boots. Mara eGoli kuyabanda yaz. I make myself the hugest kota I have ever seen with a cup of coffee and go sit down before the TV indulging in my food. This coffee reminds me how good it tasted in Kayise's lips this other day we came back from the river after 'cleansing'. I wonder how is he? He's probably turning the world upside down looking for me. I wish he never finds me. I don't trust myself to refuse to go with him because I feel so indebted to him for the man I've changed him to be after the pain I've put him through. Maybe leaving him like that wasn't a best option but I still don't think of a better way I would've done this.

"Hey you." I look up surprised to see Sally.

"Hey you're home early."

"I couldn't function so my boss let me go."

It's only now I notice that her speech is nasal and her nose is red. She's definitely coming up with flue. Sally works in a publishing company as an editor.

“You are coming up with flue?”

“Yes.” She settles on the couch next to me and puts her laptop bag, car keys, phone and plastic bag on the coffee table.

“I’m sorry don’t you have gumtrees here?”

“I have never seen them why?”

“It’s my mom’s best remedy for flue. You steam with it and drink it trust me within two days the flue goes away.”

“Oh really I didn’t know. I went to the pharmacy though to buy some flue medication.”

“That’s better.”

“I brought you something.”

I look at her curiously as she hands me the plastic bag and when I go through it there's a box of Sumsing A12.

"You bought this for me?"

"You don't have a phone right?"

"Yes but you didn't have to mzal' Sally."

"What do I have to do for you to stop calling me that."

"You're 3 years older me I have to respect you. I can't call you with your first name."

"Haisuka what is 3 years. We are peers and besides why should you call me by mzala when you call Mane by his first name?"

He's not my cousin silly! He's my virginity breaker and the father of my first born.

"Okay I get you thank you so much once again for this beautiful phone."

She gives me one of her beautiful smile and gets up from the couch.

"I need a nap maybe I will wake up feeling better  
" she says and gets up from the couch.

"Thank you so much for the phone. God bless you."

"Don't mention it sweetheart. There's also an airtime inside there."

"Thank you. Have your med first before you sleep."

“Yes doc.”

We both giggle. She takes her plastic of medication and disappears. I switch on the phone and load airtime before buying data. This is time to search for this Matshidiso Chabeli. I go to my bedroom and get that card and start searching on her. I’m sure if she has a club it must be on google. Okay she seems legit the problem is that there’s a joining fee you pay when you join her club of which I don’t have. Now I have to bother Lisi urgh!

I have been engrossed on my new phone for hours and it’s only when Lisi walks in do I realize that. I used to think that green color is bleh especially when it comes to clothing but damn I take back that thought. Lisi looks debonair in a formal slim fit green suit with a white crisp shirt and black tie that complements his shoes. I swear this outfit was made for him.

“MaQwabe.”

“Hey.” Gosh why am I whispering! He chuckles and walks towards me.

“You good?”

“Yes and you?”

“I’m also good. Where’s Sally I saw her car in the parking lot.”

“She’s sleeping she came back early today. She’s coming up with flue.”

“Oh okay.”

He nods and walks away. I get up and go prepare for supper since Mrs Maphumulo to be is sick. What I have noticed is that she cooks like Mpilenhle. They both use so much unnecessary ingredients like garlic, herbs, cinnamon etc while some of us use only knorrox and benny. Have you ever eaten eggs made by me with benny instead of aromat? I make mean eggs shame nesibonayo uyasincisha!

I take out turkey and let it defrost while I cook pap. When a blanket of goosebumps covers my body and my heart beat goes erratic I just know that he's here. I can feel his presence.

"I'm starving." His voice booms in my ear shocking the hell out of me. Why is he standing so close!

"I'm sorry I didn't mean to startle you." I turn to look at him. Now he's changed into track pants and a long sleeve simple t-shirt. Why he's always in his barefoot when he's home I don't know or maybe he wants to show off his cute feet.

"Sit down I will make some sandwich for you."

"Thank you dombolo lami."

He settles on the high chair and looks at me as I make something for him to eat.

You should be a sangoma."

“Huh?”

“You heard me.”

“Yes I heard you but why are you saying that?”

“You’re always on your barefoot.”

He looks at me and lets out a loud laughter.

“Imagine a good looking sangoma like me. My patients be throwing themselves at me.”

“Oh you are so full of yourself!”

I remember the first day my eyes laid on him I’m not sure if it’s his handsomeness or his stick fighting skills that drawn me into

him. He has always been hot but manje ngathi wenza ngamabomu. Soft life loves him!

“Here.” I put the plate of sandwiches before him and savanna.

“Thank you so much.”

“You’re welcome.”

I continue to cook while I brief her up about my meeting with the running coach.

“Wow that’s amazing dombolo lami!”

“She said I’m the next Shelly-Ann Fraser. Imagine I can never meet that woman’s level.”

“Have you ever seen yourself running though? Not that I’m biased but I think you can even exceed her level if only you can get proper training.”

Awww I'm flattered!

"You think so?"

"Yes you are amazing Wenhle. I think this is a great opportunity don't let it pass you," he says with food in his mouth.

"I'm also tempted but I'm not sure if she's legit. You can never rely on google only she could be a human trafficker."

"You should give me that card and I will have someone to run some background check on her."

"Okay thank you so much and if she turns out to be legit I would need you to pay the joining fee for me."

"I got you dombolo lami you don't have to ask."

“I will pay you back though.”

“Voetsek!”

I giggle. What wrong did I say now. A thought cross my mind.

“Lisi.”

“Dombolo lami.”

“Since you know people that can do background check on people and private investigators why don't you use that to find your father?”

He stops eating and looks at me. The look on his face is unsettling.

“Why should I look for someone who never wanted me?”

“Who said he never wanted you?”

“Mbewenhle if he wanted me he would be present in my life!”

“Ngiyaxolisa ukuphapha.” (I’m sorry for being forward)

.....

It’s Saturday and I’m helping Sally to cook. They are hosting a chilling session with their friends. Apparently they have a same circle of friends so they’re always together. I’m a bit nervous because I don’t know how will their friends receive me.

“Do you think they will like me?”

“Of course they will. They are bunch of nice friends you will see.”

“Mhhh.”

“Stop worrying!” She pinches my cheeks making me to giggle.

Lisi went to get ice at the mall. Once we are done cooking we freshen up. I don't know what am I going to wear I'm so indecisive. Maybe I should just sleep and let them enjoy their chilling session. I mean I'm not their friend mos. There's a knock on the door then Sally's head appears.

“We are waiting for you. They're here babe.”

“I'm coming.”

Her head disappears then the door closes. I heave a sigh and finally decide on wearing a grey knit sweater black jeans and sneakers. I tied my afro into a bun and spray my perfume then head out. They are in the lounge I can hear loud laughter. How many are they kanti? Breathe baby girl! I take in my breath and let it out then make my way in. The moment my presence is noticed all eyes are on me. Gosh so many people! I greet them and they all greet back. Sally stands next to me.

“Guys this is Mane’s cousin Mbewenhle. Babe these are our friends.” She introduces them one by one and by the time she’s introducing the last person I’ve already forgotten the names of others. I will just call them ontombo no nsizwooo once. They are seven which makes it a group of 10 when you count us.

“Damn she’s beautiful!” says this nsizwooo I think they introduced him as Bryce. He looks mixed and yummy with his pink lips.

“She’s no go area Bryce!” Lisi

“Why not I’m the single one in this group and I’m tired of being an extra wheel.”

“She’s my cousin man!”

“So?” The guys chorus

“She’s family! What happened to family member is no go area?”

“Oh when did we made that rule? Maybe I have amnesia please remind me?” Bryce.

They all look at Manelisi who’s stuttering.

“Okay we are making it official today ke! A family member is a no go area.”

“We will make that rule for official after me and beautiful seed here get married.”

“Uyadakwa!” Manelisi retorts they all laugh out loudly. I hate being a center of attention. I thank the heavens when Sally tells me to come help her dish out. Two girls join us as well.

“Mbewenhle are you taken? I think you and Bryce could make a great couple.” Babalwa

“You want Manelisi to kill Bryce?” Nana

“Haisuka these two are old if they feel each other they must go head. Manelisi should just chill.” Babalwa

These two girls bathong are busy going on and on about me as if I’m not here. I don’t want a colored boyfriend I still have to smile for the world when I win that golden medal in Olympics. I don’t want to lose my teeth.

“He’s too overprotective for my liking.” The shade in Nana’s voice is so loud.

“She’s like a sister to him Nana of course it’s normal for him to be overprotective,” says Sally laughing

“If she’s like a sister you would’ve known about her the moment you and Mane started dating. She’s a cousin and you know what they say about cousins.”

“What do they say?” I ask out of curiosity

“Umzala uyayizala indodana.”

Sally and Babalwa laughs. I don't know what funny with what this girl just said. I have to give it to her that she doesn't even wait for me to walk out or something but she just said all of this right in from of me.

“You're crazy!” Sally

“You need indayeke your mind is too dirty Nana.” I say and walk to the lounge with the tray leaving them laughing. Once we are done dishing up we join others in the lounge. After eating we get started with drinks, the ladies are having champagne while the gents are having savanna.

As the day goes by the chat is getting loud so is the laughter. It's fun and I'm enjoying myself. They are really a bunch of cool people.

“Let’s play a game.” I have forgotten the name of this ntomboo.

“Truth or dare!” Bryce

They all cheer up. I have never played it before so I’m just going to watch.

“Mane Truth or Dare?” Nana

“Truth.” Lisi says.

“Would you fuck your cousin?”

The room erupts with “what???”

“It’s just a game guys come on. So Mane.”

“Of course I would never fuck my cousin.” Lisi

They continue to play and it's getting more interesting and funny with each second until Babalwa ruins it when Bryce says dare.

"Kiss Mbewenhle."

The all squeal excitedly except Lisi.

"That's not going to happen."

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER SEVENTY THREE

“Eh don’t ruin the game Manelisi please.” Sizwe says and they all agree.

“Do I have to though?” I ask. I thought I’m not playing I’m just watching while enjoying my champagne. It’s tickling me real good.

“See she also doesn’t want to kiss some colored boy she doesn’t know let her be.” Lisi

“I was given a task and I’m going to do it with or without your approval Manelisi.” With that said he smashes his lips on mine. They are soft just like they look. The cheers fill the house. When we break the kiss I see Manelisi walking to the kitchen. I get up and follow him. He takes out the savanna in the fridge and gulps it all down.

“What’s with you?”

“Nothing!”

I check the coast to see if there's no one is coming.

“Are you jealous?”

“What? No I'm not jealous!” He retorts

“Well good because they will start suspecting if you are. We can't afford that. ”

As I walk away he pushes me to the fridge and closes the space between us before hungrily kissing me. The flutter of butterflies dancing in my tummy compels me to reciprocate the kiss with the same fervor. Our tongues are creating magic that makes both of us to moan in each other's mouth.

☆ Muzikayise ☆

There's a knock on the door and he can barely hear it in his half drunk sleep. He's been drowning his sorrows for the couple of days. With each passing day it dawns on him that she really left him. His heart wants him to send a search party looking for his wife but his mind knows that this is the end of their marriage and searching for her will only break his heart more than it's already broken.

He should've seen this coming, Mbewenhle has been hinting for months how draining their marriage is but somehow he always managed to convince her otherwise until he accuse her of something again. This time he can feel it in his gut that it wasn't just an accusation. There's definitely someone else. Why would she throw her phone in the water if there wasn't anything she was hiding? What are the chances that she left with some bastard?

Oh what a fool of foolst in the world full of fools he is! What was he thinking when he thought that their love will conquer? How could she give up on them and leave him just like that after the sacrifices and efforts he's made for her? He was there for her when she was in a wheelchair and he never left her. He was ready to kill and die fo her that day he went to rescue her when Siyabonga kidnapped her. What about the humiliation he

brought upon his nephew and almost ruining their relationship because of her?

Let's not mention making her a wife out of the whore that was hiding behind virginity testing. He became the mockery of a village for the humiliation and pain she put him through and for taking back a cheater. He never wanted to move out of home after marriage but for her he moved out and built a house for her. The same house that she left him with. As if the pain she put him through wasn't enough now she gave up on them and leave him to lick his wound and face the ignominy alone.

"Muzikayise," says Mam Sonto

walking into the lounge. When she couldn't get a response she decided to walk inside only to be met by a dirty house like no one lives here. It's been days since she saw her son and ever since her husband has been in jail he makes sure that he comes to check on them but now it's been days.

"Ma what are you doing here?" His speech is slurring it obvious that he's still drink.

“What’s going on Muzi? Where’s your wife?” She’s looking around with a scrunched nose trying to block her nose from the unpleasant smell. There are bottles of beers and takeaways papers on the floor. A stain of puke on the floor that is almost dry now makes her insides turn. This is the least of her expectation. Where is that girl? What is her job if her son is sitting in such dirt? Muzikayise doesn’t know how to answer that to his mother.

“Muzikayise!”

“Ma don’t make noise please!”

He gets up from the couch and stumble almost falling down then he walks to the kitchen to get some beer. When he get back to the lounge he finds his mom reading the letter his wife wrote for him. Up to this day he still reads it hoping that maybe it might have a different meaning but it’s still read and sound just way it was for the first time he read it.

“What does this mean Muzikayise? Where is she now?”

“I don’t know mama she took her things and left. Even her family don’t know where she is,” Muzikayise says and flop on the couch.

“That whore of a bitch! Is this how she thanks you after everything you’ve done for her? You accepted her whore self and made a wife out of her then she’s going to leave you just like that! She didn’t even have decency to tell you face to face instead she left a stupid letter!” She’s burning with anger. How can that girl break her son’s heart once again after he’s shown nothing but love to her.

“You are better off without her my son! It’s about time we cut ties with that family!”

“I love her mama tell me I’m so fucking stupid!”

“Oh no son you’re not stupid. You just happened to love a wrong person who never deserved you in the first place. You deserve someone who’s going to love you enough to not find it easy to break your heart like this.”

“Maybe when I find her she will be calm. We can work things out...” The desperation in his voice breaks Mam Sonto’s heart. She hates that this is how vulnerable and weak her son has become because of that girl. It also infuriates her that she couldn’t see how much her son loves her. He still wants to work things out between them but that would happen over her dead body. It’s about time her son know his worth.

“Boy you need to love yourself enough to know when to let go. This girl doesn’t love you and she never did. It’s absolutely clear now. You have proven yourself so much to that girl how much you love her but what she did is like spitting on you with that same love. She’s not worth it. You deserves better my son someone who’s going to make you realize why that bitch had to leave you. Someone who’s going to make you rule her heart.”

This is the truth his heart don’t want to hear but his mind know it very well. How he wish love had a button to switch it off. The hardest part of everything is that the more his mind says he should move on it’s the more his heart is loving her. He can barely see himself surviving without her. She gave him a reason and purpose to live. An air that he breathes now that she’s

gone he's barely breathing. Everything around him seems to be sublimating at a very high speed and he has no idea how to stop all of this. It's like the world has cease to exist.

Mam Sonto gets up from her couch and gives her son a warm hug which he needed so bad then she starts cleaning the house before cooking for her son. Just as he's about to dish up for him there's a knock on the door. She shuffles her feet to the door and her stomach turns at the sight of Mam Thembeke.

"What do you want here?"

"Hi Sonto."

"Kli ukunuka!...." Mam Thembeke cuts her short

"I'm not here for you Nomasonto. Where's your son?"

"I'm right here." Muzikayise says behind his mom. He heard some commotion and decided to come see what's going on. Mam Thembeke walks inside the house and looks at him. She

has no clue what has been going on inside these walls but seeing him right now there's no doubt that he's having a difficult time. They walk to sit on the couches in the lounge. Mam Sonto and Mam Thembeke are sitting on one couch and Muzikayise is sitting before them.

"How are you holding up?"

"What do you expect? My son has become a drunkard because of your bitch!"

"Mom!" Muzikayise warns his mother but she's not hearing none.

"What? There's nothing wrong with what I'm saying and she knows that her daughter is a whore!"

"Nomasonto I know that my daughter has put your son through a lot of pain but I won't listen to you insult my daughter in front of me."

“What are you going to do huh?”

“Just insult her once again you will see. Muzikayise I just need some clarity son about everything that has been going on between the two of you. She said she doesn’t blame you for the way you have been treating her. Please enlighten me on that one. What happened and do you have an idea where she could be?”

“Of course wherever she is she’s doing what she does the best which is whoring! You have a nerve to come here and ask my daughter stupid things! We want our lobola back that good for nothing daughter of yours doesn’t deserve it!”

Mam Thembeke inhales deeply to control herself from the rage that is brewing inside of her at Mam Sonto’s comment.

“You’re welcome to come and take the lobola that was made by my daughter’s blood.”

“My son made his own money and his father didn’t help him even with a cent stop talking about things you know nothing about. You and your whore my leave my son alone! He’s been through so much pain because of that slut you call a daughter!”

“I said stop insulting my daughter!” Shouts Mam Thembeke as she slaps Mam Sonto who immediately sees stars.

“How dare you hit my mother! Leave now Mam Thembeke I won’t watch you abuse my mother in front of me!”

“Abuse? That’s extreme! How about we talk about the abuse that my daughter has been enduring in your hands!”

“What abuse I’ve never abused her!”

“Then what did she mean in the letter!”

“Can’t you see that she was looking for an excuse to leave me! I’ve treated your daughter like a Queen mama but she never appreciated me now leave!”

“You did something to her Muzikayise! If I ever found out that you laid your filthy hands on my daughter you will know what I’m made of!” Mam Thembeke clicks her tongue and leave. Mpilenhle left the very same day she came to hear what happened to Mbewenhle so obviously she’s walking. Her phone rings as she’s walking back to her house. It’s none other than the man that is making her life a living hell.

“Gcobolwakhe.”

“I don’t have time to wait for you Thembeke do you want me to go to the police.”

“You don’t have to do this Gcobolwakhe where’s your humanity?”

“Did you think about humanity when you kept my son away from me?”

“You know what is at stake. I’m married I wasn’t even supposed to have a child with you.”

“Ey I don’t care about that mina. I didn’t force you to sleep with me. I just want my son qha and you’re going to give me him otherwise I’m going to the police. Don’t waste anymore time for me I need to bond with my heir.”

“Just give me one more day.”

“I gave you two days already Thembeke and I wasn’t supposed to do that. Should I go to the police?”

“No don’t,” she whispers in defeat as tears roll down her face.

“Good don’t keep me waiting.” He hangs up.

Mam Thembeke wipes her tears. One way or the other she's still losing her son. Going to jail would be no different from losing her son but would she survive the heat in there? Definitely NO which leaves her with no choice but to sign over her parental rights to him and that comes with the hardest thing she's ever had to do which is coming clean to her husband.

On arrival she joins her husband in the lounge who's watching TV while gulping down the last content of mahewu she poured for him before she went to Muzikayise's house.

"Umh mnyeni wami there's something I have to say to you."

"If it's about Mbewenhle please don't MaNdwandwe. I'm tired of listening to you going on and on about that slut. She's the one that chose to leave."

"It's not about Mbewenhle."

"Okay."

Now she has his attention. Her heart is pounding violently and threatening to jump out of her mouth.

“Kwenzenjani mkami?”

“I wish there was a way to say this better than it’s going to sound but unfortunately there isn’t.”

She gulps the air to gain some strength.

“You and your sisters were right. Ndabenhle is..is..no...not your son.”

Qwaabe looks at her blankly as his mind tries to process what his wife just said.

“What are you saying nkosikazi?”

“I’m sorry Khondlo I never meant for any of this to happen.”  
She’s in tears already. Qwabe chuckles and shakes his head.

“Ima ke if he’s not my son then who is his father?”

“I’m sorry....”

“Who is his father Thembeka!!!” He roars angrily making her to jump with fright.

“It’s Gcobolwakhe.” She goes on and explain everything not leaving a single detail.

“Oh is this why you wanted to take Mbewenhle to Durban so that you can cheat on me!!”

“That’s not true sthandwa sami I...”

“Don’t you dare call me your love! I knew it! I knew it that he’s not mine but you accused me of insulting you while you know

very well that what I was saying is true!! Then when I've decided to let all of this go you tell me that he's not mine!!"

"Ngiyaxolisa mnyeni wami. Ngilingekile bekungasiye imhloso yami ukuphinga. Ngicela uxolo," (I'm sorry my

husband. I was tempted it wasn't my intention to cheat. I'm really sorry) she cries looking at her husband who's breathing fire

"Ulingekile amasimba! If this man didn't find out about this you would've let me raise a child that is not mine!"

"He is your son..."

"Shut the hell up! You're talking nonsense! That boy is not my son and never been mine! I know that I hurt you and I still regret that but I never thought you will cheat on me Thembeke! That was just so low of you! Izinyanga ezimbili zonke uvumela enye ndoda idle ukudla kwami awugcinanga ngalokho uyamitha uqamba manga uthi levezandlebe lakho elami unesibindi mfazi ndini!" (Two months you allowed another man to eat food and that's not all you fall pregnant and lied to me

claiming that bastard child of yours is mine. You have a nerve woman!)

“I’m really sorry....”

“Your sorry won’t change anything! Now I see that Mbewenhle got her whore tendencies from you! I can’t even stand the sight of you right now! I want you and that bastard child out of my house!”

“What? No Qwabe don’t do this to me. I’m sorry from the bottom of my heart. I love you and....”

“I said get out of my house now!!”

He gets up and attempt to walk away but his wife holds him. He looks at her with intense disgust and anger.

“Don’t touch me!” He says pushing her away and she falls on the floor right in the moment as Mvelonhle walks in.

“Qwabe please forgive me...”

“You disgust me take your rags and leave my house!”

“What’s going on? Baba why are you kicking out mama.”

Qwabe clicks his tongue and walks out without responding to his son.

“Mama what’s happening?”

Mvelonhle rushes to his mother who’s crying on the floor and help her up.

“Mama talk to me please. Is this about Mbewenhle?”

“I’m fine my son.”

She wipes her tears and walks to her bedroom with her son behind her. She starts packing her clothes and son's clothes into a bag.

"You're packing? Mama kanti what's going on?"

"Nothing you should worry yourself about my boy."

"You're leaving me? First it was Isisa then Mbewenhle now it's you. Mpilenhle is next clearly. Why am I losing the women who means so much in my life? What have I done?"

Those words are like shards of glasses in Mam Thembeke's heart. She looks her son and takes his hands in hers.

"I'm not leaving you boy I will never leave you. Whenever you need me just give me a call and I will always be here for you okay."

"Where are you going?"

“Somewhere.”

“I don’t want you to go mama please don’t go. Whatever it is we can sort it out please.”

“Oh son I’m sorry but this can’t be fixed. I just need you to be strong now okay. I’m sorry that I read your letter your sister wrote for you. She’s right my son you’re about to have a family now it’s time to step up and be a man. You can’t keep on stealing your father’s money just for fun why not steal it to build something for your little family or better yet go study. Your matric results are very good and you can study any course you want. Make something out of your life and be the man that I’m going to be proud to call a son. You need to prove it to Isisa that you can take care of her and the kids. Trust me after that she won’t hesitate to choose you. It’s not that she doesn’t love you it’s just that she needs you to convince her that she won’t be making a mistake of her life by choosing you over her mother.”

Mvelonhle is shocked to hear his mother saying this. He thought she’s against the relationship.

“Did you hear yourself?”

Mam Thembeke laughs.

“I always want the best for you and your sisters. The fact that you two have been dating behind our backs it shows that you love each other. I don't want to be the mom that choose for her children who they should date though I would've preferred a daughter in law your age but hey if my son loves them older what can I say.” They both giggle

“I messed up with Mbewenhle and I don't want to mess up with you as well. I believe that if I guided her correctly she wouldn't have found herself caught up between two guys. Manje lento iyinhamba eyohlezi abantu balendawo bemuthuka ngayo as if they are perfect. I don't know how do I expect people to stop insulting her when your father still does that to her. Every single chance he got he insulted her but funny you never hear us reminding him of his past mistakes. It was about time your sister set herself free from all of this unfair treatment and pressure. I think a change of scenery will do her good I just wish she can at least tell me if she's okay wherever she is.”

“Running away is not an option mama. She should’ve come to me. I’m always there for her couldn’t she trust me enough to tell me whatever that made her to think running away is an option? Stop defending her please and admit that she’s selfish. Look now you and baba are fighting because of her. You are leaving home because of her mama I hate her!”

“You don’t mean that my boy.”

“Oh yes I do mama. Mbewenhle is dead to me!”

He’s still angry and he will come around. Mam Thembeke thought to herself and continue with packing. When she’s done she takes her little boy who’s sleeping on the bed. She piggybacks him and wrap a towel around him clapping it on her around her breast for support.

“Take care of yourself and when you need me call me okay.”

“Don’t go please.” Mvelonhle Whispers as she looks at his mama tears shining in his eyes.

“I don’t have a choice. I love you my boy.” She kisses his forehead before taking her bag and walks out leaving her heart behind. It’s unbelievable that almost 3 decades of marriage is in shambles because of two lousy months.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I shake my head while typing the message when I'm about to press send my phone is snatched out of my hand. I look at him annoyingly.

"I'm talking to you wena! Who are you talking to that has you engrossed like this?"

I wasn't even engrossed I'm just annoyed how persistent this colored boy is. Why would I even date a colored boy when I have such a beautiful smile.

"That's invasion of privacy Lisi!" I say as soon as I see him reading my conversation with Bryce and snatch back my phone. He cannot fight me because he's driving.

"Oh Bryce is the one that has you so engrossed. Why does he has your numbers?"

“He said he stole them in your phone.”

“That’s bastard I’m going to skin him alive!”

“You don’t need to get worked up I will handle him.”

“Handle him by kissing him?”

I roll my eyes. Like really now? It was just a game!

“It’s better to kiss him than a man who has a fiancée.”

“Oh so you want him.” Is it me or there’s a hint of jealous in his voice?

“No I don’t want him I love my teeth and my smile is so beautiful.”

He looks at me and his demeanor tells me that he's confused.

"We all know how aggressive those fellas are. Imagine me with two missing teeth on the front. Trust me it's not nice as Bab Bheki from Mina Nawe show makes it to be."

"Who is Bab Bheki?"

"You never watched Mina Nawe House show on Moja Love?"

"I don't like shows."

"Oh well the show was about five couples who were on the brink of breaking up and moved into a house, where they attempted to salvage their relationships. There was this man goes by the name of Bheki and he had a gab. Whenever he was laughing he was like."

I show him how Bab Bheki laughed. His laughter fills the car and I can't help but join him.

“It was so funny how his tongue was peeping through his gab.”

“And you had to notice that dombolo lami!”

“You know something hilarious is noticeable. Everyone noticed then Somizi had guts to mimic him in front of him and the whole world.”

He can't stop laughing and at some point he's even choking. I stroke his back until he's fine.

“You okay?”

“You want to kill me!”

I laugh

“I can imagine the headline on Isolezwe. ‘Indoda ihleke isisini sa mnumzane Bheki owaye kwi show kamabonakude ebizwa ngokuthi iMina Nawe kuchanel 157 Moja Love yaze yaxhilwa amathi yashona.’ ”

He starts all over again and I’m watching at him laughing like it’s a foreign thing. Does everything about him have to be this sexy though? Mbewenhle you need to stop ogling someone’s fiancé!

“Jesus I missed your crazy ass!”

“I’m not crazy!” I retort

“Yeah right. Bryce is not a typical colored dombolo lami. Not every colored is aggressive it’s so unlike you to be stereotype not that I’m saying you should date him.”

“Oh well I’m not taking any chances. I’m coming from an emotional taxing marriage I wouldn’t dare gamble like that with my life.”

“I hear you.”

“So we are not going to talk about that kiss on Saturday.”

“There’s nothing to talk about.”

“It shouldn’t have happened Lisi.”

“Exactly so there’s no need to talk about it. I think we are here.”

It’s Monday and we are meeting the running coach at her club. Yes she’s legit Lisi’s someone whom he asked to run some background check said so. We drive through the gate and pull over before this big building. He goes to my side to open the door for me. When I step outside my eyes scan the place. He closes the door and takes my hand then we make our way through.

We are welcomed by the lady on the front desk then she ushers us to her office. She's expecting us I called her yesterday and confirmed my meeting with her. We pass several doors until our walk ceases to the door that has a sticker M Chabeli. The lady knocks and when we hear the voice saying come in she pushes the door then we get in.

"Tshidi, Miss Qwabe has arrived."

"Thank you KB."

We exchange greetings then she asks KB to get something for us to drink.

"I'm on it," says KB and disappears.

I thought we will be welcomed by 'sihamba ngolayini' bursting through the speakers but this is totally different from what I anticipated. Don't ask me how does a running club and partying club are the same thing in my mind. It must be the village girl in

me. The room is a typical beautiful and spacious office with it extravagant furniture.

“Please sit down.”

We settle down on the comfy chairs before her. She takes off her glasses and looks at them as if she’s checking some dirt on them then puts them back.

“So you came Ms Qwabe.”

I try to speak but isikhohlela asizibekile phansi. I’m kinda nervous I don’t know why. I clear my throat and stare at her.

“Yes. This is Manelisi Maphumulo, my cousin. Lisi this is the lady I told you about.”

“Nice to meet you ma’am.” Lisi says extending his hand and they do a hand shake.

“Please call me Matshidiso or Tshidi.”

She’s talking to both of us. City people and being called by their first names even when they are older! By the time I go back home I would be calling elders by their first names left, right and center. I can already see myself walking through the door and finding my father sitting in the lounge watching TV. “Hello Musawenkosi. Ngibuyile. How have you been?” and when he starts roaring angrily I’d laugh at him “Ah mara Musariza I’m alright what with the drama? Where’s your wife? Thembinator I’m home!”

“Thank you for agreeing to see me ma’am...uhm I mean Tshidi.”

“I’m glad you came it would’ve saddened me to let such remarkable talent go unrecognized and unnoticed.”

“Thank you so much. Honestly I’ve always known that I can run but I’ve never thought I’d be a professional athlete. At school I used to win the races and when we were competing with other schools but that was it. I’m clueless about all of this do you mind to take me through step by step.”

“Okay AA Club stands for Amaqhawekazi Athletes Club. This club was established seven years ago. Our focus is female runners of all abilities. We provide the members running activities and training so that they can improve their sport. We participates in national and provincial athletics association events. Every after two months we have a competition where we serve refreshments after the competition. Our club and license fees are the lowest in the whole country. The running attire is of high quality and is sponsored by Nike and Puma.”

“Is it a must to join the club?” Lisi

“Yes joining a club will enable her to compete in South Africa or any other International Association of Athletics Federations member country. An athlete is represented by the club he or she is registered with. This is one of the many rules of Athletics South Africa.”

“Many rules?” I say and she chuckles

“Yes there are so many but I will highlight the very few important ones and others you will learn them along the way should you decide to take this journey of becoming an athlete.”

“I will really appreciate that.”

“The....” she’s cut mid sentence by the knock on the door.

“Come in!”

The door swings open and KB walks in then places a tray that has two cans of coke and glasses. We thank her then she dashes out. Lisi opens the cans and pours the drink in our glasses then gives me one.

“Thank you.”

“As I was saying an athlete is eligible to compete in South Africa, or any other IAAF Member country if he or she is in possession of an ASA License

agrees to abide by the rules of ASA, or IAAF where relevant, and has not been declared ineligible by ASA or IAAF. He or she should register in one club and will not represent another club in any form or format. No athlete may relocate from one club to another club in the same province, or from one province to another.”

“So what happens if she’s not happy in the club she has joined and wants to change? Is she not allowed?” asks Lisi and takes a gulp of his coke.

“She is allowed only if she’s in possession of a written clearance certificate from her former club entitling her to change to the new club or province. Failure to obtain such a clearance certificate shall render the athlete ineligible to compete for the new club or province. A club must respond to the request of an athlete to relocate to another club within 2 weeks. Failing to do so, the athlete will automatically be cleared to register at the new club. She may change from one club to another once per year calendar.”

“You talked about license how does one go about that?”

“ASA provides permanent licenses to provinces then the provinces provides those licenses to the clubs. The clubs sell the licenses to their members. The temporary licenses are also provided by ASA but the difference is that they are provided to event organizers instead of clubs. The event organizers obtain right from the province to use numbers. You’re only allowed to wear the number specially issued for you and shouldn’t be transferred to any other member or athlete.”

So many rules indeed but in no time I will be used to them. She goes on and enlighten us more. I couldn’t be more satisfied.

“She was once shot and was in a wheelchair for weeks could that be a problem maybe?”

“Oh I’m sorry to hear that. That must have been very traumatizing. Has she had any problems or pain after recovery?” She asks and they both look at me.

“No I haven’t and I’ve fully recovered.”

“When was that?”

“Three years back.”

“It’s been long but if something happens our medical team will examine her and ensure that if it’s safe for her or not.”

Oh God please let no injury of three years ago hinder me from achieving my goals. I’m about to start a new journey of my life and I need no hindrance. Running has always been my strength but now it’s about to be my career. I won’t lie I’m so scared but I’m not sure who once said if it doesn’t scare you then it’s not real. Oh well I guess my life is about to take an unexpected turn. Am I ready? I’ve gaat to be otherwise ngizoba ready phambili!

.....

I woke up in a jovial mood today for the first time since I’ve been here. It must be the fact that things are slowly working

out for me. Monday we came back and discussed this meticulously with Lisi and Sally. They think this would be a great opportunity for me and I shouldn't miss it but do you want to know what do I think? This is more than just an opportunity to me it's more like following something I've always been passionate about but I didn't realize that fact until I got here.

Lisi made all the necessary payments and I'm looking forward to my first day at the club which is tomorrow. See when other people do spring cleaning when they are stressed that was me when I woke up but the difference is that I'm not stressed. I've just finished half an hour ago now I'm showering while singing. Yaz you will know that you are actually the type that enjoy bathing until you get used to showers and bathtub. They make this bathing thingie enjoyable maan.

Imagine having to pour water into the kettle and place it on the brazier that's if you've already prepared the fire. If not you have to make it first before warming your water and by the time it get hot you've already lost the interest to bath suka! No wonder when people come back from eGoli they are usually glowing and have some complexion because bathing is not as daunting as it is in rural areas. Here you don't need to eat

umdoko wamabele to gain strength to bath. I hear the door of the bathroom opening then closing. The love birds are at work and it's still early.

"Hello is there anyone here?"

"Yeah I can't hold it anymore!"

I sigh in relief when I hear that it's Lisi and wipe the foggy shower glass with my hand then look at him. He's grunting while peeing.

"You held it that long huh."

"Yey wena my bladder almost burst."

"Don't you have toilets in your workplace?"

He laughs and spits inside the toilet after shaking his dick. I wonder why guys spit every time they finish peeing no actually

why am I staring? I turn around and continue with scrubbing myself. I hear the toilet flushing.

“Don’t forget to wipe the seat Lisi.”

“Voetsek!”

I’m not his fiancée I won’t clean after him every time he uses the toilet. With me he’s going to learn how to aim.

“You need to learn how to aim cuzzy! How is it possible that you can’t aim such a big hole but you can aim the opening of a vagina?” I ask giggling and when I don’t get his response I realize that he’s gone.

“You can’t compare a toilet to a vagina dombolo lami.” I jump in shock at how close his voice sounds. Beautiful bastard is standing right next to me butt naked. Damn for a moment I thought Michael Jai White is standing right next to me.

“Lisiiii.” It comes out in a whisper

“Dombolo lami,” he says eyeing me up and down.

“Wh...what are you doing here?”

“Taking a shower with my dumplings.”

“This is....” He shuts me up with his forefinger on my mouth.

“Don’t think much about it okay.” There’s something in voice that makes it hard for me to protest or it’s actually him as a whole I don’t know. He takes the shower gel and smear it all over my chest then put it back before lathering the gel on my chest going down to my breasts.

“How was your day?”

Gosh his touch has my nerves in my body and brain electrifying. I can barely think straight!

“Day...uhm...fine.”

I hear him chuckling.

“You are not going to ask me as well?”

“How..uhm..was your day?”

“I couldn’t do anything hence I came back early.”

I open my eyes and they lock on his.

“Why? Is everything okay?”

His hands are massaging and squeezing my boobs sensually. Fuck it’s so good! I bite my lip to suppress a moan.

“There’s someone who’s invading my mind 24/7. I can barely think straight!” There’s a hint of frustration in his voice. I look

down at something that is poking my tummy only to be met by his shining hard meat. I swallow nothingness and look up at him.

“You sound frustrated did that someone did you bad in the past?”

“Not really in fact this someone made me feel things I never thought a guy like me could ever feel.”

“Okay is that a bad thing?”

“I don’t know I just...it’s complicated.”

He heaves a sigh and takes the gel then beckons me to open my hands. I do just that then he pours the gel into my hands before giving me his back. My heart sinks to the pit of my stomach at the sight of a huge burn scar on his back. I smear the gel on his back and my hands look like Benhle’s on his broad muscled back.

“Does it hurt?” It look like it does yaz. He laughs out loudly.

“No it doesn’t. It just looks ugly.” I switch on the shower spray and let the water wash away the gel on his body as it pours on us.

“I’m sorry.” I whisper pushing back my tears and plant kisses all over his scar as if my kisses will make it disappear.

“Hey it’s okay.” He turns around and cradles my face in his huge palms.

“It’s not your fault don’t feel bad. Soze ngikuthwese amacala okungasiwo awakho.”

“It doesn’t change the fact that who did this is my family.”

“It is what it is dombolo lami and there’s nothing we can change instead we should find a way to move forward okay.”

His thumbs are drawing circles on my cheeks as we gaze at each other like we haven't seen each other for decades. He onslaughts me with a soul searing kiss that has my tummy fluttering. I pull him closer digging my nails on his dripping wet flesh.

“Lisi...”

“Mmh..”

“We shouldn't..”

We exchange words in between the hot and heavy kiss before breaking it. He goes down to the floor on his knees. Without a warning he pulls my leg to his shoulder and I almost fall but I balance on the wall. He cups my mound as if he wants to see if it fits in his hand. A flash of tingling sensation travels through me as I feel the warmth of his tongue stroking my bud. Oh damn! I grab his head to keep him in place and enjoy his tongue running between my delicate folds. He's feasting on me like his life depends on it. I explode into a knees wobbling orgasm before I expected it.

“Ohh my good God!”

He gets up from the floor his eyes are hooded and he has a smirk on his face. Once again he frames my face and ravages my mouth. I taste myself in his mouth for few seconds as the water pouring on us washes away the taste. He trails hot kisses down my neck to my boobs. Moans roll out of my mouth in a form of a national anthem as he twirls his tongue around my nipple and suckling like a starved baby. Gosh I hate how my body melt like ice under his touch.

He scoops me up and I tightly wrap my legs around his waist then he wrenches his lips from mine. Our eyes lock as he fiddles his cock in attempt to plunge into me. The anticipation of him inside of me is almost tangible. He thrusts into me and I gulp the air as my muscles swallow his rod.

“Ohhh shin ta ra ba aaaah.”

Lord your son is praying in tongues now? He presses his forehead on mine for a moment trying to ease the effect rippling through us then he begins to flex his hips.

“Look at me dombolo lami. Don’t close your eyes,” he says in a throaty whisper and I blink my eyes open gazing at his dreamy eyes. I’m not sure how am I going to keep my eyes on him the

pleasure is too intense. He pumps into me deeper reaching every nook of my pussy. Every stroke feels so foreign in a most mind blowing way that compels me to gurgle his clans.

“Shidi what did you put in there aahh,” his thrusts are in a furious motion and our screams are deafening. Guilt nibbles on me at the thought of Sally walking in and hearing our mutual screams of ecstasy. He puts me down and turns me around before plunging into me. I arch my back a bit. His one hand is gripping on my waist while the other is clamped around my neck.

With each thrust he is tightening the grip around my neck. He’s pounding me like he’s on a race and I can barely keep up that I’m now standing with my toes. A wave of overwhelming sensation washes over me and my knees wobble. He bites my earlobe and chokes me while our bodies move in a rapid intoxicating dance. The muscles of my pussy spasms and I let out a foreign sound as he growls like a dying cow in my ear. We both explode into an intense tsunami of orgasm.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

Guilt is gnawing at me but not enough to stop me from reveling in this moment. We took the second and third round to my bedroom now we are swaddled in each other's arms. The sound of his heart beat is like a love song in my ears. No one is saying anything to the other but our souls are naked in one another's company. They are having a conversation that if we were to have it verbally it will ruin this moment because our minds know what's right from wrong.

His fingertips are drawing circles on my back making my skin to tingle in a frenzy of static. The feel of his rod stirring underneath my stomach is making my clit pulsates and it doesn't help that I'm still sensitive from that round we just had. As much as I would love for this moment to last forever I know that's impossible. I attempt to remove myself from his body but he tightens his grip around me.

"Lisi...."

“Let me revel in this blissful moment dombolo lami,” he says in a whisper.

“No matter how blissful this moment is it doesn’t change the fact that it’s stolen mqwebu wami.”

It’s always the stolen moments that are most the euphoric ones. This is how it used to be when I was the one two timing someone who I made promises to now the tables have turned but still here we are lying on this bed and our sweaty bodies are intertwined into one. He doesn’t say anything but pull my chin up so that I’m looking at him before plundering my mouth.

His dick is getting harder beneath my tummy and when he flips us over so that he’s the one who’s on top of me I just know that I have to stop this before we fuck again. Sally is on her way home now it’s around her knock off time.

“Lisi...”

“Mmm...”

“We have to stop please.”

“Okay we will stop but let me bhebhanize you fast and quickly.”

I chuckle

“No your fiancée is coming you will bhebhanize her.”

“I want to bhebhanize you dombolo lami. I can't get enough of how your pussy grips at my dick.”

“No. Your fiancée is nice to me Lisi and I feel bad that we betrayed her.”

I really feel bad. Sally doesn't deserve this. I don't know why it's so hard to resist him!

“Let’s make it worth our while and then after that we are never going to do it.”

“Jesus Manelisi do you hear yourself right now? Don’t you feel bad for what we did?”

He groans and rolls down from me. I get up and go back to the bathroom to take another shower. What have I done? Gosh where Lisi is concerned I never use my mind to think but my pussy. How will I look at Sally after this?

Once I’m done with the quick shower I pull on my robe and pick his clothes on the floor then head to my bedroom. Oh shit she’s back I can hear their voices. I rush to my bedroom to hide his clothes in my closet and lotion my body then slip into leggings and shirt-sweater.

I feel my chest tightening at the sight of them canoodling on the couch. Giving them the space is the only way. I walk back to my bedroom and sleep off the ache in my heart. At dinner time Sally wakes me up. I start at the bathroom first to pee and wash my hands then join them. I don’t know why she uses so much ingredients yet her food still tastes the same as mine. Okay I admit her food is succulent my taste buds are just bitter!

“Are you ready for tomorrow?” Sally asks and I give her a nod. I can’t bring myself to look at her on the face.

“You okay?”

“Yes I’m okay. I just miss my little brothers.” It’s not a lie I do miss my brothers.

“Oh I’m sorry babe.”

“It’s okay. How was your day?” I’m trying to make a conversation to ease my conscience. She looks at me and beams. Gosh she’s so beautiful without trying so hard and her good heart is what makes this hard. Maybe if she didn’t welcome me nicely I’d be like ‘middle finger up’ I owe no bitch loyalty but man....

“I got a promotion!”

“Oh yeah?”

“Yes she’s a Managing Editor now.” I cannot miss the pride in Lisi’s voice.

“Wow that’s beautiful so when are we celebrating?”

“I haven’t thought about it but now that you’re saying it how about this Friday night?”

Lisi and I agree that Friday night it is. Yaz it’s so funny how he’s vibing so well with his fiancée like he wasn’t fucking me hours ago while guilt is slicing me into pieces. I just want to vanish from here.

.....

I don’t know what to expect and that’s a reason I’m anxious. I’m praying that everything go well. Lisi is going to drop me at the club and head to work. He squeezes my thigh and I look at him.

“Don’t be nervous you will do good.”

“What if I won’t cope? What if everything will be too difficult for me to do?”

“Come on dombolo lami you can’t expect to be perfect on the very first day. It’s a training club for a reason don’t forget that.”

“What if their training would be too intense for me to the point that my operation pains or I lose the mobility of my legs again?” I’m panicking and my breathing is rapid. He immediately stops the car on the side of the road and holds my hands.

“Breathe in and out slowly. Release the air deep from your stomach.” I inhale deeply and exhale.

“Again.” I repeat the same breathing exercise and look at her. The concern in his eyes makes me feel awful. The last thing I want is to worry him.

“Negative thinking would be a hindrance to succeed in your life. I want you to instill positivity in yourself. Tell yourself that you would do this no matter what and let no negative thoughts tell you otherwise. I believe in you but it won’t do any difference if you don’t believe in yourself first. It has to start with you first dombolo lami. Save yourself from unnecessary anxiety and stress by erasing every single negative thought and live a confident, positive and fearless life you feel me?”

I release a deep sigh and nod my head. He’s making sense as always.

“Yeah I feel you.”

He plants a long wet peck on my lips then he starts the car and drives off. On arrival he opens the door for me. I lean over to take Lisi’s sport bag at the back seat and climb out of the car. He has many of these sport bags I’m stealing this one.

“You’re going to be good right?”

“Yeah.”

“Come here.”

He envelopes me in his arms and I take in his scent. I really needed this hug. I feel his lips on my forehead before he frees me from his arms.

“Call me if they do something you don’t like.”

“I would do that. Thank you.”

“Here.”

He hands me a few hundred notes.

“What is it for?”

“I don’t know anything you might need.”

“I don’t think it’s going to be necessary.”

“Just take it you might never know if you going to need it or not. What time are you going back home?”

“I’m not sure.”

“Let me know I will request Uber for you.”

“Sure.”

He cradles my face in his palms and kisses me then I make my way in.

“Go get them my runner athlete!” He says behind me and I giggle waving at him. He doesn’t go until I’m out of his sight. I meet Tshidi in the parking lot and we exchange greetings then we make our way to her office.

“The other members haven’t arrived yet. Make yourself comfortable.” I settle on the couch.

“Are you ready?”

“I think so.”

She looks at me intently as if she’s not happy with my response.

“I mean I’m ready!” I say enthusiastically

“That guy you came with Monday is your cousin right?”

“Yes.”

“Oh I saw you two kissing.”

She saw us! No no no! This can't be happening! What were we thinking? Why did he kiss me? No why did you allow him to kiss you? Sally...

"Hey hey hey breathe...breathe okay...deeply and slowly." I don't know when did she get next to me. We are seated on the couch and she's trying to calm me down. Mortification washes over me the moment I'm calm.

"Uhm I'm sorry."

"Why are you sorry?"

What am I sorry for? I don't know but I'm sorry. I shrug my shoulders.

"Look I didn't mean to pry or anything I should mind my business but you don't have to hide that he's your boyfriend"  
" she says with a smile painted on her face.

“He’s not my boyfriend and please don’t tell anyone please I’m begging you.”

“Of course I won’t but you need to calm down. Close your eyes and inhale deeply.” I do as she says

“Exhale.”

I exhale

“Now open your eyes.”

I do exactly as she says. She’s tan in complexion and so beautiful with a mole underneath her left eye.

“You’re beautiful,” Okay that’s random.

“Thank you so are you.”

“Thank you.”

“Where are you from. Your isiZulu is deep.”

“I’m from KZN, Village called Mozane in Msinga.”

“Great. When did your anxiety attacks started?”

“I’m not sure about the exact date but they started after the disappearance of my twin sister. Running helps me though you don’t have to worry about anything.”

“It’s my duty to worry about your well being as your coach. Do you mind to enlighten me about your twin sister.”

“Ndalwenhle? Doesn’t that name ring a bell?”

“Ndalwenhle...wait that child that disappeared years back but her family just found out weeks back that she was sacrificed by some man to be rich.”

“That’s one.”

“Oh my goodness I’m really sorry to hear that Mbewenhle. This world is so small!”

“She’s resting in peace now that what’s important.”

“I remember when I saw that post on social media I thought of my daughters and I couldn’t help but cry. I’d never survive if such can happen to them. Have you ever had counseling?”

“Yes.” Of course I’m lying. The last thing I need is to hear someone telling me to talk as if it ever change anything. She looks at me as if she’s trying to read if I’m telling the truth or not. I keep my eyes straight to her until she chuckles.

“What triggers your anxiety attacks?”

“Anything worrisome or scary.”

Are we going to start or not? I'm here for training not all these questions.

"How do you handle your anxiety attacks?"

"I run."

"You have never taken any medication for your anxieties?"

"No the last thing I want is to depend on some pills."

"Then you have to face your fears and challenge them. Who do you trust and share your thoughts or feelings with?"

"I keep my thoughts and feelings to myself most of the time."

"Why?"

“I feel like people listen just to judge not to understand what you’re saying and put themselves in your shoes. Sometimes it’s a matter of fact there’s no difference it will make instead it will worry other people.”

“I see let’s try this. Hark back to every anxiety attack you have ever had in your life and remember what caused it then write it down.”

“Okay then what after that?”

“Just do that then we will take it from there. Come let me show you the changing room.” We get up and she leads me to the changing room. 7 girls walk in and change as well after we exchanged greetings.

“Okay girls. I’m Matshidiso Chabeli and I’m going to be your coach. There are many of us but you beginners are only 8. Once I’m satisfied with your performance I’m going to move you to join the other members who are now doing intense training. Do you all understand?”

“Yes coach.” We all chorus

“Okay I’m sure we are all here because we have goals to reach so to reach those goals we have to be committed and devoted to everything we do here. I want us to have a healthy and honest relationship. Feel free to come to me if ever there’s something you are not happy about I’m always available to listen to you. Even if it’s something that is not relevant to everything we will be doing here and be rest assured that everything we will discuss will be confidential. Now let’s introduce ourselves to each other.”

We do just as our coach said after that she leads us to the field. We start with light jogging and stretches to warm up for ten minutes then we begin our workouts. Today we are doing the basic which is sprinting at 60% maximum of our efforts and walk for 120 seconds for recovery. We repeat the pattern for about 3 hours taking 10 minutes rest in between. By the time we are done I’m hungry as fuck plus I didn’t eat breakfast. My stomach was in knots due to anxiety.

We seem to get along with the girls before they leave we exchange numbers. I will remember their names along these

training sessions. I call Lisi and let him know that I'm done. Time is going for 12 in the noon. While I wait for Uber I do some sprints alone.

"I can't get over how remarkable your speed is but you need to avoid too high movement of the arms and too far across the chest."

"Noted coach ." I say in between pants.

"You shouldn't strain yourself it's your first day."

"I'm just waiting for...." I'm cut mid sentence by my ringing phone. It's a text from Lisi.

"My Uber is here." I say taking my bag from the ground.

"Don't forget about what we talked about."

I nod and say my goodbye then head to the gate where I find Lisi's car waiting for me. I thought he's going to request uber but no Mr is waiting for me outside his car.

"My favorite athlete!"

I giggle and throw myself in his arms which are wild open for me. He holds me tightly and kisses my forehead.

"How was it?"

"Not bad at all."

"See? You got this."

"I thought you will request Uber for me."

"It's my lunch break. I will drive you to our place and go back to work."

“You really didn’t have to do that Lisi.”

“I know but I want to. I bought us pies I’m sure you’re starving. Let’s find a spot to eat them because we are not going to eat them in my car.”

“Why not?”

“Wait until I buy you a car then you will know what I mean.”

“You want to buy me a car?”

“Let’s bounce.”

Okay so he’s going to ignore my question just like that? I throw my bag in the back seat and get in the front as he does so then we drive off.

“Tshidi saw us kissing.”

“Unamanga wena!”

“I’m telling you whatever this is between us has to stop Lisi.”

He doesn’t say anything but pull over under the shade of the tree in this secluded place. We get out of the car and sit on the bonnet. I fiddle inside the plastic bag and find 4 pies with two fanta cold drinks and P.S chocolates.

“4?”

“Yes 2-2 this thing disappear in the stomach the moment you fart. I workout too and I know what I’m talking about.”

Maybe he’s right because the way I’m starving I could eat a whole cow. Then these pies had to be hot!

“Let me cool it down for you.” He takes my pie and unwraps the top part of it then blows cold air on it. Aww isn't he cute? When it's cool he gives me back and I eat it like I've been starved for years.

“So tell me about your day.”

I tell him everything we did and he's listening to me. This of the things I love about Lisi. I wouldn't notice even when he's just humouring me because when I share something to him he's not quick to respond or tell me what he thinks without putting himself in my shoes.

“I'm glad you enjoyed your day dombolo lami.”

“I think I'm going to like it there. How about you? Is work okay? Are you still thinking about that someone?”

“I forgot that I had a meeting today because of this someone.”

“Haibo Lisi you can’t afford to forget meetings because of this someone. Kanti what hold does he has on you? Why are you thinking about him now? Did you meet him perhaps?”

“What happened in your marriage? I’ve been waiting for you to open up to me.”

He’s changing the topic I see him!

“So that you can judge me?”

“No dombolo lami I’ve never judged you nawe uyakwazi lokho.”

“I’m sorry I didn’t mean to say that. I just don’t want to talk okay?”

“I haven’t changed dombolo lami. I’m still that Lisi you know. I would never judge you and I won’t force you to open up to me. Whenever you are ready you would do that. I’m sorry if I offended you.”

He caresses my cheek staring deep in my eyes then he leans over. Our lips blend together in passion. In a blink of a second he's on top of me intensifying the kiss. I moan as he grinds his crotch on my mound.

He wrenches his lips from mine not taking his eyes off me and removes my leggings together with my panties before unzipping his pants taking out his hard meat. Without a waste of time his dick is jackhammering in and out of my pussy.

I meet his furious thrusts as we fuck like we are possessed. It's not love making but it's passion and suppressed emotions that are let free. He pounds into me in an unrelenting rhythm. It's only take hard and rapid strokes before we both reach our high.

"I love you so much dombolo lami," he says in a gruff whisper and collapses on top of me.

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER SEVENTY FIVE

☆ Isisa ☆

They're from the gynecologist and it was Mvelo's first time accompanying her. He's been so engrossed on the pictures of the scan and beaming as if he understands what he's seeing on the pictures. All he knows is that he's staring at his baby girl. They didn't want the sex of their baby to be a surprise so the gynecologist said they are expecting a daughter. Isisa looks at him and a swell of joy sweeps over her as she bites on her drumstick. They're in Nandos restaurant.

"Eat the pictures won't vanish."

"I can't wait for her to be born. Thank you Manjinji."

She knows how much this means to him.

"Don't mention it."

His heart is swimming in a pool of joy and he can't control it. He finds himself going down to the floor with one knee and looks at this beautiful woman who has occupied his heart. He flips the box of the ring open and looks at her.

“Manjinji I won't lie and say the first day I met you I knew that you are the one because that's not true but I knew you are the one the weeks we got to know each other after Mbewenhle went missing. You taught me what unconditional love is and losing you would be like losing uqobo lwami. Ye you're my world

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my beginning and my end. Ubambo lwami, my Eve ngiyacela sthandwa sami ungenze indoda emdodeni and marry me.”

Isisa is shocked to the core and the people who are now taking videos of them are not helping. How can he ambush her like this? They broke up and....

“Say yesss!” People are chanting. She gets up from the chair and dashes out with tears streaming down her face without saying a word. Sadness filled the whole of Nandos restaurants

as they look at him with pity. He fakes a smile and gets up from the floor then he runs after her.

“Isisa!”

She walking fast heading straight to the rank where she gets inside the taxi which was just left with one passenger to be full. They look at each other as the taxi drives away. Mvelo’s heart breaks into million pieces. He gets into another taxi and wait almost an hour before it gets full then it takes off.

On arrival at home his heart is bleeding and all he wants is to sleep the pain off. He finds his father on the floor lying downward. He rushes to him and crouches before him.

“Baba! Wake up baba!”

Mvelo cries in agony trying to wake up his father who’s not waking up.

☆ Mpilenhle ☆

The moment she sees her brother she runs to him and they share a hug. The way her brother was hysterical on the phone she still can't believe she made it to hospital without causing an accident because she was driving like a maniac.

"Where's mama?" She says breaking the hug and looks at her brother.

"I've been trying to call her but her phone is off. The last time we talked was yesterday."

"Last time you talk? What does that supposed to mean Mvelo?"

"You don't know that mom doesn't live at home anymore?"

Mpilenhle is shocked to hear these news!

“Why?”

“Baba kicked her out of home I don’t know why but I think it’s about Mbewenhle. She left us with problems nx!”

“Mvelo why I wasn’t told about this where does she live now?”

“She didn’t say but she’s not at gogo’s place.”

She takes out her phone and calls her mom but her phone sends her straight voicemail. She keep on trying hoping for different results but unfortunately Mam Thembeke is not aware that her son is playing with her phone and has switched it off. Going to her mother’s house after her husband threw her out was not going to be a good idea. Her mom was going to demand to know the reason why she was returning back home and she doesn’t want her mom to find out about her infidelity at least not yet.

She had to go to Tugela Ferry to her aunt’s house, MaZwide. The one who was supposed to raise Ndabenhle. She

understands unlike her mom. Funny how it took this moment to realize how her daughter feels about her. She can go to strangers but her just like she went to her aunt instead of her mom.

“Don’t cry I will try to find out where she is.”

“You’d do that for me?”

“Yes but I don’t promise you anything.”

He wipes her tears on her face with her thumbs while staring deep in her eyes. God knows it was never his intention to destroy her marriage but she pushed him and seeing how broken she is right now breaks his heart.

“I’m sorry Thembeke you made me retaliate it was never my intention to cause all of this. All I want is to be part of my boy’s life and I know that it’s not a wise decision to take him away from you. A child needs both of his parents so I’m no longer taking him away from you. We are going to parent.”

“Really?”

“Yes.”

“Oh thank you so much Gcobolwakhe this means so much to me. I’m really sorry for everything I’ve done. I didn’t handle this better I just panicked and thought of what this could do to my marriage. Once again I’m sorry.”

“I’m also sorry and please don’t be hard on yourself you tried your best to be the best mom to Mbewenhle. You made your mistakes and you tried to rectify them but she pushed you away. It’s not your fault that she wasn’t ready to forgive you.”

All she needs is another chance just one chance. Ndabenhle walks to his mother frustrated that the screen is now blank and hands her the phone.

“Cimile!”

Mam Thembeke switches on the phone and just as she's about to give her son it rings.

"Mpilenhle."

"Mama you need to come to the hospital baba has been admitted."

Mam Thembeke's heart stop beating. The doctor said he would never survive a second heart attack hence she tried her utmost to protect him from this. She tells the father of her last born what's happening.

"Oh I'm really sorry to hear that. Go I will look after him. You can take my car."

"Gcobolwakhe you don't have to..."

"Thembeke take the car and go"

“Okay thank you so much!”

Without a waste of time she leaves the two to bond and drives to the hospital. As she’s about to enquire she spots her children and go to them. They both get up and hug their mom.

“What’s going on?”

“We are still waiting for the feedback from the doctor but I found him unconscious on the floor.”

“Oh Jesus!”

“Where do you live now and why did baba chased you out of home.”

“Not now Mpilenhle please.”

They wait for what almost feels like a decade then the doctor comes to update them. Qwabe suffered a stroke and his

condition is critical. The severity of the stroke caused paralysis and they are skeptical if he's going to recover from that. Mam Thembeke sinks to the bench and cries her lungs out. How she wish she can take back the hands of time.

☆ Manelisi ☆

“The last thing we want is for you to get fired. First you forgot the meeting now you are video calling at work?”

She won't let this go now would she? I wonder what would she say if she were to hear that she's the reason I've been messed up lately. 'Did I do right by fetching her?' that's the question that has been lingering in my mind until I found myself buried deep in her warmth two days ago then it hit me that I made the biggest mistake ever. The temptation that I can't resist and the upside down life turner that what she is.

“It wasn't a meeting, meeting babe more like taking down the meeting minutes.”

If someone told me that I would be an executive assistant years back I would have laughed so hard and think it's a joke. The funny part about this I came here looking for a forklift operator job since I did my training as it was the part of the plan but I got a six month probation for executive assistant. The turn out of events is still a mystery to me. It surely has my grandma written all over it. I mean you might not need qualifications to be an executive assistant but experience is needed which is something I didn't have. Six months later I got hired and the salary is satisfying let alone the benefits.

"Still Lisi...." I cut her mid sentence before she goes on and on.

"What are you doing there?"

"I'm about to take a bath to wash away the sweat. Today the training was very intense. I'm so exhausted."

"I want to see you bath."

“Ahhhhh ufuna ukungibonela

” she says pouting her lips and I can’t help but laugh.

“Just a bit. I wanna see that beautiful vagina of yours.”

“Haibo mzala!”

“You’re so forward!”

We both burst into laughter. She likes teasing me with this ‘cousin’ thing.

“Let me bath Lisi.”

“I want to see your pussy you sexy thang!”

She giggles naughtily then her face disappears before her shaved glistening pussy appears on my screen. I feel my dick expanding in my pants.

“Like what you saw?” Oh I wonder she knows what she’s does to me when she bites her bottom lip.

“Oh yes I want to ravage it. Can I join you for shower?”

“Goodbye.”

The video call cuts off. I just want to bury myself deep into her right now. Since I can’t bury myself deep into her I bury myself with work.

When it’ time to knock off time I waste no time but drive to my place. I can’ believe that I’m breaking road traffic law just to get there first before Sally does so that I can have a quick one with dombolo lami. Damn I’m pussy whipped and it’s not funny! The disappointment washes over me when I see her car in the parking lot.

“Hey baby!”

Sally strides towards me and kisses me. The guilt gnawing at me right now yeses! What's wrong with me? How can I do this to her? This woman has been nothing but a great partner to me and I love her.

"How was your day?"

"It was okay my love and yours?"

"Same baby."

"Where's domb...uhm Mbewenhle?"

"Oh that one is busy stressing about an outfit for tonight." Her voice is filled with amusement.

"For tonight?"

"We are going to celebrate my promotion."

I have forgotten that it's Friday!

"Oh yes. Let me go take a shower while you make something for me to eat."

"Okay my love."

I plant a peck on her lips head to our bedroom but Wenhle's fat ass tucked in her full panties catches my attention through the space made by the door that is left ajar. I make my way in and close the door then put my laptop bag together with my car keys and phone. She's rummaging in her closet. The sight of her ass has my rod pulsating and calling me for close contact. She jumps up in shock when I press my hard manhood on her ass.

"Lisi maan!"

"I'm sorry I didn't mean to startle you."

“Get away from me!”

On top she’s not wearing a bra which gives me an opportunity to fondle her boobs as I trail lazy kisses on the side of her neck.

“Lisi stop it.” It comes out as a gasp.

“I miss you.”

“No stop it! Sally could walk in! Awuziphathe kahle tu!”

She fees herself from me. What the fuck? My fiancée is in the next room and I’m busy initiating sex with my ‘cousin’. I adjust my boner and take my things before walking out. Once I’m in our bedroom I take off my clothes and pull on my gown then go hit a shower. This has to stop Manelisi before things get out of control!

When I finish I go back to our bedroom and find my fiancée taking our clothes we are going to wear this evening. I walk

towards her and onslaught her with a kiss that leaves her gasping for air.

“What was that for?”

“I love you baby.”

“I love you too sthandwa sami. You know now that I got a promotion which means my salary is going to increase. I think we should get started with wedding preparations I want us to get married in Spring.”

“Are you sure?” I ask caressing her hips. We have been together for a year and few months. I asked her hand in marriage few months back and she told me that I should be patient with her as she has to raise enough funds for the wedding because she wants a beautiful wedding there ever was in the world and want it to be aired on perfect wedding. Well I didn't have a problem with that because it also gives me more time to save. I want to give her the wedding of her dreams.

“Yes I’m sure so you need to start organizing the lobola negotiations and all.”

“Okay I will talk to Bab Mthiyane.”

“Yes we are getting married! Let me go ask Mbewenhle to be one of my bridesmaids.”

“But baby....” she’s out of sight before I even finish to say anything. Why am I so worried how she will take the news? I mean she already knows I’m engaged and she always reminds me that during our stolen beautiful moments. Sigh!

.....

Our friends joined us as we always celebrate each other’s victory together. I can’t wait for the day we celebrate Wenhle’s win. I want the best things for this woman more than I want them for myself. She always says the one person that deserves happiness in this world it’s me but actually it’s other way

around. I would leave no stone unturned for her to fulfill her dreams.

VIP is usually our spot but today Sally wanted general and since kuwusingaye we didn't protest. It's too crowded here. I don't know if it's my imagination or what but I've have been getting some cold vibes from Wenhle which is stressing the hell out of me. I've lost count of beers I've consumed now but I'm still sober as fuck!

"I feel like dancing!" Wenhle screams and the girls agree with her and convince the gents to join them except me. I gulp down the content of my savanna.

"You good?"

"Yes Sizwe I'm fine."

"You don't look fine man. We are all drunk except you and I know that happens when you're stressed out." Sizwe is the one

I'm close to more than I am with the other guys. It's safe to say he's my best friend before Wenhle.

"I'm okay."

"You have been staring at her the whole night what's up?"

"Sizwe awume tu!" That snap was actually meant for that guy who's dancing with her. Their dance is too erotic for my liking. I go to the bar to get a drink and when I turn around I see them walking away. Where the fuck are they going? I follow them and grab the guy's wrist.

"What's the problem man!"

"Bounce man!"

"Who are you to tell me that?"

"Lisi..."

“I’m not talking to you Wenhle! Wena goduka ngaze ngikufinyise igazi!”

The guy clicks his tongue and walks away.

“Was that necessary?”

“Yes he wanted to take advantage of you can’t you see that?”

“He was just accompanying me to the toilet gee Manelisi!”

“Are you that naive? That’s the line we say to lure you in and the moment we get to the restroom the rest is history. He wanted to use you!”

“Oh so it’s right when you are the one who use me but when it’s others it’s wrong?”

“Dombolo...”

“Argh save it!”

She walks inside the restroom. I take one glance and when I see no one I follow her and walk inside just as she pees.

“What are you doing here?”

“Why are you mad?”

“I’m not mad I’m okay. Can I pee in peace?”

“Baby I’m not using you.”

“Then what are you doing with me? You fuck me and tell me that you love me then the next minute you’re preparing your wedding.”

“Wenhle you know that I’m engaged....”

“Exactly Manelisi so what do you want from me? A fresh pussy to dispose your sperms while building you are family on the side? Oh well don’t be jealous let others use me because you are also not different from them.”

Her words stings badly and for a moment I don’t even know what to say to her because that how it looks like but it’s not true. I watch her as she wipe herself with a toilet paper and get up pulling her panties up.

“What do you want me to do?” I ask

“To leave me alone!”

“I want to but I can’t okay? I just...I can’t!”

“You are not making sense!”

“This is your fault!”

“My fault?”

“Yes it’s your fault! You chose him over me Wenhle and left me to pick up the pieces alone. Now I’ve met the most beautiful woman who means so much to me here you are turning my world upside down!”

“I didn’t force you to bring me here! You are the one who offered me to come with you Lisi but if my being here is inconveniencing you then fine I will leave!!!”

“And you think I’m going to watch you walk out of my life again? Uyanya!”

I push her against the wall and devour her lips. She bites my bottom lip and that fuels my desire for her. It’s doesn’t take that long for her to give in. I shift her panties aside and glide inside. We swallow each other groans at the feel of first thrust. Damn it’s always feel like entering heaven, a sanctuary that I have no

desire to lose. Her pussy grips on my dick hard and I fight the urge to cum. Fuck! I'm pounding in and out of her like it's the last time and we are both screaming in pleasure.

"You're going to be the death of me! Ohhh shit!"

"Please shock me! I love it when you choke me while drilling into me." She doesn't need to tell me twice.

☆ Muzikayise ☆

No words could ever describe the love he has for his wife. It might be flawed here and there but he always had pure intentions from day one. He misses her every single second of the day and it is without doubt that he still loves her so much but he would give anything for that love to turn into ashes and the wind to catch it. Hence he always drowns his sorrows every single day just to escape the reality.

“Get us another one!” he’s pap drink but he still wants another round of beers. They’ve been drinking the whole afternoon and being one who is still new in this drinking industry he gets drunk easily.

“Aw Ngcamane! Uyindoda enamandla ezikhonayo!” One drunkard says and they all agree with him. Of course they will sing praises for a man who buys them alcohol. If Muzikayise were to ask them to kiss his butt they will do that without hesitation.

“Haisuka he’s just a wimp who married a whore now she’s left him he’s drowning in alcohol. Don’t make me laugh nina isyoyo lento!”

A flash of anger sweeps over Muzikayise.

“Ukhuluma amasendakho ndoda!”

“I do have them unlike you that needs to grow a pair of balls!”

“Shut up this man will stop buying us alcohol!”

“I don’t want his alcohol I’m drunk now by the way thank you for free booze.” The man gets up from the crade or beer just as Muzikayise does so. He grabs him and attempts to punch him but he misses and reels forward before dropping on the ground like a sack of potatoes.

They laugh at him while those who still want to use him for free booze help him up. He clicks his tongue and walks away. His legs could barely carry him he’s tottering all the way to his home and it’s proving to be a difficult task. The wobbly knees give in, he flumps to the ground and never wake up.

It’s few hours later when 3 boys around 15 years old pass by with goats as they head home. They see a man lying on the ground and snoring like a train. When they look at him clearly they realize who is he. They try to wake him up but he’s mumbling incoherent things. One of the boys runs to the Maseko homestead and let his mom know. Without waste of tome Mam Sonto and Thuthuka rush to where the boy is taking them to.

“I curse the day my son met that slut! Look what she did to him! Muzikayise has never touched alcohol in his life until that bitch broke his heart again!”

“But Mbewenhle didn’t force malumes to drink gogo. He needs to take responsibility for his actions too. We can’t keep on blaming someone who we don’t even know where she is. He’s embarrassing him right now.” Thuthuka says but Mam Sonto doesn’t want to see it that way. If it wasn’t that hoe her son would be okay now. Tears sting in her eyes at the sight of her son lying on the ground with a huge wet stain on his front of his pants. He pissed himself in his drunk sleep.

“Malumes wake up!” They try to get him up but it’s impossible.

“Yeyeye.” In his drunk sleep says almost incoherently. Anger washes over Mam Sonto.

“Lentombazane kumele ibuye izokhipha umtanami idliso leli emfake lona!”

They should’ve brought a car once because waking up this man is proving to be like moving mountains.

☆ Isisa ☆

The world has become something else because of social media. People have turned social media to a place where they ridicule other people. They hide behind keyboards ridiculing other people and then say it's their 'opinion' nja opinion yamasimba! There's no way to sugarcoat shit because it stings. Yazin let's just sort this out face to face ikhiphane ukujwayelana ekubeni ingazani. Someone posted the video of Mvelo proposing on Facebook and the nasty comments there are enough to make me stalk one of these people and make an example of her in town or mall. People need to stop talking shit and think they can get away with it. They don't even know me! Bloody highly opinionated assholes!

It's been days since he proposed and I'm so scared to face him especially after this video that is trending on social media. At least I'm the one who is receiving backlash from these assholes then him but knowing Mvelonhle he's not even bothered by what people are saying but what I've done to to him. I admit I didn't handle the situation right and my sister gave me an earful on the phone.

The moment I walk inside the Qwabe store I'm met by this girl flirting with my man. Yes he's mine and I don't care that we broke up.

"Ntombazane uyathenga noma?" (Girl are you buying or what?)

"Ay kahle wena! So Mvelo baby..." who is she calling baby? I pull her by her pot scrubber of hair and she screams.

"Isisa stop!!" I feel his arms pulling me away from the girl.

"What are you doing huh?"

"She..." I'm cut mid sentence by a punch on my tummy. I squirm in pain holding my tummy. The girl looks at me shock clouding her face then scurries away leaving me with Mvelo who's fussing over me.

“Babe are you okay? Are you in pain? Should I take you to the hospital?” I smile that he called me babe

“I’m fine.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes.”

“Jesus Isisa don’t ever do that again! You can’t get involved in fights while pregnant! You want to kill our baby?”

“No of course not.”

“Then why did you do that huh?”

It’s funny how he always makes feel like a baby when he’s shouting at me yet he’s younger than me and being shorter than him is not doing me justice. I’m looking up at him with my puppy eyes and my lips pursed.

“I’m sorry I just got jealous when I saw her flirting with you.”

“Why would be jealous you don’t want me nje.” That cut deep but I don’t blame him.

“That’s not true I want you Mvelo more then I have ever want a man in my life.”

He chuckles shaking his head in disbelief.

“You have a funny way of showing it yaz. Vele uzokwenzani la?”

I hold my tummy and kneel on the floor.

“What are you doing?”

“I’m sorry for everything I’ve done to you. It was never my intention. Fear of losing my mother is the reason I broke up

with you and when you propose I just.... I was caught of guard babe. I'm sorry I ran away I shouldn't have done that. I guess I'm not a surprises person. I

love you sthandwa sami you've shown me nothing but pure and unconditional love. I couldn't be more grateful for the loving man that you're. I'm highly blessed to have you in my life and I would be a fool to let such a hunk to get away from me. I'm done allowing fear to come between us please give me another chance to love you to the core with all my heart and soul. Please ask me again to marry you." I don't know why I'm crying gosh these bloody hormones!

"I was joking."

"Oh."

"Yeah can I go back to work."

He helps me get up on the floor and leaves me standing there. I want to tell him that it doesn't matter that he was joking I want him back but I'm scared of rejection. I walk out with a heavy

heart and just as I'm at the gate I hear him calling me. I swivel around to look at him on the ground with one knee.

"The ring is at home but MaNjinji I love you so much and life without you is meaningless. Would you make me a man among men and be my wife?"

"Yes I will be your wife!" I say excitedly as tears drench my chubby cheeks. He breaks into a wild smile and get up on the ground before plundering my mouth in searing soul kiss.

"I love you so much Mvelonhle."

"I love you too but you're not off of the hook Manjinji. I don't want to leave in fear that you will leave me one day. I need you to convince me that you are stuck with me forever and you will never give up on us no matter what."

"I understand sthandwa sami and I don't want to make promises but my actions will speak louder. I want to cherish your pure and soulful love till the end of time."

He cradles my face and our lips fuse together in intense passion. I'm not letting him go ever again. He walks me half way and when I get home I find mom hanging laundry on the washing line.

"Where are you coming from?"

"Mama I have something to tell you."

"Okay."

"Can we get inside and talk."

"Let me finish here."

I wait for her to finish and when she's done we head inside the house and settle on the chairs in the kitchen.

“Don’t tell me you are pregnant again on top of that pregnancy with another different father.”

Wow! Now that’s a low blow!

“Mama no one wants to have children with different fathers but people break up all the time. Just because you chose to endure emotional abuse from baba so that you can have one baby daddy that doesn’t mean all of us will do that. Thuthu broke my heart and we are never getting back together so I was bound to have someone else in my life. If you don’t want to accept that I dont know mama but I love Mvelonhle so much and he asked me to marry him. I want to spend the rest of my life with him so I agreed. Since I can’t have your blessing it’s okay I’m leaving your house. I’m going to stay with my sister in Newcastle and I’m taking my son with me. Thank you for everything you have don’t for us I will never forget you and I love you so much but I’m choosing my happiness mama and Mvelonhle is my happiness. Let’s be hopeful that you won’t do this to my little brother too when he’s older because you will die alone mama.”

By the time I'm done I'm wet with tears but I feel light. Like the heavy weight on my shoulders has been lifted off. I get up and go to my bedroom to pack before texting Jabu to fetch me.

☆ Mpilenhle ☆

Her mom counts into three before they both carry her father putting him into the big bathing vaskom.

"Thank you my baby."

Mpilenhle nods and gives her mom a space to bath her father. Mam Thembeke takes off the wet boxers out of her husband that she left on purpose when she was undressing him not to traumatize her daughter with her father's privates.

"You are comfortable in there?" Mam Thembeke

Qwabe looks at his wife and his eyes are glowing with malevolence. She can imagine words that would've accompanied his look if he could talk. Not that she blames him. No words can describe how remorseful she is about all of this. She takes the bar soap and his bathing cloth then begins to bath him.

If this was any other time he would've appreciated his wife for taking care of him but it brings him sorrow that he had to be taken care of by the same person that he doesn't want to see. The only woman he's ever given his heart to allowed another man not only to sleep with her only but to make a baby with her as well. The disrespect and betrayal is on another level it breaks its own record.

Her hands smoothing the bathing cloth on his thighs going up to his cock where they pull the foreskin as she washes his dick rigorously provoke ire from him at the thought of them caressing and touching another man. What angers him more is that he has no other choice his wife is the only person that can take care of him. His children are the last people he'd want them to take care of him. He can never subject them to such. It's bad enough that he can't do anything for himself. How will they look at him? Once Mam Thembeke is done drying him on his

upper body she dresses him the wet boxer and calls her daughter to help her to put him on the bed on top of the towel so he doesn't wet the bed.

"Thank you so much."

"Mama you don't have to thank me. He's my father and I would help where I can."

Mam Thembeke smiles caressing her daughter's back. She really appreciate that but taking her husband is her duty. If she had energy to carry him by herself she wouldn't even call them to help her because the last thing she want is for her children to see their father like this. Then there's guilt of being a reason he suffered a stroke.

Mpilenhle walks out leaving her mom to lotion her husband's body and dress him up then she tries to put him on the wheelchair. She manages after a lot of struggle. He's so heavy! After discarding the water she pushes him to lounge where Mpilenhle has prepared her father's food. Mam Thembeke feeds her husband and wipes the saliva drooling from his

mouth with his face cloth. When she's done she takes the dishes to the rondoval and find Mpilenhle shouting at Ndabenhle who's crying hysterically.

"Why are you shouting at him?"

"He wants Mbewenhle angazi ukuthi uthi ngimnyephi!"

"That's not a language you are going to use on me and my son!"

"Funa Mbeee mama!"

Mam Thembeke picks up her son and tries to calm him down promising him cars and bicycles but the little boy is hearing none he wants his Mbeee.

"Hey thula there's no Mbewenhle here! She left you stop making noise!"

“Mpilenhle maan!”

“What mama? Tell the child the truth so that he can stop crying for someone who left him! We are also humans Mbewenhle is not the only person and we are the ones who are here with him not Mbeee! Mbee wokunuka!!”

“Shut up! You are not helping at all instead you’re taking your frustrations on my son!”

“You’re right actually! I should be taking my frustration on you mama! How could you do this to baba huh?”

“Do what?”

“Don’t act dumb I know okay. I heard everything you said to that man on the phone yesterday and I have no doubt that it’s the same man that look like Ndabenhle. Baba kicked you out because he knows Ndabe is not his son and he suffered stroke because of your infidelity! Really mama what are you teaching us? No wonder Mbewenhle did what she did she learnt this

from you. While I was here taking care of your husband and son and neglecting my husband in the process you were in Durban opening your legs for another man and teaching my sister ubufebe....” Mpilenhle doesn’t get to finish her sentence as a hard slap falls on her face and she immediately sees stars.

“Ungangijwayeli kabi wena! When your father cheated you didn’t go to him and make all this noise but you think you should speak to me as if you are falling from the tree? Stay out of our business you are a child don’t forget your lane!!”

“It’s funny how you reacted on Mbewenhle’s saga while you’re the one who taught her that it’s okay to cheat! I don’t care that dad cheated first but two wrongs don’t make it rig...”

Another slap lands on her face as she’s still recovering from that one countless of them follow making her to scream in agony.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

One of the advantages of doing something you are so passionate about is that you forget about anything else that is tormenting your soul. The moment I get into the field I focus on what I'm doing. I'm approaching week 8 now since I've started the training and I must say with each week the training is getting intense but truth be told I wouldn't trade this opportunity for anything in this world.

This is the last week of speed development training and so far my coach is impressed with me. I couldn't be happy because at the end of the day sprint is about speed before anything else. It's the fastest event of all events in athletics. The aim is to run the distance from start to finish as fast as possible while maintaining your speed. I enjoy all the workouts except this one we are doing right now.

"Coach can't you replace this exercise with something else? It makes me feel like I'm a goat."

The girls burst into laughter while the coach is looking at me with amusement in her eyes.

“How so?”

“My father has livestock and he ties his goats and pulls them with a rope.”

“It’s not the same Mbewenhle I will be towing you using a motorcycle.”

“It’s one and the same thing coach. In fact it’s even worse because you will be on the motorcycle while I’m running behind you like a goat that is about to be slaughtered for a cleansing ceremony.”

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER SEVENTY SEVEN

“You’re so crazy! This is the best leg speed exercise. It will ....”

“Speed up the balancing between the neurological and physical functions.” I finish her sentence while fighting the urge to roll my eyes. What’s wrong with this woman? I’m mocking her but she’s smiling proudly.

“Exactly! Now get ready!” She goes to her motorcycle and I stuck my tongue at her making the girls to laugh.

The towering rope is tied around my chest and waist.

“Are you ready?”

“More then ready!”

She gets on the motorcycle and starts it. I bleat like a goat while running behind her as she towers me with a motorcycle. The girls are laughing so is she and when she increases the speed I

immediately stop mimicking the goat. I know that she did that on purpose.

This exercise is to train my legs to move faster than my leg maximum speed. We do the 120m towering sprint for 4 times with 5 minutes rest after each run. By the time I finish my workout I want to go home. This is far by the hardest exercise because it demands you to exceed your leg maximum speed. Coach is actually the one controlling your speed as she's towering you. 3 hours later we are all done and dog tired.

“Well done girls. This was our last exercise for the day.”

We all scream in excitement. Yooo we are tired and hungry!

“We need to push hard ladies, time is really not on our side. Next week we will have a bit of training as I want you guys to have enough rest for next Saturday for the event that we usually organize here every after two months.”

“Do you think we are ready to compete?” I ask

“You were all born ready to compete. I like that this will give you guys your first experience to compete with best and trained athletes like you. Training is essential for an athlete but a sprinter is born not made. Don’t you ever think you’re not good enough because you’ve had 8 weeks training only. There are 6 provincial upcoming events which you guys have to participate in order to qualify for National Athletics Championships. You have to up your game and put it in all your effort.”

“So in other words coach you’re saying I have to win in all of these upcoming events in order to compete in nationwide competitions, ” Portia asks the question I wanted to ask

“Yes Portia that’s what I’m saying.”

We all look at each other in the eyes skepticism clouding our faces. I’m already doubtful about the event on Saturday which I will only be competing with the members of this club imagine the whole sprinters of Gauteng?

“Hey guys look at me.” We all look at her.

“I don’t work with people who lack confidence. You can’t give up already but you haven’t started. You have to erase that mindset of negativity because it will be hindrance to your success. Believe in yourselves y’all are more talented than you could ever imagine and capable of everything. I don’t coach quitters and pessimistic people I coach women who are goal driven and winning all the time. We are not called Imboko for nothing ladies come on don’t disappoint me. I didn’t name my club Amaqhawekazi for cowards do y’all hear me?”

“Yes coach.”

“Say this after me. We are heroines and we always win!”

“We are heroines and we always win.”

“I can’t hear y’all.”

“WE ARE HERONS AND WE ALWAYS WIN!”

“That’s it!” she says and smiles  
satisfied with herself.

“We are done you can go back home.”

She walks away and when she’s a few steps away she calls out  
for me.

“In my office before you go home.” Oh no what have I done  
now? I’m not a trouble maker.

“Girls let’s chat on the group chat.” I say getting up from the  
ground and dust my buttocks.

“We should go out together just to unwind a bit. These passed  
weeks we have been training hard. A little fun is needed.”

Portia

“That’s a good idea how about we go out to celebrate if any of us wins Saturday?” They all look at me skeptical.

“Come on girls didn’t you hear what the coach said? We must have spirit!”

“Yeah Nhle is right!” Sthandwa says

“Ntediseng is competing as well.”

Teddy is Tshidi’s sister and she’s the fastest sprinter in this club. Apparently the coach was visiting her when she saw me running. Yes we live in the same location. She’s really good no actually good doesn’t begin to describe her.

“She’s the coach’s sister obviously they are do training at home too.”

“She doesn’t scare me.” Sthandwa

“Yasss gurl see wena I like you!” I raise my hand and we do high five. I like the spirit she has I wish she can borrow me.

“Girls coach called me y’all know how she doesn’t want to be kept waiting. See y’all tomorrow.”

We share hugs then I run to the coach office. I knock and when she says come in I walk inside. She’s sitting on the couch eating cookies and downing them with juice.

“Sit down.”

“Am I in trouble?”

“Not really. Have you written what triggers your anxiety attacks.”

“No I haven’t I don’t know where to start. Do I really have to write down my triggers?”

“Yes you have to. Identifying your triggers is the most important step to coping and managing anxiety attacks. Of course it will take you some time and self reflection.”

I heave a sigh.

“Why do you want me to do this?”

“Like I said to care about your well being is my duty.”

“I will give it a try again.”

“How are you feeling?”

“I’m fine.”

“No I want you to think about that before you answer me.”

I've come to get used to her randomness and inquisition and whenever I'm in the mood I indulge her just like I am today.

"I'm feeling a lot of things."

"Care to name one."

"I'm worried."

"Why?"

"Uuhm...uhm.." I clear my throat and twiddle my fingers.

"I haven't protected myself for a while now."

"Protecting yourself for what?"

"You know...sexual intercourse."

“Oh”

Is that a judgmental ‘oh’ ? I look up at her and meet her eyes bugling out of her sockets.

“Don’t tell me you are pregnant Mbewenhle!”

“That’s the thing I’m not pregnant.”

She furrows her eyebrows, confusion painted on her face.

“You want to be pregnant?”

“No a baby is the last thing I need right now. I’ve just started my career.”

“Exactly so what is your point?”

“My husband and I were trying for a baby but I couldn’t fall pregnant only to find out two years later that it’s because of the baby I miscarried. I had to do a cleansing ceremony and naming ritual for him. We were supposed to wait for 3 months before intimacy but my husband refused. We had sex almost everyday for about two months then I got here and had unprotected sex for almost 8 weeks now. The day before yesterday I remembered there’s something called pregnancy. I bought the pregnancy tests. Five of them came back negative I was so happy and relieved but I can’t stop thinking that maybe I can’t have kids.”

“Why do you think you can’t have kids?”

“They said after that ceremony I can conceive and I’ve been sleeping without protection for almost 4 months now still I’m not pregnant. Maybe the ceremony didn’t go well or maybe being shot and losing the mobility of my legs has something to do with this....I don’t know coach. I may not want babies now but in future I do. I love children and I dream of having them some day.”

She reaches for my hand and squeezes it.

“I’m really sorry for your loss. Let me ask was this before you got shot or after?”

“After.”

“Including pregnancy and miscarriage?”

“Yes.”

“When you and your husband couldn’t conceive did you go to the doctor to find out the problem that prevented you two to not conceive?”

“Yes we did and there’s nothing they found in both of us.”

“If you can’t have children then you wouldn’t fall pregnant in the first place. Remember you got pregnant after you got shot. As for the ceremony do you think there’s anything that went wrong?”

“No that I can think of. It was even drizzling and rain is believed to be a blessing. Or maybe it’s because... ah it’s nothing.”

“Talk me don’t be afraid. I won’t judge you nor would I share this with anyone else. I just need you to trust me.”

“Maybe it’s because we didn’t wait for 3 months period of mourning.”

“Maybe but why didn’t you wait?”

“He refused to wait.”

“Blame it on him as if you didn’t want his dick too huh,” she asks her eyes sparkling with merriment. I stage a smile and twiddle with my fingers once again.

“I never got a chance to mother my baby and the hardest thing I ever had to do was to pretend as if I didn’t lose him. I had to

keep his existence as if he was a dirty little secret. The least I could have done was to mourn him for 3 months but he couldn't let me. He knew we were supposed to wait for 3 months but that morning he didn't want to hear it. I told him that we can't do it but he...he used his power and strength to overpower me."

"He forced himself on you?" Her voice is a bit raised which forces me to look at him.

"That's how he made me feel but he's my husband...well was."

"That how he made you feel because he was indeed forcing himself on you. Sexual assault is a type of sexual violence that includes unwanted sexual touching or forcing the victim to perform sexual acts. That doesn't apply on strangers or relatives only even someone who you are romantically involved with is capable of doing that. Rape doesn't have to be done by a stranger to qualify as such. The trauma is still the same whether you have or not slept with that person."

"It happened once."

“So you’re telling me that after that incident you wanted to sleep with him?”

“No but I had to submit myself to him to avoid feeling like he was forcing himself on me.”

“It doesn’t change the fact that you didn’t want to have sex with him. He knew that you guys were mourning but he chose his own pleasure over you consenting...” I cut her short

“He wasn’t going to wait 3 months without fucking his wife because she was mourning a reminder of his wife’s infidelity! The reminder why we couldn’t have a baby! I’ve put that man through hell whatever he did to me is

nothing compared to what I did to him! I broke him apart! I changed a good man into something I couldn’t recognize! I deserved it! I deserve it! I deserved more!” I cover my face with my trembling hands and burst into tears.

Her arms wraps around me as I bawl my eyes out. How did we get here? She holds me in her arms for the longest time ever without saying a word.

“We have a lot to unpack I see but we will take it day by day.”

I free myself from her arms and look at her confusion fogging my mind.

“Are you a shrink?”

She laughs and shakes her head.

“No.”

“Then what are you?”

“Your coach.”

“Why do I find it hard to believe you coach. You’re the one who always emphasizes honesty so please tell me.”

“ I’m not a shrink as you say I’m a sport psychologist.”

I don’t know if it’s one and the same thing but as long as there’s word ‘psychologist’ then that’s a shrink.

“Why you didn’t me all along?”

“I remember when I asked you if you had counseling you agreed but I saw it through you that you’re lying. So I had to use my skills to make you open up to me first.”

“You’re sly coach!”

She laughs out loudly

“And you are a bad liar!”

Now it's my turn to laugh.

“Please let me help you. See those kids you want some day needs a happy mother and a happy mother is healed mother. Judging from bit and bit of what you've shared to me over the passed weeks I can tell that you've been through a lot. You have a bright future but your past is going to steal your happiness if you don't deal with it and heal from it then move on. Let me help you MaQwabe.”

“How much do I need to pay you?”

“Wins in all the upcoming provincial events.” I gasp in shock

“What? You can win only if you tell yourself that. So do we have a deal?”

The vote of confidence means so much to me. I give her my hand and take it.

“Yes we have a deal Chabeli but a piece of my advice next time when you negotiate a deal have some hospitality don’t eat alone share your cakes.” she rolls in the aisles.

“You’re crazy!”

I don’t understand why people call me crazy. I’m too beautiful to be crazy come on!

☆ Muzikayise ☆

The guilty conscience that has been gnawing at her for years wasn’t worth it after all. Everything is demolishing at high speed and Mam Sonto doesn’t know how to stop all of this from happening. Witnessing her husband’s businesses crumbling down at such speed and in a short space of time is depressing her.

Not so long ago she received the news of her husband’s hardware store being robbed. Clearly these people had their

whole lives to break in and take every building material. Then the supermarket was blown away by the storm and destroyed everything. A storm in winter? It doesn't take one to be a sangoma to see that this is the wrath of the Qwabe twin that was robbed her life at the age of 10 years old.

The last straw is the petrol garage that burned down. What caused the fire? No one knows and fortunately no one got hurt. These were the last three that were still standing but now they are all gone. Stress has Mam Sonto by her cow's nipples. It's only now her elder daughters see the need to work and the fact that their brother had turned into a drunkard that doesn't even remember his name is not helping.

"When are you going to give me money mama? I've run out of my toiletries and look at my hair other kids will laugh at me!" says the spoiled brat of the family in frustration.

"Hayi kahle Ndongoloza qhina amagoda usiyeke phansi haaah safa wuwe!" Thuthuka says not hiding vexation in his voice.

Why do girls care more about how they look when there are serious problems! He can't afford a mere tricycle for his son but his girlfriend is busy whining about nails and weaves that he no longer afford to buy her.

He just saw a status on WhatsApp of his baby mama. She posted their little boy on the tricycle with a caption 'My little King just got a ride from his daddy.' The status that followed after that one hurt him more 'LOL Thank you guys but you're giving credit to the wrong man. This is the daddy that bought our boy a ride not that loser I made a baby with. Phakathwayo you're a blessing in our lives.'

He doesn't know what he has to do for Isisa to forgive him for his past mistakes. He was jerk he knows that but he's shown her countless times that he's sorry and regrets everything he did. The news of their engagement was a bitter pill to swallow. He really lost a diamond while he was chasing orgasms. Now this girlfriend of his is pulling away since he can't spoil her like he used to.

"Shut up Thuthuka I'm not talking to you!"

“Ngizokukhahlela!”

“I’m your aunt have some respect!”

“You’re still younger than me!”

“Can you two stop it! Ndongoloza we have lost everything and you’re whining about hair are you for real?” Bongeka

“Oh you’re the one now who’s saying that? Why do you care that we have lost everything? Didn’t you say it’s blood money wara wara.” Ndongoloza shoots back

“Is it not blood money?”

“Yes it is the blood money that has been feeding you and clothing you while your age mates are working to provide for themselves and their children. You have a nerve to judge baba but you have nothing on your name!” Though those words are directed to Bongeka only but they hit a nerve to all Ndongoloza’s sisters.

They've never worked a day in their lives not that they would've had time to go to work because making babies twice a year is what they specialize in. Their father provided for them together with their children without any complaints because he doesn't believe women should work. They're his daughters and it was his job to take care of them no matter how old they get. He was going to stop once they get husbands to take over unfortunately it seems like the Maseko daughters are not blessed with marriage. Nomvula is the one who could've gotten married if only Thuthuka's father didn't die. He died when they were talking about tying the knot.

“What about you spoilt brat? Your peers are also doing something of their own! Ungazosiphaphela wena!”  
Nomthamsanqa retorts. The other sisters join in with a blink of an eye insults are being thrown from every direction towards Ndongoloza. Mam Sonto doesn't have energy to stop them. If they want to kill each other so be it she's beyond the word drained. She gets up and go to her son's room. That big house reminds him of his wife hence he's moved back home.

She doesn't know when he came back last night from the tarven. Now Thuthu has become his sitter who fetches him whenever he's passed out in tarvens. Those who are making fun of him are more than those who feel sorry for him.

Ukushiywa umfazi ihlazo! Now he's turned into a joke of the whole village. He is only Mam Sonto's hope to help them out of this situation. He promised that he will take care of them but if he's drowning in alcohol like this who's going to ensure that his farms and businesses are running and operating smoothly? His businesses now are only their sources of income and they can't afford to let them hit the skids too.

"Muzi!"

He shakes him but he's not waking up. As always waking him up is like moving mountains. She takes a jug of water on the bedside table and pours it on his face. He doesn't flinch nor move. Her heart skips a beat when she doesn't feel any warm air on her finger placed near his nostrils.

"Muzikayise!"

She shakes him but still he's unresponsive. The kids playing outside hear her screams and barge inside. She tells them to go call their mothers. In no second the sisters are trying to wake up their brother. When it registers to them that he's not breathing. They carry him to the car then Thuthuka drives to the hospital like a maniac. He's rushed to the ER the moment they arrive.

They sit on the benches impatiently waiting for the doctor. Mam Sonto is crying and blaming the Qwabe slut for all of this. She swears that if the unthinkable happens to her son she will learn to practice witchcraft to her. At long last the doctor comes and the look he has on his face is not promising at all.

"How's my son doctor?"

"Mr Maseko suffered cardiac attack due to alcohol poisoning..."

"Stop with the big words and tell us how is he?" Thuthuka.

"Unfortunately he...."

## ☆ Muzikayise ☆

The Maseko family looks at the doctor expectantly and hearts are pounding hard against their chests threatening to come out of their mouths.

“How’s my son doctor?” Mam Sonto asks before the doctor say anything. She can’t steel herself for the worst news but the doctor’s demeanor is terrifying and shutting her hopes down.

“Mr Maseko suffered cardiac attack due to alcohol poisoning...”

“Stop with the big words and tells us how is he?” The tremor in Thuthuka’s voice is the evident of trepidation attacking every cell of his body. The thought of losing his uncle is the one that he can’t bear.

“Unfortunately he didn’t respond immediately when we resuscitated him by shocking his heart with a defibrillator. His heart rhythm didn’t rapidly return to normal however we

managed to stabilize him he's in coma and will remain in intensive care unit until he recovers."

The only word Mam Sonto heard is coma which makes her cry even louder. The doctor allows only two people to see Muzikayise. Nomvula and her mom follow the doctor to the intensive care unit. The sight of him hooked with a number of machines breaks their heart.

Mam Sonto regrets not listening her husband when he said allowing their son to date the Qwabe twin is wrong. Maybe all of this is the punishment from God but her son cannot be punished for her and her husband sins.

"Boy you need to wake up. You can't allow that girl to break you down like this. Please my son come back to us. We need you." Mam Son says and kisses her son's forehead.

"I can't believe this is how things have turned out in such a short space of time. I miss baba so much maybe he would have known what to do." Nomvula

“I miss him too. Let’s pray my baby and hope that God will intervene.”

Nomvula wipes her tears and holds her mom’s hand then they both close their eyes.

“Nkulunkulu onothando ngiyazisondeza kuwe baba ngalesikhathi ngingumoni phambi kwamehlo akho....” she pours her heart starting by apologizing for her sins she knows and doesn’t then she asks God to heal her son before praying for unity among her daughters during this time. Once she’s done they leave. The somberness in the car is almost tangible as they all drive home.

.....

It’s finally the day the Qwabes have been looking for while the Masekos have been dreading it. The wives stare at each other with rancour as they are seated among the gallery in court and listening to the judge. MaNdwandwe Senior and Mvelonhle scream in jubilation when the judge sentence Bab Khubonye 10 years in jail but Mam Thembeke is not happy at all she was at

least expecting 15 years not 10 years. What is 10 years? She will never see her daughter again!

On the other side Mam Sonto is crying and her daughters are comforting her. Maseko looks at his family breaking down and his heart breaks into millions pieces. How are they going to lead a life without him for 10 years? He's sure by the time he comes out he will be an old man if ever he's going to come out alive. He failed his family and he wishes he can turn back the hands of time but unfortunately you can never revive a life that is no more.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

"Tell me why did you cheat on him?" The coach asks wiping her glasses with a cloth and puts them on again.

"Temptation I guess."

“You were the most wanted maiden girl and surely your suitors were many but why Manelisi out of them all?”

“I spent a very short period of time with Manelisi but it felt like I’ve known him forever. I don’t know if it’s love or what that took every cell of my body, every beat of my heart, every inch of my bones and every bit of my soul into a trance. We connected in a way that I’ve never thought I can connect with a stranger. Our connection was outrageously pure. The butterflies and goosebumps I’d feel when I thought of him or with him. I love how he respected my values and believed in the strength of my character and personality. He...he was just different even from my husband.”

“Your husband was different how?”

“My husband was a loving man before the cheating that is something I can’t deny but there are times I felt like my opinions didn’t matter to him. His word was always final as the man and growing up I never witnessed my mom defying dad’s word well until I got shot and had to go to Durban for physiotherapy.”

“If you met Manelisi first do you think you would’ve cheated on him with Muzikayise?.”

Wow what a question! Would I have cheated on him?

“No.”

“Why?”

“Because there was a certain time I wished I could love Lisi openly and without having to hide from the world.”

“Basically you wished they swiped places?”

“Yes.”

“Why would you wish they swapped places if you love your husband?”

“I love them both.”

“Love is like magic it can catch you unaware and when the bug has finally got you as person you automatically change. Even your body experience things like butterflies and knots as you said. You can never predict how or when you will fall in love. You can never decide a place or time to fall in love. Love is an adventure that you will never see it coming but it’s also a difficult concept to peg down. It can be confused to something different. Your feelings for Manelisi are clear you are in love with him but the feelings you have for Muzikayise are rather influenced.

Your decision to marry him was based on how proud your parents were when he asked your hand in marriage. You’ve never loved him even before the abuse you had to endure in his hands.”

“It was just once coach.”

“I’m not talking about the rape incident but I’m talking about everything that happened throughout your marriage. There are several abuse you suffered in your marriage

Mbewenhle.1. Psychological abuse which is also known as

emotional abuse. The insults and name calling you were subjected to. 2.Economic abuse also include him forbidding you from working or attending school. 3.Social Isolation where he monitored the people you associate with to the point of manipulating your mom to cut ties between you and the Dlomos. 4.Physical abuse also refers to how he attempted to drown you in the river, how he made you wait at night in the storm knowing very storm is your biggest fear and how he threatened you with a gun. Last but not least sexual abuse where he forced himself on you and demanded you to sleep with him.”

“That was after the cheating I’m the reason he behaved like that.”

“I can’t dispute that his behavior drastically changed after you cheated but what I’ve established throughout our conversations Muzikayise has a dominating personality.

He didn’t want you to drink despite the fact that you wanted to. He never wanted to moved out of home after marriage and his word was final. He wanted a housewife regardless of the dreams you wanted to achieve. You never had power or say in this relationship it has always been his way all the way from the

beginning where he went behind your back to ask your parents your hand in marriage. You agreed to marry him hoping that you're going to fall for him but you fall for the idea of being married and making your parents proud. Manelisi is the first guy you ever felt something for without any influence."

I remember when I told him that I can't be with him anymore I couldn't function for days. It was quite strange because I've only known him for a short period of time. Though I was confused but a part of me always knew that I love him. What I couldn't understand is loving him when I already loved someone else or at least I thought so.

"You can take responsibility for your actions only Mbewenhle. Other people's actions and decisions that they've individually made are not your responsibility. It was Muzikayise's decision to take you back despite of you cheating on him not that I'm saying he shouldn't have given your relationship a second chance but he should've known that you don't just haphazardly make such decisions without thinking about impacts and efforts that comes with taking someone back who had cheated on you. See when someone cheats on you obviously the trust will be broken and it becomes hard to trust that person with your heart again. Not forgetting the insecurities. He was supposed to

consider all the effects that comes with taking someone who has cheated on him and be ready how to deal with them.”

She takes the bottled water and drinks it then continues.

“Muzikayise was not ready to take you back. He never gave himself enough time to think things meticulously and heal before taking such decision. His impetuous decision backfired on you and him as well. You endured the pain he put you through because you blamed yourself for his behavior but truth be told a person’s behavior towards any situation is not another person’s responsibility but his or hers. No matter what you’ve done to him you never deserved any of the pain he put you through do you hear me?”

I nod with my head as I push my back my tears that are threatening to fall.

“You’ve made your mistakes and you acknowledged them but you never deserved to be subjected to abuse. No one deserves to be abused whether sexually

Advertisement

emotionally, economically or physically. Stop disregarding your pain and excuse his behavior. Your pain is valid no matter what you did and you have to acknowledge it first before you start your healing journey.”

I briskly wipe away my tears but they're relentless and that evokes a sob. The recent sessions have been ending with me crying and feeling emotionally drained. Today's session is not different from the others.

Lisi is already waiting for me at the gate. Today it wasn't a training day but my session day. He opens his arms widely for me and I walk in them then he envelopes me tightly in his arms. The hug is the longest and warmest ever. Just what I need! When we pull apart he opens my door and I get inside then he goes to his side.

“How was it today?” he asks a while later as we are driving away. I shrug my shoulders. I don't want to talk I have had enough talking.

“It's going to be worth it at the end of the day okay.”

“Sometimes I feel like all it does is to poke my wounds with a spear over and over again. Can’t we just go on with life and pretend like nothing ever happened?”

“Pretending as if something never happened will do you no good baby. Unexpressed emotions are heavy like rocks and they will weigh you down.”

“I feel like you’re not the right person to tell me that Lisi.”

He glances at me in confusion

“Did you attend therapy after everything you have been through? Especially after gogo’s passing.”

“No I didn’t but I’ve never shut my feelings and pretend like nothing happened like you do. I acknowledge my pain and I’m dealing with it day by day. Babe we used to talk about anything and everything but now you’ve locked up your emotions and you are not letting anyone to find the key but I’m glad you

finally considered to take your coach's offer. I'm hopeful that after this idombolo lami that I know is going to come back to me."

"I'm still you dumplings that you know."

"No you're not there's something missing in you. You are hiding behind smiles but deep down you're drowning. The pain in your eyes is visible and I wish I can carry it for you dombolo lami. I pray that I don't find out whatever he put you through because I swear I won't be held responsible for what I would do to him," he tightens his grip on the steering wheel that I see veins popping on his hands. I reach for his one hand and place mine on top it.

"Thank you."

"For what?"

"I've hurt you in the past and I'm supposed to be the last person you want in your life. You coming back for me

encouraged me to choose myself above anyone else. If there's one thing that is a testimony of the things coach said in today's session is you Lisi. She said no one is responsible for one's behavior towards a situation except himself or herself. We are all responsible for how we react towards a situation regardless of how provoked we are. This is how you chose to handle our predicament and someone else could've chosen another different way."

My heartstrings tugs at the smile he's giving me right now. He takes my hand and plants a delicate kiss on the back of my palm.

"Just as your coach said sthandwa sami. I'm also the one that got involved with you knowing that you had someone else. It's not like you lied to me or anything. I've hurt you as well by disappearing on you when you needed me the most and I can never ask forgiveness enough for doing that to you. I don't even know how are you still here with me after everything."

"You bewitched me."

He giggles.

“That’s what my mom said the day she learnt who broke my virginity. She said you bewitched me and she’s right Manelisi. When it comes to you I never think straight. The love I have for you clouds my thinking capacity and all I do is use my heart as a thinking tool. I know what we are doing is wrong but I keep finding myself in your sheets the second after I’ve told myself that it’s the last time and you’re not making it easy for me.”

“It’s also not easy for me Wenhle. You have been in this situation before and I’m sure you can fit in my shoes.”

“So ngifela lokho vele?”

“No my dumplings awufeli lokho.”

“Ngifelani pho Manelisi? Why loving you always have to feel wrong yet right? Why we can never love one another openly? Why do we always have to hide from the world to express how

much we love each other? Maybe this is the sign that our love was never meant to be so we should stop all of this.”

“No don’t talk like that Wenhle okay you are going to give me a heart attack if you talk like that. We love each other that what is important.”

“Important to who?”

“To us!”

He heaves a sigh in frustration and looks at me.

“I can’t afford to lose you again Wenhle please don’t do this to me again I’m begging you. I love you so much you have always been a missing piece of my heart. A missing puzzle of my love story. A missing part of my life. A missing...God I cannot lose you again!”

“You’re not being fair on me Manelisi. You have someone else in your life who you love and getting married to. We can

pretend as if everything is okay but at the end of the day someone is going to get hurt and that is going to be me because each passing day my love for you grows. I'm the one who's going to have that heart attack when you get married. What I should be doing now is to learn love you from a distance instead of setting myself for a massive heartache." I say and get out of the car as soon as he pulls over in the parking lot.

I don't wait for him but find my way up to his apartment. The moment I get inside he's right behind me. As I walk to my bedroom he pushes me against the wall and kisses me. I try to push him away but just like always I give in.

It's been almost 8 weeks now saying something but do the opposite. He has me dancing to his tune I can't seem to say no. I'm possessed by his fervent passion of love that takes my breath away.

He picks me up and I tightly clamp my legs around his waist. I feel him moving but it's only when he gently puts me on the bed do I see that we are in their bedroom. We have never fucked in here. He shuts me up with a hot steamy kiss as I'm about to protest. In a second our clothes are out of our bodies.

“Condom.”

He groans and rushes to my bedroom where we keep them. After dodging an unwanted pregnancy of someone who has a fiancée I had to be careful. He’s tearing the wrapper the moment he walks through thy door. I watch him as he slides it on his hard meat then he crawls on top of me. He places my legs on his shoulders and thrusts into me. I suck in my breath as he pushes all of himself inside of me filling me up.

“Ahh yesss!” He groans but he’s not moving. I spank his buttocks and he starts bucking his hips. We stare each other as our bodies move in a slow erotical dance. Thrust for thrust and moan for moan. It’s one beautiful love making and I can feel our souls connecting in a deep level.

“I promise you will never be the one to get hurt yezwa. I will protect your heart like it’s mine,” his voice is full of intense emotions. Those words are accompanied by deep and mind blowing strokes that touches the deepest part of my being. He’s tearing up so am I. Our lips collide we share a passionate kiss. It’s doesn’t take that long before we break into an amazing orgasm.

He collapses on top of me and we catch our breath before he rolls down from me and removes the condom wrapping it with a tissue. He puts it on the bedside table and cuddles me. It's only now do I notice the tattoo on his left breast. I jerk up my head from his chest and look at it

“When did you do this it's looks painful!”

“Today.”

“I love it my biltong!”

“I love it too and once again I'm sorry that I wasn't there for the both of you and that we lost him.”

Yes he tattooed the name of our boy 'Zukhanye' and below the name there are baby's feet.

“It’s okay I’m just glad he’s at peace now.” I press my lips on his and we share the intense kiss. We hear Sally’s voice approaching and stop kissing.

“Oh shit!” He curses under his breath.

I jump up immediately from the bed and go hide in the closet butt naked. He throws my clothes inside and closes the door of the closet. The door swings open and her loud voice fills the bedroom.

“Nana maan!...I’m hanging up bye !” She was on the phone. I can bet with five cent Nana was talking about me. That girl can’t get my name out of her mouth.

“Hey baby.” Lisi

“Hey my love. Are you good?”

“Uhm yes and you?”

“I’m fine I’m just tired I had a long day.”

“I think a bubble bath would do sthandwa sami. Go and run it I will join you.”

“Let me undress first I can’t endure the pain of this bra anymore yhuuu.”

“It’s that bad huh?”

“Yes.”

They continue to ask each other days and all those general shit. I hear her voice and footsteps getting near and freeze.

“How about we just shower once my love. Come let’s go.”

“Wait baby I’m looking for my robe.”

“But baby....” Before Lisi can finish talking the door of the closet opens. At this moment I’m not even breathing!

## ☆ Manelisi ☆

The beat of my heart is jackhammering I swear this organ wants to rip my chest open and escape. She can't find out not like this! With a swift move that surprises not only her but me as well she's in my arms. I walk to the bathroom with her giggling.

"Babe we can't be walking around naked we have to respect your cousin," she says and a wave of relief surge through me.

"She's sleeping don't worry."

Once we are in the shower I put her down and take off my boxer before kissing her. She cuts the kiss short and stares at me.

"What?" I ask

“Did you perhaps sprayed Mbewenhle’s perfume instead of yours?”

My heart skips a bit. I let out a nervous giggle and allow the water to fall on us.

“Haibo baby why would I spray a woman’s perfume?”

“The way it’s smelling on you I swear it’s like you bathed with it.”

“It must have smeared on me when I was comforting her. She had an emotional draining session today.”

“Smeared on your naked body?”

“Yes I wasn’t wearing any top.”

“Mmmh.”

“What are you insinuating Asalinto?”

“Nothing.”

“I know you and there’s something you are thinking so out with now.”

“I said it’s nothing Manelisi leave it.”

“Are you jealousy of my cousin?”

“Should I be?”

“Wow Sally you think I can sleep with my cousin? What do you take me for? Wenhle is my uncle’s daughter I will never...Jesus! I can’t believe you think so dirty of me!”

I attempt to walk out but she grabs my wrist.

“I’m sorry I...ndicela uxolo sthandwa sami.”

“Why Sally? I’ve never given you a reason not to trust me now I fail to understand where does this come from. My uncle’s daughter nogal?”

“I know..I know. I shouldn’t have let Nana get to me...”

“So Nana is the one who’s been feeding you nonsense? Your best friend is crazy if she sleeps with her relatives she mustn’t think we all do that. Some of us are not sick like her. Maybe I’d understand if you were jealous about someone else not my cousin. Your friend can think ill of me but not you babe. I’m so hurt and disappointed. I can’t believe that I’m going to marry someone who thinks such of me and who doesn’t trust me.”

“Oh no baby the thing is she’s been going on and on about this and I’ve been oblivious that it’s getting to me until this moment. I trust you baby you have never given me a reason not to. I apologize Maphumulo from the bottom of my heart. I don’t know how she got to me. I’ve never loved any man like I

love you. I'm sorry please forgive me." The remorse in her tone is slicing my heart into halves. I can't believe that I've become that man who spin lies like this and make my fiancée apologize for them.

She kisses me on my lips and moves to my chest going down to the floor murmuring "I'm sorry" in between the kisses. Oh boy do I feel bad! When she's on the floor she strokes my dick in her hand not tearing her eyes away from me and takes my tip in her mouth. I bite my bottom lip stifling a moan as she sucks on it. She gives the best heads ever!

Her tongue is swirling around and massaging the head of my dick. I can't help a moan that escapes my mouth when she puts all of my hard dick in her mouth that I can feel the back of her throat. Deep throat is my weakness and she knows. I grab a fistful of her hair and fuck her throat deeply. Her gagging sound sends me over the edge I shoot my thick cum deep into her throat while groaning. She gets on her feet and looks at me.

"I'm sorry."

“It’s okay baby I understand.”

I cradle her beautiful face in my palms and kiss her. God knows that I love this woman and I’d hate to be the cause of her heartache but my actions right now are saying the opposite. One biggest mistake I made was to bring Wenhle into our lives now my heart is split into two and I’m not prepared to lose either of them.

“You got a tattoo,” she asks running her artificial nails on it.

“Yes today.”

“I didn’t know you love tattoos.”

“I also didn’t know but I needed something permanent to remember my son with and a tattoo came into my mind.”

“Zukhanye is the name you gave him?”

“Uhm yes. It’s Zukhanye njalo sbani sami.”

I used to think I’d name my first son after me but I couldn’t be more in love with the name his mom gave him.

“Oh baby this is beautiful I love it.”

She knows everything about my history with Wenhle what she doesn’t know is that she’s the woman she thinks is my cousin. Lord I can’t begin to picture how hurt she’s going to be if she were to find out about this. I have to protect her from finding out about this with everything I’ve got. Nana needs to stop feeding my fiancée nonsense! Friends are poison sometimes! My fiancée had a long day and she wants to rest so after showering she takes the nap.

Wenhle is in the kitchen making some mean kota. I’ve never seen such a woman who eats like my dumplings. Yey she eats like a man and that’s one of the things I love about her. Yaz uyadina umuntu wesifazane ozitshela ngokudla. Uthi uyamphakamela adle nje kancane umuzwe esethi nginywith. These women don’t know the work we put in just to get them

something to eat then they disappoint us. See with Wenhle you wouldn't mind to steal your neighbors chicken and slaughter it for her because it would be worth it.

A wave of nostalgia washes over me as I think of those days. She captured my heart from the moment I saw her dancing in that ceremony but I knew that I didn't stand a chance. Little did I know that poverty is not the reason I couldn't stand a chance but it's someone else she made promises to. How fast tables have turned and I don't know if our love stand a chance or not. This is a convoluted situation and I can't seem to find a better way to work around this. My greediness wants to keep both of them but my mind knows that is impractical.

I feel a twinge in my dick looking at how fit and sexy she's getting each passing day. The grey skipper dress she's wearing moulds her body and sits a bit belong her butt. How is she able to run fast with such a huge butt is a mystery and it's seems like it's getting bigger. The training is doing wonders to her body.

“Ugijima kanjani nentaba yothuvi?”

She looks at me, confusion clouding her ever so sparkling beautiful eyes. I walk close to her and stand behind her kissing the back of her neck.

“Lisi stop it!”

“She’s sleeping relax.”

“God I can’t believe you right now!”

“Did you take the condom on the bedside pedestal?”

“Yes I did now move!” She pushes me with her butt waking up the sleeping member inside my pants. I groan holding tightly on her waist and bites her earlobe.

“I just wanted to make sure.”

“We almost got caught Manelisi can you stop this now!”

I release her from my arms and she goes to the fridge to take a jug of juice which gives me time to steal a bite on her kota.

“Hey that’s my food!”

“This is nice

” I say licking the sauce on my fingertips while chewing in between.

“Ubukopa ingoduso yakho manje usuthinta ukudla kwami ngezandla zakho!” The anger seeping out of her tone can’t be missed. She’s even trembling and her eyes are glittering with tears.

“Hawu dombolo lami I didn’t...”

“You know what you can take it. I can’t eat her dick and her pussy too!”

She walks away and I run after her but we all know she's a sprinter. The door shuts before my face and I hear the locking sound.

“Wenhle I'm sorry please open the door.”

I wait but there's no movement.

“Ngiyaxolisa MaKhondlo I didn't know you will be offended I always eat your food and you've never showed me that it doesn't sit well with you. My hands are clean I swear but I can make you another one please open the door.”

A loud sob follows after my statement.

“I'm sorry dombolo lami please forgive me.”

The louder I knock is the louder she's crying. I'm losing my mind and tempted to break the door but I can hear that she's sitting right next to it. I slide against the door until my butt touches

the floor and listen to her gut wrenching sob that has my heart shattering each passing second.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I'm bawling my eyes out because he thinks this is really about a stupid kota! This is about how we almost got caught. It's about how I had to hide in that closet and realized how cruel I am for betraying someone who's been nice to me from day one I got here in Johannesburg. It's about how I devalued myself to nothing but a dirty little secret that has to hide in wardrobe when the wife shows up. Traditionally she is his wife now because he paid lobola for her weeks back. It's about how I can never claim him as mine. It's about how he will always belong to another woman whom he is going to marry in months that are to follow.

This is not how I thought things would turned out to be when I decided to come with him. I thought this is another second chance at our love and I envisioned us having happy ever after but who was I fooling there's no way he could've waited for

me. There's no way I could've embarked on a journey of new love when back at home I have a husband who I ended our marriage with a lousy note. Coach twice if not thrice said you can't embark on a new journey without closing the chapter of the present journey.

I'm way too far from closing chapters in my life. There are a lot of things that I need to deal and face first before embarking on new journeys of my life for now the only journey that has embarked is of my career and it's best I focus on it because it's the priority reason I ran away home. The reason why I chose myself above everything else. I can't help a smile that embrace my face when I look at the audience around me. I've never had more than 100 people to watch me compete. This is my first experience and it's the most stupendous feeling ever.

I can imagine if I work hard and qualify to compete national. Let me not mention international because there we talk about 91000 people. Today it's the day of the event and the competition is tough. The ladies are putting in all their effort and it's quite impressive to watch. There are only 18 of us who are doing short distance event. As coach would say a sprinter is born not made so I understand why the rest of the other ladies are into hurdles, relay, middle and long distance events. Out of

all these events except short distance I like hurdles and I'm very much interested to do it as well. I'm going to talk to the coach and hear what she has to say.

Now we are on the finals. There are only 3 winners in each event which means there are going to be 15 winners. 3rd place winners are going to get a bronze medals and 5k. The runner ups will receive a silver medals and 10k then the first winners will get a gold medals and 15k. That's a whole total of 450k not to mention the money spent on organizing this event but surely sponsors came in handy.

I was a runner up in the first round and semi finals. Teddy is giving me a hard time I really need to win this competition. I have plans with the money unlike her she doesn't need it that much. Her sister not only does she owns a club she's a sport psychologist. Today is more about money then anything else to me. I want to secure position one but ey this teddy bear is standing on my way! Can she just break a leg on the field while sprinting. I'm kidding! Lisi and Sally with their friends are here to watch me and I really appreciate their support.

“On your marks.” We all have our feet place on the blocks fingers are on the ground behind the starting line and hands are slightly wider than shoulder width.

“Set.”

We all move up our hips are slightly above shoulder level and feet pushed hard into the block as we hold our breath getting ready for the sprint. A pistol goes off and the race begins. My competitor here is Teddy and she’s right next to me step for a step. Surpassing her is proving to be futile. ‘No no don’t give up! Remember why you have to win this race! You cannot be on the second place for the rest of your life baby girl! Run! Run! Run! Run like wild animals are chasing you!’ The voice in my ears is compelling me to push hard to my beyond maximum speed and run as fast as if I would never run again.

I hear Lisi’s voice through the crowd cheering for me and that’s when I realize that I’ve reached the finishing line. Yesssss! I flump on the ground with my knees panting heavily. The girls come to me and help me up then we share a group hug.

“Don’t get used to it. It was just this one time.” Teddy says and walks away. My girls just laugh at her. They’re genuinely happy for me.

It’s the end of the event so we receive our medals and take tons of pictures. I’m 15k rich baby! People should lay dish cloths for me to walk on them. No I want no red carpet ngifuna izimfaduko nje angisho mina I’m Mbewenhle Qwabe.

“You did well MaQwabe. High five.” I giggle as we high five

“Thank you coach.”

I also take pictures with her then I make my way to Lisi and Sally with their friends who are cheering me making me blush. Lisi can’t help himself he’s already jogging towards me but a figure behind him catches my eyes. What is he doing here and how did he find me? Despite those questions popping in my mind I find myself running towards him and launch myself into his arms. He catches me and swirls with me making me to giggle.

“Oh my goodness this is a surprise! I’m so happy to see you!”

“The feeling is mutual baby girl!”

“What are you doing here?”

“I couldn’t miss your first big competition. Damn girl are you sure you are not running with a tokoloshe I’ve never seen someone run as fast as you do.”

I giggle. Gosh I’m so happy to see him!

“Thank you for coming but how did you know I’m here?”

We hear someone clearing his throat. I have forgotten about the engaged couple and their friends. Lisi’s eyes travel from my arms that are wrapped around the man’s neck to his arms that are tightly clamped around my buttocks. Jealousy will kill him one day! Does he seriously think....argh you know what? Screw him with his thoughts! He puts me down and greets them.

“I’m Nana.” I can’t help but roll my eyes at how she’s literally throwing herself at him.

“Gcobolwakhe. Nice to meet you Nana.” The others introduce themselves as well and then he asks to borrow me for an hour or so.

“Where are you taking her?” Ask Lisi in a disapproval tone.

“It’s really doesn’t matter but she deserves some treat after that win.”

“We also have plans with her as well sir.”

“I will see you guys later I hope you don’t mind. I haven’t seen him in a long time I really need to catch up with him.”

“Who is he anyway?” Lisi

Uncle G chuckles. I decide to feed Lisi's mind with what's he's thinking already and bruise him even more. He has a fiancée for crying out loud why is he jealous?

"Your potential mzala in law. I will see you guys later. Dzaddy let me fetch my sport bag first then we will go."

"No problem baby girl."

I dash to the change room and get my bag then I leave with uncle G while others are having refreshments.

"Congratulations on your win baby girl."

"Thank you uncle G. How did you find me?"

"I have my ways."

"Let me guess mom asks you to huh?"

“She’s worried about you Mbewenhle.”

“With all due respect uncle G If you are here to take me back home rather take me back where you found me once.”

“No I’m not here to take you home I can never force you to something you don’t want.”

“Where are we going? I hope it’s not a public place because I’m sweaty I need a shower.”

“I want a private place for us to catch up so we are going to my hotel room you can have a shower there.”

“Okay.”

On arrival to the hotel I take a shower first using his toiletries and once I’m done I wear my tracksuits I was wearing before I changed into my running attire. I find him in the lounge and join

him. On top of the glass table there's food and bottle of wine. It's like he knew I'm hungry.

"Let's eat I'm starving," he says and pours wine in the glasses then we indulge in our food over a chat.

"Hawu yaz I'm mad at you uncle G."

He looks at me with a raised brow.

"You promised me that whenever I need you I should call you but when I finally did you didn't come through for me. I don't know what I was hoping you would do I mean you stay far away."

"What are you talking about?"

I tell him about that night and how his phone was answered by a woman.

“Dammit! I’m sorry baby girl she didn’t tell me and I didn’t even see your call on my call log. I would’ve called you back. I’m really sorry.”

“It’s okay now I understand.”

“Your mom told me everything....”

“Oh she couldn’t wait to tell you what a whore I am huh? You should ask her who’s Benhle’s father.” I regret saying that the moment words are out of my mouth but when I look at him he doesn’t look surprised.

“I’m his father I know.”

Wow

“All along you knew?”

“No.”

He explains to me what happened from how he found out to my mom's reaction and him threatening her and my dad suffering stroke. I don't know how I feel about all of this.

"Say something."

I look at him mystified. Baba never cared what do I have to say.

"Why?"

"I want to know how you feel about all of this and most importantly I want to know why you ran away from home." The concern in his voice has me tearing up. Uncle G is the man that I wish my father was while baba is the man mom wished her father was. How hilarious! He pulls me to his arms as I weep silently.

"Talk to me baby girl."

I heave a sigh and tell him everything choking between my sobs. He is angry especially at my dad and Muzikayise. I don't know why he's leaving my mom out of his anger or is it because he knows how her pussy tastes like. He apologizes for the pain I went through and tells me how strong I am and how proud he is of me. Just like what coach said he also tells me that I shouldn't blame myself for the abuse I endured in my marriage and I never deserved it.

"I'm sorry baby for failing you I promise from now on I would be here for you okay."

I nod my head and he wipes my tears before planting a kiss on my forehead.

"You need professional help I..."

"Sorry to cut you short but I'm already getting professional help. My running coach is also a sport psychologist."

"That's wonderful how is it's going?"

“I never told anyone about this but look now I’ve just told you I guess it’s helping. It just that somedays it really heavy I thought I can be able to close some chapters without having to go through them all over again but she emphasizes that a past has way of coming back to haunt us in future. She emphasizes healing and all this time I’ve been blaming myself for everything I went through but now I know that he had no right to put me through all of that regardless of what I did to him. Now I know that I never deserved anything he did to me. I know that I gave it my all to rectify my mistakes but he was never ready to see that because he wasn’t prepared from the beginning. I also discovered that I never loved him I just wanted to make my parents proud. Truth be told Mpilenhle set the bar too high and I’ve always wanted my parents to be proud of me like they’re proud of her. Unfortunately what baba considered as achievements in his daughters is quite different from what I considered as achievements for myself. However I take full ownership and responsibility for my actions and behavior towards every situation I encountered. Had I made wise decisions we would be talking a different story.”

He heaves a sigh and when I look at him I see emotions glinting in his eyes but I cannot pin point even one.

“I’m so proud of you baby,” he whispers and pulls me to his arms holding me tightly. I stay in his arms for what almost feels like half an hour without exchanging words. In his arms I feel safe. In his arms I feel protected. In his arms I feel loved.

“So you’re staying with that boy and his fiancée.” Eventually he breaks the comfortable silence.

“Yes”

“Are you happy with the set up you are living in?”

“Not really hence I’m planning to move out of their place as soon as I get my money. I already know the cheap flat I’m going to rent. It’s close by the club so I don’t have to travel when I go to the club. It’s going to save me money.”

“How much are you going to need?”

“No uncle....”

“Mbewenhle how much do you need?”

“I do have money don't worry.”

It's not much but it will be able to pay the rent at least 3 months and feed me while I work hard to win in the up coming events.

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER SEVENTY NINE

“I want to help you baby girl please let me. I want you to enjoy your first win. Let me worry about your needs while you enjoy your money.”

“Thank you so much I really appreciate your help uncle G but can you please do me a favor.”

“If you don’t want me to help you then no I’m not doing you any favor.”

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“Hayi I have all the money in the world to take care of my baby girl and you won’t ask me to not do that because it’s my duty okay.”

“It’s not your duty you are not my father.” Words slip out of my mouth before I can stop them and I immediately regret that.

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"You like hiding." I say and she giggles. We fall into comfortable silence staring at the clear blue sky.

"Thank you."

"For what?" I ask as I look at her once again.

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“Don’t go please don’t leave me again. I miss you so much.”

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“That's such a beautiful dream why are you sad.”

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“Come on don’t sulk.”

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It feels great to have him around he really nails that father figure figure role.....oh well the one I’m yearning for from my father.

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“Really?”

“Yes....”

“Oh thank you thank you so much!” I give him a tight squeeze and let go of him then he stares at me intently.

“What’s wrong?”

“How are old you now?” Okay that’s random.

“24 turning 25 December.”

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“Let me call the landlord and ask to view the flat and I would like you Mr Magagula to accompany me there and if I'm satisfied with it I will pay immediately.”

“Oh well let me go take a shower while you sort your things out Miss Qwabe.”

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"I said..."

"I know what you said but why are you moving out?"

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“I know that damnit! I know but it doesn’t change that I love you. Ngiyakuthanda Mbewenhle and I’ve never stopped loving you. My love for you will forever remain unchanged and endless. Loving you from a distance is one thing that I won’t be

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## ☆ Muzikayise ☆

Mama's crying voice begging me to come back brought me back to the living world. They said I've been in coma for few days and I must say I was so disappointed to learn the reason why I almost died. I'm still disappointed in myself for allowing a woman to break me to such extent. This is a wake up call I have to pull myself together and fix my life for the sake of my family. They need me now more than ever. Wealth that is made through ukuthwala never lasts so I was expecting this.

"Mr Maseko judging from what your mother and nephew told us you have a drinking problem and you need help."

"I don't have a drinking problem doctor. I was just stressed out and waking up from coma is a wake up call."

"You have been drinking for weeks..." I cut him short before he goes any further.

“I know that doctor but it doesn’t make me an addict. I’m going through a lot I drank alcohol because I wanted to forget but now I know how dangerous alcohol is. I’m going to stop on my own I don’t need rehabilitation or whatever.”

“I will give you the benefit of the doubt but you do need someone professional to help you deal with issues you are facing.”

I nod just to get him out of my sight. He’s becoming a nuisance now. I won’t talk to someone I don’t know about my issues. Talking won’t change anything that happened. It won’t heal my broken heart. It won’t give me answers to the questions Mbewenhle left me with. I want to be out of here already this place is depressing me more. I can’t believe that in the years that I’ve lived in my whole life I’ve never been hospitalized up until now because of alcohol! He leaves me to stew in my own juice.

“Can I come in?”

I look up at her and sigh. What is she doing here? She walks in but I haven't told her to come in.

"Hello."

"What are you doing here? Uzele ukuzongidelela?"

"I brought you something to eat," she says placing the pick n pay plastic bag on the bedside table before sitting down.

"How are you doing?"

"Ufunani Mpilenhle?"

"I'm here because I care Muzi okay."

"Why do you care?"

“Come on we are not all your enemies. I understand a lot has happened over the passed months but that doesn’t change that I still care about you. I’m sorry for the pain my sister put you through. Maybe you’re better off without her Muzikayise. I mean if she really love you she wouldn’t find it so easy to just leave you like that. Who knows what she’s up to wherever she is?”

“Why are you speaking like this about your sister?”

“Because it’s the truth.”

“You don’t know everything that was going on in our marriage.”

“True but that doesn’t mean she was supposed to leave Muzikayise. I don’t condone what she did it was so uncalled for and selfish. I’m sure there could’ve been a way to sort things out between the two of you not unless if you laid your hands on her.”

“I don’t beat women Mpilenhle. I’ve never laid my hands on her I swear.”

“Then what did she mean when she said she doesn’t blame you for the way you treated her.”

I heave a sigh and run my hand on my face.

“I tried Mpilenhle God knows I tried but I just couldn’t get over the cheating which resulted me into accusing her and not trusting her. We had fights almost everyday I guess that’s the reason she ended up leaving me.”

“That’s not a good enough reason for her to run away. She should’ve stayed and tried harder to fix her marriage after all she’s the one that cheated on you so we can’t blame you for not getting over the cheating. However you shouldn’t have taken her back Muzikayise if you were not ready to forgive her. The last thing I want is for you to die out of alcohol poisoning because of what she put you through. Please take this card and call this lady she will help you to tackle your emotional battles

” she says and hands me the card.

“Not you too Mpilenhle I don’t want to talk to a stranger and it’s not like talking will change anything.”

“She’s my sister in law and she’s very good at what she does. Just give it a try I promise you won’t regret it. I see that my sister scarred you and you would never be able to trust another woman again if you don’t deal with this.”

“Mpilenhle....”

“Please Muzikayise do this for the sake of your family then if not for yourself.”

She’s not going to let this go now is she?

“I will think about it.”

“That’s better then nothing. Once again I’m sorry for everything you’re going through.”

She gets up from the chair and sits on the bed before giving me a warm hug that I didn't know I needed it so bad up until this moment. She is always here to comfort me. Kungani ngingazange ngishele yena kwasesikoleni nje?

☆ Manelisi ☆

How I expected her to stick around in this love triangle I also don't know. This time it hurts more then it hurts the first time. I feel like I'm losing my world and air to breath all together.

“Maphumulo?”

I discreetly wipe my tears and look at him.

“Yes sir?”

“Are you okay?”

“Yes I’m fine.”

I stage a huge smile. He walks towards me and unbuttons his suit jacket then settles down on the couch next to me.

“Kwenzenjani ndoda yamadoda.”

“I’m fine boss.”

“I’ve just saw your cousin running away crying and I found you crying as well. Talk me to.”

Mr Nhlapho is a friend before a boss. He’s always there to listen to me whenever I need to talk. It’s safe to say when I was battling with my grandma’s passing he was there for me.

“What would you say if I tell you that she’s not my cousin.”

“Okay if she’s not your cousin who is she?”

“That girl I once told you about.”

“The maiden girl?”

“Yes she’s the maiden girl. I lied to my fiancée and said she’s my cousin. The past two months we have been having an affair and today she ended it. She’s moving out and she wants us to cut ties completely because she want to learn to stop loving me from a distance.”

“Yhooo mfanakithi ubhekene nento embi moss but don’t you think it’s best this affair is over before your fiancée find out?”

“How is it the best when I’m breaking apart like this and feel so lifeless. It’s like the universe has come to a stand still. I love her from the depths of my heart and soul. Kade yabusa enhlizweni yami leyangane.”

“What about your fiancée?”

“I also love her.”

“But?”

“There’s no but.”

He laughs softly and looks at me in disbelief.

“What were you hoping when you brought her to stay with you?”

“I thought that I’m over her but it’s clearly I was wrong.”

“Ay nawe Manelisi you shouldn’t have brought her in your place concerning the history between the two of you. It’s also unfair to expect her to stay with you while she knows you are going to get married. You have a hard decision to make man and you must be 100% certain. I’m sure you don’t want to wake up one day and realize that you’ve made a wrong decision. Sit

down with yourself and dig deep into your heart that's where you will find answers."

"I hear you man but I'm scared the answers I might get are going to hurt them. The last thing I want is to be responsible for their pain. Mbewenhle is already hurting and I hate myself for that."

"I feel you but it's better to hurt either of them with the truth then comfort them with lies. Lies that are going to haunt you in future. Life is too short to be stuck with someone you don't strongly feel connected with. You know not everyone get a chance to be with the people they truly love they settle for whoever they are with then years later they cheat. It's a tough decision to make I know and hearts are going to break but they will heal eventually."

"Thank you for the advice man I really appreciate it."

"Don't mention it. You can take the rest of the day off just to clear your mind."

“Thank you so much.”

It’s like he knows I won’t be able to function now. He gets on his feet and leaves while I take my things and once I’m done I leave. On arrival I find Sally in the lounge doing her work. She was working home today.

“Hey baby you’re back home early.”

“Yeah.”

I place everything on the coffee table and loosen the tie as I settle down next to her.

“What’s wrong you look stressed.”

“Did Mbewenhle come here?”

“Yes to get her clothes. It’s been a while she left. She said you two talked about moving out. Did I do something maybe that made her to move out? She wasn’t in a good state.”

“No I guess she wants her independency.”

“Oh maybe now that she’s starting to make money she thinks she doesn’t need us.”

“Mbewenhle is not like that at all. She feels like she’s crowding our space and wants independency.”

“I said maybe baby not I’m saying she’s like that. Come here let me take away the stress you have.”

She kisses my lips in passion and in a blink of an eye our clothes are on the floor. I run my hard dick between her slick folds lubricating it with her juices before shoving it deep into the hilt. She squirms digging her nails on my biceps. I begin to fuck her.

“You’re already failing to protect my heart Lisi I’m hurting. It hurts that I can never claim you as mine. It hurt that I’m eating where another woman is eating and I’m the one who’s a secret. You are not willing to let Sally go and I don’t want you to let her go because of me. I don’t want you to choose just because I said so. I don’t want you to wake up one day and hate me for pushing you into the corner to choose when all you feel for me is infatuation not love.” Wenhle’s words echoes in my ears infuriating my thrusts.

“Take it easy tiger!”

I pound into her harder then before as I feel my balls spasms. A wave of pleasure washes over me and I groan releasing my seeds inside of her.

“I love you dombolo lami!”

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

“You need to slow down now.” Can he not tell me to slow down? I need to numb the pain even if it’s going to be today only. I pour another glass of whiskey and gulps it down.

“Kanti kwenzakalani?”

We are in my flat he insisted to spend the night with me after seeing the state I was in and since he’s going tomorrow. The guys came to deliver my furniture and we sorted it out. We are sitting on my couches as we speak. TV is playing before us but we are not concentrating on it as we having his whiskey and chatting.

“About what?”

“Don’t make me a fool baby girl.”

“Maybe whoever that told you I’m here will tell you what’s going on.”

“What does that mean?”

“I know you monied people hire private investigators. That’s how you found out mom is involved in killing Lisi’s grandma.”

“Yes I did hire a PI but I’m sure he also doesn’t know why are you drinking my whiskey like this?”

“You’re also drinking moss.”

“Mbewenhle.”

This whiskey taste bitter yerrr but I love the feeling it’s doing in my body.

“How did you feel when the affair you had with mama had to come to an end?”

He clears his throat and gulps his last content of whiskey before pouring another one for himself.

“I don’t feel comfortable talking about that.”

“I’m also not comfortable talking about what’s going on.”

“Are you telling me that your are having an affair with that boy?”

“No I’m not.”

“Then what are you saying to me? That is the guy that drives you crazy after all so I wouldn’t be surprised but what I don’t understand why would you put yourself in such position because it never ends well?”

“I’m not having an affair with him uncle G.”

“I hope you’re telling the truth. He’s engaged to someone else and besides you just coming from a marriage. You need time to yourself before you start a new relationship”

“Yeah are absolutely right. Can you do me a favor.”

“Hayi you like favors too much.”

I can't help but laugh.

“Come on just tiny little favor.”

“Okay shoot.”

“Can you not tell mama where am I.”

“Now that will be difficult. Your mom cares and loves you so much I just wish you can give her a chance Mbewenhle.”

“She doesn't love me.”

“That's not true baby girl. Khona manje she's the only one worried that you ran away from home others don't care.”

Ouch why does that hurt? I mean I knew that I don't mean anything to them. Wait...

"Even Mvelonhle?"

"Yes he thinks your decision to leave was selfish. You could've talked to him."

That hit home. I know I was selfish but it was the only chance to break free from all the chains that were hooked all over me.

"He will understand someday. Please don't tell mom where am I and with who. I don't trust her to keep quiet from dad about my whereabouts. The last thing I need is Qwabe coming here with a sjambok to force me get back to my marriage."

"Muzikayise has a new wife now."

"Oh really? So fast and furious!"

He giggles as I sip on the whiskey.

“Yes his new wife is alcohol. Apparently he even pees on himself when he’s drunk.”

I gasp in shock.

“You don’t say!”

“I’m telling you.”

“The last straw was alcohol overdose. I remember hearing that he’s in coma.”

“Uncle G no!”

“Uyalayeka.”

“No how can you say that!”

I really feel bad yaz. Things were not supposed to turn out this way. We continue to talk from one topic to another until his phone rings. I decide to take a cold shower to sober myself up while he's on the phone. It's late now and I don't want to be drunk by the time I go to sleep well at least not that much. I'm going to the club tomorrow morning.

Damn cold water against my skin is like needles. I wonder how do people bath with cold water. I'm only enduring this pain because I want to sober up. I thought the cold water is helping but before I know it I sweep and fall on the floor. A scream of agony and fear escapes my mouth at the sight of my knee.

“Baby girl!”

The door bursts open then he rushes to me before crouching before me.

“What's wrong?”

“I fall down and my knee hurts!”

“Why are you even taking a shower while you’re drunk! Do you know what danger you just put yourself in!”

“I wanted to sober up a bit. I can’t afford to hurt my knee! Buka ithambo litshekile!” I’m hysterical

“Your knee looks okay baby girl,” he says massaging it.

“Look at it uncle G liphume ngaphandle ngathi idolo lesilenda!”

“You’re drunk akho thambo elitshekile la and you just got lucky. You could’ve hurt yourself badly.”

He stretches my leg and I notice that his eyes are glued on somewhere else not the leg he’s stretching.

“Uhm...uh...I will...get...you the towel.” He gets up and rushes out but I’ve already seen the boner on his pants. Fuck I’ve forgotten that I’m naked!

It takes him forever to come back with the towel and once I’ve covered myself he scoops me up and takes me to the bed. He wraps my knee with a bandage and gives me food and the pills for the pain.

At his hotel room we slept on the same bed but tonight he insists on the couch in the lounge. The awkwardness is almost tangible and I couldn’t be more surprised when I wake up to a goodbye note from him and money to go to the doctor if my knee becomes worse the next morning. He left just like that? Sigh!

☆ Mpilenhle ☆

She throws one look at him and snickers at how vexed he is. She's doing all of this for him and one day he will thank him. Her sister put him through a lot and it's taking a huge toll on him that he sought comfort into alcohol. He really needs therapy to help him tackle his emotional battles and move on from he's been through.

He glances at her when he hears her chuckling. What is chucklesome? They both agreed that he will think about seeing her sister in law why ambushing him now? He still can't believe that she literally came to fetch him at his home to take him to a shrink but what he doesn't believe even more is that he agreed without any protestation.

"What's tickling you?"

"Don't be mad this is for your own good you will thank me one day."

“Thank you for making me see some shrink.”

“Yes the shrink will help you...”

“I don’t need help!”

He grunts realizing that he just raised his voice.

“Look I’m sorry to shout but I really don’t need a shrink. Izinto zabafazi lezi futhi nakhona bakumabonakude.”

“That’s where you are wrong. Therapy is not for women only but it’s for everyone who is indeed. Right now Mr Maseko you are indeed.”

“This shit won’t bring your sister back!”

“True but this ‘shit’ is about you not about her. This shit will help you to deal with and overcome issues that are causing emotional pain or making you feel uncomfortable. It will also help you find your own insights into and understanding of your problems. Mbewenhle was right when she said it would be unfair for you to bleed on another woman while she’s not the one that cut you. Please just give it some time and if you still feel the same about therapy I won’t push.”

“Okay fine!”

“Thank you. Mama needs the car so I will drop you off and leave.”

“No problem I will call Thuthu to fetch me with my car.”

On arrival she drops him off and leaves. He’s expecting a woman but when he hears a deep voice saying ‘come in’ on the other side of the room he scowls. There’s no way he’s going to talk to another man he doesn’t know about his issues. He will probably laugh at him and thinks he’s a pussy for crying over a

woman. No one would ever understand the depth of his love for Mbewenhle. He turns around and walks away.

Meanwhile Mpilenhle is singing along Tides by Shekinah while driving home. Feeling proud about what she just did for her brother in law. She receives a call from her sister in law.

“Skoni sami.”

“Kanti uphi lomuntu?”

“What do you mean I dropped him there about 15 minutes ago.”

“There was a knock on the door 15 minutes ago but the person didn’t want to come in and when I checked there was no one.”

“Oh God he must have changed his mind! Let me call him.”

“I have another patient in an hour Mpilenhle your brother in law mustn’t waste my time.”

“I know let me call him please and I will let you know.”

Mpilenhle hangs up and calls Muzikayise but his phone is off. She keeps trying but still getting the same results.

“Dammit Muzikayise how could you embarrass me like that huh! I wasted my petrol for nothing! Where are you?” She groans in exasperation and calls her sister in law apologizing for inconveniencing her. Arriving at home she bumps to her mom at door carrying a bucket filled with her father’s feces.

“Oh I didn’t expect you to be back so soon. Let me go discard this and you are going to tell me what got you so annoyed.” Mam Thembeke says and walks out then Mpilenhle walks inside. The smell of her father’s poop is pervading the lounge she can barely breathe. She opens the windows and fetches her fragrance to spray it in the lounge.

This moment right now makes her wonder if she will ever be able to take care of her husband like her mom does to her

father should someday such happen to them. She couldn't bear the sight of her daughters' shit when changing their diapers now imagine how it would be like cleaning after an old man with 32 teeth. That's not the 'worse' she meant when she made her vows. Her mom walks in wiping her wet hands on her pinafore and settles down next to her.

"Yhuuu I admire you woman! How do you stand an old man's poop?"

"What's got you so angry?" Mam Thembeke says bluntly ignoring her daughter's question. How one can answer that question? She can't stand her own feces how can she stand another person's? It's not like she has a choice this is part of the 'worse' she meant when she said her vows.

"Muzikayise..." she goes on and explains to her mom.

"Kanti vele why are you so keen in helping this boy?"

"He's my brother in law..."

“He was your brother in law. I hope you’re not planning on eating your sister’s leftovers Mpilenhle.”

Mpilenhle gasps in shock. How could her mother say that?

“Haaa mama how can you say that?”

“Naqabulana nje why would you kiss your sister’s man if there’s nothing you feel for him?”

“Yho mama you are making an issue out of a tissue. I have no feelings for Muzi the kiss was a mistake. I’m trying to do damage control here. The last thing we want is for him to die because of alcohol overdose. His death will be on Mbewenhle’s hands.”

“I disagree Mbewenhle didn’t force anyone to drink alcohol....”

“But she’s the reason behind Muzikayise’s turmoil. She damaged the poor guy and left him to lick his own wounds.”

“We don’t know your sister’s side Mpilenhle. What did Muzi do to her that forced her to run away from home? There’s something that he’s not telling us.”

“He told me. Apparently he couldn’t get over the cheating and they always had fights because he couldn’t trust her anymore.”

“And you believe that?”

“Of course mama.”

“Open your eyes Mpilenhle there’s more than what meets the eye. Mbewenhle wouldn’t just leave because of accusations. There’s something he did to her and obviously he won’t tell you because he wants to look innocent. A person doesn’t just wake up and decide that she’s leaving out of the blue surely she thought about this hard and thoroughly. There’s a reason behind all of this and I intend to find out. In the meanwhile stay

away from Muzikayise you're married for crying out loud what would your husband say if he were to hear that you're busy comforting another man. The same man you kissed!" with that said Mam Thembeke goes to her bedroom to prepare herself.

Her husband is sleeping and the last born is with Mvelonhle at the shop. An hour later she's done and ready to go. Her lovely scent fills her daughter's nostrils forcing her to look up at her as she walks in the lounge. The effort she put in makes Mpilenhle wonder where is her mom going? She looks stunning in a red side pockets round neck button detail dress. The black doek is stylishly wrapped on her head and it complements her sandals.

"I won't be long but if your father wakes up please feed him."

"Where are you going looking so stunning?" She almost forgot how beautiful her mom is! The pinafores she always wears makes her looks like an old woman.

"I'm going to town."

Mpilehle laughs and shakes her head not believing what her mom said. There's absolutely no way she's going to town looking like this.

"You cleaned up so well to go to town come on mama."

"Bye." Mam Thembeke walks out. She opens her daughter's car and throws her handbag on the passenger seat before climbing inside. After bringing the engine to life she drives off.

On arrival to the hotel baby daddy stays in she makes her way up after a brief enquiry with the lady at the front desk. The door opens after knocking and damn Magagula couldn't help himself but gawks at her.

"Hi." She says softly, impressed with his reaction.

"Umh hey come on in."

He makes a space for her to walk in and stares at her behind as she walks inside his hotel room a whiff of her perfume invading his nostrils.

“Make yourself comfortable on the bed.”

“Thank you.”

She places her handbag on the bedside table and settles on the bed.

“Do you like anything to drink?”

“No I’m fine. Are you going to stand there all day? Come sit down and tell me why you called me here.”

Magagula walks towards the bed and settles down so close to her, his intoxicating masculine scent hovering over her.

“You look breathtaking.”

“Thank you,” she says and presses her lips tightly trying to hide a blush.

“It’s time I go back to Durban so I want us to talk about Ndabenhle.”

“You said you are not taking him Gcobolwakhe.”

“Yes I’m not taking him but he has to visit me.”

“You do know that all this time he’s been with you my husband thought he’s been with Mpilenhle.”

“But he knows he’s not his I don’t think it would be a problem if my son visits me.”

“Gcobolwakhe this is still new to him. I can’t just let Ndabe visit you without his approval. He’s still my husband and his father.

Please give him a chance to come around then we will talk about a way forward.”

“You are not being fair Tee. I’ve been deprived almost 4 years of my boy’s life. I want him to meet my family, introduce him to my ancestors and do all the rituals for him.”

“I understand and I’m not depriving you him anymore all I need from you is to be patient with me please. I can’t just make decisions without my husband’s input. He raised this boy after all and I don’t want him to feel more betrayed that he already is. Let just wait for him at least until he gets his speech back then we can talk.”

He looks at her not pleased with her request. She takes his hand in hers and looks at her with pleading eyes.

“Please Mthombeni.” It’s every man’s weakness to be called with his clan especially by a woman who means so much to him.

“Okay but I will see him 4 times a month and I will expect you to make a plan for me to see him.”

“Definitely.”

“Ngiyabonga.”

“For what?”

“For bearing me a son. He’s the best gift ever.”

She can’t help a smile that embraces her face. No one told her it feels this great to be appreciated for giving birth.

“You are welcome.”

“Can I give him a second name?”

“What name do you want to give him?”

“Ndlalifa.”

“I like it.”

They stare at each other, their eyes are communicating. Her chest rises and falls as he runs his fingertips on her cheek. The need to taste her enticing lips compels him to lean closer even though he’s expecting objection. Their lips collide and he lets out a rumbling growl when she kisses him back. Just like she remembers his lips are soft and welcoming funny he barely touched her but already she feels damp down there. It might be the lack of man touch over the past months. She releases a soft sound that could’ve been mistaken as a gasp savoring the taste of his lips.

The kiss is sweetening and deepening. Their breathing is ragged and they are both tearing each other’s clothes. In a split second they are in their undergarments and he is on top of her. She could feel his hard on pressing on her mound and knowing what this man is capable of doing to her body inflames her desire for him. His mouth leaves her lips and travels down to

her neck, blowing warm breath on her skin. Oh how he love her scent it's so sweet and feminine and seductive as fuck.

A throaty groan escapes his lips as he fondles her mound over the panty that is getting wet with each second. He slides it aside and delves his fingers underneath. The warmth and slickness of her cunt intensifies the hankering to ravage her married pussy. He can tell just by how wet she is that she also wants him as much as he does but why today she's giving in easily unlike the other times he tried to make a move on her and she refused. He looks at her with lust filled hooded eyes.

“Are you wet for me?” He asks with a strained voice.

“Are you hard for me?” she asks stroking his hard meat over his boxers.

“Why today Tee?”

“What do you mean?”

“You know what I mean?”

“Why not today?”

He looks at her intently studying her then he chuckles bitterly.

“You want to use me.”

“Of course not!” she whispers in a retort.

“Now that your husband is a vegetable and you don’t know when he will recover. It might take months even a year so you thought why not use me to fuck you. Then when he recovers you are going to dump me just like you did the first time.”

“Stop analyzing things too much and let enjoy this moment come on. See Magaula omuncane is craving for me.”

She kisses his earlobe while stroking his rod earning her a groan out of his mouth. No no no he can’t do this not again!

“Woah Thembeka!” He rolls down from her body and settles next to her on the bed.

“What now?” The annoyance seeping out in her tone can’t be missed.

“I’m not going to allow you to use me like this. You are going to go back to your husband and leave me alone to pick up the pieces on my own. I’m not going through that shit again. You know how I feel about you and fucking you would make things worse for me. I won’t fuck you unless I’m sure that you’re going to be mine.”

“Kodwa Gcobolwakhe uyakwazi ukubandisana. How can I be yours when I’m married. We talked about this.”

“You’re married to a man that doesn’t want anything to do with you. Now he has no choice but once he recovers he will chase you out of home and forget that you took care of him when he couldn’t do anything for himself.”

Maybe he's right but that's a last thing she wants to hear right now. She's hopeful that they will be able to move past her infidelity.

"Honey come on. This is your chance to leave him and be with me. There's no reason to stay in this marriage it has run its course. I'm still here and ready to shower you with endless love and make you happy."

It is without doubt that she will definitely be happy with him. The two months they were together in Durban she was the happiest woman ever but leaving her husband and starting a new relationship seems impractical especially in her age. Those things only happen in TV not in real life or maybe they happen to some women not the likes of her. Already she's praying that Ndabenhle's news to stay in the Qwabe homestead only.

She won't be able to handle the humiliation should her infidelity spread to every living person in the village. Not only her dignity would be dragged down but her husband's as well. He might not forgive her but one thing she knows he won't let this come out to the world. There's nothing he fears then

ignominy. They might never be a happy married couple again but in the public eye they would be.

“You and I will never be together not in this lifetime Gcobolwakhe. We talked about this and there’s nothing changed.”

He nods sadly. Why does he always hurt himself with this woman? He gets up from the bed and goes to take the sneakers and the scooter.

“Here this is for your sons.”

“My sons? You shouldn’t buy anything for Mvelonhle.”

“It’s not me their sister bought these for them with her first money she made.”

She looks at him, confusion fogging her mind.

“Mbewenhle.”

“You saw her? Where is she? Is she okay? Why did she leave home? I want to see her please take me there.”

“Woah you need to slow down.” He puts the boxes on the pedestal and settles down next to her.

“She’s okay. I can’t tell you where she is because I made a promise to her that I won’t.”

“Gcobolwakhe please I just want to see her and hold her in my arms.”

“I’m sorry Tee but I can’t break our trust like that. What you need to know is that she’s okay.”

“Please I’m begging you I won’t tell her you told me.”

“She will know I told you. I’m the only one who knows where she is. She’s scared that if I tell you where she is you are going to tell your husband and he will force her to come back to her marriage. She’s been enduring abuse in that marriage hence she ran away because she knew that you won’t be able to protect her from your husband.”

“Abuse? Oh I knew it! I knew it that bastard did something to her! Please tell me he didn’t put his hands on my daughter?” The tremor in her voice matches the shivering of her body.

“You need to calm down Tee.” He pulls her in for a tight squeeze trying to calm her down and it works like magic.

“He didn’t literally put his hands on her but she wasn’t happy in that marriage....” she listens as he goes on telling her everything Mbewenhle said to him. By the time she’s done Mam Thembeke is a crying mess.

“Oh my goodness how can I not see all of this? What kind of a mother am I?”

“Don’t be hard on yourself she did so well to hide this and not that she wanted to but she thought you guys will think the worst of her and she also blamed herself for his behavior.”

“I should’ve seen this still I’m her mother and for her to think we will think the worst of her it shows what a failure I am as her mother. I was supposed to be her protector, shield and sanctuary. I understand why she hates me and I doubt she will ever forgive me,” she covers her face with her hands and bursts into tears.

“She doesn’t hate you Tee it just that she’s still hurt and angry. Give her time one day she will come back and you would be able to tell her how sorry you are and how much you love her.”

“You think so?”

“Yes I know so. Mbewenhle loves you it just that your words hurt her beyond comprehension. You need to be careful to what you say to your children Tee no matter how angry you are. Words cut deep even if you spoke them out of anger.”

“I didn’t mean to I swear.”

“I know but you can’t take back those words now.”

“I was angry at her for humiliating us but I was more angry at myself and she happened to be at the receiving end of self anger. I felt responsible for her behavior. My own daughter saw me fucking another man while married to her father. I’m the one who set the example to her Gcobolwakhe.”

“No honey it’s not like that at all. She takes full responsibility for her actions and it’s not on you trust me. That’s not how she sees it. One thing you should’ve done when you found out after beating her up was to sit her down and help tackle the dilemma she was facing. Apparently she never loved Muzikayise she wanted to make you and your husband proud. Her feelings for him were not real but influenced. It didn’t help that your elder daughter followed the teachings and expectations of your husband which are rather different from what she wanted for herself. Mbewenhle has dreams Tee and those dreams doesn’t include being a house wife. It will take a modern man to be her husband not an old fashioned boy who didn’t want to let her spread her wings.”

“She told you all of this?”

“Yes.”

“Wow I’m so jealous right now that she can tell you all of this but not me,” she says and chuckles, sadness clouding her face.

“Don’t be you will also get that opportunity one day. You just need to change your approach towards her.”

“Where is she?”

“She’s not in this province that what you have to know.”

“She’s in another province? How did she get there and who does she stay with? Uyadla nje kodwa umtanami?”

“I can’t tell you all of that Tee but she’s fine. Yes she’s eating and doing very well. She even attends therapy to help her with the trauma. Let me show you the pictures we took together.” He reaches for his phone and unlocks it then scrolls through his photos.

“See here we were at the FNB stadium watching soccer.”

Mam Thembeke takes the phone and looks at her daughter.

“She looks happy.”

“Well she’s not completely happy but she’s finally free and doing what she likes. Here it’s a video of her running. She’s an athlete next year she’s definitely going for the Olympics.”

The smile on Mam Thembeke’s face spreads as she stares at her daughter proudly. She remembers that at school she used to compete and won medals. They’re still hanging on the wall in her bedroom.

“That’s where she got the money?”

“Yes that was her first competition and she won.”

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER EIGHTY ONE

“You will tell her someday.”

A message pops up on the screen. She notices that it's from her daughter and opens it 'Hello uncle G my knee is okay I just wanted to tell you that. I hope you arrived safely. I'm sorry about that other night. I understand you are a man and all the last thing I should've done was to be naked in front of you. I'd hate to lose you over this meaningless incident. I love you Daddy.'

“What is this?”

“What?” He asks not sure what is she's talking about as he was oblivious to what's happening. She hands him the phone.

“What incident is she talking about? Naked in front of you?”

Magagula clears the lump in his throat after reading the text.

“Gcobolwakhe I’m talking to you!”

“Don’t shout!”

“Okay I’m sorry but talk to me what is she on about. Are you dating my daughter?”

“What? No! Of course not!”

“Then what does this text mean! What incident is she talking about?”

He fleetingly shuts his eyes releasing a gruff whisper and looks at her. She’s blazing with anger.

“It’s not what you think it is Thembeke.” He explains further as embarrassed as he is about the incident.

“Wow! You wanted to fuck my daughter?”

“Of course not she’s like a daughter to me.”

“Oh please stop talking crap! How can you get turned on looking at your daughter huh?”

“Thembeke you need to understand...”

“There’s nothing I’m going to understand! So you’re the kind of father that get a boner when looking at your naked daughter! What kind of a father are you?”

“I don’t know okay! I’ve never had a daughter before I wouldn’t know but this doesn’t mean anything! A penis has a mind if it’s own!...”

“You’re defending your pervert ass! You wanted to fuck my daughter Gcobolwakhe just admit it!”

“I won’t admit anything that is not true!”

“If it’s not true then why did you run away huh?”

“Because I was embarrassed but most importantly I didn’t want to make her feel uncomfortable! She sees a father in me and the last thing I want is to taint how she looks at me! At the end of the day she’s not my biological daughter Thembeke this could’ve made her feel unsafe around me for all we know.”

“She sees a father in you but you see a woman that you want to fuck! Angisho vele she’s not your biological daughter. I can’t believe you’re lusting over my daughter!”

“I’m not lusting over her!”

“Akusho wena kusho umpipi wakho lo ovele wama wathi mpo emva kokubona indodakazi yami inqunu! Ubaba oqhanyelelwa ingane ehlaza cwee sies usile yaz wena!”

“Stop making me feel like a peadophile! Mbewenhle is not 10 years old she’s a young beautiful attractive woman. Now she’s

even fit and sexy and....” he’s cut shot by a hot slap that lands on his face. He blinks rapidly as anger travels through his veins.

“You have a nerve to tell me that nonsense! She’s my daughter for crying out loud and you’re the father of my son! You are so sick to even think like that about her! Now I see that if I choose to be with you it would be a biggest mistake ever because you you are the kind of step father who lust over his step daughters. My daughters wouldn’t be safe around you! Stay the hell away from my daughter do you hear me!”

“You’re so ungrateful Thembeke! I spent money to pay a private investigator to search for your daughter and this is how you thank me? Now you see a rapist in me after I’ve been nothing but a good father to your daughter since you failed you give her a father that she deserves.”

“Oh you’re the father that she deserves? The one that wants to fucks her?” She asks rolling out of bed and get dressed.

“Your husband doesn’t even deserve to be called a father. You failed Mbewenhle from the day you chose the man to father her!”

“Stay the hell away from my daughter Gcobolwakhe!”

She angrily takes the boxes and her handbag before walking out. When she gets to the parking lot she throws the boxes in the boot together with her handbag and gets inside the car. Her body is trembling and different emotions are attacking her. She covers her face with her hands and release a huge breath.

Mbewenhle’s numbers why she didn’t save them? That pervert will not give her especially after their fallout. Maybe it’s not a good idea to have her numbers. He emphasized to give her daughter time and that is what she would do even though it’s going to be hard. At least she knows that she’s okay wherever is she and she’s going to pray that one day she’s going to come back home and they will be able to iron things out and move pass from everything that has happened.

Arriving at home she takes the boxes and her handbag from the boot and heads inside the house. Mpilenhle is in rondoval preparing super while Qwabe is watching TV in the lounge. He looks at her from the toes up to her head and wonder where she's coming from dressed like this? If she was able to cheat on him while he was okay and healthy what will stop her now that he's a vegetable? That thought alone is like shards of glasses in his heart. Mam Thembeke greets her husband before walking to Mvelonhle's bedroom where Ndabenhle is laughing his little lungs out.

"Knock knock."

Mvelonhle stops tickling his little brother and goes to open the door for his mom.

"Mama."

"Hey boy."

She walks in and places the boxes on the bed.

“I brought you two these.”

Mvelonhle takes the box of sneakers and beams excitedly.

“Mom how did you know? I love these sneakers and they’ve been out of stock for a while!”

“I’m not the one who bought them my boy it’s your sister.”

“Mpilenhle bought these wow!”

“No it’s Mbewenhle.”

“Ma?”

“Mbewenhle bought these sneakers for you and a scooter for Ndabenhle.”

“How mama? So baba was right that you know where she is?”

“Mvelonhle how can you ask me that? I don't know where your sister is but there's someone who's been searching for her for me and he found out where she is but he made her promise that he won't reveal her whereabouts because she's scared your father will fetch her and force her to go back to her marriage...”

“Oh wow you know what I don't want to hear anything. I don't want these sneakers. You can throw them in the toilet!”

“I understand you're angry at her but you don't know what she's been through...”

“Because she didn't want me to know mama! If she wanted me to know she would've told me. I don't give a fuck what she's been going through! She can't just leave like that and buy me with sneakers!”

“You don’t mean that boy. She bought these sneakers with her first money she won. Do you know how special that is? Some of us would give anything to be at the receiving end of this gesture.”

“You want to see that I mean every word?” Mvelonhle says taking the sneakers out of the box and goes to his drawer to take a scissor.

“What are you doing?”

“I don’t want her fucking sneakers!!!”

He furiously cuts the sneakers with a scissor and his mom tries to stop him but it’s already late. Tears burn her eyes she never thought she will see a day where Mvelonhle feels like this about Mbewenhle. They were tight like a knot and always had each other’s back.

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☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I feel tiny hands tickling me and when I flutter my eyes open she closes hers pretending to be asleep. I close my eyes and open them just as she's about to tickle me.

“Gotcha!”

She giggles

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wiggling her tiny body as I tickle her.

“Aunty Nhle stop!”

No I'm not going to stop! She wakes up people by tickling them and feigns sleeping I'm going to show her who is the boss in the tickling department. I only stop when she passes flatulence.

“Mmmh sies!” I cover my nose with my hand as she giggles sweetly.

“I’m sorry.”

Such a cutie! I can’t wait to have a mini me. I reach for my phone on the pedestal to check the time. It’s going for 8am and I have therapy session at 10 am which gives me two hours to prepare myself and this little princess.

The past two months have been nothing short of training hard and winning. I did remarkably well in the past three events. The first one I manage to get myself a silver medal then last two events I got two gold medals. If I win in the remaining 3 events I will qualify to compete in National Championships which will be in Paarl. Oh I can’t wait phela it will be my first time flying! That feeling of flying to complete with other sprinters I think it would finally make me feel as an official athlete.

I have been training very hard even by myself and I happen to sprain my ankle. Coach was on my case about pushing myself hard and she even refused to let me do the hurdles. She wants

me to focus on the sprinting. I had to go to the doctor for the treatment of my sprained ankle. Luckily it was nothing that bad and the good thing is I still have time to recover fully before the 4th event. The ankle saga brings me to the reason why I have a little princess tickling me awake. She's the doctor's five year old daughter. Yeah the doctor is making his move on his patient. What a naughty doctor!

I told him that I'm not interested into a relationship so he asked at least to be friends. We have been hanging out together and I met his daughter who instantly loved me the first day she saw me. I swear I have kids' love potion

these cuties love me which is great but sometimes I can't help but wonder though. Have you ever noticed that most people who love kids and are loved by kids usually they can't have children? What if I'm one of those people?

"Get up little princess."

We both roll out of bed and while I make my bed she's spinning around my bedroom playing. Once I'm done I bath her and dress her up in yesterday's clothes.

“What do you want to eat.”

“Weetbix!”

No ways who eats that? I love my food greasy and meaty. I have no cereal at all. I'm going to starve the poor girl that moment her father trusts me with everything in him or he's just heedless. We have only known each for two weeks and we barely know each other. Yesterday he came here with his daughter just to say hi to me but we ended up watching movies together over burgers and snacks. When it was time to leave the little princess refused and that's how she ended up sleeping over. How can you trust some girl you just met with your daughter? I could be a serial killer or child trafficker for all we know.

“I don't have weetbix princess how about some eggs and...”

“I don't eat eggs.”

Huh who doesn't eat eggs? Eggs are nice especially the ones that are naturally laid by chickens! This child is missing out shame.

"Why?"

"I'm allergic to eggs."

Say what! Eggs have allergies? Qaluyiva!

"Okay do you eat sausages and bacon?"

"I love sausages and bacon but grandma doesn't want me to eat oily breakfast."

City grandmas! What is breakfast without oil? Mxm!

"Grandma won't know because she's not here."

“Lying is bad Aunty Nhle!”

Sibawodi! Can Mbongeni come and get his brat!

“Can you keep a secret?”

“Yes I can.”

“Well this is going to be our secret.”

“Okay.”

“Yay! High Five!”

She raises up her little hand with a huge smile and we high five. Such a beautiful little girl with curly hair and hazel eyes. I prepare our breakfast and when we finish we eat together. The girl has appetite unlike Benhle. That one his appetite has timetable and if you don't feed him he will starve to death. I miss him so much!

I would've asked Uncle G to sent me his recent pictures I want to see how grown he is now but the man went awol on me. He never contacted me ever since that incident in the bathroom even when I wrote him a text. I understand that he is embarrassed but he's the one that showed up here and promised to be always there for me now he is ghosting me. People find it so easy to disappoint me by ghosting me and it hurts to the core.

Now I'm scared that coach will do the same. I don't want to lose the relationship I've build with her but I'm keeping a room for disappointment since people find it easy to just walk away from me. Story of my life! It's time like this I wish Ndalwenhle was alive. I know that one wouldn't even think of walking away from me. See even in on the other side of the world she's still with me that what she promised me in my dream but I wish she was here physically.

"Why are you are crying Aunty Nhle." Tamia little's voice snaps me out of my trance. I briskly wipe my tears that I wasn't aware were falling.

“No baby I’m not crying. There’s something in my eyes.”

She looks at me gloomily as if she knows that I’m lying. I stage a huge smile for her until she’s convinced and continue with eating her food. I let her watch cartoons when we finish eating and go take a quick bath. Time runs fast quickly. I can’t believe that I only have 30 minutes only left to go to the club. I quickly lotion my body and slip into tracksuits. A beanie is the only thing I’ve been using to hide my hideous hair since I unbraided my hair. I need to make some time and go for the wash. Mbongeni is at the door.

“Hello.”

“Hey come on in.”

He walks in and pulls me into a hug. Such an affectionate man. God not only does he smells nice he dresses nice too. Right now he’s in a black pair of jeans which complements his sweater and he completed his look with a brown trench coat. He’s a bhebheble kind of man not joleble kind of man. Who dates a doctor? The man sees different booties of women everyday I

don't want to think about buttocks of women he's seen a day while I'm on

the field running. Hehe! Coming to joburg has ruined me. I can't believe the whole me can now differentiate between a man who is only good enough for a fuck not a relationship. Shwele lafa elihle kakhulu!

"Are you good?"

"Yes I'm just running late."

"I'm sorry let me not delay you any further. Princess let's go!"

"Now?"

"Yes!"

"But daddy I want to stay with aunty Nhle."

“Aunty Nhle is going somewhere we will visit her some other time.”

“You promise daddy?”

“Yes I promise my princess.”

“Okay.”

She gets up from the couch and takes her teddy bear which she carries wherever she goes. I’ve forgotten what the name of it.

“She didn’t you trouble you?”

“Not at all.”

“Thank you Nhle.”

“You’re welcome.”

“Don’t you want me to drop you off?”

“Yes please let me go get my phone.”

I dash to my bedroom and take my phone then we all head out.  
I make sure I lock my flat then we leave.

“What time are you free today?”

“From 12pm till late.”

“Okay I’m going to come and pick you up.”

“Where are you taking me doc?”

“Somewhere to have fun.”

“You are not going to ask me?”

He chuckles and bites his bottom lip.

“Would you?”

“What?”

“Come on Nhle.”

“Okay we will go but next time learn to use full sentences.”

“Yes ma’am!”

We both giggle. Oh we are here! I thank him for the ride and say my goodbyes to Tamia before stepping out of the car. He hoots once and drives off as I make my in. We have unpacked a lot of things over the months and it’s safe to say I feel much better than when I arrived here. It’s good to have someone who you can talk to any time and any day without the fear of

being judged. She's helped me discover many things about myself and understand myself better.

"Teddy come on Mbewenhle...." I pause on the door when I hear my name.

"No you come on ausi Tshidi! This was supposed to be my year to shine but I can't because this farm girl of yours is standing on my way!"

"You can still shine if you work hard..."

"You know I am working my butt off but she always surpass me! You shouldn't have recruited her from the first place!"

"Teddy you are doing tremendously well I don't understand why can't you be proud of yourself...."

"Be proud of myself? You are kidding me! She's outshining me! I cannot be on the 3rd and 2nd place for the rest of my life!"

Those gold medals were supposed to be mine but thanks to you sister!”

“Teddy come on...Ntediseng!” The door swings opens and Teddy walks away angrily bumping her shoulder on me purposely. I watch as the coach buries her face on her hands. She looks up at me when I knock and tells me to come in.

“Morning coach.”

“Hi Mbewenhle are you good?”

“Yes I’m fine and yourself?”

“I’m not well do you mind if we do this tomorrow. I’m sorry for the inconvenience I just...”

“I understand you don’t have to explain. I will see you tomorrow.”

I walk out with a heavy heart. I don't want to come between sisters I feel awful right now. When I get to my flat I pour myself a glass of wine and drink while going through Facebook feeds with a fake account. I'm laying low for a while until I'm ready to face the world. One glass turns out to be many and before I know it I'm dozing off on my couch.

Someone is shaking me and my blurry eyes are met by Mbongeni's pissed off face. Did he just walk inside my flat without me opening the door for him? That's creepy!

"I've been knocking on the door for an hour now but here you are passed out on the couch. You shouldn't have agreed to come with me if you knew that you don't want to."

Fuck! I forgot...no I didn't forgot I just...I heave a sigh and sit on my butt. I'm still drunk but not that much.

"I'm sorry Mbongeni it's not that I didn't want I just came back from the club and decided to have one glass of wine."

“One glass of wine I see,” he says eying the empty bottle.

“Yes one became many I’m sorry okay. It’s not too late we can still go.” I get up but he pulls back to the sofa

“I was planning some outdoor fun activities but you’re drunk. If you told me you can’t come with me I would’ve asked someone else to come with me this day means so much to me and I wanted to spend it with you but...”

“God Mbongeni I said I’m sorry okay. I wanted to go with you I swear but I also didn’t know when I get there the coach would be fighting with her sister because of me. I was stressed out the last thing I want is to come between sisters. One drink called another and the rest is history.”

“What happened?”

I tell him everything that happened. He sighs and takes my hands in his.

“Don’t feel bad it’s not your fault they’re fighting...”

“It is my fault if I didn’t join the club she...” he cuts me short by pressing his forefinger on my lips.

“Let me finish please.”

“It’s clear that girl is not ready for this career because athletics is all about competing. She won’t grow in this career if she doesn’t challenge herself and expect to win easily. You’re the competition she needs to push herself hard. Who said she can’t beat you? She can still beat you if she puts her mind into it and train hard. That what I love about this career because win is determined on how hard you push yourself and believing in yourself. There are many sprinters out there if she’s crying because of you only how will she make it to the Olympics? This girl is not serious she needs to check herself honestly and figure out if this is really the career she wants.” He just spoke like a wise man that he is. Now he even looks more handsome.

“You are so damn right doc!”

“I know I am so please don’t even think of letting her win because you feel sorry for her and you don’t want to come between sisters. This is your career as well and you need to work hard to put your name out there and be highly ranked. You have no time for girls who wants things easy for them.”

“Thank you so much I really needed to hear that.”

“It’s my pleasure.”

“I’m really sorry that you couldn’t spend the day how you planned.”

“It’s okay now I understand.”

“You want to tell me why this day means so much to you.”

“Let’s order pizza I’m starving and I hope you have more wine.”

“Yes I do have wine. I need to go to the loo you can order.”

I get up and run to the bathroom to release my bladder. Once I'm done I wash my hands and go back to the lounge and find the doctor already making himself feel comfortable with my wine.

"Today it's my late little brother's birthday."

"Oh I'm sorry to hear that."

"You know it's been almost 13 years he passed on but it still feels like yesterday."

"I know what are you talking about."

"I wish... I wish I could take back the hands of time and change everything."

"You sound like you blame yourself for his death."

“Yes because I am to be blamed. My mother still reminds me of that up to this date.”

“What happened if you don’t mind me asking.”

“Where do I begin?”

“Where all it began.”

I pour myself a glass of wine and sit comfortably as he begins to narrate his story.

“Growing up I was a trouble maker. You know that type of boy that my mother was always ready for the police to pop by and tell her that she must come to identify my body.”

“Really that’s so unlike you!”

He chuckles and sips on his wine.

“I know hey. It turns out that I needed usiko lakithi and that’s when I discovered that the man I thought is my father is not my father. When he met mom she was already pregnant and he took me as his child from day one. Imagine 26 years of my life was a pure lie.”

“Oh I’m really sorry I can’t begin how it must have been like. So that makes you 38 years old?” I ask already counting the years.

“Yes.”

“Oh my goodness!”

He looks so young though!

“What?”

“I should be calling you brother or better yet uncle.”

“Please don’t you dare call me that.”

“Do you know how old I am?”

“Turning 25 years December. Yes I know I have your file remember.”

He’s 13 years older than me! Even if he was a joleble kind of man but he’s definitely not for me!

“I know what you are thinking but we will talk about that sometime later. Where was I? Oh yes my father didn’t know that I existed. He was a typical taxi driver you know how they never let a skirt pass them but I still think mom should’ve told him despite of that. She wasn’t supposed to assume that he will deny my paternity and refuse to take care of me. She allowed anger of being cheated on to get the better of her. My stepdad searched for my father and unfortunately we found out that he is late but his family welcomed me. Apparently he could have been happy to meet me because the doctors diagnosed him with Klinefelter Syndrome.”

He gulps the last consent of his wine and pours another one.

“He died of cardiac attack after finding out his wife cheated on him with one of his taxi drivers. You know what broke my heart and angered me more was to find out that the bloody taxi driver became a taxi owner and was enjoying life and praised for opening a taxi academy while my dad is six feet under. He took him like his son Nhle but he betrayed him and slept with his wife moreover he impregnated her. Of course no justice was served because the autopsy said it was cardiac arrest but they were responsible for his death. They drove him to death.” His eyes are now reddish and his hand is clamping on the glass tightly like he wants to break it.

“My uncles told me that the wife died she was murdered by her boyfriend. Years later the man was murdered too.”

“I guess your father did get justice then.” What else can I say. This topic of cheating leaves a bitter taste in my mouth.

“I still don’t understand how does it has to do with you being your fault that your brother is no more.”

“When we heard that the man died we went to celebrate with my gents. We had so much to drink and we were drunk on our way home we had an accident. I was behind the steering wheel. My brother and 2 of my friends died on the accident scene.” His voice trails off as he’s struggling to breath.

“Oh I’m really sorry Mbongeni but it wasn’t your fault. Such things happens.” Now that I know how old is he it feels weird to call him with his first name.

“The bastard didn’t want to die alone! He died with my brother and my friends. I couldn’t celebrate his death because I was also burying my little brother and 2 of my friends.”

I don’t know what to say. Maybe they were not supposed to celebrate someone’s death I mean who does that?

“That day I didn’t lose my little brother and 2 of my friends only. I lost my mother and all my other friends who were also there in the avanza I was driving that night. After the death of my brother and my two gents our brotherhood died there and

then. The families of the two friends blamed me and my mother hates me up to this date for killing her son. It hard to live with this guilt Nhle it should've been me who died not him not them. I'm the one who put them up to this. I should've let God take control of everything. I should've..." he looks up in the ceiling and swallows hard. The last sentences are confusing but I put my glass on the coffee table and shift closer to stroke his back.

"I'm sorry but it's not your fault really Mbongeni. Your mother will come around one day. You know when we are grieving we look for other people to blame. It was an accident and accidents happens all the time. Don't be hard on yourself please. Have you ever had therapy or counseling?"

Look at me asking people the same question I hated when someone asked me one. We are making progress and finally see how useful therapy is.

"Yes it's just that some other days are harder then others."

“I can imagine but it will be alright one day you have to believe that.”

“If I can get my mom’s forgiveness I would be the happiest man in the world. You know I even turned my life around just to make her happy. I applied for bursary to study in Cuba and now I’m a successful doctor with my own surgery but instead my success is twisting a knife in her bleeding heart. She thinks I’m enjoying life and becoming successful while I robbed my little brother that chance. I don’t know what to do anymore to earn her forgiveness.” He gulps his wine and places the glass on the coffee table.

Shame my heart is bleeding on his behalf. I don’t know how to comfort him or make him feel better. This is deep and intense.

“I don’t know what to say to you but I’m really sorry Mbongeni.”

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER EIGHTY TWO

He looks at me deeply his eyes alternating between my eyes and lips.

“You know what else that can make me the happiest man in the world?”

I shake my head no.

“Is having you by my side.”

I swallow spit and move away from him but he inches closer and caresses my cheek.

“Just give me a chance I’m not perfect but I promise you will never regret it.”

“Mbonge...” He captures my lips in his soft and smooth lips. The wine makes the kiss erotic and intoxicating. I release a strange sound from the back of my throat as he deepens the kiss.

☆ Manelisi ☆

I'm not different to someone who has damaged lungs and breathing is a real struggle every single day. It's been full two months without seeing her well not literally. I want to respect her wishes and stay away from her but it's been hard for me hence I ended up stalking her just to see if she's doing okay and she's safe. She's like a drug to me not only am I craving for physical intimacy with her but for emotional and spiritual intimacy as well.

"Manelisi!" My fiancée's voice brings me back from my reverie.

"Yes baby."

"What are you thinking about?"

“Nothing what were you saying?”

She gets up from the chair and walks around my desk before settling on my lap

wrapping her arm around my neck.

“Talk to idombolo lakho.”

She’s grown obsessed with this pet name it’s like she can sense that it belongs to another woman. I wish I can say the first time it slipped out of my mouth was the last time but it is always at the tip of my tongue ready to roll out of my mouth at any time even when we are making love. Boy do I feel bad but I can’t seem to help myself.

“I’m okay baby I swear.”

“You are lying but I know when you are ready to talk to me you will. Now I have to go.”

“Thanks for lunch.” She was off today and decided to bring me lunch. I’m so grateful to have her in my life.

“You’re welcome sthandwa sami.”

She cradles my face and kisses me before getting up from my lap. Before leaving she starts my clearing up the desk and discarding everything that needs to be. No matter how I bury myself with work she keeps invading my mind. The thought of losing her to that doctor she’s been spending time with has my chest tightening.

I thought by this time I would be over her just like I thought I was before I brought her to Johannesburg but honestly the past two months I’ve been miserable without her and the question is do I want to be miserable for the rest of my life? It’s not like I’m winning with what I’m trying to do here so I pack my things and leave.

On arrival I see the doctor’s black AGM Merc. He is here but you know what I don’t care. When I don’t get the response after knocking I make my way in because the door is not locked.

I know that's rude but hey I can't take this anymore. It's looks like there's not one. There are two empty bottles of wine and glasses on the coffee table with a box of pizza. I start at the bathroom and when I don't see anyone I move to the bedroom and the door is left ajar by the way.

I know her moans and I cannot mistake them even if I were to go deaf. They're the most sexy sound I ever heard but at this moment knowing that I'm not the one responsible for those moans grates my heart in mince meat. I throw myself inside the bedroom and the bastard's face is buried between her thighs. I don't know how and when but the next thing I have him pressed against the wall and strangling the life out of him.

"Manelisi what are you doing? Stop it!!!" she's screaming at me but I ignore her and squeeze this asshole's life out of him. He's gurgling and trying to get my hands away from his neck but I tighten my grip. He will learn to never bury his ugly face in my num-num!

"Manelisi you are going to kill him! Let him go dammit!" she pulls me away from him and I let go of him. He coughs profusely holding his neck.

“Are you okay?”

“What the fuck is going on here?” Doc

“Take your shit and leave!”

“You have no right to chase my guest Manelisi. Ufunani la?”

“I need to talk to you dombolo lami.”

“Come some other time I’m busy here! Jizas how did you even walk in without me letting you in! That’s trespassing leave!”

“You heard her just leave and next time I won’t let this slide I will kick your ass!”

“Oh shut up wena hamba jova izinga zeziguli and leave my woman alone!”

“Aw your woman since when?”

“You know the past two months without you baby I’ve been miserable and it made me realize that the more days I’d spend without you I would literally die out of misery.

I’ve never been certain about my feeling for you like I am right now. MaKhondlo deep down in my heart I know that I was born for you and you were born for me. Our love story was written in the stars. I’m your biltong and you are my dumplings. In human eyes that’s a peculiar combination which shows that our love is extraordinary and undaunted. No one can deny the magical connection between us. You are the woman I want to spend the rest of my life with. My soul wants to unite with yours in a timeless bond. Kade ngisho futhi namanje ngisasho uyabusa kweyami inhliziyo dombolo lami.”

Tears are strolling down her beautiful face and she’s popping her fingers.

“What are you saying to me Manelisi?” she says almost inaudible for me to hear.

“It’s means I...”

“Ey ey you should have came another time to profess your love right now is not the right time!”

He grabs me with my suit and pushes me out. Wenhle is telling him to stop but he’s not hearing her.

“Leave me the fuck alone!”

“Phuma sibhizi!”

Fighting him is proving to be impossible. He pushes me out the door and shuts it before my face. Fuck! I kick the door and flounce to my car. Who the fuck does he think he is? Ngokujova nje izinga he thinks he is shit! I start my car and drive to my place. I’m boiling with anger and I feel like I will explode like a volcano.

“You are back early.”

“Yes.”

I put everything on the coffee table and settle down on the couch next to her. She’s watching one of her series. I take the remote and lower the volume.

“What’s wrong baby?”

I heave a sigh this is now or never. I take her hands in mine and kiss them. I love her God knows I really do but will my love for her sustain her for the rest of her life?

“I have something to tell you sweetheart.”

“I also have something to tell you well rather show you!” She says chirpy and reaches under the pillow of the couch and her hand comes back with a white tube.

“Here.”

“What is this?” I ask taking the tube from her and look at it.

“We are pregnant!”

“Huh”

“We are going to have a baby! I don’t know what are you and your cousin fighting about but I love her name. If it’s a girl we are definitely naming her Mbewenhle! Oh God I’m so excited!”

## ☆ Muzikayise ☆

The past two months have been bearable only because I have my mom's support and talking to Mpilenhle's sister in law astonishingly it's having a positive impact on me. Yes I ended up going back to her after Mpilenhle begged me and told me that she's not a man but a woman. I couldn't help but think she was joking. There's no way a woman can have such a deep manly voice but it turns out I know nothing. That woman has a man voice but she's so beautiful. Light skinned like myself with big brown eyes.

I love how understanding she is and how she's able of opening my eyes to things I wasn't paying attention to or aware of. I feel much better than I was two months ago. We have touched a lot of things going on in my life and now I'm fully aware that the fear of losing her is the reason I took her back but I needed some time to process everything. It's one thing to forgive someone who hurt you and it's another thing to heal from the pain they've caused you.

Letting go is the part I was struggling with and I ended up self sabotaging any efforts to move on from the pain she put me through. It was my choice to either hold on to the pain or live a future life without pain unfortunately I chose the former. One thing I've learnt over the past two months is that you can't undo the past all you can do is to make today the best day of your life. I didn't try harder to get over the pain she put me through and it backfired on both of us. Our marriage was a living hell because of the constant fights

accusations and trust issues. I'm taking it day by day and it's safe to say with each passing day it's slowly getting better.

As much as I'm emotionally trying things are falling to pieces at home. My sisters are fighting every chance they get right in this moment Bongeka is in a holding cell for assaulting Ndongoloza. Mama is not feeling well her diabetes is taking a toll on her but she's acting strong. My businesses are not making money as they usual do. Since I haven't been in my house full time someone stole my goats, all of them!

Being the only son it's my responsibility to reflect on events that are happening in my father's home and find a solution. I have to make sure that by the time my father comes back

home his homestead is still standing in one piece and his family is not disintegrated but united. I decided to consult after I remembered what the sangoma at the Qwabes said to me so here I am before this sangoma I have never seen before. I wanted someone new for a change and not that young boy I once took Mbewenhle to. Not that I'm doubting his capabilities but I need someone with a experience. He has abalozi and they communicate to him in a form of whistling then he tells me what are they saying.

“When your father decided ukuthwala he forsaken the ancestors and they are angry. They turned their backs on all of you hence everything is falling apart and it is just a start. Kusazophuma isdumbu your sisters are going to kill each other.”

I swallow hard as fear attack every part of my body. This cannot happen.

“What should I do makhosi to prevent all of this. My father is in jail now and serving his sentence for what he did life has to go on for us. Please tell me what should I do to rectify his mistakes.”

He listens to the whistle of abalozi and turns to look at me.

“You have appease the ancestors and ask forgiveness on behalf of your father then cleanse your father’s home.”

“I can do that makhosi.”

“You have to be quick because time is against you son.”

“Just tell me everything that I need and I will prepare everything as soon as I get home.”

“You also need cleansing ugeze iqunga leli onalo. As for your wife let her go her journey will take her right back to where she was destined to be.”

“What does that supposed to mean makhosi?”

“Here.” He throws a pen and a paper to me. “Write down everything that I need you to buy.”

I paid full money for consultation why is he talking in riddles? I write down everything he tells me and when we are done I fold the piece of paper and slide it in my pants. I’m not supposed to say my goodbye so I leave after we are done. On my way I call Mpilenhle’s sister in law. We don’t have a session today but she insisted that if I need to talk I should call her.

“Maseko.”

“How are you?”

“I’m okay and yourself?”

“I don’t know.”

“You need to talk?”

“Yes if you’re not busy of course.”

“Uhm come to my place I will send you my address.”

“Thank you so much.”

I hang up and few minutes later I receive her text. She stays at Newcastle in Barry Hertzog Park. On arrival she opens the gate for me and I pull over in a driveway. She’s standing by the entrance of the door. I step out of the car and walk towards the entrance. She looks more beautiful in her leggings and plain white tee.

“Greetings come on in.”

I make my way in and roam my eyes around her house admiring the beauty of her house. She looks very young to own such a beautiful big house I mean talking to people about their problems it can’t be paying her that much. Oh I forget that mommy is a principal she’s probably chowing the school’s

money. You wouldn't be surprised that learners at school don't have desks.

"Do you want anything to drink?"

"No I'm fine."

"You seem anxious. Come."

I can't help but stare at her butt as she leads me to wherever she's taking me to. It's a lounge with a big TV screen on the wall. We settle down on the couch and I wait for her to get the notepad but she looks at me expectantly.

"Are you not going to take your notepad?"

She laughs and shakes her head.

"No I won't this is my home my place of comfort so I would also like you to relax as well."

“Okay.” I say rubbing the sweat in my hands over my pants.

“Close your eyes and breathe in slowly then out.”

I do as she says then she tells me to open my eyes and talk to her. She has these techniques of hers that really help me after practicing them. I tell her about what the sangoma said concerning Mbewenhle.

“How does that make you feel?”

“I don’t know it’s not like I understand what the sangoma said but it sounds like she will come back to me.”

“It does sound like that but it can mean something different as well according to him. We can’t really be too sure until he reveals what he really meant. Let say it means she will come back to you how does that make you feel?”

“I dont think I can forgive her and take her back. Mbewenhle can't stay faithful it's in her DNA to cheat. Even my punishments didn't work on her she likes chasing dicks and it's repulsive.”

“What do you mean punishments.”

I explain to her how I cleansed her and fucked ubufebe out of her but it was in vain. Her ubufebe is on another level.

“You used physical abuse and sexual abuse to....”

Woah abuse?

“No no no I didn't abuse her.”

“You just told me how you punished her....”

“Yes that's not abuse. I didn't lay my hands on her.”

“Physical abuse is not literally beating someone but it’s any intentional physical act that cause trauma or injury to another person. You almost drowned her and made her stand in a stormy night alone that is physical abuse.”

“Okay maybe I get you a bit but I didn’t abuse her sexually. How can I abuse my wife I just fucked ubufebe out of her.”

“Did she agree to have sex with you?”

“Haibo maCebekhulu she’s my wife.”

“It doesn’t mean that she will always want to sleep with you.”

“But she didn’t tell me that she didn’t want to have sex with me well except this other morning we were supposed to mourn her late bastard child but I couldn’t wait 3 months.”

“And you forced yourself on her?”

“Forced? That’s a extreme word. I didn’t force myself I just pleased myself she’s my wife after all.”

“Pleasuring yourself without your partner’s consent we call that rape....”

“Ngingadlwengula umfazi wami kanjani umsebenzi wakhe ukungithokozisa ngokocansi! Uyangidakelwa yaz I’m not a rapist nx!” (How can I rape my wife it’s her duty to pleasure me in bed..) I furiously get up from the couch and leave.

Uyanginyela lo

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER EIGHTY THREE

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

He is breathing fire pacing up and down, terrifying the shit out of me. I'm sitting on the bed in my robe and popping my fingers.

“Stop popping your finger joints!”

This moment right now feels like a deja vu. It is taking me back to the times Muzikayise would be so angry at me for whatever reason he thought gave him a right to be angry.

“Who was that?”

“My ex boyfriend.”

“Do you love him?”

“Yes I do love him Mbongeni. He’s the reason why I don’t want to give us a chance because I’m still hang up on him. You deserve someone who will love you fully and who you will occupy her whole heart. I’m not that woman I’m sorry.”

He looks at me sadly with reddish eyes and gets dressed before leaving without breathing a word after my confession. I guess I just missed a whole doctor’s dick urgh maybe it has after taste of medicine, cough syrup to be precise so it’s not a loss. I get up from the bed and go to the lounge to get my phone.

‘Hey Lisi I’m sorry about what happened. You were rude though there was no need for everything you did but we will talk about that for now I just want you to tell me what did you mean? Are you saying what I think you are saying?’

I sent the text and toss my phone on the couch before hitting a shower to wash away the juices down there. He knows how to take a woman to muffland though. I was almost in a verge of cuming then Lisi happened. Imagine my first orgasm in two months had to be disturbed like that I’m going to sue him! I have to admit though that it felt good to see him after whole two months without seeing him. I only saw him in his fiancée’s

WhatsApp statuses. They seemed happy so I don't understand why all of Sunday he came here and said everything he said but hearing him pouring his heart out to me evoked emotions in me. Gosh I missed him over the passed two months!

I heard him loud and clear but I want him to tell me you know I want him to say it in actual words what does he want from me? I don't want to feel like I'm conjecturing.

He has to be straightforward with me. Once that is out of the way I will take it from there. After showering I put on my robe and go to the lounge to stuff myself with the pizza Mbongeni ordered and wash it down with some wine while watching TV. I keep on checking for Lisi's response until I give up and retire to sleep.

The first thing I do when I wake up the next morning is to reach for my phone. He just blue ticked me and his last seen is an hour ago. Just as I'm about to log out he goes online and begin typing. I anxiously wait for his response but he stops typing and goes offline. Okay what is going on? I type a long text for him. I find blue tick so rude and repulsive shame! He's the one that came here telling me how much he loves me hhe....hhe...now he can't simply tell me what did he mean mxm! He reads the

text and blue ticks me once again! You know what masendakhe!

I just started my day on a bad note and I'm so not in the mood for talking. I call the coach and let her know that I won't be coming. She doesn't seem to have a problem in fact she sounds like she's happy to hear me say this. Should I be worried? Today I want to spend my day in bed that's a good thing about living alone you decide how you want to spend your day and no one can interrupt your plans.

I thought adjusting to live alone was going to be difficult phela I've never stayed alone before but unanticipatedly I adjusted just fine. In fact I enjoy my space. See when there's one man that is capable of making my day somber it's Lisi. What the stunt he pulled was for yesterday if today he's taking no notice to my messages. Let me not allow him to ruin my day. I roll out of bed and make it before slipping into my workouts attire. I take my phone and plug in my headset then head out for my morning run. The volume is on maximum and I'm playing my running morning jam. Good Job by Alicia Keys.

🎵 Good job

You're doing a good job, a good job

You're doing a good job

Don't get too down

The world needs you now

Know that you matter, matter, matter, yeah

You're doing a good job, a good job

You're doing a good job

Don't get too down

The world needs you now

Know that you matter, matter, matter

yeah

Six in the morning

And soon as you walk through that door

Everyone needs you again

The world's out of order

It's not as sound when you're not around

All day on your feet, hard to

Keep that energy, I know

When it feels like the end of the road

You don't let go

You just press forward

You're the engine that makes all things go

Always in disguise, my hero

I see a light in the dark

Smile in my face when we all know it's hard

There is no way to ever pay you back

Bless your heart, know I love you for that

Honest and selfless

I don't know if this helps it but...

I don't push myself hard as I still feel a bit pain in my ankle. I'm hopeful in two weeks my ankle would be fully recovered by then. 30 minutes later I go back to my place and hit a shower. I don't even have appetite my mind keeps thinking about that fool! God why am I allowing him to do this to me. Once I'm done with shower I get dressed then go to the lounge to watch

the repeat of telenovelas over hot chocolate. My phone rings and I jump up thinking it's Lisi but disappointment surges through me when I see that it's the charming doctor.

"Dr."

"Athlete."

I chuckle. He sounds calm today and honestly speaking I didn't expect him to talk to me after yesterday's saga.

"How are you?"

"I'm okay and yourself?"

"I'm well. Do you have plans today?"

"No I was planning to spend my day indoors."

“I want to show you around please say yes.”

“Doc are you not working today?”

“I won’t open my surgery today. I will just do my rounds at the hospital by 10am I would be done. Please I’m beginning you.”

“Okay fine we can go.”

“Thank you so much I will fetch you at 11am.”

“No problem.”

Time flies really fast and in a blink of an eye it’s 11 o’clock. I’ve freshened up now I’m waiting for the doctor fetch to me. I pass time with viewing statues on WhatsApp. Sally posted a picture of pregnancy test and it has two lines. ‘idombolo elincane is on the way I’m so excited!’

Okay breathe baby girl. Don't cry you are not going to cry over a man that doesn't belong to you! That's a reason you ended things with him because he is not yours but hers! We are not going back but pressing forward! Breath in and out. You're beautiful, powerful, intelligent, worthy. Give no man a space to dictate your emotions and make you feel like you are nothing.

"Doc."

"I'm outside."

"I'm coming."

I hang up and take one last breath before heading out. He's standing outside of his car and leaning against it his hands tucked in his pants.

"Hey."

"Hello."

He pulls me into a tight squeeze and opens the door for me. I carefully step inside then he goes to his other side.

“Are you feeling cold?”

“A bit?”

He turns on the aircon and as soon as the warm air starts circulating in the car my body relaxes. I don't know where we are going but I'm looking forward to whatever he has planned for us.

“I thought you will never contact me again after yesterday's saga.”

“I won't lie I was disappointed and hurt but then again I admire you for your honesty. I don't want to lose our friendship I've grown close to you woman in such a short space of time and I want to keep this friendship between us.”

“Are you sure you are going to be able to do that. The last thing I want Mbongeni is to feel like I’m leading you on or giving you the impression that one day we would be together. If we are going to be friends it will be strictly friendship.”

I could do with a wise man in my life as a friend and the fact that he’s a doctor it’s a bonus. Uzonginika imishanguzo yesilumo mahhala hha!

“I’m hundred percent sure I’m very good at setting boundaries but I don’t mind to be friends with benefits.”

I look at him and he winks at me before focusing on the road like he didn’t say anything. The thing is with this kind of arrangements they tend to backfire when there are feelings involved. What if he ends up falling for me even more? Or what if I’m the one who end up loving him while he thinks we are friends who help each other then when he finds someone else I would be heart broken.

I wasn’t born with a dick inside my pussy so I will survive the thirst. This gender is a whole lot of stress honestly. Look at how

saddened and hurt I am right now because of the idiot that made me think he's proposing to me qwiqiqi he's not responding to my text and next thing his fiancée is posting pregnancy tests talking about idombolo elincane? What the fuck is that? So she's the big dombolo now? Abashiswe abantu besilisa emhlabeni ay cha ngeke!

"Hey are you okay?" He brings me back from my reverie.

"Yes I'm fine."

"You can to talk me."

"Can we start somewhere first to eat I'm starving now."

He nods and in 15 minutes we pull over to this restaurant that I'm not familiar with. He's such a gentleman shame. See those chair pulling kind of shit? He does them and I like that about him.

"So what's up?"

“I’m having a hard time getting over someone I love. Yaz no matter how I see that we will never be together but my heart still longs for him.”

“You are talking about your ex boyfriend? I thought you are going back to him. I mean you said you love him right?”

“Well it’s not easy like that Mbongeni. Our relationship is kinda complicated.”

“I won’t judge I promise I’m a friend remember? Just because we can’t be more than friends it doesn’t mean I won’t offer you my ear and advise where it needs to be.”

He’s so matured yazin way matured for me actually. The 25 year old in me doesn’t deserve him. He needs a grown woman like him not a 25 year old girl who ran away from her husband. Our food arrives and we dig in.

“Thank you so much yaz you deserve more then what I could give you.”

“What does that supposed to mean?”

“The 13 years gab is not nothing Mbongeni. I’m way too young for you and I will show you flames. You deserve a woman your age who knows what she wants.”

“It’s not like you don’t know what do you want Mbewenhle. You do know who do you want and that’s not me but I’m absolutely okay with that. Trust me I’ve been with women my age and they are exhausting. One thing that bores the shit out of me about them is that they expect me to love their children yet they don’t want to love my daughter. You know what even worse about some of them is that they compete with my daughter.”

I don’t see myself being that kind of woman. Let’s put away the love I have for children but come on!

“That’s insane moss!”

“Exactly finding someone you want to share the rest of your life with is hard Nhle and it even harder when you have a child or children. I’d advise you to wait until you find the right person you want to spend the rest of your life with and have children with because wow!”

“Wow some women are crazy.”

“See why I love you. You don’t see yourself in my eyes hence you think I’m insane for wanting you but believe me I know what I want in a woman and it’s everything that you are and more.”

Now he’s making to blush.

“I’m not perfect Mbongeni I’ve made mistakes in my life and I’m still learning to forgive myself for them. My ex boyfriend is one of the mistakes I made yet I still love him. I’m too much for you and I’m a bad bad bad person.”

“No one is perfect we all make mistakes. Tell me more though I promise I won’t judge.”

I sip on my soft drink and tell him everything about myself. The facial expressions he’s making are not judgmental.

“And that make you a bad bad bad person? I thought you will say you have killed before.”

“Mbongeni!”

“Serious Nhle those are just human mistakes and you’re not a bad person because you’re remorseful. I feel like you were expected to be a 40 old woman while you were only 21 years old. You were young and still are your parents should allow you to make your own mistakes and live your life the way you see it fits. Make tons of mistakes like your peers. That how we all grow it’s unfair that they expected so much from you. I don’t blame you for running away and I also don’t blame your husband for his behavior. I have been cheated on and I know cheating can drive you to do things you never imagined you can

do but it doesn't mean he is right for everything he put you through. I just hope someday you two would be able to sit down and talk things through. It doesn't mean that you have to get back together but have a conversation and ask forgiveness from each other for the pain you two have put one another through."

"That is what I always think about Mbongeni. He needs closure as much as I do but one day when I'm ready and have power I will face him."

"See how wise you are. As for umazwisana wakho..."

"He's not my zwisana."

"He is what umantshontshana wakho?"

"Mbongeni!"

"What? You two are ntshontsharing each other moss," he says laughing and I poke him on his shoulder.

“But it’s the truth nje! What do you want me to call him then?”

I know it’s the truth but he makes our relationship sounds less then what it means to us.

“His name is Manelisi.”

“Shame look at how cute you are right now. He’s really a lucky guy to have your heart and I hope he knows that too because judging from what you told me he really does love you but it seems like odds are always against the two of you. Which brings me to the fact that it’s not always that two people who love each other end up together. Maybe you two have to accept that you love each other but you are destined for other people or he can still turn things around. I mean when you decided to call lomazwisana wenu quit you actually gave him a chance to reflect on his feelings for you hence he came back to you. Trust me I’m a man and I heard him very well yesterday. He made his decision and he’s choosing you.”

“Then why he’s ignoring me?”

“I don’t know maybe when he got home to tell his fiancée the truth he got scared or maybe she told him first about the pregnancy and he couldn’t tell her.”

“At least he should tell me that we will talk not ignore me like this. Sengathi manje ngiyichappies kanti he is the one that came to me after I told him that I don’t want to be part of the love triangle.”

“Now that there’s a baby in the picture I don’t know how things are going to be but imagine breaking things up with your fiancée after she just told you that she’s pregnant. It will be like he’s running away from the responsibility.”

“Oh so it’s okay for him to play Russian Roulette with my heart?”

“Just wait maybe he will come back to you but I’m still available you know.”

“I don’t want to hurt you.”

“And I appreciate that but I don’t mind to be hurt. My dick is more talented than my tongue.” Oh gosh!

He stares deeply in my eyes that I tear away mine. The rest of the breakfast we are quiet and once we are done he pays then we leave. On our way to wherever we are going two cars one behind and one in front force us to pull over.

“What’s going on Mbongeni?” The tremor in my voice mirrors my fear.

“I would be lying if I say I know sthandwa sami,” he says trying to be calm but I can hear in his voice that he’s also scared.

Three guys get out of the car wearing black clothes and force us to get out of the car.

“Don’t hurt her gents please just take....” he doesn’t finish speaking as the back of the gun hits his head. Now I’m a crying mess begging them to not hurt us. The other guy covers my nose with a damp cloth. The more I try to breathe it’s the more I feel dizzy and what happens after that I really don’t know.

☆ Isisa ☆

I press her tiny lips together as she yawns and rubs her face with her teensy fingers. I give birth to beautiful babies I deserve an award people. Love at first sight! I'm swooning over this little princess of mine. When I held her in my arms for the first time the feeling was different from the time I gave birth to Lumi. I think that time I was scared more than anything else.

This time it was different, the look she gave me was cute but it carried so much more. It was saying I'm a vulnerable little human being and I need you mommy. I pressed her tightly against my chest and said I got you my little princess and I will make you feel safe beyond every ripple of doubt. I think it comes with the experience and the fact that the man I love with everything in me was right by my side throughout the process of giving birth.

"Don't be mad at me please

Advertisement

” Mvelo says and takes our daughter from me cradling her like she will break.

“Make her burb I just breast fed her.”

He got hang of things so quickly and he’s willing to learn more so I don’t see the need to move in with his parents. Mam Thembeke is already taking care of her husband she doesn’t need us to burden her. I know how to take care of my daughter I don’t need help. I’m not a first time mom I’m experienced now.

“Talk to your mother babe please.”

“Mom is right though baby you just gave birth and staying with my parents will give you time to rest while mom takes care of the princess.”

“It’s not like I’m alone here Mvelo I have my sister’s help.”

“Your sister is working babe and you are always alone during the day. Remember what happened when the labour pains started?”

God he’s not going to let this go. So when the labour pains started I was alone and it’s not like anything bad happened he’s just being extra. Yes I did move out and all these months I’ve been staying with my sister and her husband. They got married in home affairs and had a little celebration for their union. It still get to me that she didn’t invite me I would’ve loved to be there despite what’s going on between her and mama. Her hubby bought her a mansion in Hutten Heights.

My sister is living a soft life honestly and if I was her I’d quit my job once. The husband does everything for her and he’s monied, too much for my liking. This man was arrested not so long ago but now he’s swimming in money. Let me mind my own business bathi iphakethe lendoda alaziwa. I guess I’m not like other women who prefer to work and make their own money. I’m that kind of woman who wants to run my household and take care of my family while my husband makes money then afterwards we enjoy the fruits of our labor.

“I don’t want to go back to that village Mvelonhle and you haven’t paid a cent for me to live in your parents’ homestead. What will people say?”

“Since when now do you care what will people say? You are my fiancée Isisa so living with my parents shouldn’t be a problem.”

“This ring doesn’t mean anything according to our culture you know that. Ngizoba ingoduso yakho masungilobolile.”

“I’m working on that baby and you know that.” His tone has my heart sinking. Now I sound like I’m putting pressure on him kanti that’s a last thing I want to do. He’s doing everything he can to provide for me and our children.

“I know baby and I’m sorry to sound like I’m putting you are under pressure I just don’t want to go back to that village. I don’t think I would be able to stay in your patents’ homestead while I know my mom is next door and she’s not talking to me.”

“At some point your mom has to come around I mean how am I going to lobola you if she’s angry. Clearly she won’t accept my lobola.”

“As for that worry not my love my uncles will handle it. I would just buy them a case of beer. Mom respects and loves her brothers even though she’s their sister when it suits them. How much have you raised?”

“I’m not telling you baby.”

“Why not?”

“Why should I?”

“Because I’m your fiancée!”

Why is he laughing? I deserve to know right?

“No I’m not going to tell you.”

“Usunezimfihlo baba ka Luzelwande?”

Idiot is smiling like an idiot that moment I’m serious like a heart attack.

“Say that again please.”

“Ngithi you have secrets now.”

“No I mean the last part.”

Oh it’s that what has him smiling like a donkey? I’m never calling him baba ka Luzelwande ever again!

“The reason I’m asking you baby is that I’d rather hire a nanny then go to back to that village.”

“Kodwa Isisa....”

“Ngiyakucela sthandwa sami.”

“Mom is already expecting you and she’s so excited.”

“Please baba ka Luzelwande.” I pull on my puppy face.

“Don’t do that to me.”

“Pretty please.”

Just as he’s about to talk his phone rings. He slides it out of his pocket and answers it.

“Nxele....sure...I’m on my way there now...sharp.” He hangs up and kisses our daughter. Lumi is visiting his father. You can never come between those two so I decided to stop fighting Thuthu and let my boy be.

“Where are you going now?”

“I will be back now baby there are errands I need to run for Nxele.”

“What’s going on between you and my brother in law.”

“What do you mean?”

“You are so close baby.”

“And what’s wrong with that my baby?” He asks chuckling

“I don’t know but...what are these errands do you run for him?”

“Nothing you should worry about. Go to mommy princess.”

“You are leaving us alone?”

“Baby come on...”

“Mvelonhle you have secrets and I don’t like that especially that these secrets involve my sister’s husband.”

“You are overthinking this Manjinji. I just like him I see a grootman in him and my role model.”

“Role model eyisigebengu Mvelo.”

“Wow!” My sister’s voice says and we both look up at her she’s standing on the entrance. Oops she heard everything!

“Baby I need go.” He hands me the baby and greets my sister on his way out.

“Umh I didn’t meant it like that sis.” I say, shame gripping me hard.

“Yaz I expected better from you Isisa but I see you are just like mom!”

“No it came out wrong Jabu.”

“You have a nerve to call my husband a criminal while you’re living under his roof!”

“I’m sorry sis...” she raises her hand to stop me from talking and walks out. God me and my big mouth!

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I feel lethargic and opening my eyes to this dark unfamiliar room has me trembling in fear. I hark back to the events that led me here and everything play in my head like a movie. Mbongeni where is he? My eyes roam around the room and there he is by the far end of the room lying on the floor helplessly.

“Mbongeni!”

I crawl towards him and shake him but he’s not waking up though I can still feel his pulse.

“You need to wake please so that we can find a way to get our of here.”

Trying to wake him up is proving to be like moving mountains. I notice blood on his head. What have they done to him? There are voices approaching on the other side of the door.

“What about the girl?”

“What about her?”

“Dude we were ordered to get the doctor only not the girl.”

“There’s nothing we could’ve done she was also there with him and letting her go was going to be risky because she saw our faces. Without a doubt she was going to go to the police.”

“We should’ve threatened her or something man. You know the boss lady hates slips ups.”

“She will have to understand that there’s nothing we could’ve done. Did you see umapakisha onjani? She’s like one of those celebrity girls abo Boity so.”

“Yeah right keep dreaming! You are not going to get her especially not after holding her hostage. Who knows boss lady might terminate her as well. You know she doesn’t leave loose ends.”

“You talk as if I would be asking her.”

“You are not saying what I think you are saying.”

“Oh that’s exactly what I’m talking about!”

No no no what does that mean? I fish for my phone in my pants and tap on it with my shivering fingers. Coach is the recent person in my call log before Mbongeni so I call her. It's ringing please pick up! Come on Chabeli pick up please!

"Hello."

"Coach it's me please help me. They are going to kill me please help me!"

"Where are you Mbewenhle?" The panic in her voice tells me that she gets the urgency behind this call.

"I don't know but it's dark in here and I..." The door opens and I get caught in attempt to hide the phone by this sgora man with a black eye shield. My heart literally stops beating as he approaches me. The anger displayed on his face has me letting out a drop of pee I wasn't aware I was holding.

"Bitch what are you hiding?"

"Nothing." The shiver in my voice mirrors my fear. I scoot back trying to get away from him but who am I fooling there's no way to escape.

“You think I’m stupid huh?” He searches me and finds the phone.

“Oh you are clever neh! Let me show you how do I deal with clever girls like you.”

He slaps me hard that I reel back and bump to the wall before falling to the floor. I watch him as he throws my phone on the floor and violently steps on it with his caterpillar black boot.

“I’m sorry please don’t hurt me I’m begging you. If you want money my boyfriend will give you. There’s a number saved mqwebu wami on my phone call.....”

A black clap lands on my face cutting me short. I scream in agony and plead with him not to hurt me but I’m infuriating him more. He is alternating between punching me with his huge fists and kicking me with his boots over and over again. With each kick and punch I feel like my bones are cracking. God in this right moment I beg your forgiveness for whatever I’ve done to be beaten up like I’m not a human being

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER EIGHTY FOUR

☆ Manelisi ☆

“You haven’t said anything about the pregnancy since yesterday Mane.” It’s the first thing my fiancée says as soon as she wakes up.

I didn’t sleep a wink thinking about this baby that is coming at such a wrong time. I cannot for the life of me understand why now after I have decided to make a life changing decision. I’ve been contemplating the whole night trying to find the right words to say to dombolo lami but nothing seems to come in my mind.

When I walked out of her flat yesterday and got to my place I knew what I wanted and I was certain but the news my fiancée broke to me changed everything. Now it can no longer be what I want but what’s best for my child. I didn’t grow up in a proper and loving family. Mom never told me who my dad is and on top of that she was gallivanting the streets and chasing everything that had a tail between it legs.

Motherly and fatherly love is something foreign to me but that doesn't mean I never yearned it. I wished I had a mother who cared about me just like other mothers. I wish I had a father like other boys. I also wanted my father to teach me stick fighting and milking cows like other boys. I also wanted to accompany my father to the mountain to hunt rabbits. Not that I don't appreciate gogo's love trust me that woman was my everything but the void in my heart has always been there. I guess you can never replace a mother's nor a father's role in a child's life.

Feeling unwanted and unloved by the same people that brought you in the world I don't want my children to experience that. I made a vow to myself that as long as I live my children will never go through that. I will give them a proper and loving family no matter at what cost little did I know that the cost would be so huge.

"It's just that I don't understand how are you pregnant."

"What do you mean? Ain't we having raw sex?"

Oh please she mustn't dare pull that card. I'm so not in the mood and it doesn't help that I didn't sleep at all. I'm cranky and grumpy when I didn't get my sleep.

"Asalinto we agreed that we will try for a baby after our wedding."

"Well I kind of stopped taking the pills."

What?

"Why did you do that?"

"For obvious reasons Mane. I want to be a mother now."

Wow

"And you decided that alone without involving me?"

“Come on Mane...”

“No you come on! Having a baby is a life changing decision! You should’ve ran this pass me before deciding to trap me with a baby.”

She gasps and blinks rapidly as sadness clouds her face.

“Trap you? Wow!”

I groan and scratch my itchy nose.

“What I’m trying to say is I deserved to know that you have changed your mind about waiting until we are married. We made this decision together Sally because we wanted to prepare ourselves not financially only but emotionally as well to have a baby. Now you just ambushed me with a pregnancy that I wasn’t prepared for and you expect me to be happy. How can I be happy when you just forced me to be a father before I even prepared myself.”

She moves closer to me and caresses my cheeks while staring deep in my eyes.

“I’m sorry my love I acknowledge my mistake I was wrong to make this decision on my own. I should’ve known that me being ready doesn’t mean that you’re also ready. I was egocentric and I’m sorry but you still have months to adjust until the baby is born. Not everyone get a chance to prepare themselves, unplanned pregnancy happens all the time and they turn out very well.”

“I’m not everyone!!!”

“Okay you don’t need to shout Manelisi! Is it such a bad thing to have a child with your fiancée soon to be wife?”

“I never said it’s a bad thing Sally but you are missing the point and disregarding my feelings about your impulsive decision!”

“I did say I’m sorry didn’t I? What am I supposed to do now huh? The baby is in my tummy and there’s nothing I can do

about it just get over it already! Some men out there would be happy that they're expecting but you! It's fine I will raise my baby on my own!!!”

She furiously gets out of the bed and wears her robe and sleepers before heading out. I can't believe she just said I must get over it how dare she! I know when I'm like this I won't be productive at all so I called in sick at work. Yes I'm a sensitive human being and I'm not ashamed to admit nor am I apologetic. I need to gather my thoughts and strength to face this predicament at hand.

The fruity scent of her shower gel fills our bedroom the moment she walks in. I look at her as she takes off her robe and begins to butter her body with her lotion. I don't understand why she's so mad when I'm supposed to be the one who's mad. Once she's done getting dressed she leaves without kissing me goodbye let alone a mere goodbye.

WhatsApp messages starts popping up and when I log in our friends are congratulating me on the pregnancy. How did they know? I check on WhatsApp status and not only she did shove a baby down my throat now she's telling everyone without

letting me know. What's wrong with this woman? What happened to not telling anyone about pregnancy until you are at least on the second trimester? No wonder there are so many miscarriages in nowadays. But what am I saying people post babies who are only one day old what is pregnancy revealing. Her caption threw me off! Idombolo elincane lani? This woman is going to drive me to mental institution.

I call her but she doesn't answer my phone. She's ignoring my call on purpose that I know. After making the bed and showering I go to the kitchen to make myself breakfast. No matter how lazy I can be to make food but I never starve myself. Ngikhule ngilamba mina cheese

bacons and bread were things that I only watched in TV. It was between waking up to nothing to eat or eating iskhokho sepapa and water or tea if only there's sugar and teabags. Growing up life wasn't a walk in a park.

Once I'm done I sit down on the high chair and enjoy my breakfast but a knock disturbs me. I'm surprised because I'm not expecting anyone. I grab a dish cloth and wipe my oily hands before going to the door to open it. Chabeli what is she doing here?

“Hi come on in.”

She walks in. I close the door and study her face. I’m not sure if I’m studying her correctly but her demeanor is unsettling.

“How are you Manelisi?”

“I’m fine. What brings you here? Is Mbewenhle okay?”

“Unfortunately I don’t know. I received her call she was crying begging me to help her the next thing I heard a male voice cursing then a loud scream followed.”

My heart stops beating as my mind try to process everything she just said.

“Why come here? You should have went to her flat straight! Oh shit I hope it’s not too late! Let’s go....Let’s go!”

“I’m coming from there Manelisi but she’s not there! Her flat is locked.”

“Maybe that doctor bastard locked her up inside her flat...”

“You are not listening to me. I even called the owner of the building and he came to open her flat but there was no one in there. That’s why I came here.”

No no no! Please God don’t let this be what it sounds like.

“Did she tell you where she is?”

“No she said she doesn’t know but where she is it’s dark and they want to kill her! What are we going to do? She’s in danger and I’m so scared.” Fear is evident on her face.

“Let...let’s report this to the police but I suspect the doctor she’s been hanging out with.”

“Dr Mbhele?”

“You know him?”

“Yes he’s a friend and he will never harm Mbewenhle.”

“Maybe you don’t know him like you think you do. People are psychos out there. Let me go get my keys and wear shoes.” I say and run to the bedroom where I wear my sneakers and grab my phone together with my car keys then head back.

Without a wast of time we both drive to the police station where we report the matter. Typical police! They’re taking their sweet time and asking unnecessary questions. My baby could be getting killed while they are wasting time. When I mention the doctor and yesterday’s saga they insist to go to his place. The coach is leading the way to his place and I’m following behind the police van.

On arrival I jump out of my car the moment the gate is opened for us but the other police stops me and tells me that I should

let them do their job. We find the nanny and despite the fear in her eyes she answers the policemen's questions truthfully. The bastard left for work this morning then at 10am he came back and changed his clothes before going out again. He didn't tell the nanny where he's heading to. They search the house either way but they don't find anything suspicious. Dammit where the fuck is he?

The police promise to keep on looking and there's someone in their team who's working on tracing her location with her number. I'm not going to wait for them it's going to drive me crazy so I do my own search as well. I call my friends and we all scatter around Johannesburg searching for her. I've been waiting for the feedback from the police as well but nothing. It's around 8pm when I drive back to my place with a heavy heart.

Sally welcomes me with a warm hug and leads me to the lounge where our friends are. The ladies get up and give me hugs then we all settle down somber silence filling the room. I don't know what I would do if anything can happen to her. I shouldn't have allowed her to move out from the first place. Under my watch no one could've had access to her. She trusted

me enough to come with me to the province she's never been and I couldn't do one simple thing which is to protect her!

"The police haven't said anything yet?" Sizwe breaks the silence.

"No they haven't." I say

"Don't stress man we will find her."

"How Bryce she could be death as we are speaking right now!"

"No baby don't say that please be positive," says Sally massaging my shoulders.

"If she didn't move out from the first place she would be safe with you guys. We should be celebrating the pregnancy but here we are worried about her yhuu ha.ah!"

I chuckle in disbelief shaking my head I'm up here with this girl now!

"Nana awuyibeke la esandleni sami inkinga onayo ngoMbewenhle!" I stretch my hand to her.

"I don't have a problem with her I was just saying..."

"Oh please stop acting! You do have a problem with Mbewenhle and what are the odds that you are behind this?"

"What? Sundiqhela kakubi Manelisi...."

"No guys woah let's all calm down please. It's an anxiety-ridden situation I understand and at some point we are going to take frustrations on each other but please guys let's invest this energy to God. Let's pray for Mbewenhle's safety."

"Sally is right guys." Bryce

We all bow our heads down closing our eyes and let Sally lead a prayer. She's a prayer warrior but not a regular churchgoer. Once she's done praying I excuse myself I need some time alone. I go to the bedroom that used to be hers and lie on the bed. The pillows still smell like her. I hold it close to my face and sniff it. The bad scenarios of what could be happening to her has me shaking in fear. I would never forgive myself if something happens to her. I feel the bed sinking as my fiancée's scent fills my nostrils.

"Hey she's going to be found. I know at this moment nothing positive is in your mind but please babe you have to believe that she's going to be found."

"The thought of her lying somewhere dead is..." I choke on my sob that escapes my lips. She pulls my head to her bosom and comforts me.

.....

Two days! Two fucking days! The police haven't found her. Do they know that she could be out of the country as we speak or

even worse lying somewhere dead! You know the funny thing is that the doctor as well is awol. This means one thing he's the one that got her it can't be a coincidence. I'm losing my mind each passing day without knowing where she is and if she's still alive. Lord I'm sure she's scared right now and needs me more than ever but I'm not there for her. Fuck! I reach for my ringing phone.

"You found her?"

"No....."

"Stuurman what is the money I'm paying you for huh?"

"I'm working on it Maphumulo you need to give me a break okay. I've never disappointed you before why would I start now."

"You better because I won't pay you the remaining balance."

“I just saw the CCTV of the restaurant she was having breakfast at. They were really together and they left together uhm...Someone is calling me I have to answer this call.”

“Okay update me please.”

“I will my man.”

I hang up and release a sad sigh. Stuurman is the PI that helped me find out who's behind my grandma's death. I trust him but he's too slow for my liking.

“I have run a bath for you baby. You haven't had a bath in two days now.”

“Mawukuthi ngiyakunukela faka isafonyo Sally.”

How is bathing going bring back idombolo lami? She sighs and brings the tray of food to me.

“You haven’t touch your food Mane please have something to eat.”

“I’m not hungry baby.”

“You need to....”

“God Sally angifuni ukudla why don’t you eat you are the pregnant one after all!”

“You don’t have to shout.”

“I’m sorry I’m just stressed out.”

“We are all are. I saw that you made payment to Stuurman.”

“Yes.”

“Why don’t you let the police do their job Mane.”

“What job are you talking about? Those people are useless!”

“They are trying their best you should give them time instead of wasting money hiring PI we are getting married in Spring and Mbewenle is on the way...”

“Funny enough that you didn’t think of wasting money when you decided to fall pregnant futhi stop calling the baby Mbewenhle! We are not going to name her after Mbewenhle!”

“God you are not going to stop mentioning this baby thing. I said I’m sorry and I don’t understand why you don’t want us to name idombolo elincane...”

“Tjo Sally what’s with you huh? Why are you trying so hard to be Mbewenhle? You can never be her no matter what stop this it’s annoying!”

“Who said I want to be Mbewenhle? Why would I even want to be her? What’s wrong with you? I didn’t realize it’s that wrong to name our daughter after your cousin! I just....”

“She’s not my cousin dammit!!”

“Oh if she’s not your cousin then who is she?”

## ☆ Manelisi ☆

“I asked you an ask Manelisi!” Oh shit what have I just done? My mind is dazed I cannot think of anything to cover up my outburst. Maybe this is the time to tell her the truth once and for all. I clear my throat and look at her.

“What I’m trying to say is that she’s more then a cousin to me.”

“What does that mean?”

“I mean she’s like a sister to me Asalinto so I can’t just wait for the police who are taking their damn time to find her. It’s been two days already she’s been missing.”

Her penetrative gaze has my heart beating rapidly and I’m so afraid that it might tap deep into my eyes and discern the truth.

“Oh she’s like a sister to you but you’ve never mentioned her until her twin sister trended on social media?”

“What does that supposed to mean Sally?”

“You tell me Manelisi! I feel like there’s something you are not telling me. If Mbewenhle means so much to you how is it possible that I only learned about her just few months ago? Is she really your cousin Mane?”

“Of course baby why would I lie? Since when have I ever lied to you?”

“I don’t know but over the past months I feel like I don’t know you anymore. You’re slipping right through my fingers and I don’t know what to do. Are we still on the same page?”

I walk towards her and places my hands on her shoulders.

“Of course baby we are still on the same page. You know what let me call Ma Mthiyane so that she can tell you that

Mbewenhle is really my cousin.” The words roll out of my mouth before I can stop myself. Fuck!

I reach for my phone and call Ma Mthiyane. With each ‘tu tu’ sound of her ringing phone I could feel my heart knocking hard on my chest threatening to rip it apart and escape. The phone is on loud speaker and she could also hear it. Bad move! Very bad move!!! When it goes to voicemail I release a temporary breath of relief.

“Maybe usemasimini let me try her again.”

“No baby it’s fine.”

“Are you sure? It’s seems like your mind have been very busy and planting doubts lately. I just want to erase every doubt you have.”

“No my love you wouldn’t call your mom if you’re lying. I guess my hormones have been messing up with me. I’m really sorry.”

A wave of alleviation washes over me. I place my phone on the counter and cradle her face in my palms.

“I love you sweetheart.”

“I love you too please forgive me about the baby....”

“Shhh it’s okay my love.”

I capture her lips in mine and pick her up going to the bedroom to make love to her. Erasing every seed of doubt in her mind with each stroke and dive until her heart sing love songs.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

It’s been 2 days since they’ve been locked up without water nor food. They only gave them a bucket to release themselves which was only used by her only. She’s blue and black due to the beating she endured at the hands of their abductors. The

pain radiating through her body is debilitating her and the cold concrete against her body is not helping. Last night she was shivering profusely and Mbongeni had to take off his clothes and left with only his boxers to lay them on the floor so that she can sleep on them.

Mbongeni is cradling her like a baby and staring at her breathing shallow. Each breath hurt like hell and her body cannot endure more pain. Seeing her in so much pain and having nothing to do to help her is like shards of glasses in his guts. This moment right now feels like a deja vu to him. It takes him back to that day he lost Tamia's mom and did nothing to save her. Not that there was anything he could've done. The doctors declared her brain damaged after an unsuccessful brain tumor surgery. He still beats himself up for failing to save her. He's a doctor for crying out loud and he made a vow to save lives but it seems like he's useless when it comes to saving people that means so much to him.

He never believed in love at first sight until he met this beauty. The world stood still and there she was before him in his surgery and a little voice whispered in his ears 'she's the one bro don't mess up'. The cherry on top is that his daughter loves her. Unfortunately her heart belong to someone else but anything is

possible since the man she loves is engaged and expecting. There is a chance that the man can choose his child over the woman he loves. It happens all the time even himself he'd sacrifice to be with the woman he loves to give his child a proper family and warm home.

"Don't close your eyes stay with me please," he says slightly slapping her face. The fear of her never waking up if she closes her eyes is the one that he's struggling with. There's a lot she could be suffering right now judging how bruised she is. Hemorrhage can cause death in 6 hours and it's been two days now.

"Mbongeni what have you done?"

"What do you mean?"

"I heard them talking they want you not me. I was in the wrong place at the wrong time."

He would be lying if he can say he knows why would these people want him. Just like her he's also confused what's going on. Maybe they are mistaking him.

"They said that?"

"Yes. What have you got me into huh? Please be honest with me I deserve the truth at least Mbongeni."

"I swear Nhle I don't know who are these people. I think they are mistaking me."

"You said you were bad boy when growing up. Maybe it's one of the people you messed..." she coughs and winces in pain.

"Maybe but to take this far? I don't think so in fact I don't know what to think."

"I'm in pain Mbongeni I think I'm going to die. Ngizwa umoya wami uyahlukana nomzimba."

“No baby don’t say that please. You still have a lot to accomplish. Please hold on my love we will get out of here okay. Let’s be hopeful your coach heard you and she’s finding help for us as we speak.”

“I don’t think I can make it. I can’t hold on anymore.”

“Don’t say that please. Look at me please my love.”

She blinks lazily and stares at him through her glassy eyes. There’s no way that she’s making it she’s dodged many deaths in her life but this time she’s so sure that she won’t be lucky. She’s not a cat she doesn’t have nine lives. Maybe it better to join her twin sister underground but she’s not ready. Not yet there’s a lot she need to accomplish indeed but when death knocks there’s nothing you can do.

“Not yet please you people still needs to see your talent my love. I still want to see our name in Athletics World Ranking. Hold on please if not for me for your family.”

“I can’t...if...it happens that you make it out alive please pass this message to my mother. Tell her that...that...” That only what she manages to say.

“Nhle nooo! Please don’t do this to me!”

He shakes her trying to wake her as tears and mucus stream down his face.

“Please help!!!! Help!!!”

He gently puts her down and goes to the door and bangs it hard begging whoever held them in hostage to open the door.

“Ngiyanicela magents I can give you anything please open up she needs to go to the hospital before it’s too late!” He screams but no one is coming to assist him.

Demoralized he goes back to the floor and cradles her in his arms. The fact that they want him and she got dragged into things she has no knowledge of has him drowning in guilt even though he doesn't know what is this all about.

He hears the sound of the door unlocking them it swings open bringing a bit of light. Two gentlemen in black attire walk in with a woman. He instantly recognizes her the moment their eyes meet and fear paralyze every nerve of his body.

“Ya njandini,” she says walking closer to him and finally being face to face with the man that made her a widow and made her children fatherless evokes anger that is soon replaced by perturbation the moment her eyes moves to Mbewenhle's face.

“Mbewenhle!” she kneels on the floor uttering a cry of dismay as she feels her pulse. No no no!!!!

“Hey nina zihlama what have you done!!”

“She was with him and....”

“Your job was to get him not her you shouldn’t have took her too let alone lay your hands on her dammit!!”

“She was calling.....”

“Do you know what you have done?”

“We are sorry bossy lady do you know her?”

“Yes we need to take her to the hospital now!!”

.....

It’s been a while since Mbewenhle has been rushed to ER and the gentleman with a black eye shield is shivering in his boot. Boss lady made it clear to him that if the girl doesn’t make it she’s going to deal with him and he knows exactly what does that man.

“Boss lady I’m sorry she called help.....”

“I don’t give a fuck what excuse are you going to give me! Do you know what this girl means to me? She’s like a daughter to me!!” Boss lady says pacing up and down. God knows she never meant any harm to Mbewenhle.

“I didn’t know...”

“You were not supposed to take her from the first place!! The thing is you don’t follow instructions! I don’t care that she was also there but you were not supposed to touch her! Not only did you traumatize her by kidnapping her but you beat her up like she’s no human!”

“I’m so....” she cuts him short with huge slap on his face and just as she’s about to give him another clap her sister wife walks in.

“Don’t please. We are in public and you are acting like a crazy woman right now,” says her sister wife and when she looks

around her she notices that people are watching them. The sister wives share a warm hug and settle down.

“How is she?”

“The doctors are still busy with her but she’s badly bruised and her pulse was very faint. I’m going to kill these motherfuckers if she doesn’t make it!”

“They didn’t know Star come on.”

“Wena shlama make yourself useful like others! Leave my sight now!”

The gentleman rushes out and leaves the sister wives comforting each other and talking with subdued voices.

“So what does all of this mean?”

“I’m not sure I understand your question.”

“There’s a possibility that Nhle is dating Mbongeni or maybe they are friends but the fact is they know each other where does that leave our plan?”

“Aphiwe we have come so far to stop now. We can’t back down now. Our husband deserves justice and he’s going to get it dark or blue.”

“Maybe we should spare Mbongeni’s life for the sake of Mbewenhle. Come on we owe that girl so much she saved our ass.”

“You think he will thank us for sparing his life? No he won’t Aphiwe he’s going to come after us, after our children. I understand what you are saying but unfortunately here we have to do what we have to do.”

“Do we really have to do this though?”

“What does that supposed to mean? Of course we have to. Why are you having second thoughts now? Isn't what we both wanted all these years? To look at the murderers who murdered our husband and make them pay?”

“Of course it is what I want but it's been more then a decade now. The pain and anger is not the same as it was years ago and I think our husband did get justice. The three guys that died in a car accident and one of them is Mbongeni's brother....”

“Exactly we have to finish with what our husband started. I know that he would've done the same for us if tables were reserved so please let's not disappoint him. Mbewenhle will find another boyfriend or whatever he is to her there are many guys out there.”

“Xitlalli....”

“Hayi Aphiwe! Here's the doctor.” They both get up as the doctor approaches them.

“Doctor how is she?”

“I want to talk to her family.”

“We are her aunts. Her parents live in KZN and they will be here tomorrow.”

“We’ve run tests and we found a rib fracture other than the swelling in her body.”

“Please tell me no internal organ is damaged?” Mam Xitlalli

“Luckily there isn’t but we are going to keep her for observation.”

“Can we see her?”

“Come this way.” The doctor leads them to Mbewenhle’s ward.

“Oh my goodness!” Mam Aphiwe says with shock as she looks at Mbewenhle tears already spilling down her face.

“She’s going to be okay. It’s not bad as I thought. The swelling on her face will go down in few days

” Mam Xitlalli consoles Aphiwe. Regret washes over them when they look at her. They could barely recognize her. The doctor gave them few minutes so when time is over they leave. On arrival they can hear Bab Senzo’s and Bab Zero’s voice as they walk inside the house. They look at each other confused. What are they doing here?

“Nifunani la?” It’s the first thing Mam Xitlalli says when she walks in the lounge.

“Hello to you too MaLopez.” Bab Senzo

“Who is making sure that the taxi drivers are not slacking when you are here Senzo?” Mam Aphiwe

“Mbuso is there MaNdlela. Yaz I can’t believe the two of you seriously thought are going to avenge my brother without me.”

“Let me guess they told you?” The anger seeping out in Mam Xitlalli voice can’t be missed.

“They work for me Xitlalli of course they were going tell me.” Bab Zero says chuckling.

“Did they told you that they beat up Mbewenhle?”

“Yes they did how is she?”

“She’s going to be okay she has a rib fracture and swelling.”

“Where are they now? Did they get the other motherfuckers?”

“Yes we were just waiting for the two of you. So Mbewenhle is dating the other bastard now?”

“It doesn’t matter we are going are head with our plan.”

“Let’s get the party started!” Bab Senzo says and gulps down the last content of his whiskey.

“Senzo, Zero you are not invited here.”

“I didn’t need any invite MaLopez. Those assholes killed my brother and I have dreamed about this day for so long.”

“Actually Senzo and I are going to take care of this. There’s no way we are going to allow you two to taint your hands with blood while we are still alive.”

“Zero....”

“This non negotiable MaLopez.” Bab Senzo says calmly but sternly. Mam Xitlalli sighs in annoyance and walks towards the

room the murderers are kept followed by her sister wife, best friend and her late husband's best friend.

The friends look at the door as it opens. They are all tied in chairs and have gags in their mouths. While the other friends are still confused what's going on Mbongeni already knows but how can he tell them that with a gag on his mouth.

“Zinja y'all thought you are going to hide until when?” Mam Xitlalli

“But we have to give it to them for managing to hide from us for more then decade now. Bravo!” Bab Senzo claps his hands while Zero is removing the gags from them.

“How is Mbewenhle?” Asks Mbongeni. That's the only thing he cares about at this moment.

“Why did y'all kill my husband.” The tremor in Mam Aphiwe voice is the evident of pain and anger she thought was no

longer that intense and great but now seeing them brought every depth and intensity of it.

The friends look at each confused what the woman is talking about then Mbongeni tells them who are these people. He knows them very well unlike his friends.

“He killed my father!”

“You know very well that’s not true Mbongeni! Moses died out of cardiac arrest!” Mam Aphiwe.

“Because the asshole you called husband fucked his wife! They both drove him to death you know that very well!”

“Mbongeni mfethu calm down. He didn’t mean to say that. We didn’t kill anyone.” The other friends spits earning himself a punch from Bab Senzo.

“We are not your fool! As for you uyahlanya lelakhehla couldn’t take the pussy grip and heat of the girl young enough to be his granddaughter!”

“Don’t you dare talk about my father like that!!”

“You’re truly your father’s son! Weakling sore assholes!!Your father failed to kill Mnesh but you did for inqaza njeeeee? My brother was killed like an animal for a mere pussy???” The anger boils up in Bab Senzo as the picture of his best friend when they went to bath him and dress him up in a morgue flashes in his mind. The stabbing wounds all over his flesh is the picture that he can’t take out of his mind. They even made it look like it was him! Anger, pain and sadness intertwine into a burning ball that grows inside of him until the inferno is unbearable. In a swift move that surprises everyone he pulls out his gun and shoots Mbongeni. He groans in pain.

“So y’all are Gods huh? You take people’s lives just because an old man couldn’t handle the betrayal and died? Do you know the pain you put my family through? You made my children fatherless. Our last borns don’t know their father!! Do you

know how it pains them that they never met their father?" Mam Xitlalli

"I also never met my father because of your late husband." Mbongeni grunts his response. The other friends are trembling in fear and begging for their lives to be saved.

"Idiot you won't realize how stupid you are until you realize that you are about to make your daughter an orphan because of your stupidity nx!" Mam Aphiwe says and walks out tears flowing down on her face. Her sister wife follows her to fetch the wood cutting machine she bought for this special occasion in the other room then goes back.

"They butchered my husband like he was not human. I trust you two to send them to hell the only way they all deserve." Mam Xitlalli says handing the wood cutting machine to her best friend who chuckles softly. He almost forgot this side of her.

"Tu deseo es mi comando" (Your is my command) Bab Zero

Mam Xitlalli walks out and finds her sister wife sipping on the whiskey through the bottle while tears are strolling down her face. Settling next to her, she takes the bottle from her and places it on the coffee table before holding her hands.

“I can’t believe that he died because he couldn’t keep his zip closed Xitlalli.”

“I also can’t believe that they devalued his life to such to extent.”

They hear loud groans and the sound of the chainsaw machine coming from the other special room.

“It’s finally over he can rest in peace now and we can also make peace with his passing.”

“I miss him so much,” whispers Mam Aphiwe

“I know I miss him too and I know that he’s proud of us not only for avenging him but for holding each other’s hands throughout

the obstacles and hardships we faced and conquered even though he's no longer with us and for making sure that his name and legacy still lives on. He's gone and no can ever replace him in our lives but I'm glad that he left us with each other." Mam Xitlalli says before wiping her sister wife's tears with her palms.

"That's true it's like he knew that he would leave us so soon. I don't know how we both would've made it without each other throughout these years. I'm also proud of how we've managed to pull through. I love you sister wife"

"I love you back sister wife."

The two gentlemen walk in covered in droplets of blood all over their clothes.

"It's done."

.....

The sister wives are each seated on each side of Mbewenhle's hospital bed chatting. Mam Xitlalli is the first one to see Mbewenhle fluttering her eyes open.

“Hey baby you are awake?”

Mam Aphiwe looks at Mbewenhle and the sister wives simultaneously gets on their feet and move closer to the patient holding her hands. Mbewenhle looks at them as she harks back to the events that brought her in the hospital. She remembers everything that happened except the part how she got to the hospital. These two women are the least of people she expected to see. How did they save her and where is Mbongeni?

“Mbo..nge...ni?” They looks at each other then at her.

“How are you feeling?” Mam Aphiwe says trying to dodge the question but Mbewenhle is not going to let it go just like that.

“How did I get here? Where is Mbongeni?” It comes out almost as a shout which hurts her causing her to wince.

“Take it easy baby you are going to hurt yourself.”

“How long have I been out?”

“Not that long. Do you remember what happened?”

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER EIGHTY FIVE

“Yes I remember what happened but I don’t know how did I get here.” She tells them everything that happened.

“What are you and Mbongeni?”

“We are friends. Where is he? How did I get here?”

“Let me call the doctor.” Mam Aphiwe says and disappears.

“Mam Xitlalli what’s going on. Is he dead? Did they kill him?”

The doctor walks in with Mam Aphiwe and greets Mbewenhle.

“Are you in pain?”

“Yes my body is pain.”

“I’m going to give something for pain but you need to take it easy. You suffered a rib fracture.”

“How long will it take for me to recover?”

“6 weeks or so.”

“No! Please tell me there’s something you can do doctor. I have to compete in two weeks. If I miss these upcoming events then I won’t qualify for the National Championships Athletics let alone World Champions Athletics!”

“You are an athlete?”

“Yes doc help me please.”

“Unfortunately there’s nothing I can do. You need to take a break from sports to allow yourself to heal without hurting yourself again. Do you remember who did this to you?”

“No she doesn’t remember anything doctor.” Mam  
Xitlalli says first before Mbewnhle could say anything.

“Are you sure Mbewenhle?”

“Of course she’s sure I asked her. It’s must be transient global  
amnesia. I’m also a doctor by the way.”

“Oh okay umh please excuse me.” The wives thank the doctor  
who then walks out.

“What’s going on?” Mbewenhle

“You can’t tell anyone what happened baby.”

“Why not Mam Xitlalli? Mbongeni is in danger the police could  
help...”

“He killed our late husband.”

Mbewenhle's eyes are popping out of their sockets.

"We are sorry baby we didn't mean any harm to you. You just happened to be at the wrong place and at the wrong time. They were not supposed to take you as well we only wanted the guy you were with."

"Woah are you saying that you two are responsible for me being locked up in a dark room

Advertisement

deprived food and beaten up into pulp"

"I'm sorry Mbewenhle it was a mistake. Those guys don't know you and...."

"So that make it right? Where's Mbongeni?"

Their eyes look around the room but her. No no no they didn't...

“Where’s Mbongeni?”

“That doesn’t matter but you know how we wanted to avenge our husband Mbewenhle and we finally got them all of them. It’s so unfortunate that you happen to know one of them and we are really sorry!”

“You...you...killed him?” Tears are already falling down her face as she asks. Now that she connects the dots the story Mbongeni told her was about Uthandiwe’s father but he didn’t say they killed him. How could she not see this?

“We are so...”

“Get out!”

“Mbewenhle...”

“I want you two out of this hospital room now!!!!”

They both walk out leaving her bawling her eyes out. Mbongeni lied to her! He didn't tell her that he and his friends killed Mr Dlomo. Now she got dragged into things she knew nothing about. His death doesn't hurt less despite the fact she's known him for a short period of time. Her heart is bleeding for Tamia who's now an orphan at the age of 5 years old because her father made himself God and made the Dlomo children fatherless.

After eating food and taking medication that is brought to her few minutes later the Dlomo wives have left she cries herself to sleep. Waking up to their voices is kindling anger and sorrow. What are they doing here? Didn't she tell them they must leave her alone?

"Not you two! Cela ningiyeke tu! You've ruined me enough what more do you want from me?"

"We brought you something to eat, toiletries and pjs."

“Aw pakithi that’s so thoughtful of both of you now you can go!”

“You can’t talk to us like that Mbewenhle give us some respect we are elders.” Mam Xitlalli

This woman still has a nerve to talk about respect after what they did to her!

“We want to apologize Nhle...”

“Apologize? For what exactly? For ghosting me or for kidnapping me or for killing my friend or for ruining my career? mmh Mam Aphiwe?”

“For everything baby...”

“No save it Mam Aphiwe I don’t want to hear it okay? Ngicela ningishayise ngomoya angikhoni ukuphefumula.”

“Baby....”

“Don’t baby me just go!!!”

The doctor and the police walk in. The wives freeze at the sight of the police. This is Gauteng not KZN where Zero has police in their payroll so if Mbewenhle decides to sell them out they are in deep shit.

“The police are here to take a statement from you Mbewenhle.”

“Haw doc just give my niece a break to rest.”

“We won’t take long ma’am. She’s been reported missing and we have been looking for her since the morning she disappeared. Please give us some privacy.”

“Don’t chase them bab’phoyisa I want them right by my side.” Mbewenhle says staring both of them with anger evident in her eyes.

It's not a secret that she once loved this family until they ghosted her and without a doubt she would've forgiven them for that but this...she can't forgive them. They traumatized her and ruined her career! Of course she will never forget what they did for her when her father kicked her out of home but she also saved their ass so she doesn't own them any shit!

"I will tell nothing but the truth ." The two women shift uncomfortably in their seats as their hearts beat rapidly against their chests menacing to escape.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I detest how they think they can just decide who dies and who lives as if this is their world! It's okay for them to kill people like flies but when it's done to one of them they massacre the country. They saw me with Mbongeni why they didn't spare his life for my own sake? Clearly they don't care about me! They never cared from the first place! Now they're telling me they are sorry? How will sorry bring back Mbongeni? How will their sorry heal my rib? Six weeks is way too far by that time I'm supposed to be competing nationally so that I can qualify for the international competitions.

"Miss Qwabe can you hear me?"

"Uhm yes Bab'phoyisa."

"Tell us what happened."

I swallow spit and eye both of them. Their pleading are eyes are not moving me. What's moving me is Tamia who's now left as an orphan because of her father's sins. What's moving me is Bukamina and Melikhaya who never got to meet their father just because he fucked another man's wife. Now their mothers are about to go to jail. What's moving me is a male friend that I've just lost but these two women don't care.

What's moving me is my career that is going to be derailed because of these two women before me. What is moving me is the question at the back of my mind "WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE ARE SUPPOSED TO BE BE PUNISHED FOR THEIR SINS?' Is it mam Aphiwe's mom who killed Uthandiwe's mom or these two women who knew about it and decided to kill a man that knew about the secret? Should it be these two women for killing Mbongeni because he killed their husband?

Is it my father in law who killed my other half or is it his wife who also knew but never said anything instead she enjoyed every cent that was made by my twin sister's blood? Is it the witch doctor that made all of this ritual possible? Is it my uncle who killed an innocent old women and burnt the man that I claim to love or is it my mom who's behind everything? Is it Siyabonga who kidnapped me or it's Muzikayise and my dad for

letting Siyabonga die in that burning hut and told the police that they know nothing about him?

What about me who know all of these things above but never said anything to anyone? Doesn't that make me an abettor? I'm not the right person to decide who should be punished and who shouldn't be but crime is punishable by law. If I want to do this right then it has to start all the way from the beginning and starting from the beginning has dire consequences. Who am I to decide who is supposed to be punished when myself even should be punished? At this point human judgment would be biased. Only the man above should intervene in this situation. He's the one who has power to punish us for our sins or forgive us ngoba sonke emehlweni wakhe sonile.

Like a sinner and abettor that I am I lie to the police and say I wasn't with Mbongeni when I got kidnapped. We went separate ways after our breakfast that morning. I don't remember the faces of the people that took me but they beat me up after I called my coach and took my phone. I don't know how I got to the hospital but I heard them saying they got the wrong person which is probably the reason I was found by my "aunts". The big lies I tell when it comes to these two women surprise myself as well. I feel like a pathological liar. Once the

police are satisfied with my statement the doctor walks them out.

“Ay ngisasho namanje you are a bad girl. You just remind me when I was your age! ” I’m so amazed at how proud Mam Xitlalli sounds right now. Unjani lomama?

“Oh baby thank you thank you thank you so much!!!” Mam Aphiwe says planting kisses all over my bruised face. I push her away from me that she falls on the chair she was sitting on.

“I didn’t do this for you or her but I did this because of my guilty conscience! I did this for Bukamina and Melikhaya they already don’t know their father they don’t deserve to have jailbirds as mothers. Cela ningishayise ngomoya I don’t want to ever see you two ever again.”

“Ah Nhle don’t say that please. I know that we owe you an explanation...”

“I want no explanation Mam Xitlalli please leave me alone!” I yell hurting myself in the process and bite my lip to suppress a groan.

“Do you need anything? I’m going to buy you the phone they....”

“Hahaha why am I not surprised? That’s what you know Mam Aphiwe neh? Well news flash mommy I no longer need you to splash out money on me. I’m an athlete in progress now but all thanks to the both of you I won’t be making money anytime soon! Now leave and if you two don’t stop pestering me I’m going to tell the police that I lied because I was scared for my life.”

“Hawu Mbewenhle aze abuhlungu amazwi akho.” Mam Aphiwe

The sad tone in her voice is audible enough for me miss it but I don’t care. They both leave and I allow my tears to fall. My heart bleeds for Mbongeni I can’t believe one minute we are

friends the next he's gone. I shouldn't be crying for him kahle kahle. I just allowed his killers to get off scot free!

"Oh it's really you!!"

I open my eyes and look at the entrance. He literally jogs towards my bed and sits on the little space before me then cradles my face in his palms.

"It's really you," he whispers locking his eyes that are shining with unshed tears with mine. Jizas he looks like he's carrying every breathing person's burden on his shoulders. I don't think he's eaten nor bathed.

"Yes it's me." I whisper back and he keeps wiping my tears with his thumbs but they come like a deluge of rain.

"You scared me."

"I know and I'm sorry."

“Don’t ever do that again! I will never ever allow you to leave my sight again!”

Tenderly he cradles my head against his chest with his one hand while the other is holding my body tightly. I feel his chest bouncing and his breathing is ragged. Oh my he’s crying.

“I’m really sorry dombolo lami.”

“It’s not your fault mqebu wami.”

“It is my fault I shouldn’t have....” I pull back from his embrace and frame his face.

“Hey look at me.”

He looks at me. Tears are simultaneously rolling down our faces.

“Akusilo iphutha lakho yezwa.”

“Kodwa...”

“There’s no but what is important is that I’m safe and I’m alive.”

“Did...di...di...” He blows a huge sigh and looks at me sadness glinting in his eyes.

“Did they rap..rape you?”

I shake my head no and watch as relief clouds his face. He takes my hands from his face and kisses them.

“I’ve never been scared like this in my life. I thought I will never see you ever again or if I did you would be dead. I’m glad that I was given a second chance to protect you and guide you. I promise with me you will always be safe no matter what yezwa.”

I nod with my head and he leans closer to take my lips with his. I almost forgot how soft and sweet his lips are. In that moment of the kiss we are pure and vulnerable.

.....

I don't know what stupefied me the most between him asking for a leave at work and moving in with me. He took care of me and accompanied me to the doctor for check ups. I don't know what he said to his fiancée that made her to be okay with the arrangements. She also came to see me more often than I would've loved to and their friends too came but hey I'm not complaining.

The kidnapping kinda gave me sleepless nights and nightmares the first few weeks but Lisi was there for me. I told him everything I had to talk to someone since coach was not the best option considering that she knows Mbongeni. His family is worried sick about him and looking for him. This other time his mom came with Tamia to me. Guilt was and still nibbling at me and that day I realized that ngiwusathane onamathumbu ezingeni. Lisi consoled me and said I did right because it's

absolutely clear that the Dlomos are dangerous so I had to do this to get them off my back because I don't know what they would've done to me if I ratted them out.

The Dlomo wives stopped pestering me but they sent their daughter Uthandiwe who I told her where to get off. Mama might have been used and manipulated by Kayise but she was right the Dlomos are not the right people I should associate myself with. What kind of people that kill people like flies? I wish I can say it worked, telling Ndiwe to get off that is. Yeeeyi uyiphela endlebeni nangu muntu. You know the annoying mosquito that keep buzzing in your ear the moment you are slipping into deep slumber? I don't know what to do anymore plus she lives this side since she's working in a family friend law firm.

As the weeks went by I recovered and managed to compete in the two events which means out of 6 I missed only one. By the grace of God I qualified for the national championship athletics which were at Tuks Athletics Stadium in Pretoria by the way not Paarl. The under 20 national championship athletics is the one that was in Paarl. I must have misheard the coach. I was vexed because I was really looking forward to fly but nevertheless. Baby girl performed brilliantly in the national trails which made

her qualified for world championships athletics. Guess where would be the world championship athletics? Doha, the capital city of Qatar baby!

“You know I thought the kidnapping will set you back but you have been making me proud mogirl. I’m so proud of you!”

If it isn’t this woman I don’t know I would’ve performed remarkably well over the passed months. She always pushes me to be the best version of myself in everything I do. I don’t know what happened between Teddy and her but Teddy changed the club. Yep she’s no longer training here but funny enough when we meet in some events I still beat her ass! She must accept that it’s not about her sister’s club or training but it’s just me. I’m way too faster then she can ever be. I don’t mean to brag that how it is.

“Thank you so much coach. I don’t think without you I would’ve made it.”

“You are welcome.”

I say my goodbye and go take my sport bag before heading out. Oh God there's Uthandiwe by the gate! I walk pass her car but she steps out and runs after me.

"You should know by now that I won't stop hounding you until you forgive me."

"Okay I forgive you now leave me alone."

"Come let me drive you to your place."

"Uthandiwe..."

"Pretty please! Or you want me to kneel?"

I roll my eyes and jump inside her car. My flat is not far from the club it's 5 minutes drive I'm not sure how it's how many minutes when you walking. On arrival she forces to get inside with me she has burgers and flying fish. Talk about someone who knows how to force herself into someone's life. I take a quick shower then join her.

“Are you seriously letting that Xhosa woman to take your man?”

“He’s hers not mine Ndiwe.” I say and take a huge bite of my burger. I’m starving and I didn’t eat breakfast.

He told me that he loves me and he will always love me but he made a vow that he can’t break. I felt like a fool once again but I didn’t want to dwell on it that much. See when there’s one thing that is capable of making me to lose focus it’s him. I chose to forget about that day in fact forget about us being together someday and focus on my career. The weeks he spent here with me we didn’t do anything even though we slept in one bed. I couldn’t help but laugh though when he told me how this dombolo elincane thing came about. Next month they’re getting married.

“He’s only there for a baby but his heart belong to you and you said how far is she?”

“I don’t know and I don’t care.”

“Mmm but isn’t she supposed to be showing now?”

“Maybe she naturally doesn’t have a big tummy and pregnancies are not the same.”

“Maybe so she hasn’t posted anything not even a scan?”

“She’s been busy with work and wedding preparations to the point that she hasn’t had time to go to the doctor. That what Lisi said when I asked him how far is she.”

“Haibo njani? Kanti when did she found out that she’s pregnant?”

“Weeks back.”

“How many weeks to be precise?”

“Yhuuu Ndiwe too much questions ay awungiyeke!”

She laughs and takes a long sip of her flying fish making that annoying ‘hlwwwi’ sound.

“I’m looking for anything to do operation gudluza. Manelisi is yours babe. I can’t stand another woman taking him from you. I swear ngizowumisa umshado!”

“Ndiwe no don’t do that please!”

She is laughing and knowing her I’m scared she would really stop the wedding. God why did you have to bring this soul back to my life?

.....

I don’t know why anxiety has me by the clit. This is a big moment of my life and I’m supposed to be on cloud nine. Maybe it’s because the first time experiences are all happening at the same time and being the person that I am I find that too

much for me. It's my first flight to a foreign country that I've never been with no one as my family and I will be competing for the first time internationally. Too much first experiences at once!

"Hey don't worry you are going to come back with a win

" Sally says pulling me to her embrace. Linuka njengetswiri idombolo mbumbulu.

The couple insisted to drive me to the airport since they can't go with me. They are both working but I would've loved to have someone there to support me.

"Yeah Sally is right. Go and make us proud there. I'd be watching you on TV."

I wish he'd be watching me live but I understand that not so long ago he took a leave just to take care of me. The world championships athletics is a 10 days event. I can't expect him to take a two weeks leave and come with me.

I move to him and sink in his embrace as he wraps his arms around me.

“You will be okay yezwa.”

“I’m nervous.”

“I know but just know that I’m with you.”

He kisses my forehead and tightens his grip around my body as an assurance that I’d be okay and boy it works like magic. In his strong hugs I feel more alive than I have ever been.

“Remember when Satan tells you that you can’t just tell him to go to hell. Don’t let anyone to stop your dreams including myself. Keep your head up and rise to the top. You’ve got this my favorite athlete.”

He just know how to hit that...that...that spot in my heart without so trying hard.

“Thank you so much Dubandlela.”

“You are welcome. I love you dombolo lami,” he whispers the last part in my ear and I feel a blanket of goosebumps covering my whole body. Oh God I hope Sally didn’t hear him. A piece of advice never be happy about a sudden pet name from your partner it’s definitely belong to another woman.

“Don’t worry Manelisi the Arabs will bite her a bit not that much but I promise you she will come back in one piece,” the coach says and we all burst into laughter. The other families have bid farewell to their athletes I’m the only one left behind and Lisi is clinging on me like I’m going to be choked by shish tawook and die in that foreign country.

“I don’t want even a little bite Chabeli!”

“I can’t promise that.”

We laugh once again and I say my goodbye one more time then we leave.

“I thought you said you ended things with him.” The coach says as we are walking down the jetway.

“Yes I did coach.”

“Then what was that all about?”

“Saying goodbye to each other.”

“To me it was like two lovers who are deeply in love with each other saying goodbye to each other. I just wonder if Sally saw what I saw or she was just looking at ‘cousins’ saying goodbye to each other.” with that said she makes her way in and I follow behind her while rolling my eyes.

I sit next to this girl who does relay. I’ve forgotten her name but she’s nice unlike others. Most of these ladies were friends with Teddy so I don’t expect them to like me. I wish one of my girls is

here. I can't believe that out of the 8 newcomers I'm the one who qualified for the world championships athletics. I should be proud of myself honestly. Lisi bought me a new phone so I slide it out of my pocket and take few snaps. There's no way I'm not capturing my first time in a plane!

My heart skips two beats as I feel the plane moving from the jetway and heading towards the runway. Slowly then it start accelerating before it lifts off the ground. When we in the air I feel my body involuntarily relaxing you'd swear I was born in the air. This is an exhilarating feeling! It's an 8 hours and 30 minutes flight thankfully de girl is gregarious so I'm not bored at all. Her name is Blue and when I ask her blue as in kulihlaza okwesibhakabhaka she bursts into laughter. No serious who name their children a color? It must be that nice ring it has when you call it in English because I'm sure in any other Nguni language it sounds funny.

She's the first one to fall asleep. I plug in my headset and watch the All American series I downloaded in my phone. Ndiwe introduced me to it and I love it so far. I'm not sure who do I have a crush on between Jordan and Spencer but I think with Jordan it's more about his beauty then anything else. He's so pretty maan I could eat him then there's Spencer oh God he's

those typical black guys who are good looking and you can't help but love every single thing about them. The type yabo Lisi so you'd keep waking up in their sheets even though you know they can never belong to you.

After four hours of watching the series I fall asleep as well. Hlaza wakes me up when we land. We take our belongings and deplane. While waiting for our transport to fetch us from Qater airways and take us to our accommodation I take pictures. Doha, the capital city of Arabian Gulf country Qatar! We are here baby and sizoyenza imlingo!

“ya hdha almakan jamil” (Oh this place is beautiful)

The A athletes are looking at me confused and Hlaza is laughing next to me. Ahh these people take me for small! I have been learning Arabic language on google ever since I learned that I'm coming to Doha. To speak it of course not to write it because wow that's another different thing.

“Im tr shyyana baed” (you haven't seen anything yet) See my beautiful coach gets me!

“Wait what you said is real?” Blue asks me

“Haibo Hlaza musa ukungihlaza.” Once again she cracks up. This girl doesn’t take me serious yaz. She laughs everything I say mxm! Oh our transport is here. Once our bags are loaded we drive to The Torch Doha hotel. Oh wow Chabeli was right this hotel is really iconic! We check in. Hlaza is my roomie after settling in well we take the tour of the hotel and damn I have never seen such beauty in my life. I wonder how long it took to build such an iconic hotel. The interior is captivating I love the revolving restaurant with its panoramic views and cantilevered pool. Not only is it the luxury hotel but it is the tallest in Qatar.

The event will start tomorrow but I will start competing for 100m race on day 2 at 4:30pm to 5pm then the semifinals and final will be on day 3 but at different times. The semi finals will be at 09:30pm to 09:45 and finals will be very late 11:20pm to 11:30pm. As for the 200m race it will be on day 4 for the first round at 5pm to 6pm. Day 5 at 09:35pm to 10:22pm will the semifinals then the finals will be on the day 6 at 10:32pm to 10:55pm. Yeah akulalwa but I’m glad there’s plenty of time in

between which will give every athletes time to prepare themselves.

The world championship athletics event usually take place in August or September but this year they are taking place in September. 24 for events will be held for females and males athletes hence it's 10 days event. It use to take place after every 4 years but now it take place before and after the Olympics game which are usually after every four years. If I win here I will qualify for Olympics games which will be next year.

As we are touring the hotel I spot the Dlomo family. From the wives to the twins Bukamina and Melikhaya! These people have money to waste did they all have to come? No in fact why are they here? Breathe baby girl maybe they're not here for you. It's a family trip.

"Oh my goodness is that Aphiwe Dlomo?" Hlaza asks already squealing next to me. Sometimes I forget that they are famous people.

“Yes it’s her! We are in the same hotel as celebrities that means I’m celebrity too! Let me go ask for a selfie!” she scurries away before I can even stop her. Abuse spots me first and comes to me. Can I have magic powers and just vanish?

“Hey beautiful!”

“Hi Abuse.”

“Aw that’s a cold response.”

“You know why the least you guys could have done was to tell me.”

I leave him and go to our room. It can’t be a coincidence they’re definitely here for me. I know I said I’d love to have people supporting me but not them. Just as I lie on my bed Hlaza and Uthandiwe walk in.

“Hey girlfriend!”

I just roll my eyes. Bafunani vele la?

“Come on can you at least pretend to be happy to see me?”

“What’s your family doing here Ndiwe?”

“We are here to support you babe.”

“Wow Mbewenhle you are the ‘it’ celebrities are here for you!  
I’m stuck with you girl no in fact we are best friends now!”  
Hlaza says and walks to the bathroom. The thing is she doesn’t  
know the way I know them.

“I miss you.”

“I was with you 3 days back what’s with the drama!”

She laughs and flumps on the bed next to me before planting kisses all over my face.

“Hey what’s that for!” I annoyingly wipe my face.

“I’m proud of you babe and I know that you’re going to make me prouder. Oh I wish I can be a fly to see those motherfuckers in your village when they see you in TV.”

“Weee those mothersfuckers don’t have DSTV.”

“But they do watch news. Bazovaleka imilomo!”

The news neh? After this everyone now will have a clue where am I and that includes my husband and my father. Am I ready to face them?

.....

“Are you scrubbing pigs in there!”

“Five minutes!” Hlaza shouts back from the bathroom. She’s been saying this for almost an hour now. We are supposed to be joining others for breakfast.

“We are not going to a fashion show come on!”

“I’m coming!”

I’m going to leave her serious if another five minutes pass and she’s not coming out of that bathroom. There’s a knock on the door. That’s must be one of the A athletes sent by the coaches to fetch us. I drag myself to the door and open it.

“Good morning MaQwabe.”

“Hi Mam Aphiwe.” I can’t help the iciness in my voice.

“Uhm how did you sleep?”

“Good.”

“We..um..since the competition starts around 4pm we were asking if you could join us for sightseeing...”

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER EIGHTY SIX

“I already have plans with my club.” I say curtly.

It's not a lie though. Coach did say today we are going for sightseeing. Most of us are only going to start competing tomorrow.

“Okay.”

Yes so why is she still standing here looking at me like she's going to cry. She calls out for me just as I'm about to close the door.

“Nhle.”

“Yes.”

“Ngiyaxolisa...”

“Kulungile sisi bye!”

I shut the door before her eyes and heave a sigh. I hate to be this rude towards elders but I can't help it. I can't forgive them for what they've put me through.

“Are you okay?” Hlaza snaps me out of my reverie. Oh thanks God she's done.

“Yes we should get going.”

We take our phones and join others for breakfast. At least they do have familiar food. The last thing I want to is to eat something my stomach is not familiar with and ghuda the whole 10 days. After breakfast we leave for sightseeing. Souq Waqif is the first place we visit. The labyrinth of small places offering a dazzling merchandise from spices, nuts, to clothes, perfumes, handicrafts etc all at bargain prices.

Thanks to the second competition at the club I do have money in my account. Dubandlela also added a few thousands for the

trip. I take a few things that I like and when I go to pay they show me the ATM to get riyals from my debit account and use them to pay. The next place is Museum of Islamic Art. I don't love the almost Chinese architecture but the masterpieces of Islamic art are beyond the word beautiful.

Tell me why not even one of us thought of buying a camera? The pictures we are taking are many and batteries are running out. Nevertheless we are having an awesome time. After having lunch in one of these restaurants we start at the hotel first before going to

Khalifa International Stadium. One word 'wow' that's all I can say about the stadium. We are almost late the national anthem of Qatar is already playing and the president of International Associations Athletics Federation, Seb Coe is about to deliver his welcome message. Finding our seats, we all settle down.

"Welcome to the IAAF World Athletics Championships Doha, which brings the IAAF's flagship event to the Middle East for the first time. This is the biggest sporting event anywhere in the world this year and it will be ground-breaking in several ways, as we introduce a new schedule, new broadcasting technology and a highly talented generation of new athletes to the world.

It is the one place this year where you can see the best of the best from more than 200 countries gather to test themselves against the global standard. With our Local Organising Committee in Doha, we have done everything we can to create a stage worthy of the world's greatest athletes. Whether you are sitting in the magnificent Khalifa International Stadium or at home on the couch, we aim to give you the best seat in the house from which to watch our athletes push the limits of athletic achievement....” He goes on with his speech and after him the vice president of IAAF Dahlan Al Hamad follows.

“Athletics fans, congratulations on being part of the biggest sporting event of the year and welcome to Doha, the capital of international athletics. Over 10 days of action, the world's finest athletes from 210 countries will go head-to-head for top honours in athletics

and you will have the unique chance of watching that first-hand and up-close. There are a lot of stories to be told during the competition, records to be broken, new heights to be reached and you will experience it all. By hosting the Middle East's first ever edition of the World Championships, our aim is to engage people of the region, introduce athletics to a new audience and inspire the young generation to take up athletics and aspire to follow the steps of the top athletes who will grace the track and

field of Khalifa International Stadium and contest the marathons and race walks across Doha Corniche. Qatar is no stranger to staging world-class sporting events and has an impressive track record and a legacy in hosting major athletics competitions, and this World Championships will not be different. We have worked hard and invested a lot of time and resources to showcase athletics like never before and bring it to new fans in the region and all over the world in a fun and memorable experience for all. We wish you a pleasant stay and an enjoyable experience in Doha whether this is your first visit, or we were honoured to welcome you before.”

These presidents should learn the difference between a message and speech. A message shouldn't be this long! We don't want to fall asleep already before the event even started kodwa ke thank you gentlemen we are definitely going to enjoy our stay. After some entertainment the event gets started. Long jump is the first event to take place and I must say it's really an interesting event. We watch athletes competing from one event to the other but we don't watch all of them by 10pm we go back to the hotel and retire to sleep.

The whole following day we prepare ourselves for the evening but anxiety is going to choke me to death. What if I fail the first

round? What if I trip and fall? What if I make a mistake and get disqualified? God I think I'm going to have anxiety attack for the first time in months. Chabeli's mollifying voice is encouraging me to calm down and breathe. Everything is going to be okay and whatever happens it doesn't mean it's the end of the world. Ndiwe and her mothers are also adding more to what the coach is saying. They're right! I can do this! I'm powerful! I'm Intelligent! I'm beautiful and nothing can ever stop me from achieving my goals! I take one last deep breath with my eyes shut and open them.

Oh my goodness! That figure! That stride! That sexy smile! That....I find myself running towards him and launch myself to him. He catches me in his arms giggling like a little boy. I have my legs wrapped around his waist and my face buried in his neck inhaling his scent. I'm literally tearing up.

"Hey miss athlete."

"Shut up! You said you are not coming!"

"And miss your first major international competition never!"

“You such an idiot!”

“You love me as an idiot that I am!”

Urgh! I pull my head from his neck and look at him. Yinhle indoda yomuntu jehova!

“Why are you crying?” The worry in his voice is so loud.

“I’m just happy to see you.”

I see a mixture of emotions glinting in his eyes as we stare at each other until Chabeli’s voice breaks our moment.

“Okay that’s enough now put her down Maphumulo!”

He puts me down and it’s only now do I notice that he’s wearing a white t-shirt that has my picture on the front and

below written 'The Best Sprinter In The World' awww my heart is melting. The coach throws me a look that makes me look down. Ndiwe is giggling and angimazi ukitazwa yini!

"Go to the call room!"

"Go miss athlete and show them who you are!" Lisi screams after me. That's my cheerleader! A wave of confidence washes over me. Sizoyenza imilingo ezweni lama Arab asizanga ukuzodlala!

At the call room the officials check if we all qualify to compete and we are wearing the correct uniform. From the bibs if are worn correctly and they correspond with the list to the shoes and advertising on clothing meets the rules and regulations. Once they're satisfied we head to the field

Dzang! The view of the audience is quite different when you're part of it. Now that I'm in the middle of the field I can see how huge it is. People are almost occupying the 48 000 seaters. I can't help a smile that spreads on my face as it registers to me that in this moment I'm living my dream. Even if I don't win it

won't matter because being here in Doha for world championship athletics is far the best achievement and it's not the end but the beginning of Mbewenhle Qwabe's journey as an athlete.

☆ Mpilenhle ☆

It's not like her to be lazy especially during ceremonies. Everyone knows that Mpilenhle doesn't have a problem with cooking meals for the ceremonies. They usually assist her with salads only but today she's fatigued. The fact that she's crotchety is also not helping.

"Ngiyacela sthandwa sami. You know your aunts don't know how to cook."

"Why don't you cook mom. You are the mokoti here not me." Mpilenhle says and stuff herself with baked cookies

"Hence I gave birth to my chef daughter."

“Wena na!”

They both laugh out loudly.

“Get up my love. Your aunt was talking about cooking curry and you know we will have diarrhoea.”

“Just let them be they are happy their brother has finally recovered.”

“They can be happy as much as they like but not with my food. Mpilenhle please that woman is getting started now. Hurry up musa ukuvilapha since when now are you lazy huh?”

Mpilenhle nods earning a cheek kiss from her mother who dashes out that after that. Today it’s a celebratory ceremony. Qwabe has slaughtered two goats and chickens to thank the ancestors for being with him throughout the passed difficult months of his life. He never thought he’d recover but through their protection he did. Every Qwabe family member is here to

celebrate. They didn't invite anyone itiyelomndeni but this is Mozane village. The smell of usu is an invitation.

The men of the valley are gathered next to the kraal drinking Zulu beer and singing. Children are playing around and giggling carefreely. It's such a beautiful sight and in this right moment Mam Thembeke can't help but wish her twin daughter was here. Qwabe calls her to their bedroom and they settle down on their bed.

"The past couple of months have been hard for the both of us but if there's one thing I realized is the depth of your love for me. Honestly you had a choice to leave me but you didn't. Every single day you were by my side taking care of me. I can never thank you enough for what you have done for me. I'm nothing without you ngiyabonga MaNdwandwe."

Mam Thembeke smiles as her husband intertwines their hands together.

"Bengenza okufanele Khondlo. There's no need to thank me."

“It doesn’t change the fact that you had a choice. I’ve been consumed with anger and pain over the past months and sometimes I made it hard for you to take care of me but you didn’t give up on me. I’m also not giving up on us. I’m not a saint either and I know it will take a lot from both of us to move on from the mistakes we both made in our marriage but I’m willing to do anything. The question is are you?”

“Of course I’m willing Qwabe. I love you and if there was a way to take back everything that happened I would. I can give everything for us to move on. Once again I’m really sorry for everything.”

“I’m also sorry for everything. Now I understand better the pain I put you through. We made stupid mistakes and no one has to know about them. I’m not going to deprive Ndabenhle a chance to know his true roots and identity. I don’t want this man parading my homestead and I don’t want him near you. The best thing we can do this as discreetly as we can Ndabenhle has to go and stay with his father.”

“Please don’t do this I’m begging you. He’s still young and he needs his mom more then he needs his father.”

“Akanceli lomuntu mudala kabi manje. At the end of the day he’s not a Qwabe. One day he will leave us and go to his real home. He might as well just go now.”

“Qwabe...”

“He will visit us that way that man won’t keep coming here as he please and take him until people notice. We can’t afford to let the world know the truth. I’m willing to keep this as our secret you have to meet me halfway.” with that said Qwabe walks out leaving Mam Thembeke in despair. The little boy walks in and gives his mom the lollipop.

“Cela ungivulele mama.”

She picks him up putting him on her laps before opening the lollipop for him. Why does it feel like he’s making her choose between their marriage and her son? How does he expect her to live miles away from her son? One thing she knows is that Gcobolwakhe loves his son but what if his whores abuse her son? What would this say about her as a mother? What are the

odds that her son would feel like she chose her marriage over him? God this is the hardest thing she's ever had to face in her life.

“Yakhala mama?” (Are you crying mama?)

“No my boy angikhali,” (...I'm not crying) she briskly wipes her tears and holds her boy for dear life.

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The ceremony was nothing short of jollification. Most relatives left around 5pm the family members who left behind is Gogo Qwabe with her daughters and grandchildren. They are seated in the lounge, elders are occupying chairs and couches while children are scattered all over the floor on grass mats. Enjoying supper over a loud chatter and laughter. It is without doubt that they are having a great family moment and it's been a while they felt like this as a family.

“Now we can have that ndlamu battle baba and see who is the boss,” says Mvelonhle to his father and everyone agrees with him.

“Heee madoda you think you can compete with me? Uyadlala mfana nginzima kabi mina!”

“Please don’t break your back babomkhulu while trying to battle with him.” Mpume teases her uncle and they all burst into laughter.

“Ningithatha kancane nina! MaNdwandwe tell them you were charmed by my Zulu dance moves.”

Mam Thembeke blushes as the laughter fills the whole lounge. The banter carries on and on as the laughter erupts the room. A loud scream escapes from one of the kids.

“Hayi maan what’s with the noise!” Gogo Qwabe yells

“Look gogo!! Mzali Mbewu on TV!!!!” Everyone turn to the TV screen. SABC 1 7pm news are playing and showing the winners of the World Champions Athletics which were held in Doha.

“Where is she?” Mam Thembeke asks ebulliently.

“Inamanga lengane ngabe ufunani loyonondindwa eTV.” Qwabe says and laughter fills the room.

“There she is!!!” The other kids scream pointing with their tiny fingers on the screen. Eyes are glued on the screen looking at Mbewenhle racing with the other sprinters and finishes the line first.

"A new sprinter all the way from KZN in Msinga, Mbewenhle Qwabe breaks the record by winning a gold in 100m event with a time of 10,70 seconds and a bronze in 200m event." The news reader says then Mbewenhle appears on the screen with a smile of triumph plastered on her face. She's glowing her skin is flawless and beautiful it's like she baths in milk.

“Oh my goodness. I don’t know what to say! I...I...I...” she covers her face with her hands and cries. The camera moves away from her and shows the journalist.

"Oh what an exceptional performance! Congratulations Mbewenhle Qwabe for securing your first world title in 100m. Not only you did you made women proud but South Africa as well."

“That’s my baby!!!!” Mam Thembeke ululates not hiding how delighted and proud she is. This is what she need to lighten up her dull mood. She’s been thinking about what her husband said the whole day.

“Wow I didn’t expect this I thought she will be a dentist.” Isisa says rather to herself as she brushes her daughter’s back trying to make her burp.

“A dentist salary per annum is the money that she just made with these two wins only. She made a good choice!” A hint of pride can’t be missed in Mvelenhlo’s voice and for moment he’s

even surprised himself. No no no he's still angry her. This doesn't change anything!

“Aw suka chasing after something she doesn't know nor see won't get her anywhere. She will come back to us as soon as the rusty cents she won run out and I will send her back where she is coming from!” Qwabe

“Ahhh babomkhulu I think you are the one who will run after her not the other way around. Mbewenhle is about to be rich!!” Mpume says laughing realizing how clueless Qwabe is.

Not only is it Qwabe who is clueless but everyone is including Mam Themveka but she's proud of her daughter even there's no money that is going to be won. She appeared on TV! Her own daughter was on TV who wouldn't be proud?

“I wish I can agree with you baba but Mpume is right. Athletes make money in these major events. If you win a gold you receive 60 000 dollars which is roughly around 850k. A silver is 40 0000 dollars and that approximately about 550 in rands. A

bronze is 20 000 dollars and it's around 250 to 280k.”  
Mpilenhle enlightens everyone and they are all in awe.

“Hayi wena usho ukuthi umtanami une million nokudliwayo nje?” Mam Thembeke

“Yes mamkhulu that what she means but there's a certain money she pays whoever is coaching her.”

Mam Thembeke breaks into an ululation, her mother in law and sister in laws join her while the cousins starts searching Mbewenhle on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter everywhere. They're all screaming at each other about the things she's going to buy for them. Mpilenhle looks at her father who has been quiet ever since the revelation of his daughter's breakthrough. He hands his food to his wife and leaves the lounge heading straight to his bedroom.

## ☆ Muzikayise ☆

The burden weighing on my shoulders has been lifted off ever since I've done the ceremonies and cleansed iqunga. I'm hopeful that things are going to go well as from now on. Mama seems a bit better but I know that the reason her diabetes is acting up is that she misses baba. The old man asked us to stop visiting him in jail. I understand it can't be easy on him to have us visiting him in prison but he's not being fair on mama.

"Malume sis Mpilo is calling you." One of my nieces says and runs away. I stop cutting the woods and dust my hands before going to her. She's parked by the gate and I'm not surprised she's here. I open the car door and climb inside then shuts the door closed.

"Hello Mpilenhle."

"Hey how are you doing?"

“You do know that it’s not your duty to check on me?”

“Uyathanda ukuphoxana yaz wena.”

“The thing is I don’t understand what’s in for you Mpilenhle? Why do you care so much about me? Honestly you should be celebrating that there’s nothing that’s connecting us anymore. When your sister left me she obviously cut ties between the Qwabes and Masekos and I’m sure your mom is happy.”

“I’m not going to explain myself over and over to you but I feel like you are so unfair to expect my mom to be just okay with the fact that your father killed her daughter. At the end of the day you’re a Maseko regardless that you had nothing to do with all of this.”

“Is my father not in jail Mpilenhle?”

“Did that resurrected Ndalwenhle?”

I blow out a sigh. I'm being unreasonable and insensitive. No amount of punishment can ever bring back Ndalwenhle.

"I'm sorry that there's nothing I can do to change anything my father did. Honestly after everything that has happened I don't think our families can ever get along again. Don't get me wrong yezwa but I'm trying to move on from everything and I would really appreciate to just cut off everything that is connected with my past."

"Oh I see if that's what you want it's fine." I can't miss the sadness in her voice.

I swear I didn't mean to hurt her. It's not like there's ever a chance where our families will get along again. There's no use of keeping contact with each other and I think the only way I can fully move on from Mbewenhle is to be rid of everything that is connected to her and that has to start with her sister.

"I'm sorry Mpilenhle..."

“Don’t be I understand you very well and I respect your decision. Anyway I brought you this,” she says and leans over to take the memory stick in a glove box.

“What is this?”

“Sbu’s sister said I must give it to you.”

“I don’t want anything from that woman uyangidakelwa.”

“I thought your sessions with her are going okay.”

“Until she insulted me. Stop wasting your money on her I’m not going to see her ever again.”

“I’m not paying her it was just a favor from sister in law to sister in law but it’s fine.”

“You are going to be okay right?”

“Yes I’m fine why are you asking?”

“I see that I’ve hurt your feelings and trust me that’s a last thing I wanted.”

“No hard feelings man. Don’t worry. Please take the USB though. You can get rid of it yourself if you don’t want it.”

“Okay sharp.”

I take the memory stick.

“Sure.”

I step out of the car and walk to my bedroom. Curiosity gets the best of me I take my car keys and go inform mama that I’m going to my house. My laptop is there and I hardly ever used it. In fact Mbewenhle forced me to buy it because she used to download movies and watch them.

“Where are you going now? Don’t tell me that you want to bring us another Qwabe girl as our daughter in law?”

“Haibo mama Mpilenhle is married!”

“Then what is she doing with you huh? She’s always with you for someone who’s married. Ubufebe kulamantombazane aka Qwabe bubhilidile and I hope you have learnt your lesson.”

“Seriously mama. Bye.”

It’s better to just leave her because she’s not going to stop with this nonsense. On arrival in my house I go upstairs to my bedroom and get my laptop before sitting on the bed. I plug in the memory stick and turn on the laptop then browse through. There are about 10 videos stored. I play one video and watch it. Different emotions attack me and threaten to drown me as I watch one video after the other.

She's trying to manipulate me and make me feel guilty for something I didn't do! How would I know that she didn't pay these women to say all of this? Entleck why does she even care it's not like she's getting paid. I need a smoke to calm me down but even after smoking I still feel like shit. Why is she doing this to me? You know what fuck her! I take my car keys and the usb then drive to Newcastle.

The voices of these women are echoing in my ears no matter how loud I turn the music on to suppress them. Is this how she also felt? Why she never told me? No these women were paid to play with my feelings! I didn't do anything wrong! She was my wife dammit! Arriving at her place she welcomes me nicely. I'm glad that she's home.

"How are you?"

"You paid these women right? To say all of this?"

"Tell me why would I do that?"

“To manipulate me and make me feel guilty!!”

“Do you feel guilty?”

Oh I hate how she’s always calm even when I’m burning with anger. Right now I’m pacing up and down her lounge but she’s just sitting on her couch looking at me calmly.

“No! I don’t feel guilty!” I retort

“Then why are you so worked up?”

“Because you want to make me feel guilty!”

“I’m sorry you feel that way it wasn’t my intention to make you feel guilty. Those videos are real I saved them in that memory stick because I feel like you really needed to see the perspective side of women who have been victims of sexual abuse in the hands of their partners and husbands.”

“Why did you have to go to such trouble huh? It’s not like you are getting paid!”

“The thing is you think I’m your enemy Maseko but I’m not I just want to help you. I’m not one to start something and not finish it but I can’t force you to do anything you don’t want. If you don’t meet me halfway there’s no way I can help you.”

I never understand the mollifying effect she has on me. I lower myself on the couch and wipe my sweaty palms on my pants. I’m shivering and my heart is jackhammering.

“Tell me how are you feeling right now?”

“I’m confused, sad and angry.”

“Let’s start with confusion, why are you confused?”

“I don’t understand how can I force myself to my wife. Isn’t her duty to satisfy my sexual needs? I paid lobola for her.”

“The moment you start referring sex as a duty that’s where the problem starts. It’s a sexual act between two people who are in a relationship. The most intimate way to show love and affection to each other and bond with each other. When it becomes a duty it lacks intimacy and being cherished. Of course you do get an orgasm but it’s not exciting and it makes you feel less connected and desired. It’s important to get the partner’s consent first before sleeping with her. Remember this is not about you only but her as well. It’s about respecting and considering her feelings. There’s a misconception elders have about sex and lobola. They have this thing of advising women that they should give their husbands sex whenever they want because their husbands paid for it. That’s just objectifying women. The significance of lobola is to bring the two families together as marriage is more than just the two union between the two individuals. It’s a cultural practice and spiritual connection between two families. It has nothing to do with you owning her since you’ve paid lobola for her or buying her.”

“I don’t think elders meant to objectify women. They were advising women not to deprive their husband sex.”

“Of course they don’t mean it that way but they rather have a not so right way to advice women to not deprive their husbands sex. Not that I blame them the times they were living in were very difficult compared to now. This mentality stems from the gender inequality. Inequality laws and harmful traditional practices reinforced unequal power dynamics between men and women. These dynamics limited women’s choices, opportunities, access to information and education. Most of them were unmindful to the abuse they were enduring in the hands of their husbands. Times have changed now laws and regulations were enforced and people are more knowledgeable about such things however there are those few who are still uninformed.”

“A part of me somehow always felt like these regulations made women to stop respecting men. I guess I’ve been living in the past way too much that it clouded my judgement and how I see things. Now that you’re saying this I realize the level of my ignorance.”

“You know that there are number of factors that can influence our mindsets indirectly and directly such as our upbringing, background, beliefs and culture. A mindset is mental frame created by our believes

our traditions and our values that determine the way we act and interact in an environment. The fact that you acknowledge your ignorance it proves that your mindset is not fixed. There's still a room for growth and learning."

"I don't understand why she couldn't tell me."

"There are many reasons. It could be possible that she wasn't aware because she also grew up with the same mentality as yours. It's also possible that she was trying so hard to please you and thought by doing that she can earn your trust again and you will forgive her for the pain she put you through. Fear could be also the reason she didn't voice it out or lack of voice can be another reason as well. Lack of voice stems from the origins of the family of handling negative emotions and destructive behavior."

"It brings me so much pain that I've been consumed with anger and insecurities unobservant to the fact that I was also not a good husband to her. God knows how much she tried to mend the broken pieces of our marriage but I didn't meet her halfway. I just couldn't get over everything one minute I was so sure that I've moved on and the next I was at it again accusing

her and throwing derogatory remarks at her. I won't lie to you MaCebekhulu uzamile umtwana bantu inkinga ibe nami uqobo."

I swallow hard and pushing back my tears but they don't want to be kept at bay. I bury my head in my hands.

"It's a good thing to acknowledge the role you played in sabotaging your marriage. Don't beat yourself up instead find a silver lining. Through failure, pain, and making mistakes we learn. We grow, mature and become more understanding of life, love and people around us."

She always makes it sounds so easy but that's not the case. I feel her settling down next to me and stroking my back.

.....

Taking it day by day is proving to have promising results.

I won't say I'm finally over everything that happened.

Emotional healing is not something that happens overnight but

it's safe to say my perspective of how things transpired is not the same. I'm fully aware of the role I played into sabotaging our marriage and I acknowledge the pain I put her through but I'm not ready to face her yet. I know at some point I have to apologize to her but for now I'm not emotionally ready.

"I heard that there was ceremony at the Qwabe's today,"  
Mama says staring at me. We are having supper and watching TV.

"I don't know."

"How come you don't know that girl didn't tell you?"

"No mama I no longer talk to Mpilenhle."

"Good choice my boy."

"Apparently they were celebrating Qwabe's recovery."

Thuthuka

“I didn’t even know that he’s sick my boy.” Sis Nomvelo

“Hey they hide their affairs but they were so quick to spread my dad’s deeds to the whole world. Weeks back I saw Ndabenhle with a man that’s look exactly like him.” Here goes Ndondoloza!

“So?” Bongeka

“Haibo sis Bongeka wake up and smell the coffee! That man is Ndabenhle’s father.”

“Oh suqalile!” We all scream in unison. Ndondoloza with her gossip stories.

“One day you will get locked up wena.” I say and bite my drumstick.

“Bhuti I saw them with my two naked eyes and I think that’s what made Qwabe sick. Mam Thembeke cheated which means Mbewenhle is a whore just like her mother.”

“Ndondoloza....”

“Wait wait wait malumes isn’t that Mbewenhle?”

Thuthuka is pointing at the TV and we all turn to the screen. The 7pm news are playing and apparently Mbewenhle is one of the world championship athletics winners. My heart beats rapidly when she appears on the screen. The last time I saw her she had lost so much weight but now she’s fit and fucking sexy.

“So she ran away to be an athlete! I thought she ran away with a man malumes! Damn if I wooed her first we would be eating these millions together!”

“Haibo Thuthuka!” My sisters’ gasps in shock.

“I’m just kidding. Malumes ngiyadlala.”

“What millions are you talking about Thuthuka?”

“Yey wena Ndongoloza athletes make real money in these competitions. This is not just a competition nyana but world championships athletics! Do you know what that does that even mean?”

“I don’t know and I don’t care.” Ndongoloza couldn’t hide how uninterested and bored she is in her tone about this.

“Why did she have to run away though? She would’ve done this without running away and we would’ve supported her,” sis Nomvula comments

“Speak for yourself mama because malumes wanted a housewife. There’s no way he could’ve let her go.”

“Hayi I also agree with my son. How she would’ve done her wife duties when she’s out there running in foreign countries? Look at her what she’s wearing? Umakoti onjani ofaka amatight

nezikinithophi phambi komhlaba wonke? Ukhangisa ngamathanga maan! My son deserves better!" (...what kind of daughter in law that wears tights and sports bras in front of the whole world? She's advertising her thighs maan!...)

"That's how all runners wear mama...."

"Yeeey I don't care she's married she should cover herself!..."

I leave them and head to my bedroom where I lie on my bed. It is without that wherever she is she's doing very well. That glow on her skin tells a lot. It hurts to acknowledge that she's happy without me and making money while I'm trying to pick up the pieces which is not easy by the way. It hurts so bad like someone cut my chest open to snatch my heart and drop it on the road then a huge truck drove over leaving it tattered.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

Happiness doesn't carry the weight of meaning to how I felt when I was standing in the podium in Doha and receiving my medals as the national anthem of my country played. I can't get over that picture in my mind. Baby girl did say she's not in Doha to play but to make magic and she did. Gold in 100m and bronze in 200m. It's only just the beginning we are still going to break records and collect those golds left right and center.

It's been a week since we came back from Doha and I really had a majestic stay in that foreign country. The days that I wasn't competing Lisi stole me and we explored. We went to desert safari where we experienced a heart stopping roller coaster ride of camels and also went for dhow cruises. I enjoyed every single moment and we took a lot of pictures. What made everything even more special it's because it was both our first time in that country and man we did make great memories.

No we didn't do anything 'cousins' shouldn't do. Not that he didn't try and I wasn't tempted to. That's a reason I try so hard to distance myself from him because we're like magnets we just connect. I'm coming to terms with the fact that he's getting married next month and last thing I want is to hurt myself even more.

The media has been going crazy about me and it feels surreal honestly. I didn't expect to trend this much. One can't even go to the mall without having people asking for selfies and looking at you like you shit chocolate. The turn out of events scares me honestly. I mean I've never been a person who likes crowds and entertain them. Yuhh but I will survive.

"Are you up for media interviews."

"Interview about what?"

"Mogirl you are the talk of the world so people are intrigued about this girl who just pop out of nowhere and won world championship athletics."

"You didn't prepare me for this exposure coach." I say and groan covering my face in my hands. She laughs and comes to sit next me on the couch with a notepad.

“I thought you are ready! I know it can be too much but the only way to get them off your back is to give them what they want but in your own terms okay.”

“Okay only if you guide me please. I don’t want to say something that would embarrass me or make me look somehow. I don’t want to talk about my personal life and I hope they will respect that.”

“Of course they will respect that. I will prepare you for the interview but you just have to be yourself and be truthful.”

I release a sigh and nod.

“Okay so that’s why you have a notepad?”

“No this notepad is for our session.”

“We’ve never used a notepad before.”

“We always do but you didn’t know because I make my notes after our sessions when you have left. It’s my way of making you to be comfortable and free to talk.”

“Mh okay.”

“Relax I just want to us go through some things that I’ve noted down here.”

“Alright I’m listening.”

“You have so much anger towards your mom more then your father why?”

“I’m angry at her because she found it so easy to not care about me let alone loving me but it’s a everyday struggle for me to hate her. I desperately want the feeling to be mutual but it’s proving to be difficult each passing day. I know I’m stupid to love and miss someone who doesn’t even care about me.”

“You are not stupid she’s your mother at the end of day and you can’t just miraculously hate her just like you are her daughter and she can’t just hate you....”

“Well she does hate me coach she wished death and disappearance upon me. What kind of a mother does that?”

“A mother who allowed her emotions to get the better of her and said things she didn’t mean. When she realized how much she hurt her daughter’s feelings she tried to reach out to her.”

“After I told her how she made me feel. How should I know that she’s not pretending? It’s not only that coach she watched dad chase me out of home and never said anything to stop him because she didn’t care. It was her chance to be rid of me because she never wanted me from the word go. I needed her protection but she didn’t protect me from her husband knowing very well what kind of a father he is. I almost got raped because she failed to protect me as her daughter.”

“Why it’s your mother’s duty only to protect you? The way I see it you are blaming your mother for your father’s behavior

because she married him and she knows what kind of a man he is. You are taking all the parenting responsibilities and handing them over to your mom only. Your mother is not responsible for your father's behavior nor his reactions. It seems like you understand the kind of father your father is but you find it hard to understand the kind of mom your mother is. Regardless of the type of parents they each are they each have a role to play in your life as your parents. No one should play a role of the other parent. I told you that we all should be accountable for our reaction or behavior towards any situation."

It's not a nice feeling to discover your flaws and imperfections you weren't aware of especially when you've been so sure that you're the one who's been at the receiving end of unfair treatment.

"Your father believes that the head of the family set his own rules in his household and his word is always final. No one has to defy his word and your mother is the kind of a woman who is submissive and obedient to her husband to such extent that she doesn't stand up for her children to her husband. You despise your father's way of parenting and you're so angry at your mom not only for every wrong she's done to you but for your father's as well. He's your father and the man of the house

that you fear more than you respect and you feel like you don't have a right to be angry at him. You are oblivious of the anger you're pouring at your mom that some of it is not directed to her but to your father. Is it fair to your mom to be held responsible for the anger you have towards her and your father alone?"

I shake my head no as I wipe my tears that keep coming like a deluge of rain.

"No it's not fair."

"Tell me if you caught your daughter cheating on her boyfriend as a mother how you would've felt and handled the situation."

"I'd be disappointed obviously and probably beat her up then sit her down and talk with her so that I can understand why she did what she did."

"Isn't that what your mom did?"

“She beat me up with a mop stick until it broke into pieces and no she didn’t talk to me but she told me what I should do. She didn’t care what do I have to say.” I say and sniff away my mucus. She gets up and fetches a box of tissues then hands it to me before settling down.

“Thank you.” I wipe my tears and blow my nose.

“Beating a child with a mop stick is not a right way of disciplining a child. Do you think you would’ve wanted to hear anything your daughter has to say about the grandson of the old woman that is believed to be responsible for the disappearance of your daughter’s twin?”

I swallow spit as I think hard about my response.

“No I don’t think so.”

“Why?”

“The first thing that would come to my mind is that maybe the grandma has sent her grandson to take my other daughter.”

“Thank you for your honesty. How was your relationship between your mom way before everything happened. Were you close and open to each other?”

“I don’t know what to say but growing up mom was a lovely mother she changed after the disappearance of my twin sister. She was wearing a mask on always smiling but as I grew older I realized that her smile wasn’t reaching her eyes and she was sullen. I understood why and it pained me that I was just a reminder of her sorrow. No matter how she could’ve tried to move on it wouldn’t have been possible because there I was before her looking exactly like my twin sister. Then I got shot and she took me to Durban for physiotherapy. The months we spent together we bonded. I couldn’t remember when was the last time I felt so much love from my mother and funny enough it took me that moment to realize that. We talked about anything and everything, she babied me and I enjoyed every moment of it.”

“The time away from home and just the two of you made you two to bond and understand each other?”

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER EIGHTY SEVEN PART ONE

“Yeah maybe but I think her change of behavior had to do with my physiotherapist. They...uhm...I caught them having sex this other day and I thought it was once off thing but it carried on the whole two months we were in Durban.”

“How did that made you feel? Did you confronted her?”

“I was traumatized and disappointed. No I didn't confront her because I didn't feel like I had a right to confront her I mean she's my mom and I'm just a child well until that day she caught me. I've never looked at her the same way though. No child want to see their mom in such a compromising position.”

“That's very true. Why you do think your mom's behavior in Durban had to do with the physiotherapist?”

“He made her happy she was almost the mom she was before Ndalwe disappeared. He brought some positive energy around her and she was even glowing. I saw another side of my mom that I never knew about it. I've never seen my mom drinking wine until one day we were in Durban. There was that side of

her that was beautiful to witness. I remember when he took us to the Solly Mahlangu's concert mom was so excited like a teenager."

"Mh I see. Your family went through a lot of pain after the disappearance of your twin and seems like your mom has always been the one to keep your home warm and filled with lot of love but the disappearance of your twin sister broke her. She pulled away from everyone not aware that she was neglecting all of you or I can say you in particular because I don't know how the other siblings feel."

"Hence I was beyond shattered when she said those hurtful words to me and I waited for her sorry when I couldn't get it I realized that I'm good as an orphan mos. I have no feelings towards baba except fear oh and the anger you just made me realize I have for him. Okay maybe I do have that natural love for him but it's nothing compared to the love I have for mama. I believe that you can naturally love someone because they are your blood but how they treat you determine the growth and reduction of that natural love. As far as I remember baba has always been like this well except that time I was in a wheelchair. He was sweet and spoiling me I think it was guilt because the doctor told him that if they remove the bullet I

would not walk but he insisted that the bullet must be removed.”

“Life doesn’t have a manual as much as parenting doesn’t. Parents do make mistakes they’re also humans. There are many factors that contribute towards the way each parent raises their children. Most of the time the upbringing of each parent plays a role in how he or she raises his or her children. You can’t be too sure that you’ve mastered parenthood you learn as you go. Change and growth is very crucial not in parenting only but in life generally.”

“Thank you for painting a clear picture for me. Maybe my mom can accept growth and change but not my father. That man is stubborn and it doesn’t help that he’s uneducated but he acts like he knows everything. Some things are better left the way they are.”

“You let things be after trying them out and see if they work out or not.”

“The thing is I don’t want to hurt myself no more with his insults. That man would never see anything in me except a whore so I’m cool.”

She heaves a sigh and looks on her notepad.

“Uncle G...he’s seems to be an interesting character. Let’s talk about him.”

“Uncle G is my physiotherapist, ishende lamama.”

She cracks up into laughter and I join her.

“Oh now I get it he’s playing the step father role very well huh.”

“Yeah sometimes I feel like I’m betraying dad. Can I please go now I have an headache.”

“Okay I’m very impressed about today’s session. Enjoy the rest of you day.”

“Thank you same goes as you.”

I get up and leave. The sun is scorching hot and exacerbating the ache in my head. Getting to my flat I take the grandpa powder to ease the headache and request an Uber before dishing up. Once I'm done I pack everything and when my Uber arrives I leave for Lisi's work. The eyes on me the moment I make my entrance. I wonder if I will get used to this attention. Today the bitch behind the front desk is not rude she's smiling like I pay her salary and offers to take me to Lisi's office but I tell her I know my way around.

“Come in,” he shouts on the other side of the door and I push the door open. He beams when he sees me.

“Good day Mr Maphumulo I hope I didn't disturb you.”

“Not at all. Come on in Miss Qwabe.” He gets up from his chair and meets me halfway. These suits he wears they were perfectly tailored for him. Today he's in a mustard one and he's

looks debonair. We share a warm hug and he looks at me as we break it.

“You were crying.”

“Coming from my session.”

“Oh how is it going? ” he asks as we both settle down on the couch.

“It’s going okay. Today’s session was about discovering my flaws I wasn’t aware of.”

“I know you are beating yourself up about them. You can’t be always perfect Wenhle. You are human and humans make mistakes and some of those mistakes we are not aware of them until someone call them out.”

“You are right. I brought you lunch. It’s yesterday’s leftovers by the way. Dumplings and beans with bones I know how you like that combo.”

“Ahhh ave uyisthandwa yaz wena!”

I hand him the lunchbox and he doesn't waste any time but dig in.

“Mhh mhh mhh this is taste amazing

” he moans and sucks his fingertips.

“I haven't had any of this for a while now thank you so much dombolo lami. Veza inkomo ngicabuze.”

I giggle

“Nooo!”

“Come on you really deserve a peck on your pussy!”

“Ah usile mzala!”

We both laugh.

“I brought you something for you. I bought it in Doha.” I give him the gift bag. I got him a wallet and a waist belt.

“You do know that my birthday is in November right?”

I chuckle and nod my head.

“Yes I know I just want to thank you for encouraging me to choose myself and chase my dreams. How can I not mention for being my cheerleader. Ngiyabonga Dubandlela.”

He opens the gift and smiles like little boy.

“Oh wow thank you so much dumplings.”

“Kubonga mina. I wanted to give you as a wedding present but I won’t be there.”

He swallows quickly. I don’t think he even chewed enough.

“Why?”

“I’d be competing in Durban.”

“You are lying Wenhle.”

Of course I’m lying but he can’t expect me to come and watch him get married.

“I’m not lying.”

He heaves a sigh and looks at me sadly.

“I understand it’s unfair of me to expect you to be there you don’t have to lie to me.”

“I feel like I’m the one who’s unfair. You are always there to support me and cheer me.”

“It’s not the same sthandwa sami don’t worry I get it.”

He continues to eat as somber silence fills the room.

“I should getting go now.” I sat after a while.

“How did you come here?”

“I requested an Uber.”

“See how important it is to learn how to drive I’d give you my car right now. I don’t feel comfortable with you using public transport I don’t even trust Uber.”

“You are right please recommend a driving school for me.”

“You are not paying a driving school while I’m here to teach you. I got my driver’s license through Sizwe’s connections and it’s legit.”

“You are going to honeymoon with Lisi and I don’t know when will you come back. I’m not sure but I’m thinking of getting myself a cheap second car.”

“We decided to not go since there’s a baby on the way so don’t worry. Have you decided what are you going to do with your money Ms Millionaire.”

Manelisi though! But he’s not lying let me revel in this moment of sleeping as a poor man and a nobody to waking up as an athlete millionaire! I see what you are doing Mr God and I see what you are doing Ndalwenhle.

“No but I want to do something that will generate more money for me.”

“That’s wonderful and very wise of you.”

“Thank you. Let me leave you to work.”

“Let me call Sizwe to fetch you. It’s been a busy day and we were working out of the office so when we came back I forgot my phone in my car.”

“You don’t have to Lisi I would be safe...”

“I’m not taking chances dombolo lami.” with that said we get up and walk to the parking lot. He opens his car and takes his phone before calling his best friend.

“He’s coming. Thank you for the gift and food.”

I'm standing against his car. He moves closer covering the space between us. We are breathing the same air and staring at each other deeply in the eyes.

"Don't mention it."

"Why do I feel like this is an official goodbye," he whispers while placing his palm on my cheek and trailing his thumb on my lips.

"Well it is the random kisses and coziness should end. In weeks you are going to be someone's wife and you should focus on your family now."

"Are you going to move on to another man?"

"Not now I'm going to focus on my career but at some point I will have to move on."

He chuckles bitterly and shuts his eyes closed. When he opens them they're bloodshot red.

“Are you okay?” I ask placing my hands on his waist.

“Kubuhlungu dombolo lami.” (...it hurts my dumplings.) the tremor in his voice is audible enough for me to miss it.

“Kuzophola yezwa.” (It will get better.)

He shakes his head as a tears roll down his face.

“Angicabangi kanjalo kodwa ngiyindoda ngizoqina.” (I don’t think so but I’m a man I will be strong)

Our lips meet in a passion dance. A moan rumbles through my chest as a blanket of goosebumps covers my body and a flutter of butterflies dances in my tummy. This is it for real this time!

☆ Isisa ☆

I've just put my baby girl to sleep she's restless tonight and I don't know why but finally she's sleeping now. I kiss her tiny lips and roll out of bed. The door swings open just as I'm about to sit on the bucket and pee. He walks in and closes the door.

"Shhh don't talk I've just put her to sleep." I whisper and he whispers back.

"Okay."

I pee and wipe myself before settling on the bed next to him.

"What are you doing here?"

"I miss you."

He moves closer to me and fondles my breast as he leans over to kiss me.

“Mvelo this is your parents house come on.”

“They are sleeping. I miss you.”

“Your mom said we have to wait for 6 months.”

“Haaa ngeke and it’s not she will know babe please.”

“No Mvelo elders have a way of knowing these things and the last thing I’d do is to have sex in your parents’ house.”

“We had our first fuck here Manjinji.”

“And you remember how that turned out?”

“Please I’m going to have blue balls see how hard I am.”

He takes my hands and makes me feel his rod. God he's so hard and I really feel sorry for him. I get up from the bed and sit between his thighs before unzipping his pants

"Let's me help you release."

"Oh you such a sweetheart," he says and assists me to unzip his pants. His rod springs up skyward glistening and veiny. I palm it and lick the leaking precum on his tip. He winces and grabs a fistful of my twist.

"Ahh fuck!"

I pleasure him sucking and licking his dick until he releases a throaty groan and empties his seed in my mouth. Swallowing is really a difficult part but he likes it when I swallow.

"Thank you so much sthandwa sami." He says packing back his manhood into his pants.

“You are welcome. Can I also get a cuddle in return until I fall asleep please.”

“No problem.”

We both get in bed and he cuddles me. He hasn't said anything about Mbewu ever since that night. I'm very curious what's on his mind.

“Babe.”

“Yes.”

“Don't you miss Mbewenhle?”

“Why should I?”

“She's your sister and I know you are so proud of her. I heard in your voice when you explained that dentist per annum earn the money she made with those two wins.”

“Well you heard wrong. Nothing is ever going to change anything. She must enjoy her millions wherever she is I don’t care.”

“I’m also angry at her but I won’t lie and say I don’t miss her nor am I not proud of her. Truth is we all expected her to fail but she proved us wrong.”

“I’m going to go back to my bedroom if you are not going to stop talking about your friend.”

“Okay I’m sorry.”

“I’m ready now to send lobola and I’ve talked to my mom to go talk to your mother.”

“Let’s be hopeful she will be able to get through her. It breaks my heart that my mom is next door but I can’t even go to her and show her our daughter let alone greeting her.”

“Don’t worry sthandwa sami my mom will try her best. We are going to be a family now this has to end.”

He kisses my cheek and we talk more about our wedding and our future. It seems like he’s raised so much money the way he’s planning our future. He has a business plan and wants to embark with it as soon as possible.

.....

Luzelwande kept us almost the whole night so her father decided that we should take her to the doctor. I think she’s coming up with flue because her temperature is so high and she’s wheezing. I walk into a jolly noise in the rondoval.

“See your sister does not only appear on TV only even on newspapers! Oh I’m so happy that she mentioned me. Listen here ‘...my mom used to buy me tights and spikes to wear for the running competitions at school. I just love how supportive she was even though she didn’t understand what is running all about...’ ahhh indodakazi yami bakithi she mentioned me in a newspaper! I’m going to plaster this article on the wall. ”

“Let me see?”

“You can’t read baba what do you want to see?” Mvelo says to his father who snatches the newspaper from his wife and looks at the picture of Mbewenhle wearing her two medals and has a wild smile on her face. She’s so beautiful and glowing it’s like she was born with millions!

No jokes I’m really proud of her. She’s always been an ambitious girl. It’s just that our environment and her upbringing hindered her to reach her goals.

“Haisuka!” Qwabe says and throws the newspaper into the brazier. Mam Thembeke screams as it catches fire.

“Qwabe why did you do that for!!”

“Hey I don’t want to hear any of you talking about that whore in my house do y’all hear me!!”

I decide to make my way in and greet them. Mam Thembeke is the only one who greets back. I tell Mvelonhle we are ready to leave. His mom insists that I have breakfast first before we leave but I tell her I'm fine. I won't be able to down anything when my daughter is sick.

My brother in law landed Mvelo a car to use. It's the latest BMW 320d and suits him. Their relationship unsettles me honestly. That man is dodgy where does he gets so much money? Anyway Mvelonhle opens the door for me at the back and closes it before going to the driver's seat. We drive off agreed he's turn the engine on.

"Tjoo your father is really angry at Mbewenhle."

"Do you blame him?"

"Yes I do blame him honestly because as far as I remember Mbewenhle has always been scared of your father. Maybe it was about time she chase her dreams. The same dreams that your father was depriving her them and the only way she

could've done this is to run away. We should look at this in all angles Mvelo.”

“We also supported her why didn't she mentioned us? Just stop talking for someone who doesn't even care about you!”

“Obvious the first person she will mention is her mom. The person who carried her in her womb for 9 months! Maybe she did mention us but the journalist quoted few important words from her!”

“Exactly the journalist chose to quote few important words because she is the one that made us seemed less important.”

“Oh wow Mvelonhle I knew you are angry at her but not to such extent.”

“Now you are her spokesperson because she's a millionaire and a celebrity!”

Oh wow!

“You know what pull over!”

“I’m not pulling over we are taking the baby to the doctor...”

“I said pull over now Mvelonhle!!”

He pulls over by the side of the road. I step out of the car with my daughter and her bag.

“Isisa stop thinking with your emotions...”

“Leave me the fuck alone! I don’t want to be around you right now you disgust me!”

Oh here’s the taxi. I hail for it and when it stops I get in and the scabha boy closes the door for me. Thanks God my sister gives me money and I always empty this idiot’s wallet but he never asks me anything nor complain. Now this money is coming in handy. I pay for the taxi fare and check if my daughter is still

alive. She looks at me with her cute eyes and smiles at me. Ah that smile is enough to calm me down. I can't believe her father thinks so low of me!

Just like I assumed the doctor says it flue there's nothing I should worry about. He gives us the medication and promises that my daughter is going to be okay in few days. I decide to treat myself with pizza and as I'm waiting for my order this guy we used to go to same school comes to me and greets me. His name is Lungile. We end up having brunch together and catching up.

"Is that real ring?"

What kind of question is that?

"Yes it's not fake."

"No man I'm trying to say are you taken?"

I laugh.

"Oh yes I'm engaged."

"Congratulations. I saw your best friend in TV what's her name again?"

"Mbewenhle."

CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER EIGHTY SEVEN PART TWO

“Yes! I wasn’t surprised to see her that she won the world championship athletics yayigijima leyangane eskoleni.”

“Yeah that’s true.”

“So wena what are you doing for living?”

“Uhm nothing.”

“Oh you still looking for opportunities?”

“Not really see I have new born I have to raise my daughter.”

“Oh yes she’s so cute by the way ufana nomamakhe.”

“Thank you.”

He's a nice company for a moment I'm not thinking about Mvelonhle. He offers to give me a ride home. It seems like my peers are making it big and here I am making babies. He's driving a Merc coupe it's beautiful and red in color. Roadblock! After giving them the driver's license they ask to search the boot. I decide to breastfeed my baby while waiting for these police to finish. When pull up my head the police have surrounded the car and Lungile is screaming at my name. I tuck in my breaks and Luze starts crying. There's nothing she hates then being disturbed when she's feeding.

"Wait baby mommy can't show off his boobs to the police."

I step out of the car and they all look at me. Lungile is fidgeting. What's going on?

"Isisa who's bag is this?"

"It's my baby's bag."

“See I have nothing to do with this. She’s my former school mate I just gave her lift.”

“Miss we found this in your baby’s bag.” They show me huge block of white powder.

“What’s that?”

“You tell us!”

“I know nothing about this. What is it?” I’m trying to shush my baby and understanding what’s going on

“It’s cocaine miss we have to arrest you....”

“What? No no no please I don’t know anything about drugs! What would I do with drugs! Maybe he’s the one that put it in there. As you see officer I’m just a mother and my baby is 10 weeks old please don’t arrest me.”

“In that case we are going to arrest both of you.”

“No Isisa! Why would I even put it there! How would’ve know I would meet you!” Lungile

One lady police takes my crying baby and in seconds I’m cuffed. Tears are streaming down my face. I’m trying to understand all of this but nothing comes to my mind.

No no no God what’s happening? I didn’t so anything wrong! I don’t know how those drugs got in my bag! Is this what they mean when they say icala livula ingubo lingene.

## ☆ Mpilenhle ☆

The doctor confirmed it she's really pregnant and her emotions are all over the place. She left her husband stranded at the doctor's office with no car nor money to take a taxi home. He can't call anyone because he left the phone in the car. Now he regrets not trying so hard to memorize the contact numbers of his sisters or mom by the head. He's not good with numbers he doesn't even know his wife's numbers. The panic in her mom when she walks in.

"Mpilenhle what's wrong? Is everything okay?"

Mpilenhle tries to explain through her sob but her mom can't grasp her actual words. She takes her to the couch and comforts her.

"Talk to me sis. Are my granddaughters okay?"

"Yes mama."

“Then what’s wrong? Umkhwenyane uright?” (Is my son in law okay?)

She cries even louder at the mention of her husband. Mam Thembeke’s heart beats even harder at the thought of her losing a husband at such a young age. How would she even begin to comfort her.

“Mpilenhle talk!”

“He made me pregnant mama!”

“Who?”

“What do you mean who?”

“Wait are you crying because you are pregnant?”

“Yes.”

“Isn’t that good news?”

“I don’t want another child. I had enough cleaning those two girls’ poop.”

Mam Thembeke stifles a laugh but it proves to be futile. She suspected that her daughter is pregnant and knowing how crazy she becomes when she’s pregnant this dramatic act right now is nothing compared to what they are going to be subjected to for next coming months.

“I’m sorry my baby.”

“Maaa you are laughing!”

“No I’m not I said I’m sorry.”

“I don’t want you to be sorry I want you to tell me that you’re going to deal with Sbusiso for making me pregnant. Kanti umama onjani wena!”

“I would deal with him in fact I will cut his dick that made my baby pregnant rhhaaa!” Mama Qwabe says holding herself from laughing.

“That’s more like it!”

“Now stop crying okay.”

“I want to take a little nap.”

“Okay baby I cleaned your bedroom remember how dirty you left it?”

“No I want to sleep here on the sofa.”

“Sleep then.”

Mam Thembeke gets up from the couch and goes to her bedroom to take the lighter so that she can prepare the fire to cook supper. Isisa and Mvelo are still not back and she's starting to worry now. They would've called though if her granddaughter has been transferred to the hospital. They are probably spending quality time together and it's been a while since Isisa has been locked up in here. She thinks to herself.

"When is Ndabenhle going?" It's the first thing Qwabe says when he wakes up from the nap and sees his wife. Mam Thembeke blows out a sigh and goes to sit on the bed next to him playing with a lighter in her hand.

"Qwabe I'm really sorry and my sorry won't change anything but you have to believe me that it's sincere and coming from the depths of my heart."

"Of course I believe you MaNdwandwe."

"Please don't punish my boy for what I've done to you I'm begging you. I can't send him away what kind of a mother

would that make me be? I know it can't be easy for you to accept him but please don't make me send him away. Traditionally he's a Qwabe there's no need to send him to his father."

"Don't you think I know that? Of course I know that traditionally he's mine and I love that little boy. The problem is his father if we do this traditionally he will have no access nor say to him as this boy belongs to the Qwabes but we can't do that because he wants to be part of his boy's life and if we don't allow him he's going to send that evidence to the police. I also don't want to do this I hate that I'm allowing another man to walk all over my head but I don't want you to go to jail. It's either we send him to his father or you go to jail."

"No I can't live so far away from him. We can make arrangements for him to visit his father. I can't be separated from him."

"Thembeke you want that man to disrespect me even more. Is it not enough that he slept with you and made you pregnant? He's not supposed to be claiming him! He knows that he slept with a married woman therefore he has no right to this boy but

because he has something against you he's using that! The arrangements you are talking about not only will they make me more weak then I feel right now but they are going to make people suspicious. Ndabenhle might as well go and live with him!"

"People will still be suspicious when they learn that he doesn't live here. Can we forget about people for once and focus on what's good for all of us," she pleads desperately.

"And what is that huh? Ukugibeza leyandoda ekhandeni lami as if he hasn't disrespected me enough! He can't have it all like he didn't fuck a married woman! It's either his child is separated from his mother and lives with him

or he let the child be where he belongs here with the Qwabes!!" with that said Qwabe walks out leaving his wife crying on the bed. She's caught between a rock and hard place.

Mpilenhle walks in and settles down next to her mom then embraces her. She was coming to bring her mom's ringing phone but she paused on the door and eavesdropped her parents' conversation. One thing she knows is that her mom won't tell her if she ask what does Ndabenhle's father has

against her but she intend to find out and sort this out. Her parents are working on their marriage nangu'mpandlana ngapha making it hard for them as if he's not the reason for this crack in their marriage already. Ucabanga ukuthi uwubani yena?

☆ Isisa ☆

The tears I've cried in this cell amount to the tears I've cried in my whole damn life. I've never imagined not even once that I'd be locked up let alone for drugs I have no knowledge of. Drugs come on I've never even smoked cigarettes in my life why would I snot drugs. First of all I hate anything that has to go through my nostrils. I used to have a lot headaches growing up and mom would force me to snot umbhemiso. That shit used to mess me up so bad I don't know if I used to inhale it in a wrong way or what.

Now imagine me with cocaine. A huge block of it moreover! Lungile is the one that tricked me. He put that thing in my bag after all he's the one that put the bag in the boot. He's driving a

Mercedes and he smells like money surely he's a drug dealer! I can't stop crying and I even have a headache. I'm so scared and I'm thinking of my princess who was taken from me crying. She must be hungry and my breasts hurt so bad. I gave them my sister's number so that she can come and get my baby but I'm sinking in worry. I don't know if they really did call her or it was just another trick.

Babies get stolen every now and then in nowadays days. You can't trust no one not even the police. Lord please don't let these thoughts reeling in my mind to be true. With police involved I know that I can never ever find my baby. This country is way corrupt from the police to the political members. Ngiyini ke mina! Where would I even begin to look for my daughter? Look at the Qwabes for years they've been searching for their daughter and it took the twin of their daughter to get married to the son of the person responsible for their daughter's disappearance. Honestly kwadlala idlozi lapha some people don't ever find closure and the thought of being one of those people has me bawling my eyes out.

I don't know how long I've been here but already it feels like a decade. How do people survive in jail? I'm suffocating it feels like these walls are closing in on me and it doesn't help that it's

so dark in here. I've never felt so lonely, tiny and helpless like this. I'm alone for now in this cell but what will happen when they bring in someone. I watch movies and life in jail is savage. Inmates be beating you up for no reason just because they want to feel superior than you but at the end of the day they are all the same.

"Hey you come!" A police says as he opens the bulgar. I get up from the corner I squashed myself in and walk to the door.

"Where are you taking me? Where's my daughter?"

"Ey I'm not your baby sitter! Come and stop asking questions!"

Oh jehova bamntshontshile umtanami! I follow behind him and when I see my fiancé. I run to him and he catches me in his arms.

"I'm really sorry Manjinji. Cela ungixolele yezwa." The tremor in his voice triggers a gut wrenching sob. It's not his fault.

“Where’s Luzelwande?”

“She’s with your sister in the car and she’s okay.”

“Mvelo I’m scared I don’t want to go back to that cell please tell them that it’s....”

“You are not going back there sthandwa sami. Nxele sorted this out okay.”

Just then my brother in law appears and tells us we should go. Relief surges through me when I see my sister in the car with my baby feeding her purity.

“How are you?” It’s the first thing my sister says when I get inside. The concern and worry in her voice ease my heart. We were not on speaking terms when I left her house. I called her husband a criminal remember.

“I’m just glad sbari sorted it out. Can I hold her please.”

“Yes you can.”

I take my daughter and kiss her. The silence in the car is deafening.

“Thank you sbari for sorting this out.”

“No problem sisi.”

“If I may ask how did you do it?”

“Does it matter baby you are out now.” Mvelo says looking at me from the front passenger seat.

“Yeah sis you are out and I’m glad you are okay.” Jabu adds. Yeah they are right I don’t need to know how did he do it. I’m out and free that’s what matters.

“What about Lungile though? Did he admit that he put those drugs in my bag?”

“Like your sister and fiancé are saying Isisa you don’t have to know everything but Lungile is also out. Don’t worry about him okay.”

Oh so if he’s out then what does this mean? Is he not the one who put the drugs in the bag or what? How can they just let us go? Being caught with drugs is a serious offense punishable by law. We arrive in my sister’s house.

“I think it’s better you spend the night with me sis. Mvelo can also sleep over it’s cool.” Jabu

“Okay sis.”

I see this really shocked and affected her. I step out of the car with my daughter and we walk inside the house. My sister and her husband walk upstairs leaving me in the lounge with my fiancé and our daughter.

“I’m really sorry about what I said I really didn’t mean it sthandwa sami. I know that you and Mbewu have been friends from way tuka and you want all the best for her. The feeling is mutual but I won’t overlook what she did. I’m angry and hurt she left just like that. Why she didn’t give me a chance to help her and be there for her? I thought we confide in each other and we support each other through thick and thin kodwa yena uvele wahamba nje. The least she could’ve done was to tell me that she decided to leave and I would’ve supported her still. So please let me be angry as much as I want and as long as I want. To avoid us fighting let’s not talk about her okay.”

I let out a sigh and nod. I understand where he’s coming from but how long will he stay angry at her?

“I’m also sorry that you got arrested for something you know nothing about. I’m sure you were scared sthandwa sami ngiyaxolisa yezwa.”

“It’s not your fault and I don’t know who it is. I’m confused how can drugs come out of my bag out of the blue.”

“Maybe someone in a taxi put them inside baby or maybe it’s that guy. Who is he anyway?”

“Former school mate babe but he seemed like he really didn’t know ay I don’t know what to think.”

“Don’t think much about it okay. It’s over now that what’s important.”

He leans over and kisses me.

“Did you call your mom and let her know we are sleeping over at my sister’s place.”

“Oh let me call her now.”

“I will take this one to bed.”

I get up and go upstairs to put my baby in my bedroom. I do have a bedroom here. This is my home as well. I cover her with a blanket and kiss her cheek. What a day it's been and I'm glad this nightmare is over. The main bedroom is the next room. I can grasp their exact words as I walk pass. Couples argue all the time but hearing my name makes me pause and eavesdrop.

"I can't even look Isisa on her face!!"

"Babe you need to calm down...."

"I won't calm down Nxele! That's my sister we are talking about! My one and only sister!! She spent hours in a jail cell! I'm this age and I've never been into a cell! The only time I go to the police station is when I want to certify my documents! I can imagine how she must have felt especially when they took her baby away and cuffed her!"

"Stop shouting at me! It's also not my fault! Mvelo is the one that was supposed to deliver that parcel to someone! I don't know what was he thinking!!"

Huh?

☆ Manelisi ☆

It's a Saturday and we are having our chillas over drinks at Sizwe's house. We usually do them every weekend and today Sizwe and his girlfriend Babalwa are hosting it. The gents and I just finished braaing the meat so the girls are dishing up inside the house. Now we are settled by the pool.

"Why you didn't invite Mbewenhle as well Manelisi?" Bryce asks swigging on his beer.

I did but she refused. Maybe being distant from each other will help to alleviate the burning urge to be always next to her because loving her is something that won't end. I should focus on my family now she's right about that. I'm happy I'm going to be a father but I'm scared.

"She had plans for today."

“So where are you taking Sally for honeymoon.”

“We are not going we decided to save the money for honeymoon for the baby.”

“You guys are not poor I’m sure going to Zanzibar for a weekend won’t dent your pockets.” Sizwe

“I’m not taking any chances.”

“You and Sally deserve a break though just to be away...”

“Sizwe no!”

“Gee you don’t have to shout!”

“The thing is you don’t understand what’s like growing up in poverty Sizwe. Having nothing to eat and wearing rags. Walking

barefoot in winter and your feet freezing. You know the funny thing that happens next? Uqhuzulwe yitshe ubhozo uvuze igazi and uzwe ubuhlungu bukhuphuka ngobhozo buya emzimbeni wonke. Going back home and nurse your excruciating toe is not an option what you will eat at home? At least at school you will have a meal that not even a 5 year old can be full with it. I don't want my child to go through that shit man."

"I'm really sorry you have to go through that boy but your child won't go through the same thing..."

"You can't be too sure. Fine my salary is satisfying neh but it's not enough to take care of us and the baby as well. That's why I wanted to wait until I have a business or bought shares in the company then have a baby. I didn't want to raise my baby in an apartment but in a beautiful child friendly home. I want all the finer things for my boy I don't want him to lack anything. I'm scared that I would fail my child I'm scared..."

"Boy

boy, boy breathe. Just take a deep breath." Sizwe says squeezing my shoulder. I blow out a deep breath.

“I understand your fears boy but don’t worry okay. You have a good job so does Sally. Your boy will be well taken care of. The boy is even blessed with uncles who will do anything for him to have a nice life and lack nothing right gents?”

They all nod

“Everything is going to be fine. These fears will prevent you from enjoying the pregnancy. Just relax and take your wife to honeymoon. You two deserve this.”

I let out a breath and sip on my beer. They are right I’m sure my savings will be enough to cover the wedding expenses and a weekend away to Paris. She always wanted to go there.

“Thank you guys I really appreciate this and I think you guys are right. I’m going to take her to Paris but I want to surprise her.”

“We got you man.”

“Sizwe your pillow talks with Babalwa...”

“Oh come on man my lips are sealed!”

“Remember when I wanted to propose to Sally you...”

“Ahh you will never let this go neh!”

“Ay wena awunasifuba wakhahlelwa ihhashi esfubeni.”

We all crack up into laughter. This dude almost messed up my proposal.

“Trust me I won’t tell Babalwa.”

“Tell me what?” Babalwa says as she walks towards us with the ladies.

“Uhm nothing babe.”

They serve us food then they join us. We are having a good time and the chatter is getting louder as we get drunk. My fiancée is the only one who is sober. I love this chillas we get to relax and catch up while having fun.

“Oh hell no!!!” Nana

“What?”

We all ask in unison. Her focus is on her phone and she’s cursing none stop. Nana with her drama we don’t want to hear anything about her many boyfriends.

“What Nana!”

Sally annoyingly grabs her phone and looks at the screen. I watch as her face instantly becomes vermillion and her hands shake terribly.

“What’s going on my love?” I ask and she looks at me with tears in her eyes.

“You tell me!!” She throws the phone to my direction. I catch it and look at the screen.

"NEW ATHLETE, MBEWENHLE QWABE WHO WON HER FIRST WORLD TITLE IN WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ATHLETICS IN DOHA RAN AWAY FROM HOME AND LEFT HER HUSBAND NOT ONLY TO PERSUE HER DREAM OF BEING A SPRINTER BUT TO REKINDLE HER AFFAIR WITH MANELISI MAPHUMULO WHO IS GETTING MARRIED IN WEEKS"

My heart literally stops beating at the attached pictures. Oh shit the kiss in the parking lot!!!

☆ Manelisi ☆

No no no! This can't be happening! Not like this! Who the hell took these pictures and where did they get this information! I can't bring myself to look at my fiancée but staring at the phone forever won't make the trouble I've just got myself into vanish. She's waiting for me to explain and Nana is busy cursing none stop exacerbating her pain and anger. Others are still in the dark about what's going on and waiting for us to explain.

"I did say didn't I? No one wanted to believe me! Y'all thought I'm sick in the head including you Asalinto!"

"Shut the hell up Nana!"

"Oh you can't tell me to shut up Manelisi! This is my mouth and I'm going to talk as much as I want! Explain to my best friend why are you caught kissing your cousin!"

The gasps are so loud and their stares make me cringe. This wasn't supposed to come out like this heck it wasn't supposed to come out at all.

"Is this true Manelisi?" Sizwe

"Yes it's true! He and his 'cousin' are trending right now!" Nana once again.

Everyone reaches for the phone and I sum up the courage to look at my fiancée. The reflection of pain on her face makes my heart drop to my knees. She's at the brink of tears and her face is not only bright red but it's swollen now as well.

"Baby can we talk in private and I will explain to you please."

"Now you want to explain in private but you fucked around for the whole world to see! Talk right now right in this moment and right in front of our friends! They know don't they? In fact you should be standing on top of the roof explaining so that everyone can hear!"

“Yes babe this bastard must explain here and in front of us!”

“Shut up Nana! This has nothing to do with you!”

“It has everything to do with me Manelisi! Sally is like a sister to me and when a motherfucking cheating lying bastard hurt her it becomes my every business!!”

I bite the inside of my cheek trying so hard to control myself. This girl is boiling up my anger and I’m afraid of what I would do to her at this moment. I get up and stretch my hand to my fiancée.

“I’m begging you sweetheart can we please go inside and I will give you an explanation. Please MaGxarha.”

She looks up at me her eyes has unshed tears. I pray a silence prayer within myself. When she gets on her feet I blow out a sigh of respite. She leads the way inside the house and we take a seat.

“I love you baby and I can never hurt you intentional. You have to believe me when I say this...”

“Stop running around the bush and tell me if this is true?”

“No it’s not true baby.”

She chuckles bitterly and looks at me with those eyes filled with fury. I swear this woman is scary when she’s angry.

“Oh so what I just saw it’s not you kissing your cousin!”

“It’s me baby. Look I’m sorry for lying to you. The truth is Mbewenhle is not my cousin. She’s my ex girlfriend, the maiden girl I told you about....” she shuts me up with a loud laughter. I watch her as she laughs hard but tears are streaming down her face.

“Wow you are so unbelievable! You made me stay with you and your ex girlfriend under one roof! How could you made me feed, love

support your ex girlfriend! I don't even want to mention the giggles you two shared and the hugs and forehead kisses you showered her with! You literally cheated before my naked eyes Manelisi and I couldn't see it because all this time I've been made to believe that you two are cousins! Oh my goodness you are so evil!!!”

Her tears come out as if her pain and anger have liquefied into a deluge of rain. It breaks my heart to the core to see her like this.

“I'm sorry sthandwa sami I should've told you the truth but I didn't have the gut to do so. I....” I try to pour my heart out to her but she stops me.

“You are lying Manelisi! You knew that if you told me the damn truth I wasn't going to agree because you also know what you did is wrong! You chose to lie to me so that you can enjoy her maiden ass right before my eyes because I'm your fool right?”

“Cha MaVambane akunjalo I just wanted to help her achieve her goals. Not only was she not happy in her marriage but in life as a whole and I felt the need to do something for her because she also did something for me when no could or did. She saw something in me when everyone saw a grandson of a witch and a herd boy. She made me feel human and worthy of great life and happiness. What she saw in me was beyond what I was but she was able to make me see myself through her eyes and damn it was a great feeling ever....”

“You wanted to help her achieve her goals by fucking her! Oh what an interesting way to empower someone or is that a real reason she packed her bags and ran away from her family! I don’t know why am I surprised she couldn’t wait for her umemulo ceremony to be over! The bitch risk it all when it comes to your dick!

“Don’t call her a bitch Asalinto...”

“Oh you don’t want me to call her a bitch? Fine let me see a right word for her injakazi, unonkroyi, ihenyukazi...”

“Asalinto stop it!!”

“Or what huh?”

“I’m warning you.”

“How long have you been fucking each other?”

“Baby it doesn’t matter I....”

“It does matter Manelisi!”

“Only for the first two months but we stopped baby. That’s a reason she moved out of the apartment. We called it quit sthandwa sami I swear...”

“And you think that makes it okay? The time you moved out to stay with her did you not nurse her back to life with your dick?”

In Doha you were together for two weeks did you not fuck her knowing that you left your idiot back at home who thought you went to support your cousin.”

“I’m really sorry...”

“Do you love her?”

I open my mouth to deny but words are stuck at the back of my throat.

“Wow you do love her. The way you just can’t even deny it shows.” She shuts her eyes closed for seconds.

“Baby...” I shift closer to her and reach for her hands but she yanks me off.

“Don’t touch me!”

“I want you MaGxarha you are the one wearing my promise ring and carrying my child.”

“But she’s the one occupying your heart.” Her whisper is accompanied by thousands of teardrops flowing down her face.

“When were you going to tell me? Did you not fucked with my feelings enough? Now you were ready to let me get into a one sided love marriage? Do I mean that less to you Manelisi that you can’t even do one genuine thing for me?”

Oh shit I swear I didn’t mean to break her heart like this.

“I was a coward and selfish. I didn’t have grown balls enough to tell you the truth baby I’m sorry. Honestly I don’t know how all of this happened. I thought I was over her hence I was confident when I fetched her but little did I know that she never left my heart. Ngiyaxolisa Siyoyo from the bottom of my heart. I wish I could rewind the clock and take back everything.”

“What should I do with your apology? You want me to just accept it just like that as if you’re not stabbing my heart with a double bladed sword over and over again?”

“I know it’s more then your heart can take but we can make it work baby. I promise you that I will spend my damn life showing you how sorry I am for the pain I’ve put through. Give us another chance sthandwa sami do it for our baby. He deserves to grow up in a proper loving family that has two parents.”

“How do you expect me to overlook the fact that your heart belongs to that heartless bitch that spread her legs open for everyone and doesn’t even care about the feelings of other people. As long as there’s a dick inside of her smelling pussy...”

I swallow the anger but the more she goes on insulting Wenhle the anger turns into a ball of an inferno in my stomach and surges up through my throat demanding a release.

“Don’t you dare talk about dombolo lami as if you know her because you don’t fucking know anything about her!”

She blinks rapidly and with each blink teardrops run out of her eyes like they are on the race. She gets up from the couch and walks around the room.

“Dombolo...what? Oh so she’s the dumplings? The real dumplings you have been calling me with every fucking time you fuck me? Now I see why you cringed and couldn’t give me eyes every time I refer myself as ‘ ‘dombolo lami’ How could I’ve been so stupid! Not only did you fool me and made me watch you cheat in front of me but you also called me with your ex pet name idombolo lekaka!! Awundiboni Manelisi rhaaa undiqhela ukunya!”

The anger behind that scream is a shield of pain. The pain that I’ve been protecting her from. She grabs a remote and throws it at me. I catch it and get up from the couch. Oh shit here’s the vase of flowers soaring towards me. I duck and it falls on the floor breaking into shards of pieces.

“Babe calm down please!”

Is she listening to me? No she’s throwing things at me and cursing. All I’m doing is ducking at every item thrown at me. Everyone runs inside the house and the girls try to placate her but she’s breathing fire. No one is able to get through her. She takes the car keys and runs out of the house. We came with her car. I run after her trying to stop her but pushes me after giving me a hot clap. She angrily jumps in the car.

“Manelisi stop her she can’t drive in that state!”

“How man I’m trying but...”

“If it was Mbewenhle you wouldn’t say that you idiot!” The bitch is talking so close and splattering droplets of saliva all over my face.

“Nana awuyeke ukungithimisela ngamathe!”

The tyres screeches as Sally drives out. Why did we leave the gate open!

“If anything happens to her I’m going to deal with you man whore! You will wish you burnt to death with that crippled witch you called a grandmother!!!”

I don’t know what happens next but the itching on the back of my palm makes me realize that I’ve just black slapped her. Fuck! This bitch just made me lay my hand on a woman! Gogo must be turning on her grave!

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER EIGHTY NINE

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I can't believe how hard it used to be to do push-ups but now I can just reach my daily target without so much rest and difficulty in between. I get up from my yoga mat and reach for my towel on my bed to wipe the sweat on my face before moving on to the last set of gluteal muscles exercises. Except the sprint training and exercises I do have my personal workouts which I made a commitment to myself to thoroughly do them because the diet Chabeli is always talking about I can't keep up with it.

It's not like I'm trying to lose weight but I just want to stay in shape and so far I'm very much happy with my physique. I've shaped up very well over the passed months. Two hours later I'm done. I hit a shower washing away the sweat. My day started late today I woke up at noontime because the whole night I was watching All American series. The end of one episode made be long for another and before I knew it the sun was shining bright on the windows. I finished all 3 seasons now I'm waiting for the website I bootleg my movies and series to update the other episodes.

I'd update my DSTV package to have 1magic so that I can just watch the season 3 but nah I don't have money to waste for one channel only. Uncle G paid upfront for the remainder of the months for this year. I will only start paying next year. I throw in a black solid short sleeve cropped tee and high waist ripped denim shorts. I have guests today well rather a guest because I won't count that annoying Dlomo spoilt brat. She's bringing one of her cousins from mom Aphiwe's side of the family who's a financial advisor. Yeah I'm not sure what I want to do with my money and I have never had so much money before but I want to spend it wisely.

I prepared a grilled chicken and vegetables salad. I had to use one of Mpilenhle's recipe to meet the standards. Of course this is not the food she cooks at home but at her house. Baba would never ever eat such meal. He would ask where's pap. It seems like it's not going to be a formal kind of meeting because Ndiwe said she will bring booze. No I'm not complaining it's a Saturday so unwinding wouldn't hurt.

Lisi had invited me to chillas but I blatantly refused. Keeping distance will be good for the both of us and Nana annoys me.

The day I started fucking Manelisi being around them felt awkward. It's not like I don't have people to hang out with. I've made friends in the club there's also Ndiwe who I'm still angry at but not as angry as I am towards her mothers. Knock on the door. They are here. I slip into my push ins and go to the door to open it.

“MaKhondlo.”

“MaDinangwe.”

As always she forces me to hug her then we both look at this beautiful lady with protruding ears. She has deep set of eyes and tan skin tone.

“Babe this is my cousin Zithobile. Cuz this is my best friend Mbewenhle.” I stop myself from rolling eyes at ‘best friend’ do you spend two fucking years without your best friend? Let alone blocking her in all your social media accounts?

“Hi.” I say stretching my hand for a hand shake but she pulls me in for a hug. She smells nice.

“I’m so honored to meet the lady of the moment in athletics.”

Awww she’s making me to blush. I look at the Ndiwe who’s already packing her flying fish ciders in my fridge.

Sdakwa!

“I see flying fish only here.”

“Yes is there a problem?”

“What about me?”

“I thought we will all drink flying fish babe.”

“Ay Uthandiwe you know this flying fish of yours causes me heartburn.”

“Don’t come for my alcohol!”

“Ay vele imuncu lento yakho! Why do you even like it?”

“It’s not me it’s dad! He’s drinking it through me!”

Zitho and I laugh. I dish up for us then we all go to the couches and settle down. We eat and down the food with the flying fish madam is shoving down our throats over a general chat. The cousin is such an affable lady and I didn’t expect her to be young. When we finish eating I take the dishes to the kitchen and just as I go back there’s an aggressive knock on the door.

“I’m coming!” I yell as I walk to the door. Opening the door I’m met by Sally who has a truculent expression written on her face.

“Mzal’ Sal...” I don’t finish saying that as a clap lands on my face and clouds my vision with stars.

“Mzala ukunya! How dare you bitch!”

She slaps me twice again and I move backwards but she’s charging for me.

“What have I done?”

“Oh you don’t know what you did? I will slap the amnesia out of you!!”

I yelp in pain as she slaps me again. Oh God! I don’t know when did the two came to us they are pulling her away her from me.

“I’m going to remind you bitch do you hear me!!”

I’ve never seen her this angry. The malevolence glowing in her eyes scares me. Could it be possible that she found out?

“You need to calm down sis wee you can’t come wherever you are coming from and attack my friend in her flat! We are going to press charges and I’m going to make sure you rot in jail!”

“Ey shut the fuck up wena! I’m going to make you remember how you made me a fool pretending to be my man’s cousin and fucked him right under my nose!” She roars while pushing Ndiwe away and trying to get to me. Oh God she knows! How did she find out?

“I’m sorry Sally it wasn’t my intention to hurt you. I also didn’t know that he’s engaged he didn’t tell me. I wouldn’t have agreed to come with him from the first place...” I try to explain through my shaky voice but she doesn’t want to hear anything coming from my mouth not that it will make any difference.

“Oh stop it! You fucked him even after finding out that he’s engaged! I welcomed you nicely and treated you like a family while all you were doing behind my back is fucking my man!!! I’m going to show you how do I deal with whores like you!!”

I don't know how does Ndiwe loses her grip on her and she manages to get to me and slaps but I hold her arm and slap her back. I didn't want to hit her back because she's pregnant and her tummy is visible now but I can't watch another woman beat me up as if amaqhikiza azange angiqhathe nezinye izintombi emfuleni.

"I don't want to fight you Asalinto! I grew up in a village and I would mess you up badly woman!"

She laughs and folds her hands into fists.

"You are not the only one who grew up in village bitch! Come here let me show you how do we deal with ihenyukazi like you back home!!"

"Ladies come on stop it please!" Zitho

I wait for her to come for me and when she throws a punch I grab her arm and twist it causing her to scream. She knees me on my tummy and I reel backwards almost falling on the floor.

“Finish her babe! Ukujwayela kabi lo!” Ndiwe urges me on not minding her cousin’s rebuke.

“Hayi bo Uthandiwe you’re pouring fuel into the fire! We have to stop them before they kill each other! This lady looks pregnant!”

“Come bitch? Is that how far you can take?” Sally

“Do you think beating me up will change anything? No it won’t but if this is how you want to do it bring it on hoe!!”

I charge for her and fist her not giving her a chance to fight back.

“Mbewenhle stop it!” Zitho says tugging me away. Blood is coming out of Sally’s nose and her face is more red then it was when she walks through that door.

“You want to stoop this low and fight for a man? A man that might not care about neither of you? Come on ladies grow up!”

“I’m not going to let her beat me Zitho just because I don’t want to stoop down to her level. Hayi phela I’m not immune to pain!”

My face is burning and it hurts where she knees me on the tummy.

“Manelisi is mine! I’m the one who pick up the pieces when you chose your abusive husband over him. I’m the one who was there for him when he’s lost his grandma! You might have a history with him but it only stays like that HISTORY!”

“Oh really then why are you here telling me that? Who are you trying to convince? That man was ready to dump your ass but when you told him about pregnancy he couldn’t go through with dumping your idiotic self! Busy calling yourself dombolo lami and your unborn baby dombolo elincane shame sis. I’m the real dumplings and the small dumplings is our son Zukhanye!”

“If you think that goat piss smelling pussy of yours can win you my husband then why am I the one who’s marrying him in weeks not you? Who’s the idiot between you and me?”

Goat piss smelling pussy wow! Ukusho kubani kimi lokho?

“I’d never be an idiot as you busy calling yourself with a pet name of another woman! You couldn’t even ask yourself where did this sudden pet name comes from! A pet name he only calls you when he is fucking you which clearly means he thinks about me when he fucks you!”

In a bat of an eye she’s all over me throwing mean punches of which I return and grab a fistful of her braids pulling them off her head. She screams in agony trying to get my hands off her head. With a swift move I didn’t expect she clutches her teeth on my forearm. I squirm at the feel of the agonizing pain on my forearm. Oh gosh she’s going bite off my skin! I grab a frying pan on the stove and blow her head hard. She stumbles for a second and flumps on the floor. We all freeze as we look at her lying on the floor.

“Oh shit what I have I done!”

Panic travels through my veins.

“Yes what have you done I’ve been trying to stop you but you don’t want to listen!”

“Hayi Zitho udakelwa uNhle what was she supposed to do huh? Watch her beat her?”

“You also should’ve helped me stop this not watch and encourage Mbewenhle! What if she’s dead?”

“Haisuka she can’t die with a frying pan!” Ndiwe says feeling her pulse. Regret washes over me.

“Let’s take her to the hospital guys please!” The tremor in my voice mirrors my fear.

“She will wake up Nhle she’s not dead. There’s no need for hospital. ”

“She’s pregnant Ndiwe! Fainting can’t be a good thing for a pregnant woman!”

“She’s right cuz let’s take her to the hospital.”

“Okay fine but y’all are worrying for nothing

” with that being said we take her to the hospital. Ndiwe is driving. On arrival we are attended immediately. I hope nothing really bad happened to her because Lisi will never forgive me if there’s anything that happened to her let alone his unborn baby.

“Stop worrying babe she’s going to be fine.” Ndiwe says taking my hands that I’m popping none stop. On the way I called Lisi and he said he’s on the way.

“What if something happens to the baby? I’m scared Ndiwe. She could press assault charges against me.”

“You are overthinking she’s going to be okay and if it comes to that then you were defending yourself.”

I don’t know if it’s me or people are at staring me.

“How did she found out?”

“Maybe Manelisi told her.”

“I don’t think so....”

“Oh no!”

She looks up from the screen and stares at us.

“What Zitho?”

“Umm I think this is how she find out.”

She hands me the phone and my heart stop beating. No no no!  
How did all of this happened!

“Oh my goodness! How did this...Who gave the press such confidential information!” Tears steam down my face. I give Zitho her phone and bury my face on my hands as I cry. I feel like someone undressed me and exposed my nakedness to the whole world to see. They’ve stripped of my dignity and image.

“Gosh these people! They want to destroy your image while your career just began! Urg people are so jealous! I’m really sorry baby.” Ndiwe comforts me.

“Mbewenhle!”

I remove my hands from my face and look at Manelisi as he literally jogs towards us.

“What happened? Is Sally okay?”

“I don’t know Lisi but she came to my flat. We fought and I hit her with a pan.”

“What?”

“I’m sorry Lisi.” I let out a sob

“If anything happens to my baby I swear I will never forgive you Mbewenhle! How can you hit a pregnant woman!!”

“I’m sorry.”

“She attacked Nhle Manelisi! She was only defending herself!”

“With a pan Uthandiwe? Sally is pregnant for crying out loud!!”

“Then she shouldn’t be attacking people when she’s pregnant!!”

“Don’t raise your voice at me!”

The doctor approaches us and introduces herself. Not that we care about that. I just want to know if Sally and the baby are okay.

“How is my fiancée doctor?”

“She’s going to be okay she fainted due to the blow on the head.”

“And the baby?” I ask

“There’s no baby.”

“What do you mean there’s no baby?” Manelisi asks the doctor we all look at her expectantly. Sally is pregnant we all saw it. Oh no please let it not be a miscarriage.

## ☆ Manelisi ☆

Bewilderment comes like a fog in his mind as he waits for lucidity but Dr Willams tells him that it was brought to her attention that his fiancée is pregnant when she was brought in and she has run some tests but she prefers to share the news to both of them. With that being said they walk to the Asalinto's ward leaving the three ladies confused and longing for the news as well. He can feel his heart thudding hard against his chest and he's battling to steel himself for the unpleasant news. There's no way that he lost another baby again.

He feels his heart disintegrating with every beat at the sight of his broken fiancée. Being light skinned manifests the effects of Mbewenhle's mean punches on her face that wouldn't have been perceptible if she has coffee melanin. Manelisi is the last person she wants to see right now but at this moment her concern is her baby. The thought of anything bad happening to her baby makes her regrets getting involved into a physical fight. What was she thinking? How could she puts her baby at risk like that?

“Doc how is my baby?” Sally asks, eager to know yet scared that the answer might not be what she’s looking for.

“Miss Ntakana I brought your fiancé so that I can tell you together about my findings. ”

“Fair enough. Please tell me my baby is okay.”

“You said there’s no baby doc tell us what does that mean? Did she had a miscarriage?” The tremor in Manelisi’s voice mirrors his anxiety.

Sally looks at the doctor and shakes her head as tears already well up in her eyes.

“No no no please doctor....”

“Miss Ntakana calm down please and let me explain.”

The couple look at the doctor anxiously. You could hear their heartbeats.

“You have what we call molar pregnancy...”

“Molar what?”

“Sally please let doctor finish speaking!”

Sally throws a mean look to him. He mustn't dare! If it wasn't his cheating ass they wouldn't be here waiting to hear the news that doesn't seem to carry anything positive.

“A molar pregnancy is a tumour that develops in the uterus as a result of a non viable pregnancy.”

“I still don't follow doctor.” Sally says the same thing her fiancé wanted to say. They're both confused.

“This kind of pregnancy is rare but it happens when the placenta doesn’t develop normally. Instead a tumor forms in the uterus and causes the placenta to become a mass of fluid filled sacs also called cysts.”

“In other words doctor you are saying I’m not pregnant but I have a tumor in my uterus?”

“Technically yes but....”

“How is that possible she did the test and they came back positive. ” Manelisi is still in a befuddled state so is Asalinto.

“What kind of test?”

“OTC home pregnancy test.”

“Did you go to the doctor after that to confirm the results?”

“No I have been meaning to but I’ve been caught up with work and wedding preparations. I was going to go on Monday.”

“It’s advisable that when you get the positive results of pregnancy to go to the doctor right away not only to confirm but to monitor the pregnancy as well. The pregnant test detects human chorionic gonadotropin which is a hormone produced by the placenta of a pregnant woman. A molar pregnancy is a tumor that develops in the uterus at the beginning of pregnancy hence the tests were positive.”

This is new to them and to say they are shattered would be not doing justice to what they are feeling right now. One minute they are expecting a baby the next minute it’s not a baby but a tumor.

“There are two different types of molar pregnancies partial and complete. A complete one happens when there’s only placenta tissue growing in the womb. There’s no sign of a fetus at all. In a partial one there is placenta tissue and some fetal tissue. But the fetal tissue is incomplete and could never develop into a baby. In your case it’s a complete one.”

“Does it mean I have cancer?” Fear is almost palpable in Sally’s voice.

“The tumor is usually non cancerous but we can run the tests to rule out cancer because when you have molar pregnancy you are at the risk of choriocarcinoma which is a type of cancer that develops at the placenta site and spread to the body.”

Oh God it keeps getting more nerve-racking especially to Asalinto.

“What could be the underlying cause of this doctor? Did I do something maybe?” Sally

“No you didn’t do anything. A molar pregnancy has nothing to do with anything that you could have done. It can happen to anyone but it sometimes happens because of the mix up in genetic DNA level. Women carry thousands of eggs and some of them might not form correctly. They’re usually absorbed by the body and out of commission. Once in a while an imperfect egg happens to get fertilized by a sperm. It ends up with genes from

the father but none from the mother and that can cause molar pregnancy. It's the same way as an imperfect sperm or more than one sperm may fertilize a good egg."

"Will it affect my future pregnancy?"

"If you had a molar pregnancy before you are more likely you to have another but with the right treatment you can have a successful pregnancy and healthy baby."

Sally covers her face with her hands as she cries. It as if her soul could bleed an ocean through her eyes. That's how intense her sobbing is.

"You are in good hands Miss Ntakana. We are going to remove the molar pregnancy by dilating the opening to your womb and using a medical vacuum to remove the harmful tissue. If there's a potential of cancer you're going to receive some chemotherapy treatment after removing the molar pregnancy. We will have to check your blood type as well if you have Rh negative blood type you will receive RhoGAM drug to prevent complications related to developing antibodies. After your

treatment we will have to monitor you and run more blood tests to ensure that no molar tissue was left in your womb. It is best to wait to get pregnant again for a year after receiving the treatment.”

“Thank you doctor.” Manelisi

“I’m very sorry for such an emotional draining experience. This predicament is going to take a toll not only physically and emotionally but mentally as well.

There are a lot of support groups that I will suggest for you. Talking to other women who have gone through molar pregnancy will help. Therapy and counseling can help both of you to look forward to a healthy pregnancy and baby in future. Once again I’m really sorry my lovely couple. I will give two some space but I will come to check up on you later Miss Ntakana.”

The couple thank the doctor profusely then she walks out leaving them in somber silence. They are both processing the enormity of this ordeal. As much as he wasn’t ready for the baby but he was looking forward to be a father. It breaks his

heart immensely that now there's no baby. He finally snaps back from his misery and lowers himself before his fiancée.

"I'm sorry...."

"Leave!"

"Baby...."

"Don't baby me just leave! Go to your whore you must be happy this is happening! You never wanted this baby from the beginning now you don't have to feel trapped!"

"I'm also hurting like you Sally. I never said I don't want the baby you know what we agreed on but that doesn't mean I wasn't looking forward to be a father. I was so happy and already envisioning us as a family. These news are also shattering my heart. Technically here we just lost a baby and we need each other more then before."

“Tell me why would I need someone who just humiliated me in front of the world? Someone who made me a fool over and over again. Someone who not only lied to me, cheated on me, broke my heart into pieces but also saw the need to tell his bitch how he thinks of her when he’s fucking me to the point of calling me with her pet name?”

His eyes drop as regret and pain washes over him. God knows it was never his intentions to cause so much pain to anyone.

“I gave you my all Manelisi because I love you so much. You’re everything I ever wanted in a man. I love the way you make me feel special. It’s funny after all this time I’ve known you I still feel giddy and butterflies in my tummy. We have something magical going on here how could you do this to us. You turned my safe haven into hell. You broke my heart and now I must recoil to protect the shattered pieces that remain.”

It tears him apart to see how broken she is. He doesn’t even know what to say. No amount of sorries nor words can take away the pain he has caused her. This is what he feared the most being responsible for her pain.

“Leave Manelisi!”

He doesn't protest but get up and leave. She watches him as he leaves with her heart and when he's out of sight she cries a river of tears. What an agonizing day it has transpired to be. A small part of her knew that the storm was brewing when his behavior suddenly changed. It wasn't a major change it was just the smallest things about him that he wasn't doing anymore. If she didn't know him better she wouldn't have noticed but these smallest things are some of the things that made her fall in love with him.

Those moments she would fall asleep in the couch while doing her work and wake up in bed. In the middle of the night he'd feel her with his hands between the sheets if she's still sleeping next to him. He'd sit through her favorite movies and TV shows just to make her feel special. It's those 'I love you' he'd randomly say. Those calls she'd receive during the day at work just to check on her and tell how lucky he is to have her in his life.

Those little cute things to some people wouldn't matter but to her they do matter because they grow her love for him every

single day and make her feel loved. These are the things he ceased doing. It didn't help that her best friend had planted a seed of him and the cousin having some sort of an intimate relationship but remembering how hurt he sounded when she made those accusations. There was no way that her fiancé was entertaining another woman let alone his cousin.

She was just overthinking. Little did she know that her guts were right and so were her best friend's. How can he play with her emotions and her soulful feelings and then leave her to perish. Hearing the news of the tumor baby has multiplied her pain tenfold. The baby that she thought would connect them even more and strengthen their bond turns out to be nothing but a bloody tumor! All this time she's vomiting and has nausea like as a pregnant woman only to find out she's carrying a tumor instead of a baby!

The doctor said it's a rare pregnancy why her? What has she done to deserve this? As if she's not broken enough she had to receive these news on the same day she found out that her fiancé cheated on her with the girl he made her believe is his cousin. The same girl she welcomed loved and supported thinking she's family only to find out she's an ex. The betrayal

cut deep in the depths of her heart and her relentless tears are the punctuation of the intensity of her pain.

How does one is expected to move on from all of this pain? Maybe moving on would've been easy if she didn't love him but this man is everything and more she's ever wanted in a man. Oh God she loves him so much he is her heart beat. What are the odds that they can still be together now that there's no baby? Is she going to let all the sacrifices and efforts she's made in their relationship go into waste? Is she going allow a village bitch to destroy her marriage before it even began?

☆ Isisa ☆

I sprint down the stairs like Mbewenhle. He's not in the lounge I search the rooms downstairs and find him by the pool talking to his mom on the phone. I don't have time to wait for him to finish he needs to tell me what I just heard is not true. I signal for him to cut the call. He says his goodbye to mama and looks at me.

“Mama talked to your mom and she managed to soften her up baby!” The excitement is loud in his voice but I don’t think there’s going to be lobola negotiations anymore.

“Babe did you hear what I said? Your mom is finally coming around!”

“Are those drugs yours Mvelonhle?”

“What?”

“Don’t make me your fool dammit!” I yell and he clenches his jaw. He hates it when I shout at him.

“Musa ukungithethisa!”

“Then stop lying to me and tell me the truth because I already know that you were supposed to deliver those drugs to someone!”

He looks at everything but me. Guilt is written all over his face.

“Manjinji...”

“Don’t Manjinji me explain to me!!”

“Can we sit down please.”

“I don’t want to sit down.”

“I’m begging you. Come my love.”

He stretches out his hand for me and I settle down next to him on the pool chair.

“Uhm please promise you won’t leave me first.” He whispers and his eyes are already bloodshot red.

“In my head I’m already packing Mvelonhle!”

“Baby please...”

“Talk!”

“Nxele offered me a job to deliver to the guys that are selling for him elokshini.”

I chuckle in disbelief. This can't be possible. Ngiyaphupha! I knew it Nxele is dodgy but not my Mvelo! He could never be involved in crime!

“I don't know what is worse between the fact that you hide your drugs in our baby's bag and put my life in danger! I was arrested for crying out loud!! Drugs pho Mvelo why?”

“I'm sorry baby if I could erase your experience in a cell today I'd would. I need money Isisa to provide for you and our children.”

“And you thought getting yourself into crime is okay? Really Mvelonhle!....”

“What do you want me to do kanti Isisa! I’m doing this to provide for you and the kids isn’t what you wanted?”

“I didn’t say get involved in crime Mvelonhle! Go find a job or anything!”

“What kind of a job will I get with a matric certificate only huh? A cleaner? Cashier? How much do they earn per month R2500? Even the money I make in my father’s shop is much bigger than that. We have not one but two kids and on top of that you and I have separate needs. Angifuni ukuphilela ukudla nje kuphela Isisa I want to build empire for my children. I want you and the kids to be set for life. I want to give you the wedding of your dreams and build you a beautiful house. I won’t be able to do that with R2500 per month so if it takes me to be involved in crime just for the time being then so be it!” with that said he leaves me sitting alone and conflicted.

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER NINETY PART ONE

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

When Lisi and the doctor left us we also decided to leave. Ndiwe couldn't take no for an answer when she told me that I'm sleeping over at her place. We started at my flat and she packed an overnight bag for me then we left. I don't know how long I have been in this bathtub but the water is now cold. I've seen a glimpse of what people are saying about me but Ndiwe snatched my phone away from me and said I shouldn't be reading people's comments.

I can't believe in a bat of an eye people have changed their tone about me. From the amazing and beautiful words they were saying about me to derogatory remarks that are finding a place in my heart. I've been subjected to backlash before but it was from my community not the whole world. I wish I can crawl underground and never rise up. The hilarious thing about all of this is that I'm going through same shit again because of the same guy. Wow clearly I wasn't beaten hard enough at first because I would've been shy for the second time.

The door of the bathroom swings open and Ndiwe walks in. She bends to feel my water and shakes her head in disapproval before fetching a towel.

“Come out it’s been hours now since you have been soaking your body and this water is cold now.”

I just look at her and say nothing. I’m emotionally drained out I have no energy to do anything.

“Mbewenhle...”

“Leave me alone Ndiwe!”

“Babe I know you are hurting.....”

“You know nothing Ndiwe! You have never been undressed in front of the whole world! No one has ever aired out your dirty laundry in public! You have never been subjected to derogatory remarks left right and center from the world. You don’t know how it’s like to pray so hard that you are not responsible for the

death of an innocent baby! You have never been stupid in love like me! Making one and the same mistake in the process hurting other people because of love! Is that how love should be? No I don't think so! You are a beautiful intelligent young woman Ndiwe you are even a lawyer for crying out! You make reasonable decisions unlike me! I'm just a bitch who keep on hurting people as if kuqala ngami ukuthanda umuntu! Loving a man that can never be mine how stupid is that! I despise myself and I understand why my parents don't love me I'm truly a disappointment!"

I get up from the bathtub and take the towel from her then wrap myself in it before going to her bedroom. I don't have energy to lotion my body. I just apply the ointment on the bruise where Sally bitten me. It hurts really bad. She should be happy that I'm not that bitter I would've get a lizard and use it on my bruise so that she can lose all her teeth.

Once I'm done I crawl under the blankets and bawl my eyes out. I can imagine how my parents are feeling right now. Once again I've embarrassed them. Maybe it's better that I'm away from them and they don't have see the disappointment they produced together. I can hear water running in the bathroom

I'm sure Ndiwe is rinsing the bathtub. My soul is in deep hurt I can feel the pain even in my bones.

"Babes your coach is calling you." Oh God I know that one is going to scold me and tell me that she told me to stay away from Lisi bla bla bla. I fling the blanket away from my head and sit on my butt before taking the phone from her. It's a video call! I briskly wipe my tears and accept the call.

"Coach."

"How are you feeling?"

I open my mouth to say something but there's a huge lump lodged in my throat. Trying to swallow the lump is proving to be impossible instead I bleed an ocean of tears through my eyes.

"Don't cry it's going to blow over soon. Tomorrow they will find something new to talk about." Okay I didn't expect that. Isn't she supposed to be yelling at me.

“I don’t understand how did they get such confidential information.”

“These people have a way to dig your past just to destroy your image. You need to grow a thick skin mogirl because that’s how it is in this world. The moment you become known there’s always going to be those people who wants to write juicy stories about you. How is Sally taking all of this?”

“She attacked me and I hit her with a pan. Now she’s in the hospital and there’s a possibility that she miscarried the baby.”  
I sob

“Jesus Mbewenhle why did you hit her back!”

“Coach I’m not immune to pain. I wasn’t going to watch another woman beat me up.”

“She’s pregnant! Do you know how serious offense it is to assault a pregnant woman? You have enough drama as we speak assault charges are the last thing you need right now!”

“I know coach and I’m sorry.”

“You are apologizing to the wrong person. Sally is the one who should be apologizing to but I know that at this moment she doesn’t want anything to do with you. Let’s hope she won’t press charges.”

“What if I killed her child? How would I live with an innocent baby’s blood in my hands?”

“Is it confirmed that she lost the baby?”

“No but the doctor said ‘there’s no baby’ I don’t know what does that mean. Then she asked Lisi to go with her to Sally’s ward so that she can explain to both of them”

“I also don’t know what it means but I think she would’ve just said she lost the baby if she miscarried.”

“I’m losing my mind coach.”

“Let me fetch you. This is not a good time to be alone.”

“I’m not alone I’m with my friend, Ndiwe.”

“Okay that’s better. Don’t think too much okay. Such things happens just be strong. Don’t allow the enemies to rejoice by breaking down. In life there are moments of sadness happiness, laughter and tears and if you want to live a purposeful life you must have a passion to overcome every obstacle thrown at you.”

“Thank you so much coach.”

“You know where to find me when you need me.”

This woman is goals. It’s been really a blessing to have met her. I call Manelisi and his phone rings to no answer. Ndiwe warned me but I can’t help myself. I’m trending in every social media in

the world. It's like whoring starts with me. The Facebookers are the worst! Their comments hit hard.

'What a waste of talent! Where's self love?'

'Aw kodwa umkhaya wami I'm so disappointed in her.'

'I'm not surprised I was there on her memulo ceremony I saw the cow's fat tearing apart with my naked eyes. Why did she allow the ceremony to go on while she knew that she wasn't a virgin anymore baffles me.'

'It's clearly she never loved the husband apparently this is the same guy she cheated with on her husband who was a boyfriend back then'

'La okwama khona amanzi aphinde ame futhi. Bayathandana labantu bayekeni!'

'What about the fiancée? They are both selfish and cruel! They deserve each nxa! I wish the fiancée can leave this asshole!'

'Oh I feel sorry for the husband. Lomgijimi doesn't deserve him!'

'Shame the poor husband. She just broke a record though usually it's men who leave their wives back home and go to the City to cheat lol after all she's a record breaker!!'

'Let's not talk about things we know nothing about! This husband y'all are feeling sorry for his father killed her twin sister! I also would run away after finding out that my father in law sacrificed with my twin sister to be rich!'

'Haisuka the point is she's still married and nothing give her a right to break another woman's marriage before it even began! Such disgrace why don't she join her twin sister once and for all!'

'It seems like it's a wrong twin that was murdered'

The phone is snatched away from my hand. I look at Ndiwe through my teary eyes. Zitho is behind her carrying a container of ice cream and spoons.

“Babe why are you hurting yourself like this? Stop reading what they are saying.”

“I can’t help myself. God they are so mean Ndiwe but they’re right.” I cover my face with my hands and cry. I feel the bed dipping and they both put me in between them and comfort me.

“I can’t say I know how you are feeling Mbewenhle but I can imagine. That’s how the media is. Tomorrow they will be talking about something else. How many celebrities you have seen being dragged on social media but they don’t break down instead they hold their head up and rise to the top. Don’t give them that satisfaction.” Zitho

“The thing is there’s so much truth in what they’re saying.”

“People cheat everyday and some trend for bigger things then cheating but because you are a celebrity now they’re making this a big deal and it’s not like you cheated babe. You and Muzikayise are no longer together now. This will blow over I promise don’t allow it to kill your soul and make you feel less of yourself. You are beyond powerful and remarkable Nhle. You made mistakes like every human being you shouldn’t punish yourself for human mistakes. Not that I’m downplaying the seriousness of this but babe you have survived the worst you can still survive this. Live your life with a positive attitude and never give up.”

I calm down after a while and we all stuff ourselves with ice cream while talking. Sally disturbed us today before Zitho could advise me. Since tomorrow she’s going back to KZN she uses this time to share her financial advices.

.....

It’s the following day and the first thing I do when I wake up is to check my phone. Disappointment washes over me when I don’t see Lisi’s missed calls or messages. I call him but still he doesn’t answer my calls. He’s shunning me that’s absolutely

clear now and there's only one thing that can make him angry at me. I notice a note on the bedside table next to me and read it. 'Hey babe ngikhaphe uZitho. Your breakfast is in the warmer. See you in a minute.'

I'm not prepared to get out of this bed at least not until Lisi talks to me. I try calling him again now his call is on voicemail. I check the status on WhatsApp maybe Sally posted something but she didn't. It's Lisi who posted an hour ago 'At this point I'm wondering if I will ever be a father. Why does it feel like I'm cursed? God I'm sorry for everything I've done but don't punish me through my babies. They are innocent. Fuck it hurts!' No no no she really lost the baby! What have I done? I feel my heart sinking to the pit of my stomach and guilt is guzzling my conscience like a lion on its prey. Now you have a blood of an innocent baby in your hands Mbewenhle you must be happy!

'Such disgrace why don't she join her twin sister once and for all!'

'It seems like it's a wrong twin that was murdered'

'Ngiswela umgodini wokuklahla you are the one who should've disappeared not Ndalwenhle!'

I get on my feet and search around the bedroom not sure what but I need anything. Anything that can take this pain away. Anything that can free my family from the humiliation they have to go through because of me. Anything to grant my mother her wish. Anything to make the world a better place. Not finding anything in the bedroom I go downstairs and in the garage I find a car towing rope. I make a circle before fastening the rope firmly on the balcony bars.

Once I'm sure the knot is tight I take the chair and head outside on the side of the balcony. Placing it underneath the hanging rope from the balcony I climb on the stool. Tears are streaming down my face and my hands are shaking terribly. I put my head into the circle and tighten the rope around my neck. The only thing left now is to kick the stool and let go. I say a short prayer within myself asking God to forgive me for I'm about to do but it's only the best for everyone.

This is it I count to 3 but something is holding me back to kick the stool. No it's not fear but it's rage. This is best for everyone

what the actual fuck does that even mean! Who is everyone? Does this 'everyone' care about you? Fuck maan Mbewenhle! Don't give importance to anyone who doesn't matter in your life and you can't change how people think about you but you can change how you think about yourself. Nothing is worth your life dammit! Are you going to take your life after so many deaths you have survived you gotta be kidding girl! Think about your twin sister who was robbed off her life but you still have a chance to live and fulfill your dreams! You owe it to her to live your life to the fullest and achieve your goals.

The society you live in will crumble you into pieces. Don't allow it to win. Just look them right in their eyes and tell them NO! You have to live your life all by yourself because no one can ever step in your shoes and feel the way you are feeling or face what you are going through. Pay no attention to the ones who think you are a whore and not worthy of life. Who are they to tell you that you should join your twin sister as if she wanted to die from the first place? Who are they to say you are the wrong twin that is alive? Prove them wrong baby girl! Show them who you are! Just like a diamond you're sparkling and priceless.

I remove the rope around my neck and lower myself to the chair holding my bent knees close to my chest. I let out a heart

wrenching sob. I survived many storms even the real storm that I thought took my twin sister this too shall pass right? I can't give up now when I've just started to make my name out there. Everyone has to know who Mbewenhle Qwabe is even when I'm gone from this world. My name will live long and I will make sure of that.

I get up from the chair and walk inside the house where I take a shower. When I finish showering I sit before Ndiwe's vicinity table and watch make up tutorials on YouTube. I follow them and make up myself. 30 minutes later I'm done and I must say I look really beautiful for someone who's doing this for the first time. I style my afro and ensure that my waves are on fleek. I look like a doll, the one even white kids would fight each other just to have it.

Ndiwe's white ribbed long sleeve bodycon dress fits me like a glove. I shuffle to downstairs to get myself a banana and a glass of juice before going up. I take Ndiwe's laptop and go sit by the balcony. The Dlomo brat has WiFi so I started by creating my official social media accounts and go live on Facebook after sending friend requests to a few people who will definitely share the video. In short space of time I have 20 people so far good shot! Labanye bazosifica ngendlela.

“Morning Facebookers.” I say peeling off my banana and take a bite.

“Ah well this is me I’m sure everyone thought I’m going to hide. That’s not my style I have training to do and competitions to win where will I get time to play hide and seek just because someone decided to vilify me. Not that I owe anyone an explanation but let me clarify a few things. Yes I am married and I won’t share how I left home and why because that is none of everyone’s business. Don’t make yourself a saint over my personal affairs. This is my life not your dumpsite to throw your insults. I’m human like yourself and I believe you also won’t like it if I were to do the same.”

I sip on my juice and go on.

“Stop feeling entitled to famous people businesses. They don’t owe you shit. Just because they are public figures it doesn’t mean they owe you an explanation about their lives or they don’t make mistakes like everyone. Y’all are expecting the impossibility honestly. I’m a human more than I’m an athlete. I have a past just like you do the difference is that mine

happened to be exposed and yours is still in the closet. Don't believe everything you read because it has that juicy side of the story that has to make the likes of you to throw unnecessary opinions but truth be told no one knows what really happened except those who are involved."

I bite on my banana and chew as I read the comments.

"You go around insulting people and having shitty opinions but you have no clue what's really going on. You don't know how sensitive and painful the topic is to that person. Normalize not having an opinion to everything you hear or see especially if you don't know how accurate it is. I'm human and I don't owe anyone perfectionism. You know if we can invest this energy we all have when voicing out negative opinions to greater things that can set us for life. This world would be a better place not for us only but for the future generations. If we say the world is cruel then that means we the humans living in the world are cruel but change is not too late. We can still create a better place for our children."

One sip on my juice once again.

“Let stop destroying each other but help each other to rise. Take note of what you feed your mind. Let’s fight the negative energy that is surrounding the world and all of the atrocities happening in the world especially against women. I believe that you can’t just wake up and have animalistic behavior. There’s always a root of everything. I think sometimes the things our subconscious minds are exposed to knowingly and unknowingly play a huge role in our behavior. We all want soft life but in the quest to find it we sometimes forget the essence of life. We forget to cherish what we have because we are wasting our energy into looking for bigger things. “love” has become a tool in search for soft life and we end up forgetting to appreciate small gestures and actions of our love ones. Materialistic things don’t define love and never would..”

A sneeze disturbs me.

“Sorry about that. If you believe buying her finer things of life is going to make her love you I feel for you my brother. The moment you lose everything and become jobless she would leave you and go find someone who can provide her with the things you no longer afford to give her. Don’t introduce a woman to finer things that you can’t maintain because when she leaves you will end up killing her then blame her but you are the one who made her fall in love with what you can provide for her not you mselufi. Akenifundeni ukushela madoda

niyeke ukushela ngemali. Life is tough out there kulanjiwe emakhaya the moment you show me how much money you have I immediately fall in love with your bank balance not you. Learn to court a woman without flaunting your wealth. Women also shouldn't put pressure on men. Let's make something out of our names and stop feeling entitled to men's money. Maybe that's the reason some men have no respect for us and they objectify us. Let's fight for the better future and harmonious world not in GBV only but in everything that is a hindrance. Stay blessed and enjoy the rest of the day."

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER NINETY PART TWO

☆ Mpilenhle ☆

“Oh wow spoken like a wise young woman!” The proud look on her face has me trapped in confusion.

We were watching Mbewenhle’s video. It’s trending on social media and it’s mind-boggling how most people have switched back to praising her again in the twinkling of an eye because of one lousy speech!

“Like really mama?”

“What?”

“You should be fuming that she’s done it again!”

“Your father’s anger is enough. Angithi wena ugijime waphapha watshela uyihlo!”

“He already knew mama because people are talking about it outside. He asked and I just confirmed it. There was no way I could’ve lied to him. I don’t understand how are you fine with this. She dragged our name into the mud once again now worse in front of the world because of the same guy! How is he still alive?”

“I’m just glad that he’s okay which means there’s a possibility that his grandma is also okay. Of course I’m not fine Mpilenhle but even the blind can see that those two love each other. He came back for her and encouraged her to follow her dreams who wouldn’t soften her heart towards him though?”

“They say he’s getting married in weeks mama!”

“I believe Mbewenhle is old enough and she knows what she’s doing. If he continues to marry his fiancée it’s okay but I’m happy that he took care of my daughter until she’s able to take care of herself. If the fiancée calls the wedding off and he peruse his relationship with your sister I’m also okay with that. Ziyathandana lezingane and we must let them be.”

Wow

“Their love is selfish because every time they have to hurt other people and drag our name into the mud! First it was Muzikayise who they hurt because of their selfishness now it’s the fiancée! Oh I feel for the poor woman. Yaz I wish bamfake isibhaxu uMbewu so that she can learn to respect other people’s relationships!”

“Stop with your self righteous Mpilenhle. We don’t know everything it could be possible that they just kissed and the press is not telling the truth. She’s a public figure now so they are going to do everything in their power to spread nasty stories about her.”

“You have become so soft towards her mama. Is it because she’s now a millionaire and a celebrity?”

“Ungazobheda wena!”

“Are you not the one who wished death upon her now suddenly you are her cheerleader even when she’s wronged people.”

“I made a mistake back then and I won’t repeat it by believing anything without getting the side of her story. You don’t know what Muzikayise put her through but you still believe that she’s selfish for leaving nywe nywe.”

“You keep on saying that but you don’t want to tell me what did he do. It sounds like you are making stories to defend her.”

“I’m not making any stories. I thought he was going to tell you kanti are you not friends anymore?”

I suppress the urge to roll my eyes. She knows that Muzi and I cut communication.

“What did he do?”

She heaves a sigh and tells me everything. I feel all sort of emotions attacking me. I see everything but the part that he took her to the river to 'cleansed her' and the one that he made her stand in stormy night infuriates me further.

"Mama why she didn't tell us!"

"Things between the two could've gotten better only if you didn't kiss her husband. Not only did you break sisterhood code but trust as well. Tell me how was she going to talk to you? The truth is that she was scared to tell us because she thought we will think the worst of her and she also blamed herself for his behavior."

"Oh my goodness! I can't believe that Muzi didn't mention all of that and you didn't tell me all along Mama."

"I'm sorry I didn't tell you."

"So you know where she is?"

“Yes Gcbobolwakhe hinted without realizing but at first I didn’t catch it until two months later after he told me.”

“Then what are we waiting for mama?”

“We are waiting for her to reach out to us first. Let’s give her the space that she wants. I believe once she’s ready she will reach out. I don’t want anything that will set her back. I also don’t trust you that you can keep your mouth shut to your father. You know he cares more about his image than anything. The bottom line is that Mbewenhle is still married to Muzikayise so you will never know what might happen in your father’s head once he finds out where she is. Let’s her gain control and power first so that when she comes back she won’t succumb to your father’s demands but stand up for herself.”

“I hear you mama and please stop making me a snitch. I just confirmed to baba. Do you think she will ever reach out to us? As far as I know she’s angry at us.”

“I don’t know honestly but I’m hopeful. If she doesn’t reach out then we have to do something.”

Nothing gave Muzikayise a right to maltreat my sister like this. I understand she cheated on him but he took things very far. It sounds like from the very beginning when he took her back he had an agenda to abuse her. I hope she will reach out to us and maybe just maybe we can still fix our relationship. I don't know how will I begin to do that with trust broken but I'm willing to give it my all. She's the only sister I have and I'd be lying if I can say I don't miss her.

.....

Shekhinah is keeping me company as I'm driving to Durban. I love this girl her music slaps hard. I want to come back today but I know that it's impossible. I'm not used to long distance driving and this pregnancy doesn't help. Yeah I'm pregnant again and to think I made a vow that I'm not going to labour ward again but here I am. That moment hubby is happy urgh I'm praying that I'm carrying a girl again azonya nyiii!

On arrival I check in at the hotel and order something to eat. I'm starving and I could do with saucy steak and ribs. While waiting for room service I hit a quick shower to get rid of

exhaustion and sweat. When I finish I throw in a robe. Oh my food is here. I don't waste time after receiving my food but dig in. My phone rings I reach for it.

"Cebekhulu."

"How's your father?"

I almost forgot that I lied and said dad is sick so I'm sleeping over at my parents house.

"He will be okay babe thank you for asking."

"Don't mention it. We miss you here."

"I miss you guys too. Nenzani lapho?"

"Just finished writing homework with the girls. Now I'm preparing something for them to eat. What are you doing now?"

“I’m eating babe. Kiss the girls for me.”

“I will baby I have to go. I love you so much please take care of yourself.”

“I will definitely do that. Ngiyakuthanda nami mubiza wami.”

He laughs out loudly.

“Uthandwa yimi muhleza wami.” I hang up with a smile on my face. Urgh ngiyazthandela lexoxo lami yaz. I continue with eating and when I’m done I retire to sleep.

The following day I’m dressed up in a red halter-neck backless bodycon dress that sits just above my knees. I pair it with black heels

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looking sizzling hot! I feel good and confidence when I’m looking good. I take my handbag, phone and car keys then

leave. I hope this doesn't backfire. He's home the whole day today I know everything about him including he's schedule.

After talking to him through the intercom the gate slides open. Oh what a majestic grandeur of his mansion. I step out of my car and head to the entrance. He opens the door for me and he's very surprised I don't blame him.

"Mpilenhle hi come on in."

I walk inside the lounge and I must say Mpandlana got some taste. We settle down on the couch and he looks at me expectantly.

"Is everything okay back at home?"

"Ndabenhle is fine."

I see him release a sigh of relief.

“What brings you here?”

“You’re a Zulu man Mr Magagula and I believe you know traditions and culture right.”

“Yes I do.”

“Then you know very well that Ndabenhle is a Qwabe and you have no right to claim him.”

“Where is this going kahle kahle.”

“You disrespected another man and slept with his wife. The least you could do is to humble yourself before my father not blackmail my mom to be part of Ndabenhle’s life.”

“She didn’t give me any option...”

“You don’t have any option vele. Ndabenhle is not yours but baba’s child. This is what is going to happen Mr Magagula. You

are going to let Ndabenhle be to where he belongs with the Qwabes.”

“Over my dead body that boy is my child!”

“Ngokwesende kodwa ngokosiko indodana ka baba leya wena uzodeda nje empilweni yakhe and let the rightful parents raise him....”

“So your mother send you here...”

“No my mom doesn’t know that I’m here and if you are wise you won’t tell her. You have caused enough trouble in their marriage. I won’t allow you to walk over my parents heads and intimidate them with your education and parental rights nonsense. You’re not the only one who can play dirty. See in this stick there’s everything shady about you and your corrupt political brother. All your shady business including that sexual assault charges that were laid against you but vanished out of the blue after your political brother pulled some strings.”

I hand him the USB and he looks at it then me. The rage reflecting in his eyes has me shaking me in my boots but I'm not going to show him.

“Maybe just maybe when he's old enough he will know the truth and choose for himself but for now let him be. So what's going to be Mr Mpandla?”

## ☆ Muzikayise ☆

I know that I wasn't a good husband to her but why is she painting me bad to the public as if I'm the only bad guy here? We both messed up! Why can't she tell the world how she opened her legs two days before her memulo ceremony! Why can't she tell them she ran away with the same guy she cheated on me with! You know what antagonize me further is the fact that I wasn't losing my mind! I knew that voice but she looked at me in the eyes and said Manelisi is dead!

Fuck I've always been stupid when it comes to that woman! I hate the stormy day I met her nxa! It can't be a coincidence that after I heard that voice few days later she left. What does this asswipe wants from me? What have I done to him to hate me this much! Did he not cause enough turmoil in my life?

"Malumes calm down!!"

"No Thuthuka this video is painting me bad only!!"

“She was just generalizing malumes she wasn’t specific.”

“Come on Thuthuka you are not stupid! Why talk about gender based violence? She should defend herself without making me the bad guy only! Please help me make a video nami! I want to tell the world my side of story!”

I have WhatsApp only. I’m not a fan of other social media networks or whatever.

“Now you are taking things very far. Mbewenhle didn’t mention your name nor did she say you abused her. If you do that it will make you the bitter husband. Just let everything be malumes.”

“Oh you don’t want to help me make this video? Okay fine I will sort this out on my own!”

I take my car keys and walk out with him following behind me.

“Where are you going?”

“To the Zondo homestead.”

“Malumes do you think that’s a good idea...”

“Thuthuka shut up because every time you open that mouth of yours you are irritating me!”

I get in my car and drive to the Zondo homestead. I’m welcomed nicely. I don’t know if they don’t see that this is not a friendly visit.

“What brings you here my boy.” Bab Zondo

“Is this why you lied to the world and made us believe Manelisi is dead so that he can come back and steal my wife?”

They both look at each other. Do they really don’t know or they are acting?

“What are you talking about boy and mind your tone.”

“You know very well what I’m talking about. Why did you lie to the world and say he’s dead? What kind of parents are you that condone a son who takes another man’s wife and run away with her?”

“Haibo mfana it’s the forensic that lied not us. We also thought he’s dead!”

“You are lying baba. Umdala kangaka uqamba amanga!”

“Ngizokushaya mawuzongeyisa kwami mfana! Get out of my house now!!”

“He’s going to pay for this stru ngifunga ubaba ejele!”

I click my tongue and leave. I drive aimlessly trying to calm myself down. I still can’t believe that she went back to him

again! Cha zingijwayela kabi lezinja zombili! I have to find them and teach them a lesson they will never forget. I drive back home to plan my revenge but I'm surprised to see a white Land Rover Discovery parked in my yard. Who's car is this? I step out of the car and walk inside.

"MaCebekhulu what are you doing here?"

"Uhm I called her malumes."

"Why?"

"I should get going." With that being said he walks out. I look at this beautiful lady before me. Oh she always look gorgeous.

"Come here." She pats the space next to her on the couch. I sigh and walk towards to her before settling down.

"Why are you here?"

“Your nephew is worried about you.”

“And he thought calling you is better where did he even get your number?”

“He called me with your phone. I know what’s happening I’m really sorry.”

“I’m okay don’t worry,” I say chuckling

“Muzikayise look at me and tell me you are not planning anything stupid!”

“Stupid? No I won’t. Me don’t do stupid things.” I fake a huge smile

“You are angry....”

“Damn right I’m angry no in fact I’m fuming and I’m going to get those two. I’m going to teach them the lesson they will never forget! They will know to never mess with Muzikayise!”

“Then what after that Muzikayise? Don’t allow them to make you someone you are not. The best revenge is to heal and go on with life as if nothing happened.”

“You are just saying that because you don’t know what I’ve been through!”

“Trust me I know. Your situation and mine are the same. I’ve been there before but I didn’t allow it to make me someone I’m not. You can do it too Muzikayise. Just let them be.”

“You have been cheated on before?”

“Yes and today they are still together. They’re that ‘it’ couple. Couple goals shit you know. No karma no nothing.”

I reach for her hand and squeeze it.

“I’m really sorry MaCebekhulu.”

“Nah don’t be. I learnt a big lesson from this. I learnt that there’s nothing called karma especially to two people who love each other and meant to be. We all have our soulmates but we have to kiss few frogs first before we land to them. People come in our lives and leave for a reason.”

Why does she makes everything easy even when it’s not?

“Soulmates or not I’d never cheat on a beautiful woman like you MaCebekhulu.”

She chuckles softly and we lock eyes for a moment. My eyes drop to her enticing heart shaped lips. I lean closer and claim her lips. They’re soft just as they look and they taste like something so foreign that ignite warm feelings in my body. She pushes me and gets on her feet then leave before I can apologize for my impetuous behavior. Fuck!

☆ Manelisi ☆

Regret is like a deadly poison. It's chowing every bit of me. I wish I can rewind the clock and undo everything. I should've controlled myself. I should've respected her more. I should've told her the truth from the beginning. How funny the 'should've's' won't help anymore. Now she's hurting because of me and this molar thing just had to poke on a already bleeding heart. At this point I'm wondering if all of this thing has to do with me. Maybe I'm the one who has 'imperfect' sperms.

I spot our crew when I make my way inside the hospital. They sitting by the waiting area. It's the next day since the ordeal happened and I came to see her last night but she didn't want to see me. I won't just stay away from her. We need each other more then ever. I was unmindful to the amount of feelings I have invested in this baby up until this moment. Impilo izimbobo zembawula!

"Hey guys."

They just glance at me and only Sizwe greets me back even though you can feel that it's forced. O-k-a-y!

"Uhm isn't it supposed to be visiting time now? Why are you guys standing here?" I ask checking time on my wrist watch.

"Her parents are with her." Sizwe gives me a cold response. Shit the parents are here already! Sally's father is going to kill me! I'm tempted to run away but I can't run away for the rest of my life. At some point I have to face them.

"Why are you here Manelisi?"

"Nana not now please."

"No Nana is right Manelisi. Haven't you hurt Sally enough?" Bryce says and I see steam flying out of his ears.

"Bryce awume mfethu I don't have to explain myself to you!"

“Damn right you don’t have to explain yourself but just leave. We don’t want to see your lying cheating ass!”

“Oh that’s so rich coming from you!”

“Manelisi you don’t see what you did? Not only did you break Sally but you fooled us too! You made us believe that Mbewenhle is your cousin and we accommodated her in our lives while you knew that she’s your fucking ex!”

“I’m sorry guys okay. I apologize from the deepest of my heart. It was never my intention to fool and break anyone. I understand the enormity of what I’ve done and I don’t blame you all for feeling like this but please don’t turn yourselves against me. I really need you guys it’s tough for me too as much as I’m all to be blamed.”

They all just look away when I stare at them one by one.

“Sizwe mfethu you know me.”

“Hayi Manelisi what do you expect us to do huh? To side with you while you’re the one who hurt Sally?”

“No don’t side with me. Insult me or whatever you want but I also need you guys. I found out the baby I was looking forward to wasn’t there to begin with.”

“Oh please you didn’t want this baby!” Nana

“Shut up wena! Guys come on I messed up I agree and I’m really sorry kodwa cela ningangilahli. We are all friends right?”

“Friends don’t fool each other. You broke one of our own’s heart don’t expect us to support you and love you after what you just did. You put yourself in this position Manelisi!”

Babalwa

“Oh so your loyalty lies with Sally only? All of you?”

“My loyalty will always lie with my best friend!” Nana says but others just keep quiet. They say silence implies consent. That’s

a bitter pill to swallow but it is what it is. Just as I'm about to sit down a bit far from them I feel strong hands grabbing me and pushing me against the wall. The bag in my hand falls down on the floor.

"I told you if you dare hurt my princess I'm going to kill you and go hand myself in!!" Bab Ntakana roars angrily as he tightens his grip on my neck. I can't breathe and I'm trying to get off his hand off me but it's proving to be futile.

"Hayi Tata violence is not going to solve anything!" His wife saves me by pulling him away from me. I cough profusely holding my sore neck.

"Nx!!" He clucks his tongue and walks away. The wife throws a look at me

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malevolence glowing in her eyes before following her husband.

"He should've killed you nxa!" Can't this bitch shut up? I take the bag and go to Sally's ward. She's lying on the bed and has

her arm over her face. I place the bag on the side pedestal and look at her.

“Hey.”

She removes her arm on her face and looks at me. The pain in her eyes overpowers anger.

“What are you doing here?”

“To see you Sally. I know that I’m the last person you want to see but I do care more than you can ever imagine.”

“You don’t care! If you did I wouldn’t be lying here in this hospital bed! It’s your fault, all of this is your damn fault!!”

“I’m sorry...”

“Ugh stop saying sorry it won’t fix anything!”

I blow out a sigh

“How are you? Have they removed..uhm you know? Did they rule out cancer?”

“Leave Manelisi I don’t want to see you!”

“Okay at least tell me that they said you don’t have cancer please.”

“Get out!!!!!!” She shrieks in anger, tears dropping down her face.

“Your pjs and toiletries are in your bag. I also brought something to eat check inside the bag. Just so you know I love you.”

I kiss her forehead and walk out with my heavy heart. It’s selfish of me to expect her to forgive me so soon.

.....

There's a loud banging on the door though it sounds far but I can't miss how aggressive it is. I rub my foggy eyes and roll out of bed. Fuck hangover has me by the balls. Last night I went hard on beer. I was drowning my sorrows. It's been two days without seeing Sally and I wish she could at least update me about the tests and removal of molar pregnancy she had to undergo.

Our friends made it clear to me that their loyalty lies with Sally I didn't expect them to choose sides especially Sizwe. Are we 12 years old? What they are doing is just childish honestly. I have never felt this lonely in my whole life. I miss my granny so much. I desperately need to lie my head on her bosom and revel in her warmth.

"I'm coming!!" I shout as I shuffle my feet towards the door. A slap lands on my face and exacerbate my headache.

"Ma! What the f..."

“Don’t you dare use that language with me boy!”

“What are you doing here Ma no Baba?”

“You have a nerve to ask us what are we doing here!” Bab Mthiyane says pushing his way through. He’s lugging their luggage. Shit they also know!

“Uhm come in.”

“Vele sizongena!” Ma says and we all go to the lounge where we settle down.

“Yini lamanyala owenzayo Manelisi!”

“Baba I can explain.”

“Nywesplain ukunuka!”

“Ay ikudlisile lentombazane! That’s only reason you’re behaving like this! No sane man can steal another man’s wife!”

“Mama I didn’t steal her. She wanted to come with me...”

“You stole her! She’s married Manelisi and her husband was breaking apart without her kanti she’s here with you!”

“Haisuka if he treated her right I wouldn’t have to steal her!”

“Wena uhlanganaphi nalokho! It wasn’t your place to take her you should’ve let them solve their problems on their own! Muzikayise came to us fuming with anger that you ran away with his wife! Umfunani vele lomfana Manelisi? You have a beautiful woman but you just had to ruin everything with that jezebel!”

“Ma don’t call Wenhle jezebel please. Mawufuna sizwane don’t even think of insulting her.”

“The Ntakanas are coming for a meeting hence we are here. Go take a bath you are smelling alcohol!” Baba drops the bombshell. Meeting? Shit this doesn’t look good at all!

I get up from the couch and go hit a quick shower. By the time I’m done hangover has worn out a bit but my head is still spinning and anxiety is not helping. I get dressed into a jean and simple t-shirt. I can hear the voices as I approach the lounge. They are here! Breathe my Manelisi.

“Greetings.” I greet as I walk into the lounge and sit on the couch. Sally is also here and she’s sitting next to her mom. I guess it’s not that bad if she’s been discharged already.

“Zondo I’m not happy with the way your son has treated my daughter. You know what makes me more angry is that he humiliated my daughter in front of the whole world!”

“I know Ntakana and I apologize from the depth of my heart for what this boy has done to your daughter. I don’t know what got in his mind! I won’t sit here and defend him. He must speak for himself.”

They all look at me except my fiancée. I clear my throat and rub my sweaty hands together.

“I won’t sit here and lie nor would I justify myself. I messed up big time and I’m very sorry to everyone I have humiliated but most importantly I’m sorry to my fiancée. Asalinto ngiyaxolisa futhi ngiyazi ukuthi akulula ukwamukela uxolo lwami kodwa liqhamuka ekujuleni kwenhliziyo yami.”

Awkward silence follows until the wife nudges Sally who looks up and our eyes meet for the first time.

“Uhm I hear you Manelisi. It’s without doubt that you have broken my heart into pieces. You know what even hurt me the most is that our wedding is just in weeks. If you cheat now how much more in our marriage? Maybe the molar pregnancy was a blessing in disguise I can’t be stuck with a cheat. Let’s not fool each other even more. You love her not me so I’m going to walk away with the little dignity that I still have and let you be happy with your bitch.”

I bite the inside of my cheek as I look at her. I can hear how serious she is right now.

“Can we talk in private please?”

“No I don’t want to talk in private. I have made my mind and don’t mistake it with anger. I’ve digested everything and the last thing I want is to be in a one sided marriage. I deserve better then that. Can we just end this without any drama and you trying to get us together because you know deep down in your heart that you love her not me.”

“Kodwa makoti one obstacle already you are leaving. Please give my son another chance to fix your relationship.” Mama

“Yhuuu you call cheating an obstacle Mama Zondo? No it’s not an obstacle! It’s a choice that he made. Don’t emotional blackmail my daughter with rubbish!” Sally’s mom spits

“Uyadelela phela masuthi rubbish mfazi ndini!”

“Mama please calm down.” I say to Mam Mthiyane. I love how she always listens to me when I talk to her.

“Mama don’t mistake me leaving with weakling. I won’t stick around while I know that his heart belong to another woman. Ask him if what I’m saying is not true?”

Eyes are on me. Jesus why is she putting me on the spot in front of our parents. I look down and not say anything.

“Nansoke!!” Sally’s mom claps her hands in disbelief.

“Lenkwenkwe isqhela ukunya! You used my daughter for your own selfish reasons and promised her heaven and earth while you knew you love another woman!”

I don’t know when did he stand up but he’s charging for me. Baba gets on his feet and stops him. He placates him and when he calm the meeting proceed. It’s the end of us and it’s all my fault. I just wish things didn’t have to end this way.

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER NINETY ONE

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

Isebenzile! Yes it worked! Instead of receiving more backlash after defending myself I received less and more reverence and compliments. I have been getting DMs from the survivors of abuse and gender based violence. Apparently I'm an inspiration and my strength is awe-inspiring. Honestly I don't know how did I get there. I just kept on talking and subconsciously I hinted that I'm coming from an abusive marriage. I try to throw some advice to those who need them and lend my ear to those who need one. It's been good and I wish I can respond to all DMs but time is not something I have.

I have last two competition for this season. I will only get time to rest on festive season but January we will be at it again with training. Next year I have to train and push hard so that by the time it's Olympics I will be more then ready. It's been few days since the trending saga and I'm back in my flat much to Ndiwe's disapproval. If it was for her I'd move in with her. I understand her though I mean it's very rare to spend time with an exceptional sprinter like myself. She has to slaughter a cow just to thank her ancestors for blessing her with me.

I really appreciate her though she's been a great support system especially throughout this ordeal. I think I've forgiven her but not her mothers. Those two I don't see myself forgiving them. They just had to be dramatic and drove all the way from KZN just to see how I'm doing. That's mostly the reason why I left her place. I'm stuffing myself with chocolates while going through my DMs and guess what? My cousins sent messages to me. I'm stupefied because I don't get along with my cousins except Mpume. They are asking me money the audacity!

Phone rings! It's uncle G. Oh wow so he still uses the same number. I thought maybe he lost it and my phone number as well. No I didn't try to call him after he didn't respond to my message. I don't know if I should answer him or not. I'm angry at him he can't keep on walking in and out of my life as he please. Come on the man must be embarrassed after that boner incident give him some break! My conscience reminds me. I tap answer and place my phone on the ear.

"Hello."

"Baby girl. How are you?"

“I’m okay and yourself.”

“I’m also okay. Look baby girl I’m sorry about ghosting you. I was embarrassed about that incident and when you sent that message I was with your mother. She saw it and she demanded me to explain. You know how your mom is so she was fuming and felt like you are not safe around me. I had to keep my distance from you. I’m really sorry.”

Wow

“She felt like I’m not safe around you or she felt like I will steal ishende lakhe angisho vele ngingondindwa mina.”

“Mbewenhle don’t talk like that please.”

“No uncle G speak the truth. Don’t cover or defend her.”

“I’m not covering anything. I don’t blame her for feeling the way she does because what happened wasn’t supposed to happen. It really was a shock to her and you I’m sure but I want to apologize. I had no control and I’m not trying to justify myself. Your mom love you and she’s learnt her mistakes she wants to rectify them just give her a chance please.”

“I don’t know uncle G.”

“You can’t stay away from your family forever at some point you have to go back home and face your family.”

“I know but I’m not ready.”

“When will you be ready mawucabanga?”

“I don’t know uncle G why are you so keen for me to go back home?”

“Uhm nothing.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes I’m sure I was just saying. Whenever you are ready baby girl. I was at your home yesterday to apologize to your father for what I did and we agreed that Ndabenhle will remain as a Qwabe.”

“Oh wow what changed your mind?”

“I know what I did was uncalled for. I wasn’t supposed to sleep with a married woman. That makes him your father’s child culturally I have no right to take him.”

“I thought you said you will send the evidence....”

“I wasn’t going to use that I just wanted to scare her. I would never do that to her.”

“I don’t understand uncle G so you are fine with not being part of your son’s life? Your only son?”

“It’s not like I’m abandoning him to a stranger but to his mother and father.”

I guess that’s true.

“You sound sad though are you okay?”

“I’m fine baby girl. He loves you and misses you. Maybe you should let him visit you sometime what do you think?”

“I would love to have him here uncle G but that means I have to ask him from mama and as I said I’m not ready to talk to them.”

“I hear you baby girl whenever you are ready. Am I still allowed to come back to your life again?”

“If you’re going to exit whenever someone tells you to and not even have decency to tell me then no uncle G.”

“My apologies MaQwabe. This time I’m in it for a long run I promise.”

“I don’t trust you.”

“I understand but I will earn back your trust believe me you.”

“Ah ngizobona ngawe. How was Mvelonhle? Did you see him?”

“No I didn’t see him. Congratulations on your world title. I’m so proud of you.”

I hear a knock on the door.

“Thank you so much. There’s someone on the door uncle G.”

“Okay baby girl I will call you later. Thank you once again for giving me a second chance.”

“Okay sharp.”

I hang up and toss my phone on the sofa before going to the door. There he stands on my door and he looks so worn out. I’m not sure it’s my imagination or what but I think he even lost weight within few days. Seeing him like this and knowing I’m responsible breaks my heart.

“Hi.”

“I didn’t know where to go,” he says and tears immediately flow down his cheeks. Oh my poor biltong! I tug him inside and close the door before pulling him in for a tight squeeze.

“With me you’re always welcome no matter what okay.”

He nods his head and bites on my shoulder trying to mute his sob. Through his muffled sob I can hear how broken and hurt

he is. I take him to the couch and he buries head on my bosom, crying like a little boy. His sob is raw and painful

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slicing my heart into two.

“I’m sorry I never meant to cause any harm to the baby...” he cuts me short

“It’s not your fault.”

“It is my fault I shouldn’t have hit her back I was supposed...”

“She didn’t miscarry Wenhle. There was no baby.”

Huh

“I’m not following. We all saw it that she’s pregnant. Her tummy was starting to show.”

“Apparently it’s a tumor not a baby. It’s called molar pregnancy and it happens at the beginning of pregnancy. Instead of fetus developing it turned into a tumor.”

Yhooo there’s such thing in this world! I’m glad I’m not responsible for this but I do feel for both of them.

“Oh Lisi I’m really sorry and I know how you were looking forward to be a father.”

“It sucks! Sally also left me not that I blame her but I feel bad for what I did to her.”

“She’s still angry she will come around.”

“I don’t think so. I saw it in her eyes that we are over. Even her father agreed to send back the lobola. It’s over Wenhle this is not how I thought we would end.”

“I can imagine Dubandlela and I’m very sorry. It’s a good thing you acknowledge your faults and I hope one day she will forgive

you and understand that you never meant to hurt her.  
Ungakhali yezwa?”

I kiss his head and cradles him like a baby as he wet my t-shirt with his tears. His one hand slides underneath the t-shirt and palms my bare boob. I listen to his loud sobs until they become mute. His breathing is now even. When I look at him he's sleeping. I try to put him on the couch but he tightens his hold on me.

“Don't let me go please just hold me tightly and never let me go. Your warmth is my solace.”

.....

I've just taken a shower now I'm in my robe standing in the balcony. Just staring at the beauty of the city at night while savoring the taste of my ice cream. This is what I love more than anything about my new place. Well not really new because I moved in here 5 months ago but you know what I mean. It was but time I move to a comfortable place that suits my caliber. It's affordable if you have shares at MTN and you're

a very dedicated and exceptional sprinter who wins left right and center like myself. Ngaze ngaceba ngimncane! To think it's only just a beginning I'm yet to be wealthy.

The past 10 months has been nothing short of winning and healing. Yes healing! Emotionally and mentally I've made a lot of progress to the point that I no longer attend counseling but whenever I want to talk to her I'm always welcome. The Olympics are in a week and they are in Toyko this year I'm so excited! One thing I love more than anything about this career is traveling the world. Oh how I love traveling the world and seeing new countries. He's finished taking a shower I can smell his shower gel from where I'm standing before I hear his footsteps approaching behind me. I feel his arms wrapping around my waist and his chin resting on my left shoulder.

"This is where you are hiding." A blanket of goosebumps covers my whole body at the sound of his deep voice against my ear. Gosh the effect he has on me never dissipate instead it has intensified.

"Yes I'm just staring the beauty of the city."

“It’s beautiful neh.”

“Very beautiful.”

“Can I have one spoon?”

“Uyaghala!”

He chuckles as I dip the spoon into the ice cream tub and tilt my head aside to feed him from my behind. One spoon becomes too many. Typical of him!

“Hayi Lisi you said one spoon!”

“Musa ukuncishana!”

“Uyathanda ukungidlela wena!”

“Angisho awufuni ngidle wena futhi you taste nicer than this ice cream.”

I inhale deeply as heat travels through my veins. The feel of his hand on pressing on my buttocks is doing things to my body. Things that I have been doing my utmost to control for 10 months and I'm not sure now I can able to continue to do so.

“MaKhondlo tell me what should I do now for you to open your heart for me? I think I've done everything in the book to show you how much I love you. Just name anything and I promise I would do it without hesitation.”

Just make love to me already! That's what my body and heart are saying but my mind...oh my mind is against all of that. I always use my heart and body when it comes to him but this time around I had to use my mind. It didn't help how fast he just moved on from Sally. In two months of their breakup he was already perusing a relationship with me. It felt like he was moving too fast and want to get over his fiancée by using me but man 10 months later he's still pouring his heart out to me and begging me to open my heart for him.

“Lisi.” I say trying to move from his embrace but he tightens his arms around my waist.

“What is it my love? Why do you fear so much to be with me? I have been courting you for almost a year now. Tell me what’s holding you back?”

“I don’t want to hurt you Lisi.” I confess.

I know that I would never hurt him but what if I hurt him intentionally?

“You love me and you won’t hurt me well not intentionally that’s one thing I know,” he plants a soft kiss on the side of my neck. His cold lips against my skin evokes butterflies in my tummy.

Oh I really do love him without any regrets. He lives in my heart and soul. I always dream about a happy and peaceful place where there’s just me and him and there are no rules to bound us. We are just free and enjoy our love.

“That’s true but I’m scared that I will hurt you.”

“Don’t let fear stand in our way of happiness. You and I have an extraordinary bond. My only desire is to grow old with you by my side till the end of time. Give us a chance and you won’t regret it.”

“You don’t understand Manelisi!”

I move away from his arms and turn to look at him. He’s in his boxers only and at first glance at him my hands itch to run across those abs.

“Do you have someone else?”

“No!”

“Then what is it Wenhle please be honest with me. I need to know if I’m going to wait for you forever or what” I can hear vexation in his voice.

“The thing..uhm...”

Gosh how do I put this? What if he will lose interest if I tell him but he deserves to know right? I blow out a sigh and look at him.

“Remember I told you how did I got help from this sangoma to reveal the truth about my twin sister?”

“Yes baby.”

“Well she kinda said something to me.”

“Sathini isangoma sthandwa sami?”

“Uhm she said I’m destined to be a Maseko wife.”

“What does that supposed to mean?”

“I also don’t know Manelisi. I tried to ask her but she dismissed me.”

He runs his fingers through his mohawk cut and looks at me. Confusion is clouding his face.

“Do you still love Muzikayise and want to go back to him?”

“No I love you that what confuses me. Everyday I dream of our togetherness and happiness. I want you to be with you with every beat of my heart and every nook of my soul Manelisi.”

“Why didn’t you tell me all along Wenhle.” The pain reflecting in his eyes has my heart breaking in pieces.

“I didn’t have a courage to tell you because of the fear to lose you forever but the more as time goes on I realize that I rather lose you then hurt you.”

He looks at me intently for what feels like a minute. Different emotions glinting in his eyes. I walk towards him and just as I’m about to touch his cheek he holds my hand.

“You should’ve told me from way beginning,” it comes out as a whisper. I follow him as he walks to the bedroom where he starts getting dressed.

“Lisi I’m sorry.”

He doesn’t say anything but takes his car keys and leaves with my heart. I put the tub of ice cream on the vicinity table and crawl to the bed then bawl my eyes out. What did MaMngomezulu mean? How can I be destined to be someone’s wife I don’t love? I don’t see myself going back to Kayise not now and not even in the next life. I’m sinking in confusion. I shouldn’t have told him now here goes my soulmate. The one I believe is my soulmate not what MaMngomezulu believes!

☆ Isisa ☆

I'm standing before the full length mirror and when I notice that Jabu is having trouble with zipping up the dress on the back worry washes over me. I'm aware of the weight I have been gaining lately but I didn't think it's that bad.

"Ay sistaz this zip is refusing!"

"No Jabu force it please!"

I try to squeeze myself but still the dress doesn't want to zip up. This wedding dress was custom made for me and today I came to fit it.

"Iyala you are so fat!"

The audacity!

“You are calling me fat?”

“You are fat.”

“You are the one to talk.”

“Duh I’m pregnant obvious I have to be fat but you? No sistaz this is not on. Please don’t tell me you’re pregnant again.”

She looks at me through the mirror with a judgmental expression plastered on her face already that would have made me not tell her if I was indeed pregnant.

“No I’m not pregnant Jabu.”

“Are you sure?”

“Of course I’m sure I’m on injection!”

“I was also on injection....”

“You missed your shot but I didn’t miss mine.”

I’ve been very cautious this time and I opted an injection instead of pills.

“But you do know that...”

“No stop it please! I’m not pregnant I can’t be pregnant!”

Luzelwande is only 1 year old I can’t be pregnant let alone be a mother of 3 children at the age of...well I might as well just say 26 because next month on my birthday I’m getting married. I was thinking we will extend the family at least when I’m 34 years old.

“Okay calm down I was just saying.”

Zanele

the woman who's the owner of this bridal boutique as well as a designer walks in. She's coming from the loo.

"Oh wow you look breathtaking bride to be."

"It doesn't want to zip up sis Zanele! Gosh what am I going to do? I'm getting married next month!" Tears are already falling down my face.

"Isisa breathe okay just breathe." Sis Zanele says stroking my back. I do just as I'm told.

"Don't worry I got you. I will do some adjustments on the dress. On your wedding day you will be wearing this dress don't stress."

"Do you promise me?"

"That's definitely a promise sisi."

“Okay thank you so much.”

I take off the dress when she's done with her inspection. We say our goodbyes to her and leave. Once we are in the car I take out my phone and check if there are any missed calls from my man or my mother. Luzelwande can be handful at times and her cry when I left is still echoing in my ears. She's such her parents' princess. Mvelo and I always have to elude her when we are leaving her with other people.

I hope she's not bothering my mom. Oh well my mother in law was able to get through her indeed. Mom apologized to me and accepted me back home. I accepted her apology but I told her that I won't move back home if Jabu is not welcome at home. I felt like it was unfair that she can accept me back but not Jabu. After so much contemplation she agreed and reconciled with Jabu.

That day was the happiest day of my life. Seeing my family together again. Now we are a happy family like the old times and the separation taught us that family is everything. Life wasn't complete without Jabu as much as it wasn't complete without mama. In two months of the reconciliation we had a

real celebration of Jabu and her husband's union. They did everything culturally from lobola to white wedding and traditional wedding. Yes wagcagca emini ka ga iMozane yonke ibhekile. Oh not only was I happy for her but I was also proud of her.

Now their marriage is not only recognized by the law but the ancestors as well. I'm glad we managed to talk things through and move on from everything that happened before something unpleasant or the wrath of ancestors forced us to. Turning your back on your home or being kicked out of home never yield fruitful results. There are no missed calls so everything is good. I find myself doing the very same thing I promised myself I won't do and it breaks my heart even further that still there's no response.

"I'm craving inhloko let's start at the taxi rank and have some."

"Okay."

I feel her gaze on me longer than necessary that I even worry that she will drive over this car before us.

“You driving sis don’t forget that. My children are still young.”

“Do you blame me? I’m surprised you agreed just like that. I know that you hate inhloko.”

“I don’t hate it Jabu what’s with the exaggeration. I just respect culture. Inhloko idliwa abantu besilisa kuphela.” (...the cow’s head is eaten by males only.)

“Dade wena! You respect culture?”

I laugh

“Just humor me okay!”

“Times have changed baby sis.”

“That’s the thing big sis the change of things as time goes by has made a lot of things to lose essence and significant.”

“Thatha Oprah Winfrey!”

Oh Gosh this preggy! We both laugh as she pulls over at one of kitchen at Newcastle taxi rank. Sis Zanele’s boutique is in Newcastle of course and I met her through Jabu she is the one who designed her wedding dresses.

“On the serious note sis why are you sad. Zanele said she will fix your dress.”

I blow out a sigh

“Mbewenhle hasn’t replied to me.”

“Did she read the message though?”

“No she still hasn’t read it.”

“Then it means she hasn’t seen it sis.”

“It’s been a month Jabu and time is not on my side. I need to know what should I do. Maybe she’s ignoring me on purpose.”

“I don’t think she’s ignoring you. When you ignore someone is when you have read the text but not say anything after reading. Even you Isisa as an ordinary girl you have many DMs. Guys trying their lucks now imagine Mbewenhle is famous I’m sure her inbox is not flooded with guys trying their lucks only but anyone who is her fan.”

“Ay maybe it’s a good thing she’s not responding. I don’t think Mvelo will be happy that I asked her to be my matron of honor.”

“Haibo who you ask is none of Mvelo’s business. I’m sure you also don’t choose who does he makes his groomsman. Can he be angry alone and not include you in his anger.”

“Maybe he won’t even want her to come to our wedding.”

“What about you? This is not his wedding only who is invited to the wedding is not a decision he should make solely. You want Mbewu to come to your wedding and to be your matron of honor he has to understand that. Come on you and Mbewenhle have been friends way before you and Mvelonhle dated.”

I don’t think we are best friends anymore. I’ve seen her posting pictures of her and Ndiwe. I guess that bitch not only did she took the father of my son away from me but my best friend as well. I wait for her in the car to go buy inhloko then we drive to her house. Mama is cooking a storm you can smell her divine chicken stew the second you enter the kitchen.

“Bantwana bami nibuyile.” (My children you are back.)

“Yes mama it smells amazing here. What are you cooking?”

“Dumplings, chicken stew and spinach. It’s tonight’s supper.”

“Oh well since it’s supper let me indulge inhloko yami.” Jabu says dishing up into the plates and discarding the takeaways.

“Hayi nawe nenhloko lengane iziphuma inamadevu ngiyakutshela don’t say I didn’t warn you!” (Ey you with your cow’s head this child will come out with a mustache I’m telling you...)

Jabu and I look at each other before laughing. Mom though!

“Where are the kids mama?”

“With your brother in his bedroom. The noise he makes with his TVgames somehow fascinates Luzelwande.”

“Let me go check on them.”

I make my way upstairs and I can hear the loud noise of the TV game as I approach his bedroom. I don’t knock but walk inside. They’re all lying on the bed with their stomachs and eyes are glued to the screen.

“Hey guys.”

“Mama!”

Lumi jumps from the bed and comes to hug my thighs. I pick him up as heavy as he is.

“Hey my boy are you good?”

Luzelwande is screaming and her hands up in the air for me to pick her up. This one thinks I’m her only mother she gets jealous when I cradle her brother. I can see that she wants to jump from the bed already and run to me but she fell from the bed two days back now she’s still scared.

“Lume doesn’t want me to play mama.”

“Sbo let my boy play.”

“He doesn’t know how to play sis.”

“Teach him them then.”

“Ahhh sisi!”

“Haibo uyagoloza phela. I will tell sbari to take this play station and throw it away.”

“Okay fine come Lumi.”

My boy wiggles himself down to the floor and runs to his uncle excitedly. I pick up Luze who’s already crying. Drama queen!

“Thula phela I got you ain’t I?”

She nestles her head on the crook of my neck as she quietens down. I head back to the kitchen and find mom and Jabu gossiping about me.

“Nazenangihleba.” I mimic Bobo’s voice when he says  
‘ngazengazisola’

“Uhm we are not gossiping about you baby sis.”

“Aw really. I’m not pregnant stop gossiping.”

“She doesn’t look pregnant Jabu but you will never know.  
Isibeletho zakhe zivundile futhi sibamba msinya.” (...Her womb  
is very fertile and it conceives quickly.)

Jabu bursts into laughter while I’m embarrassed as fuck.

“Ma really!”

“But it’s the truth baby. I’m just glad that you are getting  
married because I don’t think there’s ever a man who can  
marry a woman with 3 children.”

Oh here we go again!

“Ma you make me feel like a baby making machine. I’m not pregnant.”

“I also believe so baby I think kubuya umzimba wakho. When you were a baby you were so fat with roundy chubby cheeks like you had vetkoeks inside of them. Uthanda nokubihlika unjalo nje.”

This woman today is on a mission to mock me. Jabu can’t stop laughing.

“Maaa.” I whine and she decides to join Jabu with laughing. Mxm! I go to the lounge to watch TV once because those two are annoying me. Mvelo can’t do this to me what kind of sperms does he have? No I’m not pregnant.

“Hey sis.”

I shoot her a look and shun her. Settling next to me she hands me a tub of my favorite yogurt and a spoon. This is her way to softening me up.

“Thanks mama ka Madevu.” Now it’s my turn to mock her and laugh at her but she laughs with me. I eat the yogurt and feed my daughter.

“Sis.”

“Mhm.”

“Do you really believe that they are going to quit ?” I ask something that have been bothering me for a while now.

“They promised us and we have to believe them. Nxele knows that now that there’s a baby on the way he has to call it quit. I told him way before that until he’s serious about quitting his line of work I’m not going to give him a baby. I don’t want to raise my child under such circumstances. Now there’s baby growing in my tummy he has no choice but to stop.”

Mvelo has to keep his promise. I agreed to this because he was making sense as risky as this line of work is. He promised me that it's temporary once we have at least something we call ours he's going to quit. Now we have a butchery which he's running himself and we are getting married. The wedding costs are covered and everything is set. It's a perfect timing to quit for both of them but I have this worry niggling at my gut that they won't instead they will lie to us and pretend as if they did.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I just never get used to traveling especially to places I've never been and it baffles me why concerning that I love traveling the world. I don't know how many times I've checked that I'm not leaving anything behind. I have packed even my power bank which is one thing I always forget when I'm traveling. Breathe baby girl. One more time. I inhale deeply then exhale slowly with my eyes closed. Don't worry about a thing you got this.

The Olympics Games will take place for two weeks and we are supposed to arrive 5 days before the competition start. I'm going alone again not literally though. The A members and our coaches are going of course but what I'm saying is that there's no one who's going to be there to support me. Lisi was coming with but after telling him what the sangoma said he hasn't been contact with me which clearly means he's not going. Uncle G was also going but yesterday he lost his nephew in a car accident. His brother needs him more than I do.

I guess he was right when he said he's in for the long run because we've been in contact with each other since that day he called me and he's never missed any of my competitions. He's been the best daddy in the world and bought me gifts with every medal I won. He wanted to buy me a car on my birthday last year but I had to stop him because I want my first car to be bought with my own money. I had to stop that thought of buying a car and buy shares at MTN. It's not a big percentage and I'm not going to mention it ningaze ningicele imali. I just got lucky because during that time they were selling shares at a very reasonable price.

Ndiwe has a big case hence she also can't come along. The case is so close to her heart because it involves rape since she's a

survivor of one too. A 10 year old boy has been subjected to unspeakable abuse from his step father who is a police officer. I have faith in my friend that she will ensure that bastard is locked up and the boy gets justice. Speak of the devil. I take my phone and answer her.

“Hey.”

“Hey girlfriend! How are you?”

“I’m okay and yourself?”

“Come on you don’t sound like someone who’s going to Tokyo for the Olympics.”

“I’m just nervous.”

“You worry a lot baby. This is your time and you have been waiting for it.”

“I know I just...urgh I don't know.”

“Stop overthinking you will lose your mind. Just get on that plane and go show those Japanese that you eat iphuthu nomfino not okonomiyaki.” I can't help but laugh.

“I will even teach them how to cook it.”

“Yesss that's my gurl!”

“How's the case going? I'm sorry I won't be there for the support at the court.”

“Don't worry sweetheart I understand and I know you will be with me spiritually as much I would be with you. It's tough but I will give it my best.”

“That's my girl I believe in you!”

“Ahh thank you so much babe. I love you.”

“I love you back.”

“Please bring me a Japanese. I just want to know how do they taste in bed maybe just one round I’d be speaking Japanese”

I break into laughter. Ndiwe though! There’s someone on the door.

“Babe there’s someone on the door.”

“Okay safe travels baby and please call me when you land. I love you.”

“Thank you. Good luck on court today. I love you more.”

I hang up and feel a bit better. Ndiwe brings that positive energy around me. I attend whoever on the door.

What is he doing here? I eye him from the head to the toe. Damn nigga looks like a snack in his new clothes. He even has a

new mohawk cut and his shiny beard is trimmed nicely. He's been growing it and I love it more than the stubble.

“Kon'nichiwa misu Qwabe. Iku junbi wa dekite imasu ka? Sōdenakereba anata wa sokode watashi o mitsukeru tsumoridesu.” (Hello miss Qwabe. Are you ready to go? If not you are going to find me there.)

We have been learning how to speak Japanese for a month now to prepare ourselves for this trip. Angisho we are always together like conjoined twins. He's even more here in my apartment more than he's in his. I'm grateful for the time we have spent together over the passed months because I got to know him more than I thought I did and he also got to know me more than he thought he did. No wait just hold up a minute...he's going with me?

“Are you going?”

He chuckles and walks inside without me telling him to get in.

“Is that a rhetorical question? Where are your bags it’s getting late now.”

He doesn’t wait for me to reply but takes my luggage next to the couch and my duffle bag.

“Ikou ka?” (Shall we go?)

I look at him with a broad smile on my face and launch myself to him. He immediately lets go of everything in his hands and catches me. Oh he’s ever so ready to catch me and I know he will never let me fall.

“Thank you so much! I thought you are not coming anymore.”

His lips quirk up in a smile.

“I got you always dombolo lami.”

“I thought you won’t be able to catch me and I will fall.” I say and we both laugh.

“I will never let you fall we will rather fall together.”

Awww see what I mean! We will rather fall together! Hold yourself monkey! There’s still a Maseko-destined-bride-issue at hand and there’s no way he would dismiss that.

“Hey are you okay?”

I lock my eyes on him and the concern written on his face triggers my tears. I bury my head on his neck and tear up. Why do I have to be a Maseko bride when I want to be a Maphumulo bride? This is unfair! He settles down on the couch with me straddling him and pulls my head making me to look at him.

“What’s wrong? Talk to me please.”

He wipes my tears with his big thumbs before cradling my face in his palms.

“I’m just happy you are coming with me.” A half lie is better than a whole damn lie right? He looks at me his eyes penetrating deep into my soul. I look down cutting his scrutiny short.

“Kanti bengithe angisahambi yini MaKhondlo?” (Did I say I’m not going MaKhondlo?)

I shake my head still looking down.

“Manje uphaphiswa yini?” (Why are you forward?)

I immediately dart my eyes to his and he’s staring at me with a straight look that makes me take my eyes back to where they were looking.

“Asambe before I bebhephanize ukuphapha out of you.”

I release a sharp breath and swallow nothingness. He shouldn't speak like that I'm very fragile I haven't done the adult dance for a full year. He puts me down and I get the duffle bag and my phone while he takes my luggage then we leave. We are using his car and I don't know why waste money on parking fee at the airport when he could've just requested an Uber. I inform my coach that she doesn't have to fetch me I'm already on my way.

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER NINETY TWO

Arriving at the OR Tambo pleasantries are exchanged. Blue moved back home in Durban after falling pregnant. I wish she was here but I won't miss here that much today because I have thee company. My girls are doing great but they haven't qualified yet. It takes so much of hard work to qualify for Olympics. After all the necessary procedure we board the plane.

This is a longest flight I ever had so far. 18 hours damn but with Lisi by my side I'm not bored. Our conversations, banter and laughter are endless. We are defeated by the 'hero'. You know when sleeps is here no matter how you try to ignore it but it commands you to sleep. I'm the first one to wake up only find out I still have 8 more hours to land. I ask the flight attendant some snacks and watch movies on Lisi's laptop. He wakes up in the middle of me watching and joins me.

I must have fall asleep again because I'm woken up by Lisi who tells me we have landed. Toyko is 7 hours ahead of South Africa. It's 9am while back home it's 2am. During the two weeks of Olympics games all the athletes will be staying in an Olympics Village in Harumi waterfront district of Toyko and Lisi

booked for his stay in a Hotel Mariners' Court Tokyo which is close to the Olympics village. Amidst of waiting our transport we take pictures. Lisi hooks his arm around my waist, pulling me close to his body and onslaughts me with a kiss.

I can hear the cheers from the A athletes but I'm into deep to the kiss to pull away. His tongue and teeth are plundering my softness without resistant. I let out a strange sound at the back of my throat while fisting on his jacket. Damn it's been long and I'm pooling down there. When he pulls back and I feel his forehead on mine. It's only then do I open my eyes and find him staring at me.

"What was that for?" I don't know where is my voice but thankfully he's close enough to hear me.

"You have no idea how long I've been holding myself from kissing you but I wanted to have our first kiss officially as a couple in a foreign country just to make it memorable."

"A couple you say."

“Yes.”

“But Li....”

“Shhhh talk no more and allow the flame of our divine love to keep on burning even if it’s for the short period of time it’s okay but one thing I know is that our love is undaunted. I don’t know what the sangoma meant and I don’t care. As cliché as it sounds life is too short to waste time and think of sangomas visions that we can’t be too sure what do they mean. They’re also humans like doctors and they make mistakes because ngiyazi futhi angingabazi ukuthi wena uwubambo lwami. Umnikazi wenhliziyo yami. Idombolo lami. The bhebhanize joystick owner...” I can’t help but giggle at the last part interrupting him in the process.

“Baby I tried to survive without you but look where I landed right next to your beautiful self. If this doesn’t show that I will never have to survive without you then I don’t know. No don’t get me wrong I’m not in denial about what you said but I’m following my heart. My heart says in you I have found my soulmate. It says I have found the companion of my heart so whatever happens in future it’s okay but at least I would know I

gave myself a shot at loving you. Though I believe that the only time you would be Mrs Maseko again is when I'm gone from this world. Because our souls were woven together by threads of eternal and timeless love."

Awww I'm melting and tearing up. I lean closer and seal his lovely speech with a scorching kiss it deserves. I also don't care what will happen in the future but for now I'm going to revel in this divine pure love.

.....

Unlike the World Champion the Olympics Games are taking place as early as 9am till late. It's the first day of the competition and women's 100m round 1 is the last event of the first group of events which will end at 12:30pm. The second group of events will start at 7pm until 9:30pm. The semi finals and finals for women's 100m are tomorrow around 7pm till 9:55pm.

We are at National Japan Stadium where the Olympics games are taking place. It's not as beautiful as Doha, Khalifa

International Stadium but it's huge I think it can occupy 68 000 spectators. The six events are over now it's time for women's 100 round 1 event. Nothing is compared to that feeling of looking around you in the field and see so much spectators cheering for you. It's overwhelming.

The gun is fired and off we sprint. I don't know what distracted me but I started very slow which delayed me. I'm the second one to finish the line. Disappointment punches my gut when I look at my finishing time on the big screen. It's 10:78 seconds. The spectators are going crazy over us and I raise my hands just not to disappoint them but deep in my heart I'm not impressed.

"What happened there?" It's the first thing coach asks me when we exit the field.

"I don't know I just got a bit distracted."

"You can't afford to get distracted Mbewenhle."

"I know coach and I'm sorry."

“Don’t apologize focus okay? Focus!”

“But she did well Chabeli!”

“I also agree with Manelisi.”

I freeze at the familiar voice adding to what Lisi is saying. The three of us swivel around to look at whoever that is talking behind us. My heart stops beating as shock cripples me.

“Mbeee!!”

He wiggles himself in mama’s arms who let him be and the soon as he’s on the floor he sprints towards me. I whisk him off the ground and cradle him in my arms taking in his baby smell. Oh he’s grown so much and he’s so damn heavy!

“Ungishiyile wena

” (You left me) he says and his lips tremble as tears flow down his face. Now that feels like a shard in my heart. I thought he’s young and he will forget about me clearly he didn’t.

“Ngiyaxolisa my cupcake.” (I’m sorry my cupcake)

“Usazongishiya futhi?” (You will leave me again?)

“Ngeke ngiphinde ngikushiye sthandwa sami.” (I will never leave you again my love)

“Ohh ngiyakuxolela.” (Ohh you are forgiven)

I can’t help a smile that tugs the corners of my lips.

“Thank you so much.” I kiss his lips before wiping his tears.

“Ngikbonile eTV Mbee!” (I saw you on TV Mbee!) He beams

“Really?”

“Yes ugijima bekujaha labaya!” (Yes you were running away from those people who were chasing you.)

We all laugh and he looks at us comically. I really missed my little nigga! I move my eyes from him and they start from her shoes and travel up to her face. Our eyes lock and we stare at each other for a moment. I want to run and launch myself in her arms but something is holding me back. Her reaction is what holding me back. What if she doesn't receive my yearning to be in her arms right now well? What if this gesture turns out to be an insult to her?

“Wele ka Mama,” she says opening her arms wide open. My eyes stare at her arms then her face which is instantaneously wet with tears. I give Benhle to Lisi who is refusing by the way before running to my mom. She catches me when I throw myself in her arms. I sink in her embrace reveling in her warmth. I didn't realize how much I missed to be in the arms of the woman who brought me in this world until this moment. We are both crying in each other's arms and clinging on each other.

“I’m sorry my baby.”

“I know mama and I’m sorry too.”

I feel her warm lips on my forehead as she tightens her hold around me. I also don’t want to let go and it feels so surreal. It’s a minute later when we pull back and she wipes my tears staring deep in my tears.

“You’re so beautiful my girl.”

“Ngifuze wena nje.” (I got beauty from you)

She lets out a chuckle that ends with a beautiful smile.

“Wow this is beautiful. Look at me I’m also crying.” Chabeli says and we laugh as she wipes her tears.

“Mrs Qwabe I’m Matshidiso Chabeli your daughter’s coach. You can call me Tshidi.”

They shake hands.

“Hello Tshidi. I’m my daughter’s mother.” We share another laughter.

“Nice to meet you and I must say you are so lucky to have such a beautiful wise talented daughter.”

“I’m not lucky but I’m blessed.” The hint of pride in her voice has me feeling warm in the inside.

“Indeed.”

Lisi clears his throat. It’s time to introduce himself but he’s suddenly scared and it’s so funny to watch.

“Uhm I’m Manelisi Maphumulo ngiyacabanga umama uyangazi,” (...I think mom knows me) he speaks so fast I almost couldn’t hear him. Gosh I’m so going to laugh at him when we are alone.

“How can I not know someone who stole my child.”

Mom though does she have to say that!

“I didn’t steal her mama she...” mom cuts him off

“Ngiyadlala kanti udlaliswa ngani wena ngephenti lakhe?”

Oh gosh can’t she stop talking because the moment she opens her mouth she makes things more awkward. That’s moment the coach is laughing.

“Nice to meet you boy.”

“Likewise and by the way I see where your daughter gets her beauty.”

“Thanks for the compliment I hope you are not trying to soften me up because you and I are still going to talk.”

Lisi’s Adam’s apple bobs as he swallows hard. Hehee I didn’t know he can shake in his boots. I swear it’s only a matter of time he piss himself.

“Coach it’s the end of the event right? I just need a moment with my daughter if you don’t mind.”

“No problem Mrs Qwabe. The women’s 100m victory ceremony is tomorrow and she will also compete late tomorrow.”

“Okay thank you so much.” With that being said Lisi excuses himself shame my poor biltong. If he’s trembling at the sight of my mother how much more in front of my father. Mom and coach are having a conversation as if they’ve known each for a long time. It’s beautiful to watch yet annoying.

They finally say goodbye to each other and we leave to the hotel where mom and Benhle are staying. They're both clinging on me I don't know who should I give my attention to. The hotel is beautiful it is without doubt that it's a 5 star hotel. I wonder if dad gave her money to come and see me or he doesn't know.

"Can I get us anything to eat?"

"Yes please!"

She chuckles as she stares at me for longer then enough.

"What mama?"

"Some things never change huh."

I giggle. Mina nokudla sohlukani swa ukufa. I like that my man is one of the things he loves about me and he also eats hayi

kancane. That one never starves himself and he eats everything he wants to eat. I know growing up he didn't have enough hence he doesn't rob himself when it comes to food. I settle on the bed and reach for the remote on bedside pedestal then switch on the TV.

"How did you know I'm here?"

"I knew you wouldn't miss the Olympics. It's every new athlete dream to be an Olympian."

Oh wow I'm impressed that she knows that. She settles on the bed next to me. Benhle is on top of me straddling me and his head is nestled on my chest. He's being a baby as always and I'm not complaining. It feels good that in me he still finds that comfort.

"When did you arrive?"

"Yesterday."

“How was your first flight.”

“Oh amazing experience! Thanks to you umuntu ebezofa nje impela engakaze agibele ibhanoyi! I’m going to brag back home. No in fact I want to appear on TV with you by your side when you win.”

I can’t help but laugh at how excited she is about this.

“If I win.”

“No when you win.”

“You do believe I will win?”

“No I know you will my child. I’m glad that I got an opportunity to see how great you are in running. Uzowadabula wonke lamanye amantombazane.”

“Thanks for the vote of confidence mama it’s really means a lot to me.” It really does I can hear in her voice that she’s not faking it.

“Does baba know you are here?”

“No.”

“Oh.”

“Look my girl I want to apologize ....”

“Mama can we not talk about that now. I don’t want anything that is going to make me lose focus. Tomorrow I have semifinals and finals for women’s 100m that I have to prepare myself for. There’s also 200m after this I need to be in a happy space.”

“Oh God I hope being here is not going to distract you maybe I shouldn’t have come I just wanted...” I have to stop her before she goes crazy with feeling bad for coming here.

“I’m happy you came mama.”

“Really?” She’s shocked and it’s so evident on her face.

“Yes and thank you so much for coming.”

The smile on her face spreads into a grin. She inches closer to me and drapes her arm around my shoulders. I lay my head on her shoulder. I really appreciate that she came regardless of how things are between us. I love the effort she made.

.....

Knowing that my man and my mom with my baby brother are also part of the spectators brings me so much joy. I did well on semifinals now I’m about to run the finals. Our feet are placed on the blocks and fingers on the ground behind the starting line and hands see slightly wider.

On your marks.”

I breathe in then out. You can do this. Don't lose focus.

“Set.”

We all move up our hips are slightly above shoulder level and feet pushed hard into the block as we hold our breath getting ready for the sprint. A pistol goes off and the race begins. I run as fast as my feet can carry me and I've never put in so much speed before. The wind blowing on me as I run is the evidence of how fast I am. I can barely feel my feet touching the ground it's like I'm surging in the air with a speed of the lightning.

Finishing the line first I look at my time 9:89 seconds and scream in victory! In history of athletics no woman has ever ran 100m under 10 seconds. A record of 10 seconds has been broken by me! I find myself on my knees crying. The fellow sprinters help me up and engulf me in their embrace as we exit the field. Coach meets me half and attack me with a huge hug.

“Oh you did me proud mogirl!!”

I cover my face with my hands and cry even harder. In that moment I feel my body lifting up and when I remove my hands from my face the A athletes are all carrying me and singing oh wow this feels like a dream! After the singing of victory I go to my mother.

“Congratulations my baby!”

“Thank you so much mama.”

She squeezes me in her arms then I go to Lisi who whisks me off the ground and spins me around. I giggle none stop. Oh man this is such a great feeling ever!

“You never cease to make me proud. I love you MaKhondlo.”

“I love you twice back.”

We share a stolen kiss before he puts me down. Cha ngibizelwe kulento yokugima I yes myself! I did well once again on women 200m. I'm taking two gold medals home one with a broken record I couldn't be more prouder of myself. The passed couple of days I haven't spent much time with Lisi and since I'm done with the competition today he insisted to take me out. We are canoodling at the back of the bus. People are rather looking at us a bit funny.

"Is it me or people are looking at us funny?" Lisi asks

"I also see that."

"Maybe they've never seen beautiful people like us."

I laugh then it hits me. I usually do research when I'm coming to a foreign country to know everything about that country.

"We should stop canoodling in public babe." I say removing myself from his embrace.

“Why? Is it not allowed?”

“Not really but it’s frowned upon which is quite funny because it is said that this country has sex toy stores and love hotels on every corner.”

“Hawu bayadakwa it’s not like we are having sex. I like showing you off to everyone babe. They must know you are mine.”

I giggle and stop myself from stealing a kiss. I’m smitten and I can’t help myself. Ngisemathandweni bakithi can these Japanese humor me! I don’t know where he’s taking me but we have been in this bus for few hours now.

“Where are you taking me to?”

“Ise City.”

“Haibo Lisi don’t tell me you have been here without me.”

He laughs

“Ah baby you are the one who introduced me to traveling the world.”

“Heee mbhemu ubusungasavevi in front of my mom.” I say and laugh

“Tsek! Musa ukuphapha!”

“I can’t believe the whole of you was scared.”

“Mxm just leave me alone!” He sulks making me to laugh even harder.

“It’s okay laugh at me now but I know you would be the same when you meet my parents.”

Now that stops me immediately from laughing.

“You will introduce me to them?”

“Yes baby.”

“Why?”

“Haibo Wenhle what do you mean why? Im in this relationship for a long run and my parents have to meet the woman who stole my heart from the day I saw her dancing at the Zikalala homestead.”

“Yhooo.”

I don't think they will like me knowing my shenanigans. I'm sure they already think I'm a hoe. Do we have to go through that process of meeting parents and all.

“See you are already shaking in your boots.”

“Oh no I’m not!”

“Oh really?” He asks laughter dancing in his eyes.

“Okay I am but babe we don’t have to meet them now right? I didn’t introduce you to my mom it just happened.”

“Which means it’s only fair you meet my parents as well. Did she tell you what does she want to talk to me about?”

“No she didn’t.”

“Eish okay.”

Our destination is the sea of Futami. His words not mine. What catches my eye more anything is the two big rocks in the ocean. They’re so beautiful and bounded by a rope.

“Wow babe!”

“That’s exactly where I want to take you to. Come closer my love.”

He takes my hand in his and we stroll along the path that leads to the rocks.

“Wow Lisi how did you find this place?”

“Google my love. You see those rocks they are Meoto Iwa rocks also known as wedded rocks. The larger of the two rocks represents the husband and the smaller one represents the wife. Both rocks are connected by a shimenawa rope which acts as the division between the spiritual and earthly realms. They symbolize the sacred union of man and woman. I couldn’t find a perfect place then this one to ask you what about I’m to ask you now.”

He kneels on the rock and flips a box open. My heart stops beating as I stare at a big rock shining and almost blinding my eyes.

“MaQwabe, Gumede omuhle I don't know what the future holds for us but I believe that soulful love is the only essence of all beautiful relationships. I don't care where life will take us in future but what matters is that in this right moment we are together and if there's anything I want to do more than anything in this world is to spend these moments with you as my wife and me as your husband. Juba lami please make me the happiest man in this world and marry me?”

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

An overwhelming feeling is swirling through me and tears are flowing down like a waterfall. He's staring at me with that 'please say yes' kind of look and all I see in his cute small eyes is my universe. I know that my heart will always choose him in thousands lifetimes and zillions worlds I'd find him in.

"Dubandlela," I whisper, words are failing me but my heart has already screamed loudly and proudly 'yessss'

"Say yes sthandwa sami."

"Zikode I can't accept your proposal."

I watch as his face transforms into deep dejection.

“Well not now I can’t accept your proposal while I’m till tied to another man. I have to end things with Muzikayise first before accepting your proposal.”

A smile spreads across his face and it’s contagious.

“You are making a great point but how long will it take not that I’m rushing you sthandwa sami I know you are not ready to face him yet but it’s only fair that I know.”

“Well when mom go back home I’m going with her.”

The smile on his face stretches even wider and reveals his cute dimples on his cheeks.

“Oh yeah?”

“Yes.”

“Are you sure you are ready?”

“It’s about time baby.”

“So it’s a YES in advance might as well put on this ring moss!” He says and I giggle as I give him my hand. Gentle he slides the ring in my finger. Oh it makes my small hand look even more beautiful. It’s like it was meant to have HIS ring on. He gets up from the floor and we share a passion kiss pouring our love for each other into the kiss.

The moment we are in his hotel room he devours my lips pinning me against the door. I feel a flood of emotions attacking me at once as his tongue massages mine in a fervid manner. The thirst and passion in the kiss tells me that it’s about to go down and my pussy is ever so ready to swallow his cock. His lips are always sweet and dreamy. I can feel his erection against my tummy. It’s been so long for both of us and I’m sure my bucket of orgy is spilling and with one thrust I’d be releasing.

I don’t know how many times Ndiwe tried to introduce me to masturbation but I couldn’t. She even bought me a dildo but I couldn’t go through with it. I remember this one time I was so

horny and needed to release the ache between my legs. It felt so awkward more like someone was watching me. 'Haibo wenzani Mbewenhle wafenda umoya nje?' My inner self mocked me at the back of my head and I found myself rolling in the aisles. Maybe I was doing it wrong I don't know but all I know is that an orgy I should've released turned out to be laughter. I think some of us can never be able to pleasure themselves without a man's aid.

Especially a man like mine who knows the right places to touch me and I involuntarily hum a hymn kuhle komama bangoLwesine. He roughly pulls my dress to my waist and groans in my mouth as he gropes my buttocks. I feel his hand probing beneath my panty then his fingers circling around my clit. A moan slips out of my mouth as the soft pad of his fingertips brushes against my sensitive spot producing an amazing friction.

"Allow me to fuck you first before making love to you dombolo lami." The sound of his strained voice is arousing even more. I also want no foreplay.

"Fuck me already daddy!"

He pushes my panties down my thighs and they fall on the floor then he undoes his jeans. Desire for him spiral out of control when he takes out his hard veiny monster. The lust is almost tangible. He turns me around and I place my hands on the door for balance when he jerks up my one leg. With one hard thrust he's in and so deep. I can feel his thickness and fullness in me. That feel of him inside of him after so long has me screaming his name in gratitude. Can he buck his hips already I cannot take the ache anymore.

"Fenda phela Lisi." The frustration in my voice can't be missed.

"Ima baby," he winces against my ear and that alone sends shivers of pleasure through my body.

"Hayi fenda ndoda!" I say flexing my hips but standing with one leg is making it difficult.

"Eish ngizochama just wait a bit." (Eish I will cum...)

“You wouldn’t dare do that to me.”

“Then don’t move you know it’s been long and your grip is not helping!”

Thixo onofefe! Now I have to wait? A few seconds later he begins bucking his hips. Pleasure sweeps through me the more his thrusts grow momentum and speed. They have me screaming like an experienced prostitute. He alternates the leg when I complain to him that it’s aching. Now I’m standing with the other leg reveling in the sweetness of his cock. His deep thrusts got me scrapping my nails on the door.

Sex with Lisi is everything I’ve never experienced in my entire life when it comes to it. Whether it’s rough gentle or oral he touches the depths of my soul. His groans against my ear are rendering me closer to the edge. I feel a knot of pleasure in my tummy growing bigger and cry out his name as it explodes. He doesn’t stop thrusting in and out of me hard and deep then I hear him bellowing like a bull when it is slaughtered.

“Ahhh yess!”

He rests his head on my shoulder. Once we have caught our breathing he pulls out and I feel his juices flowing down my thighs.

“You are so amazing,” he turns me around before taking my lips into his. We kiss deeply and passionately as we glide across the room while undressing each other. By the time we fall on the bed we are in our birthday suites and our bodies are pressed together but it as if he’s not close enough and our contact is insufficient. I pull him closer by wrapping my legs around his waist. I want to consume every inch of him.

Our groins are fused together and that grows my desire for him. He trails tender kisses on my body in between staring at my body as if he’s seeing it for the first time in his life. I can see the worship in his eyes and it boosts my confidence. Once he’s between my thighs and face to face with my mound he brushes my wet folds with his knuckles before feasting on my crotch like it’s his last meal.

He grabs the back of my thighs and pushes my legs to my stomach. Now both of my holes are exposed to him. He swipes

his tongue from my clit down to my anus. The move continues for three times before I feel his tongue exploring the rim of my anus. Oh lord! I'm going to die from sheer pleasure. Toes curl and body shudder as an orgasm ripple through me. I cream into his mouth and he drinks every drop of mine.

Getting on his feet he grabs my ankle pulling me closer to edge of the bed. He stretches my legs very wide and enters me. I suck in my breath while he hisses through his clenched teeth. He has my ankles on his hands and he keeps on crossing my legs and spreading them as he thrusts in and out of me vigorously.

“Oh fuck! This pussy has always been mine! From way beginning hence I even popped the cherry. You will never ever give it to anyone else do you fucking hear me?”

“Yes I hear you baby oh my goodness ahh!”

“I'm your pussy owner and you will never put us in a position where I have to watch you give it someone else!”

“Yessss.”

“Who I am baby?”

“You are Manelisi!”

He thrusts into me hard and faster. I swear he’s going to shift my womb.

“Wenhle who I am???”

He’s Manelisi njena or has he changed his name?

“Oh I see you haven’t been paying attention to what I’m saying to you.”

“I have been paying attention my love.”

“Then who am I?”

“You are my pussy owner!”

“I can’t hear you!”

“You are my pussy owner!!!”

He rams into me hard and I scream as a mind blowing orgasm erupts throughout my body. I open my eyes only to find him smiling with gratification. He pulls out and flips me on my four.

“Ahh look at ass!”

He spans my butt for several times and I squirm as my buttocks shudder.

“And that hole creaming your delicious juices. Let daddy have a taste of that.”

He grabs my butt and I wince in pleasure at the feel of his warm tongue lapping up on my juices. The exhilarating flood of ecstasy rippling through my body has me purring like a cat. He spreads my butt cheeks and spits on my other whole. I feel the mixture of my juices and his saliva running down to my vagina. He runs his tongue from clit to my asshole and replaces his tongue with his dick.

A bolt of electricity shoots through my body with each deep thrust. The sound of our flesh hitting together is reverberating. He withdraws his dick and we take our fucking to the bed. By this time my joints are jelly. We are both lying on our side and facing each other. My legs are scissoring his and I can feel him deep inside of me with this angle as he glides in and out of me. Our bodies are fused together into one and souls connecting into a deeper level. Eyes are locked on each other and we're singing love poems to each other as we dance together in rhythm our mutual pleasure intensifying with each thrust until we both break into an earth shattering orgasm.

.....

Someone shakes me out of my slumber. I wipe the drool on the corner of my mouth and scrutinize my surroundings. I must've fall asleep again on the way from OR Tambo to my apartment. Fatigue is finally creeping in. I drag myself out of the car and stretch myself that I feel my bones pop. Lisi is taking out our luggages from the back of his Amarok and mom has Benhle in her arms.

"Let me help you." I say to Lisi but he shakes his head in disapproval.

"Don't worry MaKhondlo I will take this up for you guys."

"Okay thanks."

We use the lift to my apartment and he puts our bags in my bedroom while mom goes to the other bedroom to put Benhle to sleep.

“Thank you so much baby for coming with me and for your support. It’s really means a lot me Dubandlela. Ungadinwa yezwa.”

He smiles while pulling me closer to him by my waist.

“Aw ngeke sthandwa sami ngidinwe wuwe. You worth every support of mine.”

He onslaughts me with a kiss and I break it before mom walks in.

“I will call you later. Have enough rest you are so exhausted

“I will definitely do that babe. Do the same as well. I love you.”

“I love you.”

He kisses my forehead and walks out. I inhale deeply and smile. I’ve never felt so complete!

“You have a beautiful place baby.”

Mama breaks my moment.

“Thank you mama. I’m exhausted we should’ve passed by any restaurant to get something to eat. Let’s me order in.”

“You have a funny way of welcoming a guest. Takeaways pho!”

No she can’t be serious! I’m tired mina and it’s going for 8pm. I’m not touching any pots.

“I will make it up to you mama...”

“I’m kidding sis. I’m also exhausted please allow me to take a bath while we wait for the food to arrive.”

I show her the bathroom and order in. While waiting for mom to finish I catch up with what's trending in the world on social media only to find out it's me. I left the world in awe by breaking the 10 seconds record in women's 100m. It's not easy to run 100m in less than 10 seconds. Jim Hines is the first to break the 10 seconds in 1968 and was followed by Maurice Green in 1999. It proved that there's no limit to human sprinting and it became a norm on the men's 100m as records were broken over the years. Usain Bolt is the leading man so far with 9.58 seconds.

No woman has ever ran 100m in less than 10 seconds. Florence Delorez Griffith Joyner

also known as Flo-Jo is a sprinter who has a record of 10.49 seconds but I broke that record with 9:89 seconds wow I'm so proud of myself! People say I have a tikoloshe who's pushing me when I'm running there's no way a woman can run 100m with 9 seconds. Hahaha how hilarious! Some are even saying that I'm from Msinga witchcraft and black magic still exist that side. Other even claim I'm not 100% human I'm an alien and my father in law is responsible for that. I can't help but laugh. Satafika though! If it was back then this would've hurt me that they are doubting my capabilities and talent but now I'm used to this country shame.

“What are you laughing at?” Mama’s voice disturbs my laughter.

“These people are funny!”

She walks towards and settles on the couch next to me. My lounge is permeated with the strawberry scent of her lotion.

“What people?” She asks tying the rope of her gown. I hand her my phone and she glues her eyes on the screen. I expect her to laugh but anger instantly clouds her face.

“Why can’t these people leave you alone! How can they call you a tikoloshe that’s literally saying you are a witch!”

“Calm down mama. Don’t take everything they say about me to the heart. They are just amazed that I broke the record of 10 seconds.”

“Haisuka bayakunuka labantu! Remember how Caster was crucified and was blocked from competing. That’s what is brewing here.”

I giggle and I see that I’m annoying her even further by that so I cease my titter.

“They wouldn’t dare do that because there will be dire consequences. They will have to prove their accusations if not kuzokhala esikasigonyela.”

“I hope you are right baby. People are haters of progress out there I’m telling you. Your sister told me you won a million in Doha is that true?”

“Yes it’s true.”

“Yhuu and you didn’t faint?”

I laugh

“No I didn’t faint.”

“Hayi ustrong ntombi mina bengahlanya straight!”

“Then how will you enjoy your money when you’re crazy?” I ask and she breaks into laughter

“Urgh you have a point! What did you do with so much money Mbewu? You bought this whole building?”

“Haibo Ma this whole building worth millions. I’m renting this apartment. I bought MTN shares.”

“You lie!”

“I’m telling you!”

“Wow you’re wise I wouldn’t even think of that. It’s a great investment baby. So this time how much money did you win at the Olympics.”

“Haaa ufuna ukungibamba inkunzi.” I joke and she giggles hitting me with the pillow.

“I’m such a proud mother. You are the best daughter a mother could’ve ever have. Don’t get me wrong I’m not saying this because you are making millions but I’m proud of the woman you’re growing up to be. I’m proud of how you chose yourself above everyone and everything else. I know it wasn’t easy you were literally alone with no support and scared how we will receive your issues in your marriage. I admire your strength and resilience baby. We can all have our opinions on what you should’ve done or how you should’ve done it but at the end of the day you are the one who knows what you were facing and what you were going through. I’m sorry that I failed you. I’m sorry that I wasn’t there for you when you needed me. I’m sorry that you never felt safe and protected around me and us as your family. I’m sorry for the pain you suffered in the hands of your husband. I’m sorry for making you feel pressured into making me and your father proud. I’m sorry for the hurtful words I said to you baby I never meant any single word. I’m

sorry for everything. I wish you can find it in your heart to forgive me. I love you so much baby If it was possible I'd open my heart for you so that you can see how much I love you. Please give me a chance to rectify my mistakes. I won't promise to be a perfect mom but I'm going to die trying to be one."

By the time she's done talking I'm snuffling none stop and my face is wet with tears. Her apology touches the depths of my soul and sincerity seeping out of it can't be missed.

"I understand everything and I know there's nothing as a perfect parent. I also want to apologize for the humiliation I brought into our family. It was never my intention. I was a confused little girl who was eager to make her parents proud while trying to navigate through this life thing. I made mistakes that I'm not proud of. I'm sorry for disappointing you and embarrassing you. I'm sorry for disrespecting you at times. I know that I held you responsible not only for your actions but for baba's as well. It was very unfair of me to do that. I'm sorry for leaving home without any explanation. That again was egocentric of me but at that time I couldn't think of anything else to do other than that. I've forgiven you mama and I understand to certain extent why you did this and that. I'm not perfect either angizi ukugiya ngamaphutha akho. I have my

share of mistakes and I would really appreciate it if you forgive me and look at me beyond them.”

Now it's her turn to cry. I inch closer to her and we share a hug.

“I never thought this day would come. I thought you hate me and I've ruined things between us to the point of no return. I long forgiven you baby like you said we all make mistakes and you owned that from the way beginning. Tell me what kind of a parent would I be to hold a grudge against her daughter even after showing how remorseful she is. Believe me baby when I look at you I see you beyond your mistakes. I see a young resilience, strong, talented, wise young woman.”

“As if it possible to hate you. I tried to but I couldn't mama.”

“Serves you right!”

We both giggle. Our tittering is disturbed by our food that has arrived. After tipping the delivery guy I wash my hands and dish

up then go join mama in the lounge. I take a remote and switch on the TV then eat with mama.

“So what’s going on between you and Manelisi.”

Oh I knew that question is coming and I’m so not ready to hear what she has to say about this but it doesn’t seem like I have a choice.

“Nothing.” I reply with my full mouth.

“Ungangenzi ugogo wakho wena.”

She sips on her coke while looking at me through the rim of the glass. I’m taking my perfect time chewing and she’s running out of patience.

“Mbewu answer the ask phela!”

Oh here goes! It was nice when she was walking on eggshells around me now she's back to being the mom I know. I missed her though that 'umama uzothetha' kind of feeling. Yaz I never realized how cute and special these little annoying things are about her until I had to miss them more anything about her.

"We are kinda like."

"Kinda like what?"

I giggle. Gosh can she just relax!

"He asked me to marry him."

"How can he do that when you are still married?"

"Muzikayise and I separated mama. I just have to end things official by divorce then I can be able to be with the man I've always loved. Ngiyamthanda uManelisi and it would really make me happy if I can have your support and blessings to be with him mama."

“Where’s the fiancée? What happened to her?”

“They broke up.”

“After that trending saga?”

“Uhm yes.”

“Were you two really sleeping together?”

I take a sip on my drink and look at her. Deny! Deny! Deny!

“No we didn’t it was that moment of weakness. We got carried away and happened to kiss unaware that someone was taking pictures.”

“Now you are both ready to move.”

“Yes mama we are. Truth is we have always loved one another but circumstances couldn’t allow us to be together.”

“It’s without doubt that you two love each other but my concern is that your love for each other is selfish.”

“Hawu Mama.”

“Don’t hawu mama me Mbewu because I’m telling you the truth. When you two are together you forget about other people in your lives and the commitments you made. First it was you who hurt Muzikayise now it’s him who hurt his ex fiancée. It didn’t have to take the both of you to hurt other people before you two find a way in each other’s arms. There’s always a way to tackle things. Building a relationship while there are people who are crying because of the pain you two put them through invites bad lucks in that relationship but we all learn through mistakes. I believe you two have learnt your lessons and are going to treat each well. You have my full blessings and support but end things with Muzikayise the right way first before moving to Manelisi.”

I can't help a smile that spreads on my face. Now that's what I want to hear.

"Thank you so much mommy. It's really means a lot to me."

"Don't mention it baby. I'm so happy for you and I see the way he looks at you that he loves you but I'm still going to talk to him."

"Don't scare him please."

"I can't promise you that baby. I made a huge mistake by trusting Muzikayise with everything in me to such extent that I was too soft on him hence he found it too easy to control you and abuse you."

Understandable. Our topics change from one to another until we finish eating. I take a shower then we retire to my bedroom to sleep together and leave the other bedroom empty.

.....

“Mbee vuka!” Tiny hands are shaking me roughly and I want to scream right now.

“Mh-mh maan Benhle!”

“Mom made you breakfast Mbee,” he says with an almost tearful voice that makes my heart sink. I open my eyes and look at him. Just then the door opens and mom walks in with a tray.

“Morning baby.”

“Good morning mama.”

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER NINETY THREE

I yawn and sit on my butt next to this little boy and kiss his cheeks to soften him up for shouting at him. It works like magic in a second he's smiling wildly. Mom puts the tray on my thighs and settles before me.

"I made you breakfast baby."

Typical English breakfast with extra eggs. They are still my favorite but I miss the natural laid by chickens.

"Aw that's sweet of you mama. Let me go pee and wash my hands."

She takes the tray and I jump down from the bed heading to the bathroom. When I come back I remember something and take it out of my closet then go back into the bed.

"Here mama." I hand her a plastic and take the tray from her.

“What is this?” She asks already taking out the scarf in the plastic.

“It’s a scarf it caught my attention the moment I walked inside that store in Doha last year. It just screamed you and I couldn’t help myself but buy it for you.”

She looks at me emotionally and tears stream down her face.

“Mah come on it’s just a scarf.”

“You bought it for me baby in a foreign country! I don’t think you understand how much it means to me. Thank you so much baby I love it and it’s beautiful.”

“You are welcome mama. Thank you for the breakfast while I’m eating you can prepare yourself and Benhle.”

“Where are we going?”

“To buy my car. I’m going to drive you guys back home.”

Though I didn’t buy a car but that didn’t stop me from learning how to drive. Lisi taught me and organized me the license through Sizwe’s connection.

“You are lying Mbewenhle!” Mom beams ebulliently

“Got no time to lie mommy dearest. Get ready already.”

They both leave me while I eat and by the time they finish I’m already done. I take a bath as well and get dressed then we leave. We start at the car dealership and a yellow Jaguar F type R catches my attention. I fall in love with it immediately. I thought BMW X6 is my favorite but no maan see this one I’m taking it. We go through paperwork and take pictures then I take my mom to Mall Of Africa. The elation on their faces when I tell them to take everything they want warms my heart. We have an amazing day together and I wouldn’t trade it for anything in this world.

The following day I hear Lisi's voice in the lounge and surprised that he's here. I greet them and mom immediately thanks him for coming and he asks me to walk him out. I try to pry but nigga doesn't want to tell me what were they talking about. I guess it's not something bad since he doesn't seem affected. I let him in that tomorrow I'm leaving for KZN and he wants to come with but I tell him that I have to do this on my own. He seems to understand and gushes over my car.

.....

It's the big day mom and I have been exchanging with driving. I'm not used to driving a long distance but I also wanted her to drive my car. The whole journey she's complementing it and can't wait to arrive so that people can see it in the village. Me on the other side I'm a shivering mess. When I leave the tar road and take the gravel road that leads home my intestines tighten into a knot.

"Lower the windows baby. I want them to see us."

I chuckle and do as she says. Eyes are on the car as I drive through the gravel. Phela it's not a everyday thing to see yellow Jaguar F type R drives through the dusty gravel road of Mozane so everyone can't help but stare. Nothing has changed not even a bit. The gate is open at the Qwabe homestead so I maneuver my car inside the yard. That moment every neighbor is outside and staring at us. HUUU ondaba zabantu. I park next to the BMW I'm not familiar with.

Mom is the first to come out and she's busy calling out my name so that people can hear her. Yhooo mama I didn't know ukuthanda kangaka ukubukwa. I finally step out of the car and she takes a sleepy Benhle then we walk inside the house. Baba is watching TV with his son. They both look at us and their eyes freeze on me.

"Sanibonani endlini," mom says cheerfully but they don't say anything. I'm not sure if they are too shocked to see me or they didn't hear her. She tells us that she's going to put Benhle on the bed and leaves me with these two. The awkward silence is deafening.

"Sawbona baba." I say politely

“Klabona klakla what are you doing in my house?”

“Baba I know that I was wrong for running away I want to apologize....”

“Get out of my house!!!!”

“Baba...”

“Angithi wena uyazenzela go back to where you are coming from!!”

I look at Mvelonhle who’s staring at me with so much anger in his eyes but not saying anything

“Can’t you hear what I’m saying? I said get out of my house!!!”

Baba gets up from the couch and charges for me but mom runs to us and blocks him.

“What’s this noise for!”

“You have a nerve to bring this whore in my house! Didn’t I make myself clear that I don’t want her in my house!!”

“Aw kodwa Qwabe! Where should she go? This is her home!!”

“It’s none of my business I don’t want her here!!”

“Qwabe...”

“It’s okay mama I will leave. Mvelonhle can you walk me out.”

“Angifuni.”

Ouch now that hurts. I don't care about baba's outburst. I expected it vele but to learn that Lonhle is still angry hurts me. I walk out and mom follows me.

"Baby don't go please

" she's crying and it breaks my heart.

"Mom it's okay I will sleep in a BnB or something don't worry."

"At least go to your sister's house."

"Nah I don't want to bother her."

"You won't bother her please do this for me sis. Just go to your sister she will welcome you. She's the one who organized everything for the trip and asked me to come back with you because she also want to make thing right between the two of you. Go to Newcastle please baby."

I blow out a sigh and nod then we share a hug. She takes her luggage in my boot and I get inside of the car then drive off.

☆ Muzikayise ☆

“Kwanyakaza imikhonto weh Nkoyane kaNdaba!”

Ibandla join me as I lead the song and the women of the village are ululating while I’m dancing. Oh sukanini madoda ukuba ngangemzulu ngangiyoba yini? One of the neighbors in the village is hosting a ceremony and we are all gathered here to support it’s been a great day. I excuse myself and shuffle to the back of the yard to release myself. I’m peeing when this young woman emerges talking to the phone.

“Oh sorry,” she says to me but doesn’t walk away instead stares at my dick that I have to turn around and give her my back.

I wonder if she’s talking to a white person since she’s speaking English. Even her accent you can tell that she doesn’t stay here

probably she's one of the daughters or friends from the City. You know those types of people who arrive in the morning on the day of the ceremony and do nothing but expect to be served. The long red nails she has tells me a lot about her. She says goodbye to whoever she's talking to on the phone just a second after I finished tucking in my dick into my pants.

"I'm sorry for disturbing you." Bitch you are not sorry you would've left if you are. I turn around and look at her.

"No problem."

"You have a beautiful dick by the way."

Should I say thank you? You know what let me go with a flow. I've seen her fancying me throughout the day and this is not a coincidence at all.

"It taste nice too."

She strides closer and strokes my dick through my pants. In that instant my body reacts. It's been a year and months I'd be lying if I say I don't miss pussy. When I was dealing with my heartache I didn't want anything that got to do with a woman even a mere pussy. Now I'm ready to chow any vagina that comes my way. No serious relationship just chow and pass. It took a lot of me to get here and it seems like I'm about to have my first cunt in a year and months.

"Mmh my curiosity is piqued."

"Take my car keys I will find you inside my car and let's get out of here."

"Now you're talking papa."

I slide out my car keys and give her then she plants a soft peck on my lips before sashaying her hips away. Finally I'm getting some pussy! I smile to myself and go tell Thuthu that I'm leaving. Good thing about this one he won't leave until they stop serving alcohol. The moment we get into my house I'm into her like a bad rush and she's purring like a cat. The way to

up to my bedroom seems so far the couch will do. In a second we are both naked and she's lying on the couch legs wide open like a woolies chicken.

That glistening pussy looking at me arouses me further.

I take the condom in my wallet and tear the wrapper before slipping it in my dick. She pulls me in for a steamy kiss and I almost faint at that first thrust. Damn! It's been so fucking long. I thrust in and out of her and she's making all the right noises which fuels my deep thrusts. There's a knock on the door but maybe I could be mistaken as our screams are filling the room.

"Ah fuck! Turn around baby! I want to have you from behind."

I pull out and get on my feet as she turns around holding the back of the couch. Her ass is popping before me and her slit is looking so gorgeous and ready for me to ravage it. I plunge deep into her and she squirms shaking her booty. As I'm deep into her cunt I hear an unfamiliar phone ringing.

"Did you hear that?"

“Yes. Didn’t you say there’s no one in the house?”

“There’s no one.”

I slip out and wear my boxers then walk to the kitchen where the phone was ringing. I smell a sophisticated feminine perfume before I catch her behind about to disappear out of the door. My heart skips two beats as my eyes try to make out of what they’re seeing.

“Yeyeye.”

She stops on her tracks by the door but she doesn’t turn around to look at me.

“Why don’t you knock?”

There’s silence for a brief of moment then she swivels around. I suck in my breath not believing I’m face to face with the

woman that left me sleeping on the bed and ran away with another man. The same man that she cheated on me with before we got married. I hate how my heart is galloping at her sight right now after everything she's done to me.

"I did knock but the door was open and the last time I remember this is my house."

Oh she didn't just say that!

"Ufunani la?" (What are you doing here?)

I eye her from the beautiful toes which are peeking out from her heels going up to her sexy long legs and her curvaceous body wrapped in a short back laced up off shoulder dress. Nipples are poking through the fabric of her dress and the blush color looks perfect on her flawless melanin. Damn she's so breathtaking!

"I came to talk to you but since you're busy I will come some other time."

“Who said I want to talk to you?”

“Well I know I’m the last person you want to see but I’m not here to fight Sidwaba Siluthuli.”

I watch as she saunters towards me and the sound of her heels clanking against the floor fills the room. Now she’s centimeter away from me and I’m breathing her heavenly scent that has me closing my eyes and taking in every whiff of it.

“Can you please take my number so that you can call me when you are not busy I’m begging you Ngcamane.” Her voice is still as mellifluous as I remember.

She oozes assertiveness and composure it’s kinda intimidating.

“Babe is everything okay?” The girl says as she appears in my t-shirt only. I didn’t even ask her name and I don’t intend to.

“Go to upstairs to my bedroom I’m coming. It’s the first door...”  
she cuts me mid sentence with an earsplitting scream.

“Mbewenhle!!!! Oh my goodness I’m your big fan!!”

She ambushes Yeyeye with a huge hug that she almost fall and clings on her like a monkey on a tree. This is embarrassing!

“Ntombi awume kancane.” I pull her away from Mbewenhle who doesn’t seem to mind.

“I want to take pictures. Let me go get my phone in...”

“Ntombazane give us a moment. I want to speak to my wife!”

“You wife?”

I shoot her a look and she instantly disappears out of our sight.

“I’m sorry about that.”

“Don’t worry I’m used to it now.”

“Come sit down and let’s talk.”

“What about..”

“Forget about her.”

I pull the high chair for her and she sits down. I sit down as well next to her. She puts her handbag on the counter together with her phone and jaguar car keys.

“How are you?”

“I’m fine and you?”

“I’ve never found peace after I left. I want to apologize for the way I left and ending our marriage through a piece of paper. I was selfish I own that. Truth be told I was tired Kayise. I couldn’t go on anymore and pretend to be happy while deep down I knew that I was drowning. Everything I said in that letter is true but I should’ve done things the right way and for that I’m really sorry. Please find it in your heart to forgive me for everything I’ve done to you...”

“Why Yeyeye tell me why? You owe me the truth at least.”

Maybe after she tells me the reason why I can finally be over everything that has happened. She blows out a sigh and looks at me.

“I was young and confused Kayise. I just...I’m sorry that you were at the receiving end of my confusion, immaturity and impetuosity. Please forgive me I swear on my twin sister I never meant any harm. I’d give anything to take back the hands of time but I can’t the only thing I can do is to ask for your apology and hope that one day you will accept it.”

I heave a sigh. I understand but I'm not satisfied with her reason. I don't know what I anticipated but there's still that something I'm yearning to hear.

"Did you ever love me?"

"You're a good man Kayise..."

I chuckle as pain surges through every nook of my being.

"You never loved me just say it."

"Just as I said I was young and confused not forgetting that I was oblivious to my confusion. Everything felt right and made sense at that moment then in a spilt second everything turned upside down. I find myself caught between two men and by the time I was aware of everything it was already too late. It's all on me I won't blame anyone or defend myself I take full ownership of everything that happened."

"So it was never about love?"

“You can say that.”

They say truth sets you free but not this one. I feel like it’s opening the wound I’ve been trying to heal for a year and months.

“So why are you here?”

“To apologize to you Ngcamane. I want you to know that I never meant to hurt you.”

“I hear you.” It comes out as a whisper. I brush my face and wince at the pain in my heart.

“I’m sorry Ngcamane we tried but it didn’t work out let’s officially end things between us so that we can fully move on. I want a divorce.”

I glance at her left hand taking it into mine and look at it.

“This is not the ring I bought for you Mbewenhle.”

She retracts her hand from mine. I study her face and let out an incredulous chuckle.

“This is his ring isn’t it? You are not here because you are sorry but you just want me to free you so that you can go on and marry him?”

“I am sorry Kayise...”

“You are lying Mbewenhle!!! Uyanya yezwa akho divorce ozoyithola la!!”

## ☆ Muzikayise ☆

“I don’t know what should I do to show you how sorry I am for how everything turned out between us. I’m not here to fight nor to trick you but to end our union the right way so that both of us can be able to go on with life.”

I let out a incredulous chuckle.

“When you decided to leave me you didn’t think that one day you will have to come back to me and end our union the ‘right way.’ It was fun and you were hypnotized by his dick. Now you expect me to just give you the divorce you want? Uyanya!”

I get up from the chair and go to the lounge. I need a smoke to calm the emotions flooding through me. She is following me and the sound of her heels clanking on the ceramic tiles frustrates me even more.

“I understand you are angry and I admit I wasn’t supposed to leave like that but what is the use of refusing to divorce when we have already separated?”

I reach for my cigarette on the coffee table and light it before throwing the lighter on the table.

“That’s a decision you made on your own!”

I take a drag of the cigarette and blow out a huge cloud of smoke.

“Kayise don’t make this harder then it’s already is. It’s not like there’s anything that can change. Our marriage is over. We both deserve better Sidwaba Siluthuli, better then what we can offer each other.”

She doesn’t get it, the millions got into her head! That’s the problem with women. The moment they make money they develop this ‘don’t give a fuck’ attitude in the process they lose humanity.

“This is not about changing anything. I know that I can’t force you to love me. I also don’t want you back ngidelile wuwe sisi nobufebe bakho. It baffles me how you think it’s okay for you to run away with a man that you cheated on me with and leave me tattered. The humiliation you brought on me when the village learnt that you left me. You proved those who thought I was weak and stupid for marrying you after you cheated on me right. They rejoiced and laughed at my stupidity and misery. I was broken and the pain was more than my heart could take. You made me feel worthless, stupid and weak. I drowned myself into alcohol but escaping death was a wake up call. While you were destroying another woman’s marriage and running in foreign countries I tried to pick up the pieces. It hasn’t been easy because I loved you more than I’ve ever loved anyone in this world. After everything Mbewenhle you come back a year and months later flaunting the big rock of another man’s proposal while you and I are still married and expect me to grant you divorce easily like that. I understand I never meant anything to you and our marriage never meant anything as well to you but where’s your humanity? How can you be so inconsiderate? Is that how less you take me for? Ningijwayela amasimba ninendoda yakho. You are going to be my wife until I decide otherwise. Now disappear out of my sight I have a fuck to continue with.”

She blinks rapidly and I see tears glimmering in her eyes but she's fighting them back. Her lips open and I wait to hear what she has to say but it seems like words are stuck in her throat. She blows out a sad sigh before disappearing out of my sight. I take my last drag and squash the cigarette butt in the ashtray then walk upstairs. The girl is on the bed biting her nails and she looks frightened.

"Why you didn't tell me you are married. I'm not a home wrecker I just wanted to have harmless fun. Oh God what was I thinking?" she's talking very fast I almost couldn't hear her. The tremor in her voice mirrors the fear plastered on her face.

"You didn't ask now you can leave."

"Is your wife downstairs? Does she wants to beat me up? Yho mina ngiyasaba ukulwa please protect me..." (I'm scared of fighting)

"Stop blabbering and leave before my wife comes back."

“Okay”

She leaps to her feet and jogs for the door. I let out a chuckle and shake my head. I’ve lost the appetite for pussy but I need to talk. I pull down my boxer and remove the condom then get dressed. Once I’m done I call her.

“Maseko.”

“Hey are you good?”

“Yes I am but you don’t sound good. Is everything okay?”

“Are you home? Can I come over?”

“Yes you can.”

“Thank you.”

“I got you always.”

A faint smile embraces my face as I hang up. I almost ruined things between us when I kissed her. She wanted to refer me to someone else but I apologized to her and promised to never do that again. I couldn't think of another person to vent to and unpack to. She gets me and I love how she's able to mollify me.

Over the passed months our sessions decreased from 3 times a week to once in two weeks until they ceased but I couldn't stay away completely. I keep in touch every now and then sometimes I even make up stories just to talk to her. Don't ask me why I'm doing that because I also don't know but what I know is I enjoy being around her and I don't want to lose that.

“Hey. Come on in.”

She opens the door wide for me and I get inside. A smell of freshly baked cookies hits my nostrils. It explains the smudge of flour on her cheeks and the apron.

“You are baking?”

“Yes I was but I’m done now.”

“What is the occasion?”

She’s tidying up the counter

taking back her baking ingredients to where they belong and I have made myself comfortable on the high chair.

“I love baking.”

“You bake for fun?”

“Yes but today I was baking for my sister in law. They’re doing an imbeleko ceremony for my nephew tomorrow.”

“Oh yes I heard she gave birth to a baby boy.”

“Yeah. Unjani wena?” (How are you?)

“I don’t know honestly. I’m all sort of emotions. Mbewenhle is back and she wants a divorce.” I tell her how everything happened.

“I understand how you are feeling but it would be best to give her what she wants it’s not like you want to rekindle your marriage right?”

“That’s true but she’s expecting me to give her the divorce just like that after the way she went about this? Not only do I feel disrespected but I’m hurt that she’s inconsiderate of my feelings towards this whole thing. Mina bengikhala ngivuzza amafinyela ngenxa yobuhlungu angizwise bona ngokuhamba kwakhe now she’s back and wants a divorce I should just give her how fair is that?” (I was crying with snort all over my face because of the pain she left me with)

“You can’t force her to stay in this marriage if she doesn’t want to anymore.”

“I also don’t want her back but angeke ngidansele isiginci sakhe mina!!” (I wont dance to her tune.)

“The divorce will still go on without your consent and it can get ugly. Did you sign antenuptial before getting married?”

“No we didn’t we celebrated our marriage traditionally.”

“Did you register it though?”

“No it slipped our minds honestly. Does that invalidate our marriage?”

“A customary marriage is valid even if it’s unregistered. It’s possible that you will have to register it first before proceeding with the divorce. I’m not sure though but my advice to you is to give her what she wants once. You do know that since you didn’t sign a prenup before getting married that means that you are married in community of property. What is yours it’s hers as well and vice versa. In this marriage you are the one

who has more assets than her. Mbewenhle only just started making money. Yes athletes make a lot of money in these major competitions and she competed in two of them only. I can guarantee you that the money she has now will never amount to your assets. She owns 50% of your businesses and you are the one who will lose more in this marriage than her. I know that she doesn't want any of your assets she just wants a divorce so that she can move on with her life and marry the man she loves. Fighting this won't help you I believe you two can find a common ground concerning the settlement agreement and you can be able to keep some of your assets to yourself."

I didn't think that far but the thought of handing over my wife to that bastard on the silver platter infuriates me. How can someone fuck your wife but still you're the one who's expected to hand her over to him just like that. He's going to get away with fucking my wife and disrespecting me. How that is fair on me? Ay ngeke there has to be a way to manipulate this situation!

☆ Mpilenhle ☆

He walks towards me and I can't help but chuckle at the irritated look written on his face. It was cute at first but now I'm starting to think he loves our son more than he loves our girls. The Cebekhulu elders are here for our son's imbeleko ceremony and our boy has been passed on like a ball from one person to another. Mr here is having a hard time to understand that. He's so obsessed with him and doesn't want to share him.

It has benefits though because I get plenty of time to rest while he's obsessing over him. Most days I wake up to him bathing him or changing his nappy which is something that he never did with our girls. I'm a bit jealous on their behalf. This 'super-daddy' side of him is new to me. I don't know if I should complain or worry. The last thing I'd want is for our girls to feel like their father loves their brother more because he's a boy and they are girls.

"Are they not done with him?" He asks and I chuckle as I stretch myself to reach for his lips. I kiss the irritation out of him.

"He's with your mom."

“Go and take him. Say something about breastfeeding him or whatever. Ngikhumbule umfanami manje.” (I miss my boy now)

“I thought you are busy outside with your uncles?”

“Ay we are done now. They’re downing umqombothi.”

“Where are the girls?”

“They are playing outside with my cousins’ children. They seem to enjoy having a bunch of other kids playing with them. Maybe we should just give them a bunch of siblings.”

“Uyahlanya!” (You are crazy)

He cackles like a little boy. Oh I see he was expecting me to strike. I shake my head before going to the lounge where elderly women are gathered. Mkhonto is now cradled in my husband’s aunt’s arms.

“Aunt can I take him I want to breastfeed him.”

“Aw didn’t you breastfeed him an hour ago.”

“Iyadla lendoda Aunt. I’m sure now he’s hungry.” (This man eats a lot)

“Oh okay sisi.”

I take my son from her and go back to the kitchen.

“Thank you wifey. Come to daddy mfana kababa.”

I hand our son to him and he smiles widely before kissing his cheek.

“I’m going to lock myself in our bedroom with him. If obabomcane want me tell them you don’t know where am I. I just need a moment with my boy without any disturbance.”

He disappears out of my sight. I'm about to cook pap when I hear altercation outside. God I hope the last born of the Cebekhulu uncles is not fighting his brothers. He has no filter when he's drunk. You know in every family there's that uncle who is taken serious only when he has to be a skivvy. I wipe my wet hands with the dish cloth and head outside. There's a beautiful yellow Jaguar sport car parked in my yard. My eyes follow to where the uncles are sitting.

"Ay uyagijima ntokazi!"

"You don't look like a man like Caster though!"

"Aunty Mbewu how was Toyko?"

"You have a beautiful car aunty Mbewu!"

"I heard you are making millions with your running. Buy me a drink ndodakazi."

I find myself walking towards the crowd and spot my sister behind my daughters who are both sitting on her laps.

“Mommy! Aunty Mbewu is back!!” Azanothe says.

I stare at my sister and seeing her after everything mom told me reminds me of a failure I am as an elder sister. We were supposed to be best friends and be there for each other. How did I become a stranger in my own sister’s life that she chose to run away instead of trusting me with her own problems. She gets up from the chair and strides towards me. We stare at each other for a moment then she envelopes me in her arms. I inhale deeply taking in her lovely scent and weep silently.

“Shhh ungakhali sisi.” (Shhh don’t cry sisi)

She pulls me back and wipes my tears before hooking her arm around my waist. We make our way to the house and settle down on high chairs. A comfortable silence lingers in the air.

“I’m sorry to come unannounced,” she eventually breaks the silence and I stare at her. I’ve always known that she’s a beauty but now she’s exotic. Her skin is flawless and glowing it’s like she bathes in milk and lotion her body with butter. I’ve never seen her with a weave before and I must say it suits her perfectly.

“It’s not like there’s a way you could’ve announced. How have you been?”

“I’m okay and you? Mom told me I have a 4 months old nephew. Where is he?” The ebullience in her voice can’t be missed. She always loved kids and they love her too.

“He’s with his father in our bedroom. He’s obsessed with him and having a difficult time with sharing him since his family is here.”

“That’s cute,” she says laughing.

“Do you want anything to drink?”

“Actually I want food I’m hungry.”

“Still a foodie!”

“Oh yeah! What are you cooking and why the Cebekhulus are here?”

“It’s Lindamkhonto’s imbeleko ceremony tomorrow.”

I get up and dish up the lunch leftovers then serve her with juice.

“Thank you big sis.”

She gets up to wash her hands and sits down, indulging her food.

“Oh I missed your food!”

“Really?”

“Yes you’re a great cook sis. Sally used to remind me of you when she was cooking.”

“Who’s Sally?”

I get started with cooking the pap.

“Manelisi’s ex fiancée.”

“She sounds like a nice woman.”

She looks up at me as she licks her fingertips.

“Yeah she is a good woman. I know what you are thinking. It was just a once off kiss. We got carried away and we were unaware that someone was taking pictures.”

“You were not supposed to kiss him from the first place knowing that he was engaged.”

“True as much as you were not supposed to kiss my husband.”

I wince at that comment.

“Mbewenhle I’m sorry about...”

“Do you have feelings for him?”

“Who?”

“Muzikayise?”

“No Mbewenhle it was a mistake. The only man I love is my husband.”

“To be honest Mpilenhle I don’t buy this whole mistake thing. I mean I know that I can never look at sbari that way even if I were to be drunk.”

I blow out a sigh. This deeply hurt her I can see and my biggest fear is that she can never trust me again.

“I swear to Ndalwenhle I don’t know what got into me. It was a biggest mistake I’ve ever done in my life. Please find it in your heart to forgive me sis.”

“I’ve long forgiven you but I’m not sure if I can ever trust you again around my man.”

Ouch that hit home I don’t want to lie but I understand where she’s coming from.

“Understandable but I promise you a mistake like that will never ever happen again.”

“It’s better be the first and last time you put those lips of yours on a man that is mine because I won’t be easily forgiving when it comes to Manelisi. Soxabana singaphinde sizwane uma ngingakhiphanga isidumbu.” (It’s either we will never get along again or I will kill you)

I gulp the air at the menace in her voice.

“Ngiyakuthembisa sis wami.” (I promise you my sister)

She continues with eating while I stir the pap. There’s a deafening awkward silence in my kitchen.

“So you are with Manelisi now?” I break the awkward silence and watch as a blushing smile embrace her face. She’s in love!

“Well he asked me to marry him but I didn’t accept the proposal yet. I want a divorce first but Muzikayise is refusing.”

I listen to her as she goes on and tells me what happened. I haven’t been contact with Muzikayise ever since the day he

asked us to cut ties and honestly I've been mad at him for the way he treated my sister.

“Did you have to rub it in though? You should have took off the ring when you went there Mbewenhle.”

“I know I forgot to take it off but I think he wouldn't have agreed still even if I didn't have this ring on. Muzikayise hates me regardless of how remorseful I am. He will never see that nor forgive me. I don't know what to do anymore.”

“Why is he acting like a saint. You hurt him and he decided to take you back and hurt you too. He should stop acting like the only victim and own up to the pain he put through as well. You can't spend your whole life apologizing to someone who doesn't want to accept your apology nor look deep in your heart that you mean every word. The divorce will go on with or without his consent.”

“I don't want to fight him my approach was a bit inconsiderate I will give him time to process this because one thing I know is that he also doesn't want me back.”

“He wants to punish you Mbewu I don’t think giving him time will help. Just go through with the divorce already.”

“I don’t have energy to prolong this and fight in court sis. I just want a quick and peaceful divorce. The other issue is that our marriage is unregistered.”

“Haibo this marriage is good as in invalid. You can just go on and get married moss.”

“Oh how I wish. Ndiwe said that doesn’t invalidate our marriage and my second marriage will be considered as invalid if I go on without divorcing him.”

“Eish is she the one that is going to be handling your divorce? I remember she was studying law right?”

“Yes she was studying law but she recommended me a good divorce lawyer based this side. I’m meeting her the day after tomorrow. I want nothing from him not even his assets I just

want a divorce. Can you talk to him for me please sis maybe he will hear you.”

“Ay Mbewenhle you don’t need his consent...”

“Mpilenhle please. I don’t want an ugly divorce. It can go on and on and drain the hell out of me. What if it gets to the point where I lose everything? I can’t afford to lose isinkwa sabantwana bami sona lesi esingekho. I’m trying to secure a great future for my family.”

“I don’t think it will get to that point baby sis. Instead you are the one who will gain more than him since you own 50% of everything he owns.”

“As much as he owns 50% of what I own. I’ve just bought this car I’m not about to sell it and split the money. I don’t want to share my MTN shares. I have plans with the money I won in Olympics I don’t want to split it. If you can get him to agree I’m sure my lawyer can work around the divorce settlement agreement that is going to be satisfactory to both of us. He also worked hard to accumulate the assets he has. I don’t deserve

any share of them especially not after what I did to him. Talk to him please I'm begging you."

"Okay I will try but I don't promise anything. We haven't been in touch for a long time. He cut ties with me for a reason and I doubt there's anything I can say that can make him change his mind."

"All I'm asking is for you to try."

My phone is ringing. I reach for it on the counter and answer it.

"Mama."

"Hi baby how are you?"

"I'm good what about you mama?"

"I'm also okay baby. Did your sister arrive there? Yaz ubabakho unghiphula umoya. He kicked her out so I told her to come to

you.” Shame I can hear how down she is and her blocked nose that she’s been crying.

“Yeah she’s here mama don’t worry she’s safe.”

“Thank you sis. Can I talk to her?”

I pass the phone to Mbewu and she talks to mama for a moment then she gives it back.

“Please take care of her for me.”

I can’t help but roll my eyes. Like really now?

“Mom come on Mbewu is turning 26 years old this year she’s not a baby.”

“Y’all are my babies and you as their elder sister it’s your responsibility to take care of your younger siblings. It’s bad enough that your father kicked her out and your brother is still mad at her. I’m sure she’s already feeling unwelcome here and regret coming back home.”

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER NINETY FOUR

“I’m sure she expected that things won’t be smooth sailing considering how she left mama. Don’t stress too much okay.”

“Your father is going to send me to an early grave Mpilenhle. He’s so stubborn and hotheaded sometimes it like he’s testing my patience. Kuvele kuthi angithathe umthwadhana wami ngihambe ngigaphinde ngibheke emumva.” (I feel like taking my rags and never look back)

“Ma don’t say that please if you leave dad would be lost without you.”

“I’m also lost without my children. Life has dealt with us very severely Mpilenhle. Now that we got closure and know where Ndalwenhle is resting can’t we just move on from everything that has happened and be a happy family that we once were? We are lucky that we are still here to enjoy the remaining years of our lives why should we dwell on the past and hold grudges when we are supposed to be moving on and making new happy memories? Why waste time on fighting and mistakes we have made in the past? I just want us to unite and be happy together as a family once again is that too much to ask?” The last part

comes out in a defeated whisper and it breaks my heart to learn how much this has affected her.

“No it’s not too much mommy I understand but we have to understand that we don’t deal with things the same way. I think it’s unfair to expect them to move on just because we are ready to move on. Let’s give them time I’m sure as time goes on they will come around.”

“We don’t have time as much as we think we do baby. Life is unpredictable it’s advisable to do things right before it’s too late. Tomorrow I could be gone from this world...”

“Hayi mama ungakhulumi kanjalo!” (Don’t talk like that mama)

“It’s true baby we can’t run away from the fact that tomorrow is not promised. We should be happy that we are still given time to rectify our mistakes, right our wrongs but most importantly make great memories of our lives because at the end of the day we are not permanent residents in this world.”

“Mama you are talking like you are going to die. Is everything okay? Are you sick? You are scaring me.”

Mbewu looks up from her plate and worry clouds her face.

“I’m okay baby physically I’m healthy. Of course I am going to die but I’m hopeful that it’s not anytime soon.”

“Are you sure you are not hiding anything?”

“No I’m not you are freaking out for nothing. I was just telling the fact not that I’m sick or dying.”

“Okay I choose to believe you. I’m going to help you to bring our family together okay? Don’t worry mommy we will fix this I got you.”

“Thank you so much sisi. You are a blessing in my life and I love you so much.”

“I love you too mama.”

I hang up and heave a sigh. There’s worry niggling at my guts even though she said she’s fine.

☆ Mbewnhle ☆

I moan in appreciation when my body finally slides into blankets. It’s been a long and eventful day. I came at the wrong time when my sister needs help since it’s the imbeleko ceremony of my nephew. Oh he’s such a cutie I could bite his cheeks. We decided to do most of the cooking tonight so that tomorrow we would have less to do. It felt different in a good way to talk with my sister about anything and everything throughout our cooking. I hope this is the start of a good relationship between us.

However worry is attacking every cell of my body concerning the conversation between her and mama. The thought of losing mom has fear wrapped around me. Mpilenhle promised me that she’s okay but I can see that she’s also worried. I

desperately want to grant her wishes but I can't force dad to accept my apologies and welcome me back home. I care more about making mom happy than dad accepting my apology and welcoming me back home. I feel like it won't make any difference to me as long as his mindset is still fixed and he's not willing to unlearn some of his parenting styles and adapt to changing times. I video call Lisi and seeing his face melts my heart.

"Hey baby."

"Hey my love. I thought you are sleeping now."

"How can I sleep when you promised to fill me in later."

He called me during supper and I told him I will call him later but I didn't think we would take so long to finish cooking for tomorrow's ceremony. It's going for 1:30am now.

"But it's already late now baby."

“I couldn’t sleep I miss you so much.”

“I miss you too sthandwa sami. I’m at my sister’s place baba didn’t want me in his house and Mvelonhle is still mad at me.”

“Aw baby I’m sorry. I wish I was there to hold you. I’m hopeful though that they will come around.”

“I don’t know babe my worry at this moment it’s mama.” I go on and tell him about what she said to Mpilenhle.

“I don’t know what I’d be if I were to lose her now Lisi when we’ve just reconciled. I wasted time angry at her now she could be dying and I...”

I shut my eyes closed pushing back my tears.

“Baby...dombolo lami...look at me.”

I open my eyes and look at him through my glossy eyes.

“Your mom was just generalizing. There’s so much truth in what she said but it doesn’t mean she’s dying. I don’t think she would keep that to you guys heck she looked healthy and beautiful as fuck. Don’t overthink things please.”

“I hear you.”

“How about you write your father a letter pour your heart out to him. Maybe he will hear you better and accept your apology baby.”

“He doesn’t know how to read.”

“Your mother or sister can read it for him. As for your brother I think if you try harder to talk to him. He will hear you out.”

“Thank you baby I will try to do that.”

“Did you see Muzikayise?”

I nod and tell him what happened.

“Please tell me he didn’t touch you Wenhle even with his pinkie finger?”

“No baby he didn’t.”

“Are you sure Wenhle?”

“Yes I’m sure baby. Don’t worry I got this.” I say and yawn

“Mmmh. You look tired. End the video call I will call you and sing you a lullaby.”

I can’t help the smile that spreads on my face and does exactly what he says. He sings the song he sang for me the first time he sang for me. Oh I have forgotten that he has an angel’s voice. His mellifluous voice sends me to lalaland.

.....

I've been standing the whole day doing this and that. Now I'm serving people. Mkhonto is acting up today I think usindwa abantu. He's 4 months old after all so it's understandable. At least Mpilenhle's sisters in law are nice and helpful so I don't have to do all the work on my own since my sister has to look after her son. Mom is here with her sons and she confirmed to me that she's okay I shouldn't worry about her dying anytime soon. Now it's time for us to eat since everyone is eating as well.

"Tell me how can you run 100m in 9 seconds when it said to be impossible especially for a woman," says Sinothile the younger sister in law.

"She's no human at all!" Adds my sister and we all laugh.

"So did you feel that you are way too fast then before?"

"Yes I did."

“Wow you are exceptional yaz!”

“Thank you so much.”

The mother in law walks in with an almost finished plate and looks at my sister.

“The samp is amazing is there any left in the pot?”

“Yes mama. My sister cooked it.” Mpilenhle says getting up and takes the plate to dish up for her mother in law. Ndiwe taught me how to cook her samp that was loved by my father too.

“Oh I knew that it’s not you who cooked it. Ah sisi upheka kamnandi!”

“Ngiyabonga mama but my sister is the beast in the kitchen.” I say

“Congratulations you are an incredible sprinter! Some women should take notes from you that a woman empowers herself and makes her own money not suck our sons dry.”

Okay now she’s grating my clit. You cannot complement me and throw shade on my sister in one sentence.

“Thank you Ma but I think if those women are on a mission to suck your sons dry they would’ve done by now and left them with nothing. Instead they helped your sons to grow their empire. I see a wise woman right there. Ever heard that behind every successful man there’s a wise woman.”

“Maybe you are right but imagine having a wise famous woman like yourself by his side who’s also contributing financially into making that empire bigger and better. Tell me why didn’t you attend that wedding? He could’ve made a right choice.”

What the fuck? Lomama uyadelela manje!

“Haibo usho lesgogodolo...” I bite my lip hard as I stop myself from saying something I’d regret.

“Trust me mama my brother is with the right woman. Some women know how to destroy a good man out there.” The other sister in law says. I chuckle and take a gulp of my juice.

“Ma here’s your food.” Mpilenhle hands the plate to sbari’s mom and I see her hands shaking terribly. The mother in law walks away without thanking her.

“Khazimula where’s your professionalism and confidentiality?”

“What are you talking about?”

“You know exactly what I’m talking about don’t make me a fool! I asked you to counsel Muzikayise and now you use what he told you in confidence against my sister? How fucked up are you huh?”

Oh so this is what is about? Wow

“Haibo chill angibizanga gama latsotsi mina.” (I didn’t specify anyone’s name)

“Oh really Cobezele?”

“I’m Khazimula not Cobezele!”

I did that on purpose honey.

“Guys calm down.” Sinothile

I click my tongue and get on my feet before walking out. I’m beyond pissed who does that woman think she is? Why she’s being personal? What kind of a psychologist she is? Oh maybe she wants him! I spot my brother walking around my car while sipping on his hunters gold can.

“Your love for sport cars never gets old huh.”

He jumps a bit clearly startled. He didn't think someone was watching him I see.

"Uhm..uh...I need the loo."

I grab his wrist and he looks at my hand on his wrist then our eyes meet.

"Mvelonhle I'm sorry I know I hurt you for running away..."

"You seriously think I'm mad at you for running away?"

"Yes."

He chuckles and shakes his head.

"No I'm not mad at you for running away. If leaving was going to free you from whatever you were running away from I would've supported you! I'm mad at you that you didn't trust me enough to come to me and tell me everything you were

going through! You decided to leave nje kanjalo! I thought we got each other's back Mbewenhle! We die for each other! You deprived me a chance to be there for you! That's why I'm mad at you!!"

Tears flow down his face as mine well up in my eyes.

"I'm sorry brother and I feel your pain trust me. I didn't want to bother you with my marital issues. At the end of the day you're my younger brother. I have to protect you from things that will hurt you. I didn't tell you everything not because I wanted to hurt you or I doubt that you got my back but I was protecting you bhuti wami."

"Protecting me while you're dying Mbewenhle!! Do you know what that could've done to me if he killed you!!"

"He wasn't going to kill me...."

“He drowned you dammit!!! Made you stand in a stormy night alone!! What if the lightning struck you? What if you disappeared just like Ndalwenhle?”

“Ngiyaxolisa bhuti wami.” (I’m sorry my brother) I sob

“Fuck you maan Mbewenhle!”

“Yes fuck me!”

He yanks his hand from my grip and vigorously wipes his tears. Out of the blue he bursts into laughter.

“Hayi sies maan Mbewu what are you saying now.”

I laugh

“I’m agreeing with you nje.”

“Haisuka ukhuluma amanyala,” (what you saying is revolting) he says laughing and I join him.

“I miss you sis.”

“I miss you too baby brother.”

“Ay ay ay I’m a father now don’t ever call me that!”

I giggle as I pull him in my arms. We share a warm hug. God I missed him so much.

“Awuthi isikhiye lapho ngizwe lomshini.” (Give me the key I want to take this machine for a spin.)

“You are not drunk?”

“No I’m not drunk I had two nyana. See I can stand with one leg.”

He stands with one leg as I giggle. I run inside the house to fetch my car keys in the bedroom only to find my phone ringing. It stops ringing just as I take it. 50 missed calls from mqwebu wami. I call him back and it doesn't even ring once his voice comes through.

“Iphone ayisabanjwa ngani?” (Why are you not answering your phone)

“I’m sorry my love I was outside and left it in the bedroom.”

“Umakhala’khukhwini hayi ekamereni dombolo lami. Send me your sister’s address.”

“Why?”

“I’m on my way there.”

“Haibo Lisi are you joking?”

“No I’m not baby.”

God he’s serious! What is wrong with this man?

“Ain’t you supposed to be at work? For two weeks Lisi you were in Toyko you should...”

“Baby just give me the address please.”

I blow out a sigh

“I will sent it to you.”

“Thank you MaKhondlo.”

I hang up and send the address then go outside to give Mvelonhle the key.

“Don’t damage my car Mvelonhle!”

“It will come back in one piece trust me sis. Athi muntu ayochoma nge 4 pipes.” (Let me go brag about 4 pipes) He whistles as he gets in the car and brings the engine to life before driving out. Just as I go back to the house my phone rings.

“Dubandlela.”

“I’m parked few houses away your sister’s house or should I drive in.”

“No I’m coming.”

I hang up and walk out of the gate. I see his car parked few house away indeed and head there. When I’m close he steps out of his Amarok and meets me halfway. He attacks me with a huge hug and holds me tightly sniffing me like a dog.

“I missed you so much.”

“I missed you too.”

He opens the door for me and I get inside the car then he goes to his side.

“Why are you here?”

“To protect you from Muzikayise babe. Since he’s refusing we don’t know what he’s planning. That guy is sick in the head.”

“He won’t harm me...”

“I’m not taking any chances. I don’t even understand why is he refusing. It’s not like it’s going to change anything! Days of him bullying you are over uzonya la kimi nxa! He’s going to give you divorce dark or blue!”

“Manelisi please I don’t want you two to fight. Let me sort this out my own way.”

“So that he can continue to bully you hayi Wenhle. Ngizomfaka isbhakela kusuke inkungu egcwele emehlweni akhe abone ukuthi awumthandi futhi awusoze.”(I will remove the fog in his eyes with a fist and he will realize you don’t love him and never will)

“Baby no! Do you remember what happened when you two fought? Please don’t do that.”

“No sthandwa sami no one is going to bully you and I do nothing.”

Thixo Lisi can be stubborn at times.

“Dubandlela fighting will make things worse. Please let me handle this.”

I lean over and shut him up with a kiss. He moans in my mouth as he grabs the back of my neck. I wrench my lips from his and trail kisses on his neck while stroking his rod that is growing

hard with each second. He releases a sharp breath when I take out his meat and massage it with my palm. It will be easy to reason with him after this fellatio.

I run my tongue around his head and tastes the salty liquid seeping out of his slit. He winces in pleasure and grabs my head. I give his dick few strokes before pleasuring him with my mouth. As I continue with the task at hand he laughs. Isn't he supposed to be grunting?

"Is my tongue that tickling daddy?" I can hear seduction in my tone.

"Baby stop teasing me okay."

I carry on with what I was doing and he laughs even harder.

"Dombolo lami munca umpimpi ngathi umunca umoli hayi ngathi umunca umnkantsha ethambeni." (My dumplings suck the dick like you are sucking a lollipop not like you are sucking marrow on the bone)

Huh? I get my head up from him and look at him.

“What are you saying?”

Bastard have an audacity to repeat exactly what he said!  
Ngiyalingwa bazalwane! I know that I’ve never sucked a dick  
before but I don’t need experience maan. Actually I give best  
heads then thousand prostitutes combined!

“Yaz uyangichwensa!” (You’re ridiculing me)

“Wait you have never done this before right?” Laughter is  
dancing in his eyes. Breathe baby girl!

“Fuck you!”

I pinch his dick and step out of the car leaving him wincing in  
pain. I hear him calling out for me behind me as I walk back to  
my sister’s house.

“Ngiyaxolisa baby wozake uzomunca umnkantsha!” (I’m sorry  
baby you can come and suck the marrow) Laughter is lacing his  
voice. Heeee ngizomala lo ngibambeni ngingamali!

Ngibambeni! (I will dump this one, stop me before I dump him!  
Stop me!)

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I thought Isisa hates me for leaving like that and chasing my dreams while she chose to put hers on hold because I couldn't pursue mine. It was an idiotic mistake honestly and I'm glad when we met after not seeing each other for a year and months we laughed about it. Meeting my niece made me emotional. It took me back to the river, the day Lonhle lost his girlfriend and his unborn baby. I didn't think my little brother would ever love again let alone having a child.

They truly love each other and I couldn't be happier to be the matron of honor. Their wedding was so beautiful jealous down! Ndiwe just had to make it more beautiful by giving the groom and bride a ride in the air. It was her way of asking an apology to Isisa who gladly accepted it. In fact she thanked her because she showed her what kind of a guy Thuthuka is. In my life I've never seen Isisa insecure and lack confidence but after what Thuthuka did she drastically changed.

My gift was a week away to Madagascar. They were so thrilled and I couldn't be more merry. It's safe to say I've fixed my relationships with the people I love well except baba. I wrote the letter as Lisi suggested but he didn't want it. I don't know what mom said to him but I'm welcomed at home even though I don't feel welcomed. Baba doesn't talk to me and he leaves when he acknowledges my presence. I don't know what to do anymore hopefully one day he will accept my apology.

The past month and couple of weeks I've been gathering info and learning all there ever is to learn. The herd boy is going to regret mocking my blow job skills. He's going to take his words back. I got helpful info from my two friends, google and porn videos. I'm going to blow his mind away and once I'm done with him he will worship the ground I walk on. He's taking his perfect time in the bathroom which gives me time to slide into my black floral embroidery crochet lace lingerie set. This thing was absolutely made for my body shame. I throw the rose petals on the bed before lying on it.

I'm going to enjoy today's sex knowing that I'm Mrs Maphumulo to be and nothing is binding me to Kayise anymore. I don't know who got into him but he came to his senses and finally our divorce is finalized. My lawyer advised us

and drafted the divorce settlement agreement that was satisfactory to both of us. I relinquished my rights in his farms in exchange of the money he was entitled to on my side as well as the MTN shares. He bought me out of his goat business with his share value of my car.

I'm glad we were both able to keep what belong to us individually to ourselves. He didn't lose that much because I only got both of his cars in order for him to keep the house together with the furniture. I don't know if I should sell these cars or give Thuthuka and Ndondoloza as gifts. Angifuni kusasa masengiyi njinga kuthiwa ngaceba ngomnotho kabuti wabo.

Here comes the fiancé! I position myself in a raunchy pose and stare at the door. He's vigorously wiping his hair with a towel not aware of everything. When he's done drying his head it's only then he notices me. He gapes in awe and murmurs under his breath.

“Holy Sexy Goddess!”

“You like what you see daddy.”

“Oh I love it baby. Damn!”

Still rooted on his spot but his gaze is blazing with lust and desire. His rod is already poking the towel wrapped around his waist and threatening to perforate the towel.

“Come here.”

He bites his bottom lip and throws the towel on the floor he was drying his hair with before walking towards the bed. I instruct him to lie on the bed with his back and he does exactly that. Settling on his thighs I unwrap the towel and my clit tingles at the sight of his veiny hard rod that is standing proudly. I circle my hand around his meat and give it strokes. He blows out a heavy breath as I tenderly run my hand up down his shaft before smearing the liquid seeping out of his slit on the tip with my thumb. My eyes are locked on him I want to watch every single move he’s making so that I can see if I’m doing this right. His face transforms to a comical face as I take his dick to my mouth.

“Baby...”

Heee usangichwensa namanje! I have to give it my all and wow him. You can do this baby girl!

“Shhhh let me handle this.” I mumble with his dick inside of my mouth and feel the weight of his gaze on me as I run my tongue around his bulbous head before sucking his cock hard. A throaty groan escapes his lips and urges me on. I stroke his balls with my tongue then take one into my mouth and suck it like a lollipop. It tastes as soft as it is. I fight the itch to bite it when I feel it rolling inside of my mouth.

“Haibo Wenhle what did you eat? Hawe malooo!” His cry echoes in my bedroom compelling me to look at him.

“You want me to stop?”

I have an airwaves gum in my mouth could it be possible that it's hurting him?

“Fuck no! Please don’t stop baby!”

A satisfactory smile spreads on my face. Oh It’s doing wonders! I take him once again in one long stroke until half of his meat is deep inside of my throat. Hopefully as time goes on I would be able down whole of him. He grabs my head while I suck on his crotch hard like my life depends on it and the grunts rolling out of his mouth are encouraging me.

“Ahh shit I’m cumming baby!”

I squeeze the base of his manhood to cut the impending orgasm. He looks at me and through his eyes that are cloudy with pleasure I can see annoyance behind. Shame I’m in control and I have to admit that it feels amazeballs. I was accustomed to Kayise taking charge and never imagined that one day this could be me taking charge. Lisi doesn’t unleash the whore side of me only but the little freak of which I’m going to embrace shame!

I slide my panties aside before guiding myself down to his dick. Oh sweet lord! We both moan our pleasure as my cunt

stretches to welcome his thick meat. I balance my hands on his chest and begin to slide up and down his shaft. The pleasure swirling in my body forces me deepen my thrusts. His hands squeeze butt hard that it almost hurt. I rotate my waist like a snake wrapping on its prey.

“Yhooo MaKhondlo what are you doing to me!”

Our screams of mutual pleasure reverberates the whole apartment. I whimper tilting my head back as sparks of electricity sweep through me like wildfire. He writhes underneath me while groaning like wounded animal and reaches his high taking me with him. I collapse on him burying my head in the crook of his neck.

“Yini lezinto ongenza zona namuhla.”

“Did you enjoy them.”

“Babe that was mind blowing! Awungiphinde futhi.”

I giggle and jerk my head up to look at him.

“Oh no Mr you said I suck a dick like I’m sucking bone marrow right.”

He laughs

“I did apologize dombolo lami. Please let go one more time.”

He frames my face and kisses me. I’m so tempted and his manhood that keeps expanding inside of me and filling me is not helping but I need to teach him a lesson.

“Lutho Khehla.”

I get off him and roll out of bed then take off the lingerie. Once I’m done wiping myself I pull on my robe and go to the kitchen to get a tub of ice cream with a spoon before going to the lounge to watch a movie. He walks in just as I’m on my 5th spoon butt naked his dick dangling between his thighs.

“Hawu Wenhle?”

“Come let’s watch this movie.”

“Mbewenhle are you fucking kidding?”

“What do you think wena.”

“Okay I’m sorry come to bed please.”

He settles down next to me and attempts to kiss me but I push his face away.

“The movie is about to start.”

“What do you want me to do to forgive me?” The desperation in his voice is so loud. I look at him as I think of an idea. Oh yes!

I fetch my phone in the bedroom and connect it to the home theater via Bluetooth then play the song.

“Strip for me.”

He bursts into laughter and when he realizes I’m serious he frowns.

“Oh no! What do I know about stripping?”

“Akufuni mina lokho.” (That’s none of my business)

“Baby come on I’d rather sing for you.”

“Let me watch my movie then.”

“Mina ngazi ukugida Wenhle hayi ukudansa let alone stripping.”(I only know how do Zulu dance not dancing)

“Be creative baby! Hlanganisa ukugida nokustripha.” (Mix Zulu dance and stripping) I say laughing.

“Not everyone is talented like you!” He yells frustratedly

“Oho you’re wasting my time wena!”

“Okay okay okay!”

I smile to myself. Men can do anything for sex neh? Ay cha these creatures are weird! I increase the volume.

♪♪ Uh, girl I turn that thing into a rain-forest

Rain on my head, call that brainstorming

Yeah this is deep, oh, but I go deeper

Make you lose yourself, and finders keepers

It go green light, go Weezy go

I like to taste that sugar, that sweet and low

But hold up wait

new position

I put her on my plate then I do the dishes

She my motivation, I'm her transportation

Cause I let her ride, while I drive her crazy

Then I just keep going going, like I'm racing

When I'm done she hold me like a conversation Weezy baby

But you can't stop there, music still playin' in the background

And you're almost there

You can do it, I believe in you baby

So close from here

Oh Lover, when you call my name

No other, can do that the same no

I won't let ya get up out the game no

So go lover, don't it make me rain

And when were done, I don't wanna feel my legs

And when were done, I just wanna feel your hands all over me  
baby🎵🎵

“Strip phela.”

He starts shaking his ass like a girl and I can't help but break into laughter.

“Hayi ngiyayeka mina uyanghleka wena!”

“Come on baby you are nailing this! Strip for your dumplings. Shake that firm ass!” I cheer him while taking a video of him.

Hee I don't know what kind of stripping is this! Let's call it indlamustripping. Trying to hold myself from laughing it's one difficult task I ever done in my whole life in this moment. Tears are streaming down my face and my lungs hurt so bad they are demanding me to release laughter. He notices the phone in my hand and stops.

“Are you taking a video of me?”

“No!” I shake my head vigorously. He walks towards me to get the phone but I hide it.

“Wenhle angidlali nawe! Give me the phone!”

We wrestle over the phone and I can't stop laughing at him. That moment he's so annoyed. He's so cute when he's irritated. Being an athlete is coming handy as he can't reach the phone that easily.

“Baby stop fighting me!”

“Delete that video dombolo lami!”

“Ooops!”

“What!”

“The video just got uploaded on Instagram.”

“Whaaaat?”

Damn that look he is ready to swallow me alive. I burst into laughter and he clicks his tongue as relief clouds his face.

“Yaz wena!”

He shakes his head making me to giggle. I grab the back of his neck and kiss him. In this man I’ve found more than just a lover. I’ve found someone who I’m completely myself around him. Someone who I can be my silly self around him. Someone who I’m not ashamed of my morning face nor my morning breath around him. Someone who I’m not embarrassed to release flatulent around him. Someone who tolerate my mood swings especially when I’m on my periods. Someone who I share my dreams and fantasies with. Someone who cheers me up and shows off with me to the world. Someone who’s worth spending my entire life with.

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER NINETY FIVE

☆ Manelisi ☆

“Biltong you need to calm down please.” How does she expects me to calm down in a situation like this. I can’t calm down I’m boiling with rage.

“Really? You are telling me to calm down?” I couldn’t mask the vexation in my voice.

“Yes they are going to clear your name baby once the investigation is done.”

How did we get here from the word go? That’s what antagonizes me further. It’s not about my name being cleared but it’s the fact that they are accusing me from the first place!

“You don’t get it do you? The point here is that I’m being investigated for a crime I didn’t do! After everything I’ve done for that company? I can’t believe Nhlapho believes that I’d steal

for the company! I even want to buy shares in that company babe why would I steal money from it!”

Could it be possible that they don't want me in the company anymore and they strategized a plan to dismiss me?

“I understand your frustration sthandwa sami but boiling up like this is not going to make you feel better. Let's try to be positive about this but there's definitely something fishy going on here.”

Exactly! I've been nothing but loyal to that company everything doesn't make sense! Maybe a family member or a close friend has been promised my job.

“I'm not a thief baby I didn't steal when I was poor why would I steal now when I have everything I've ever dreamt of? I've never stole in my whole life!”

“Well you once stole baby. Remember the chicken you slaughtered for me. You even stole the egg it laid.”

I glare at her and she doesn't flinch at my scowl. Trust Mbewenhle to say that in this time. A laugh involuntarily rolls out of my mouth. I hear her laughing too.

"Yaz wena!"

A wife I have!

"Just wanted to make you laugh. I don't like seeing you like this. Come here."

I walk to the bed and lie next to her before resting my head on her bump.

"Everything is going to be okay sthandwa sami. Your name will be cleared and they are going to apologize to you for accusing you and ruining your reputation like that. You will have your job back worry not." she says and brushes my head.

I don't know what I'd be without her especially in this phase of my life. Everything is spiraling out of control I don't know what's going on but she's right here holding me down. I was involved in a car accident two weeks back and my car was damaged beyond repairs I came out with nothing but few scratches on my face. Yesterday I got suspended at work due to money theft.

You won't believe how much are they accusing me of stealing, 2grand yes R2000 imagine! How can I risk my job that pays me well for a mere 2k. That money in my savings account can be doubled thousands times. My fiancée is an athlete and she's monied. I have parents who have cattle and my best friend has a well paying job. These people wouldn't mind to help me out when I'm struggling of which I'm not!

I don't know how this happened honestly someone is trying to frame me or something. You know what baffles me is that everything had to happen just after I did a little ceremony to thank my ancestors for protecting me and the blessings I've been receiving. Well since my grams house burnt it was mandatory for me to built another house for her at the end of the day I'm not a Zondo. A place called home where I can perform my traditions was a must.

“Thank you so much for holding me down in this tough time baby.”

“It will be all over soon.”

“How are you feeling today? Do you still have that pain?”

“No today I haven’t had it sthandwa sami.”

“Are you sure? Let’s go to your gynecologist so that we can be sure. I don’t want anything terrible to happen to you guys.”

“If the pain comes back we will go.”

Fair enough. I just hope it won’t come back and put my precious cargos in harms way. I’d definitely die if something can happen to all of them.

“Is there anything that I can do for you?”

Ngimphathisa okwezikhali zamaNtungwa and she deserves it. Not everyone is lucky enough to find someone who they feel an emotional

Advertisement

physical and telepathic bond with. I swear our souls were tied together.

“I’m craving a fish baby.”

Not the fish please! Why did I ask yaz ukuphapha!

“You asked why now are you giving me that face?”

Is it that obvious? I try to mask the frown on my face with a wide grin.

“I will go buy it for you baby.”

I kiss her lips before kissing my little dumplings. I remember when she found out she's pregnant yooo I almost died. As tiny as her hands are but they are dangerous she literally strangled me in my sleep! I understood her frustrations though it's not long she started her career and she wanted to focus on it for now and our marriage before having children.

Well she made it clear to me that she won't get married with a bump she want to be beautiful on her wedding day especially that she never had a white wedding before. So we had to put the plans of getting married on hold until she gives birth. Now we are 5 months pregnant and I'm grateful that not only are we this far but we are expecting twins. I'm over the moon I could kiss the sky. It's funny how thrilled I was when she told me considering that I wasn't ready to be a father when Sally was pregnant. Maybe it was never about not being ready to be a father but creating a soul with that someone who is all the joys under the sun wrapped up into one soul.

Sizwe calls me as I'm on the way to buy my woman fish. Him and I managed to move on from the Sally thing but others still hate me up to this date. I know how women are which is

expected of them to choose sides but the gents disappointed me honestly. They're acting like women. Sizwe made it known to them that he won't desert me even Babalwa knows that we are still best friends. I really appreciate his true friendship and loyalty.

"Boy."

"How are you feeling today."

Yesterday I called him and I was exploding with anger.

"I'm alive man I just still can't believe this is happening to me."

"Someone is trying to jeopardize you man."

"Who could it be though? I mean I don't have enemies."

"Mbewenhle's ex husband?"

“Ay bra that one is not that smart. Into ayaziyo nje ukulwa.” (All he knows is to fight)

“You can never know man. That accident to me is still unclear it’s not like you were distracted or anything.”

“You are giving him too much credit. He’s just a village man he’s not that brilliant.”

“Eh baba open your eyes you don’t need to be smart to use witchcraft. Remember what his father did to your woman’s twin sister.”

“Okay now you are scaring me.”

“See it’s possible! I have to go.”

“Sharp.”

I'm having doubts that Muzikayise could go to such extent but one thing I know is that he hates my guts. On arrival at the nearby shopping center I walk to a seafood restaurant and make my order. As I'm waiting for my order mom calls me.

"Mama."

"How are you my boy?"

"I'm okay Ma how are you?"

"I'm not fine yaz there's a horrible dream troubling me lately. How is makoti?"

"She's okay mama. What dream?"

"Are the twins okay?"

"Yes they're okay. Did you dream about her?"

“I’m scared something terrible is going to happen to the twins my boy.”

“What do you mean mama?”

“Someone is at the door I will call you later.”

“Ma...” The line cut before I finish talking. Now that call left me trapped in fear. I can’t bear the thought of losing inbewu yami futhi I will literally die. Wenhle would die million deaths. She’s ecstatic and looking forward to be a mother. We are both happy and can’t wait to welcome the little dumplings to the world. I get up and collect my order after my number has been called out then leave.

“Babe I’m back!”

“Lounge baby!”

I walk to the lounge and find her relaxed on the sofa watching TV. She's wearing her robe only and it's open showing her bare huge tummy. It's so beautiful and decorated with vertical line and a bit of stretch marks. I plant tender kisses on it before kissing her lips.

"Are you okay?"

"Yes baby where's my fish?"

I give her the plastic and go get the plate and lemon juice in the kitchen.

"Mmmh this smells lovely," she says taking out the fish from the takeaway and places it on the plate. I settle down next to her and stare as she sprinkles lemon juice on the fish. I'm thinking of what mom said and I don't know if I should tell her or not but the last thing I want is to worry her.

"Hayi Lisi is this a cod fish?"

I clear my throat and cross my fingers that she doesn't make a fuss about it.

"Yes baby I thought I should buy a cod fish so that you can enjoy it without any distraction of bones."

That's a lie I bought boneless fish because she makes me take out the bones from the fish for her before she eats. Yep that's what I deal with every time she craves fish which is everyday ngifela ukumithisa.

"I don't like bone free fish Lisi."

"Kodwa Wenhle it's not like you eat the bones."

"Awazi yini ukuthi imnandi inyama esemathanjeni?"

"It would've been better if you take these fish bones out for yourself." I mutter under my breath.

“Oh is that why you bought this fish?”

“Yes..No... I mean...Baby come on. This fish is nice.”

“I don’t want this one Lisi. Go and buy...”

“Hayi udlala ngami phela manje!”

“You think I’m the one who want this fish? It’s your kids not me but it’s okay yezwa. It’s fine I hope you will be happy when something happens to these babies.”

Mom’s words ring in my ears and I feel a cold rush in my intestines.

“That’s unfair dombolo lami.”

I take the car keys and go buy her the fish she wants but when I come back she’s sleeping. Kudlaliwe ngami kodwa. I decide to get started with supper because I know when she wakes up she

will be hungry. In the middle of my cooking I hear a scream and rush to the bedroom only to find her sweating and grimacing in pain.

“Baby what’s wrong?” I settle down next to her and hold her.

“I don’t know but the pain is back and it’s very intense now. What’s happening to my babies? Please don’t let anything to happen to them Lisi.”

“Don’t worry baby I’m taking you to the hospital right in this moment.”

I don’t waste time but drive her to the hospital and on arrival they rush away with her as she screams in pain. Her screams are raw, powerful and loud. I’m surprised these walls haven’t crumbled into pieces. Tears well up in my eyes and I feel my chest is closing in as it dawns on me that this could be what mom meant on the phone.

☆ Muzikayise ☆

I've got to give her mother 10/10 for giving her daughter a perfect name. It suits her in more ways than one. Uyakhazimula kuhle kwegama lakhe. Here she comes and I can't help but gawk at her. The red dress she's wearing complements her light complexion. I love how it moulds her curves and that cleavage damn! I could only dream of sliding my dick in between those beautiful tits.

"Are you still good? You look bored," she says settling down next to me. Between you and me I'm so bored but I don't mind as long as she's by my side.

"No I'm fine, that was a lovely speech."

Her face stretches into a beautiful smile.

"Thank you."

This is the most boring event ever, nothing is exciting. It doesn't help that I'm not an event person, well this kind of event. My definition of fun is different from all these glitz and glamorous things. Her sister in law is launching her wine so she invited me. I couldn't say no because we've kept things professional and for her to invite me to a personal event means a lot to me.

A waiter brings us some finger food and we indulge as we listen to Mpilenhle delivering her speech. She did well for herself I can't take that away from her but there was supposed to be a little varam. Some fun and vibe nyana but hey what do I know about wines.

"Oh there you are! I've been looking for you guys!"

Khazimula rolls her eyes at this goddess before us who looks just like her. If I knew better I'd say they're twins the only difference is the voice. She has a glass of wine in her hand and doesn't even waste time but join us.

"I'm Sinothile, her little sister." The goddess says stretching her hand for a hand shake.

“I’m Muzikayise.”

We shake hands. I wonder how did Sbusiso turned out to be the only one ugly when he has such beautiful sisters.

“It’s nice to meet you sbari.”

“Sinothile!” Khazimula warns her sister

“What?”

“He’s not my boyfriend yeka ukuphapha.” (stop being forward)

“Hawu but you two look good together. You will make cute yellow babies!”

“Sinothile shut up!”

“Come on I’m just playing you don’t have to shout. A sister can only dream to have a hot brother in law like Muzikayise.”

“You can only dream Sinothile because there’s no way a psychologist can date her patient.” Mpilenhle’s voice says behind us then she walks away to attend some of her guests.

“Don’t mind her. Rules can be broken.” Sinothile says.

I clear my throat and ask to be excused. I go to my car and lower the window on my side before lighting my cigarette. I don’t like smoking in my new car but it’s a cold evening it’s April after all. Yes that means it’s 7 months now since my divorce has been finalized. Khazimula was right she didn’t want anything from me but a divorce. To the point that she gifted Thuthuka and Ndongoloza with my cars.

I won’t lie that hurt me because it showed me how much she wants nothing to do with me. Not that I want her to want anything that has to do with me. I think I was hurt because it wasn’t a problem to give her 50% of what I own. My father raised me well, that a man provides. I knew the day I took a

wife that everything I have belong to my wife and kids. I wouldn't have wanted a housewife if I was going to use that against her. It's a man's duty to take care of his woman. So I didn't take my cars back from my sister and nephew even after they offered to give them back I decided to buy a new one.

I hear a knock on the window and open the door. She slides inside the front passenger seat and closes the door. I throw the cigarette butt and close the window. There's awkward silence. I glance at her and find her staring at me.

"Uhm I thought I should come and check you. Are you okay?"

I chuckle and shake my head. I don't know how long I'm going to keep on doing this. I'm afraid I'm already in too deep only to hurt myself.

"Yes I'm fine. I'm leaving now. Thanks for the invite."

"Oh you leaving so soon? The night is still young. Let's go inside."

“Why did you invited me?”

“What?”

“I mean why did you invited me Khazimula. I’m just your patient not your friend.”

“Oh uhm yeah next time I should keep that in mind,” she says and reaches for the door but I grasp her hand stopping her from going.

“What Muzikayise?”

I grab the back of her neck and pull her closer for a kiss. I’m expecting her to push me away but she reciprocates the kiss this time. My tongue explores her mouth and she moans with need. I feel a bolt of lightning through my body as the kiss intensifies. We are drinking each other like we have been deprived water for a decade. We pull back from each other only

to catch our breathing and devour each other again. My other hand finds its way to her breasts and caresses them.

“Come to the back seat.” I whisper against her lips and she doesn’t protest at all. The second we are at the back seat we attack each other. She’s straddling me and my hands are groping her buttocks and pulling her mound closer to my hard on but my pants and her panties seem to be a barrier. My dick is straining my pants and begging to be released. I wrench my lips from her and kiss her jaw going to her neck then stop on her cleavage.

I stretch the dress a bit and expose her boobs. Damn she’s not wearing any bra and they’re just as perfect as I imagined. Bigger than what I was used to. Mbewenhle is not that gifted in this department but that doesn’t take away the beauty of her breasts. Her boobs are the ones that can fool a guy and made him think she’s a virgin ayehlezi emile athi mpo no matter how many times I fucked her. But these...oh damn God knew what he was doing when he created women.

I lower my head her heavenly scent filling my nostrils as I nibble on her erect nipple while delving my hand underneath her

damp panties until my fingers rest on her soft mound. She moans in pleasure while running her nails on my head sending prickles of pleasure. I give the other nipple attention as I run my fingers in between her folds salivating at the feel of her juices. Her yelp fills my car when I push my finger into her hole. I remove my finger and suck it.

“You taste amazing.”

She smiles and kisses me. I release a groan as her tongue searches mine. Her hands are fiddling with my belt and in a millisecond my dick is out.

“You have a beautiful dick,” she shuts me up with a kiss before I say anything and guides herself down to my joystick. I groan in her mouth at the feel of her pussy gripping my hard meat.

“Oh my Goodness!” It comes out as a gruff whisper. Funny her moans are not as deep as her voice is. She begins to thrust in and out. Eyes are locked on each other. It’s dark but there’s light produced by the lights in the parking lot. The up and down bouncing of her boobs as she rides me has me mesmerized. Our

screams of pleasure fill the car as our mutual pleasure increases with each thrust. Her pussy grips me hard as she convulses spilling her juices on my dick. I hold her waist in place fuck her hard beneath her. It doesn't take that long for me to spill all my seeds into her.

“Ah fuck!”

I look at her and she avoids eye contact and removes herself from my dick as if there's pain caused by our joined groins.

“Oh God what have I done!”

“Mula come on don't tell me you regret this?”

“It was a mistake!”

She gets out of the car and I step out as well while buckling my belt.

“MaCebekhulu please don’t do this to me! Don’t run away from this I know you can feel the chemistry between us too!”

“Chemistry between you and me? Oh please I don’t know what I was thinking urgh!”

I’m not sure what I see in her face is disgust or what but whatever it is has my heart sinking in the pit of my stomach.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

The first thing I do when I wake up is to touch my stomach. I blow out a sigh of respite when I feel that it’s huge which means my babies are still in my tummy. I’m not sure I’m ready to hear whatever that is happening to them. I try to sit on my butt in the process I wake up Lisi who was sleeping and his head rested on my thigh.

“Baby you are awake. How are you feeling?” He gets up from the chair and helps me sit up straight.

“Please tell me that our babies are okay?”

“They are okay baby but let me call the doctor.”

He walks out and comes back few minutes later with the doctor.

“Miss Qwabe how are you feeling?”

“The pains are gone doctor. What’s wrong with me? Are my babies okay?”

“Yes the twins are okay. Your high blood pressure is okay and there’s nothing weird or questionable with your pregnancy.”

“So how do you explain the pain doctor? You saw how hysterical she was when we arrived here.”

“Maybe it was Braxton Hicks. I will keep her for further observation but you have nothing to worry about. Just have some rest.”

Thanks the heavens! I don't know what I'd be if my bundles of joy were in danger. The doctor excuses himself and leaves me with Lisi. That harrowing look plastered on his face breaks my heart.

“I'm sorry for scaring you sthandwa sami. Don't worry you heard the doctor we are fine.”

He heaves a sigh and settles on the space before me then takes my hands into his.

“Baby there's something I have to tell you.”

“What is it baby?”

I caress his cheek. He blows out another heavy sigh. I study his eyes and I can never go wrong with them. They always lay out his emotions.

“Biltong talk to me.” The tremor in my voice is so loud. His demeanor is scaring me.

“Mama called me when I went to buy the fish for you,” he says and explains to me what his mom said. Saliva vanishes in my mouth as my heart stops beating.

“I think it’s not a coincidence that the doctor can’t see anything wrong.”

“You think someone is bewitching me?”

“I don’t know baby maybe both of us.”

“Who could it be?”

“Muzikayise maybe.”

I laugh but he’s serious which makes me stop laughing.

“Babe why would Kayise do that?”

“You and I know that he hates my guts.”

“Witchcraft? He hates us but he would never do that.  
Muzikayise is a good man unfortunately he allowed me to  
change him. Maybe it’s Asalinto.”

“Never Sally would never stoop that low.”

“How can you be so sure?”

“Because I know Sally babe.”

“These kinds of things are usually done by women when they want to get back at the woman who they think took their ex boyfriends or husbands from them. Kayise would never go through that route. He’s over me I saw it right through him that he’s done fighting and wants to move on with his life.”

“His father used witchcraft to be rich. The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.”

“That’s two different things Lisi. His father wanted to be rich he wasn’t avenging or getting back at anyone. Kayise is a violent man. Maybe if we are attacked by hitmen or whatever I’d think it’s him too. You just don’t want to believe that Sally could do this.”

“Just like you know ‘Kayise’ that well I also know that Sally would never do that,” he mimics my voice at my ex husband’s name.

“Fine ke!”

“Yah fine vele!”

“Dombolo...”

“Mqwebu...”

We both say at the same time and look at each other.

“You go first.”

“Nah ladies first.”

“Oho.” I say and he chuckles. I’ve grown stubborn ever since I fall pregnant and he always gives in.

“Let’s not fight dombolo lami we are both not sure what’s happening so it unfair to insinuate that one of them is responsible for this. I will call mama when I get to our place since I left my phone and we would take it from there.”

“I also wanted to say that baby. I’m sorry for raising my voice at you.”

“I’m also sorry for shouting at you.”

He palms my face and kisses me. The next day the doctor discharges me. Once again he confirms that there’s nothing wrong with me or the babies. I’m starving so we start at nearest restaurant and have brunch.

“So what did your mom say baby.”

“Mom thinks we should...” he’s cut mid sentence by this gentleman who appears out of nowhere and holds on my stomach while praying in tongues. To say I’m scared would be an understatement. I don’t know when did Lisi get up from his chair. He grabs the guy with his clothes.

“Who the fuck gave you a right to touch my wife huh! Don’t you know that’s harassment?”

“I’m sorry man it wasn’t my intention at all to harass her. I couldn’t hold myself ngithe ngizihlele lapha ngidla umoya wase ungithuma la.” (I was sitting over there eating then the spirit sent me here)

Lisi and I look at each other then we look at the guy. I notice green and red ropes around his wrists.

“Biltong you are attracting attention to us let him go and let’s hear what he has to say.” It’s only a matter of time the manager comes here and I don’t want drama. He lets him go and they both sit down.

“Uthi umoya wenzeni?” (What does the spirit says)

“Ngithe ngizidlela lapha wathi umuntu okhulumayo angisondele ngibeke lowesimame izandla ngijule ngomkhuleko ngicele umdali kanye nezidalwa zivikele imiphefumulo ayithwele. Ngabuza ukuthi ngabekwenzenjani wathi umuntu angithi ubabawazo lezingane usembangweni wesbongo. Ngathi mina kanjani manje wathi umuntu okhulumayo kunomcimbi asanda

kuwenza ebonga abadala bakomalulme ngabe kunjalo yini?” (I was just eating over there and the spirit asked me to come here and pray for this woman asking the Lord and the ancestors to protect the souls she’s carrying. I asked what’s happening and the spirit said the father of these children is caught in between two surnames. I said how is that possible and the spirit said he just did a ceremony of gratitude for his maternal ancestors. Is that true?)

“I don’t know anything else but yes I did a ceremony...”

“Yebo phela angithi loyomcimbi iwona okhande ulaka olukhulu. Kuzoshabalala yonke into onayo ngisho imbewu yakho imbala. Kanti wena ucabanga ukuthi yonke lembewu yakho elokhu ichitheka yini isizathu salokho?” (Yes that ceremony evoked the anger of ancestors. You will lose everything you have including your offsprings. What do you think is the reason behind the miscarriages?)

“I don’t know my father nor do I know his surname. I doubt he even paid damages so I’m not wrong for using my maternal surname. My paternal ancestors have no right to fight when I

know nothing about them let alone their son who created me. Abame ngedrama!” (They should stop being dramatic)

“Akulula njengoba ucabanga unesipho owazalwa usembethe owaphiwa abakini ukuthi uvuse umuzi wabo. Lungisa izinto ngaphambi kokulahlekelwa yikho konke onakho ngisho naye umfazi lo imbala.” (It’s not easy as you think. You were born with a gift of wealth and fortune which you were given by your paternal ancestors to build their surname and homestead. Do something before you lose everything including your wife)

The gentleman walks away leaving us in fear. I’d die if I were to lose these munchies. I didn’t plan them but I knew the first day I learnt about them that they’re going to be my joy. Where do we even begin to look for his father or his paternal family? How much time do we have?

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER NINETY SIX

☆ Manelisi ☆

Life is full of shit. If this man wanted to be part of my life he would've been here. Now I have to live in fear that I could lose not only my twins but their mother as well as if I haven't lost enough. It's been a heart-rending week I've never been terror-stricken like I am in my whole life. Wenhle is in pain and I don't know how to help her. It's absolutely clear that the hospital won't help. Mama suggested that we consult and we did. The sangoma confirmed exactly what the gentleman said.

"How is she now?"

I'm on the phone with her mother. Our families know what's going on and there's no day that passes without them checking on us.

"She's sleeping mama."

“Manelisi kuncono ehlani ngizokwazi ukunakekela uumtanami.”  
(I think it’s best that you two come here so that I can take care  
of my baby)

“Ma I know how to take care of my wife!”

I heave a sigh

“I’m sorry mama I didn’t mean to shout.”

“You are frustrated

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scared and confused I understand my boy which is why you  
guys should come here where your families are. You two need  
our support.”

“I hear you mama. I have to go.”

“Tell her to call me when she wakes up.”

“I will do.”

I hang up and sigh. My phone rings again.

“Mama.”

“Hey my boy how are you.”

“I’m trying mama and you?”

“Sivukile baba. Your father and I were thinking why don’t you come home with makoti. You don’t need to be alone in this difficult time my boy.”

“Mam Thembeke also said that.”

“She’s right. How is she today?”

“She’s been sleeping the whole day. Last night she was in intense pain.”

“Oh kwaze kwanzima. The sangoma didn’t give you anything?”

“No mama he didn’t.”

“Come back home. We will figure everything out together.”

“I hear you mama. Goodbye.”

I hang up and go to the bedroom. I find my woman on the phone.

“Come on I’m fine...don’t do that please...I love you too.” She hangs up and looks at me.

“Ubani lomthandayo.” I ask as I settle down on the bed next to her.

“It’s Mpilenhle. She wants to fetch me. I don’t know where does she get the idea that you don’t want me to go home.”

“She doesn’t like me.”

“That’s not true baby. Mpilenhle is just...she’s my father’s daughter. A bit uptight.”

“How are you feeling now?”

“A bit better. Stuurman hasn’t called?”

Remember the PI? I asked him to search for my father of which it’s going to be hard because there’s nothing tangible that we have to connect us to him.

“No he hasn’t. I’m losing patience baby. I can’t watch you in pain anymore.”

“I’m also scared I just wish you listened to me when I told you to look for your father.”

I chuckle in disbelief and look at her.

“Are you blaming me?”

“Yes Manelisi unenkani kabi wena if you listened to me we wouldn’t be going through this! I swear I won’t forgive you if something happens to our children!” (You are stubborn)

Now that hurts so bad. I get up from the bed and walk away. I can’t believe she’s blaming me for something I have no control over. I need some air to clear my head. I take her car keys and leave. I find myself parked before Sizwe’s house. There are cars parked outside the gate and I spot Sally’s car among the cars. The last time I heard she was in East London when did she come back? Why are they here? Oh yes Babalwa’s birthday! Maybe being here is not a good idea. It’s not like Sizwe is going to have time to listen to me vent and comfort me. I hear Sizwe calling me just as I’m about to make the u-turn.

“Dude come on in. Why are you leaving?”

I turn off the engine and step out of the car. We share a side hug.

“Man I don’t think it’s a good idea to be here.”

“Ay come in bra.”

“Sizwe...”

“Woza!”

We walk through and go to the back yard where everyone is.

“How are you holding up.”

“I’m breathing man.”

“Wifey?”

“She’s alive.”

“Oh hell no! What is he doing here?” Nana screams and people turn to look at me.

“Sizwe I’m not in a good space. I can’t deal with Nana’s drama.”

I turn around and walk back. As I’m about to open my woman’s car I hear Sally calling out for me.

“Hey.”

“Hello.”

She walks closer and stands before me. She looks better than I last saw her.

“You don’t have to go because of me.”

“Your friends don’t want me there.”

“I didn’t ask them to choose my side.”

“It’s fine don’t worry. I have to go.”

“Are you okay?”

“Yes I’m fine.”

“You don’t look fine Mane. I know that things didn’t work out between us but I’m here for you.”

“Thanks but I’m okay.”

The hug catches me by surprise but I reciprocate it. She doesn’t break the hug completely and we are staring at each other. In a

blink of an eye her lips are on me. I push her and catch someone on the corner of my eye. It's Nana.

“Wait you... you did that so that your friend can take a picture of us?”

“What no Mane! I don't know what Nana is up to....”

“You are lying Asalinto! You want to get back at me and ruin things between me and my woman!!”

“Of course not Manelisi! I would never stoop that low! I don't know what got into me for kissing you I'm sorry!”

“Tell your friend to delete that picture because I swear Asalinto I'm coming for all of you nx!”

I get in the car and drive to Wenhle's place. I'm boiling with anger WTF? I find her sitting on the lounge with tears streaming down her face. My heart stops beating as it hit me that I left her

alone while she's in pain. How could I be so heedless and inconsiderate?

"Baby."

I sit on the couch next to her and stare at her. Oh no please don't tell me that they've already posted the picture and it's trending.

"It's not what you think baby. She kissed me but I didn't kiss her back. They want to break us apart please don't allow them to come between us."

"Who kissed you?"

Eh so she doesn't know?

"Sally."

I explain to her everything that happened. I don't know what they are planning it's better to come clean now.

"I swear baby I'd never hurt you like that especially not with Sally..."

"I know."

"Huh?"

"I know my heart is safe with you because you protect it as if it's yours but we have a bigger problem."

"What is it baby?"

She points the letter on the coffee table next to the trunk.

"That letter has the answers we have been looking for about your father."

☆ Manelisi ☆

I stare at the letter next to the trunk on the coffee table then back at Wenhle. Ever since our lives have been thrown into this turmoil there's nothing I have been praying for more than anything as finding the man who created me but seeing her demeanor right now is terrifying the hell out of me. What is in this letter that has her sinking in deep trepidation.

"Where did you find this letter?"

"In this trunk."

"You are telling me this now?"

When she refused to take this trunk the day she gave me I was hurt because I meant it when I said there's no one I'd give my late mom's jewellery then her. Last year on her birthday I gave her back as one of the gifts. How come she's only telling me

now about a letter when it's been 5 months I gave her this trunk?

"Yes because I've just discovered the letter now. Not that I didn't appreciate your gift mqwebu wami. You never gave me time to open it. Remember after showering me with gifts you took me to Cape Town where we spent almost a month. Then we came back when I was sick only to find out I'm pregnant. I had to wrap my mind around the fact that I'm pregnant not only with one baby but two. My career being derailed on the other side while trying our best to enjoy this pregnancy. I never got time to open it until today. I'm sorry sthandwa sami."

"It's okay baby you don't have to apologize. I understand so what does this letter says? Who wrote it?"

"Your mom wrote it I think. Take it and read."

I stretch my hand to take the letter but my hand shakes terribly as my heart thuds harder against my chest.

“Just tell me what it says baby.” I can hear the tremor in my voice.

“Read it sthandwa sami.”

“Ngiyasaba Wenhle.” (I’m sacred) I confess in a whisper.

“Come here.”

I inch closer to her and she takes my face in between her warm soft palms before kissing me. She’s plundering my mouth like the world is ending and when she pulls back we are both gasping for air.

“I’ve got you baby no matter what. Take this letter and read it yourself. I’m right here with you. Whatever this letter carries we are going to deal and tackle it together okay?”

I nod my head and kiss her nose before blowing out a sigh of courage. I take the letter and feel my woman’s hand stroking my back as I begin to read the letter.

'Dear Manelisi

Son I don't know where to begin or how should I lay out everything in a way that you can understand but first things first let me apologize for being a bad mom to you. I'm sorry my boy I was never there for you as a mother should be. I'm sorry that I was a huge disappointment and I have no excuse why I neglected you. One thing that I want you to know is that everything I did it wasn't because I don't love you or I hate you. Ngibe isahluleki sikamama angikubeke lokho kucace. I never deserved you from the first place.

I can imagine how hard it must have been for you that not only were you neglected by me but you never knew your father. It's all because of me boy and for that I'm very sorry. I didn't know who your father is and that is one thing a mother isn't proud to admit. It didn't help that you look nothing like the men I've slept with during that time. I ignored this issue as you grow older until your grandma told me how important it was for me to know your father because you were born with a gift of fortune which you got from your father's side. Mina azange

ngibone ukuthi wazalwa wembethe futhi abahlengikazi abangitshelanga lutho.

I didn't know where should I begin to find your father because of the long list of the men I had fun with. There was also a married man. It was not easy to claim that you are his child without proof. The affair already ended long time ago and there was no way he could've believed me. You were already a teenage by that time. I don't know if it was coincidental or it was God's way but this other day I met this friendly woman. We kind of clicked and became friends only to find out that she was the married man's brother's wife. During one of my visit in her home I saw a picture of an old woman who looked exactly like you. Even those cute small eyes of yours and the dimples. She had a beautiful smile like yours. It was like I was seeing my son in an older version of a woman. I knew from then who your father is.

The married man is your father. I told your grandma who your father is but she wasn't happy as I thought she would be. I couldn't understand until she told me that your father was contemplating of sacrificing one of his own blood to be rich. I couldn't risk telling him about you especially knowing that you were born with a gift of fortune. Chances of him choosing you

as his sacrifice were higher. You didn't have a relationship with him it was going to be easy to choose a child he conceived outside of his marriage then the other children he raised. I think he couldn't kill his own blood hence he chose one of the twins around the village. That what your grandma told me anyway and you know as much as she was a prophet she needed tangible proof to reveal the truth but unfortunately they caught her and I believe they are the reason behind her impairment.

I knew then that I don't want you near that man he's evil my boy. I couldn't tell you everything because you were still young and I wanted to protect you from this. I was waiting for the right time to tell you but AIDS got me before you were old enough. I can't rely on your grandma telling you because she can't talk hence I'm writing this letter to you and hope that one day when you are old enough you will come across it and read it because truth be told you deserve to know the truth about your father in spite of everything that happened. It's up to you if you want to build a relationship with him or not.

If it was for me you wouldn't dare because I fear what will happen to you when he has to sacrifice again. When you get rich through ukuthwala the sacrifice never ends. Your father is Khubonye Maseko. The richest man in the village and he's

Induna. Don't let his wealth fool you my boy he sacrificed a little girl. He's monstrous and evil! I'm sorry I didn't get time to sit you down and tell you this face to face. I hope one day you will forgive me for failing you. I wasn't a good mother but I'm hopeful that I would be a good guardian angel to you. You're far greater than what you think you are don't let any situation kill your dreams. Rise above the obstacles thrown at you. Mom loves you so much boy.

Love Mom'

By the time I'm done reading the letter my eyes are moist with tears. I look at Wenhle next to me.

"Khubonye Maseko."

She nods her head with a faint smile as tears roll down her tears stained cheeks.

"I'm Muzikayise's brother." It comes out as a whisper. I can't believe this, it even sounds weird rolling out of my mouth.

“Yeah baby and my biggest worry is that will they accept you after everything that has happened?”

“God hates me out of all people in this world that evil man has to be my father!”

“Even in jail he’s still breaking our hearts into pieces. The thought that your grandma was the one accused of taking my twin sister while she tried to save her in the process she became impaired makes my heart bleed.”

“I don’t want to be a Maseko baby. I hate that his wicked blood is running through my veins!”

I know I sound childish but out of the surnames in the world or the Maseko surnames in the world did it have to be this one. I despise that man with everything in me. He’s the reason my grandma never got to enjoy her life to the fullest. He’s the reason she was accused of taking Wenhle’s twin sister because he pinned his atrocious actions to her. I hate him!

“No one would be proud to be the son of that fiendish man but you are not him babe and you will never be. Come here.”

She pulls me in for a tight embrace and I sink in her warmth. How I wish I have a choice to just go on with life and pretend that I didn't just discern the truth about my father and who is he. Lucklessly I have to go through this regardless of how I feel about that man in order to save my babies and my wife. I'd go to the ends of the world to protect them in every possible way. I pull back from the embrace.

“Let's waste no time baby and go to KZN. We have to get over and done with this.”

“Now?”

“Yes.”

“Okay let me take a bath.”

“Don’t worry I will run it for you.”

I get up and go to the bathroom to run the water in the bathtub before going to the bedroom where I take out something for her to wear. Once I’m done I head back to the lounge and find her grimacing in pain.

“Babe.”

“I’m fine don’t worry.”

“You don’t have to pretend. I know that you are in pain and I’m sorry that I’m useless but I promise you baby if he’s really my father I would do whatever it takes to save you guys okay.”

She nods her head and I kiss her forehead before enveloping her in my arms. The turn out of events is a mind fuck but I have to be strong for the both of us. Not only is she suffering emotional distress but physical pain as well. It’s heavy and taking a huge toll on her more then it can ever be to me.

“Let’s get you out of these pjs.”

I undress her and pick her up then shuffle to the bathroom where I gently put her in the bathtub before closing the taps. I take her wash cloth and her soap then begin to bath her.

“Biltong.”

“Yes.”

“How do you feel about your mom now that you know the truth about your father.”

I look up from her thigh that I’m lathering up with soap to her beautiful face. No amount of pain nor fear takes away her beauty. Muhle umfazi wami bafethu!

“I’m still angry at her for dying and leaving me alone with this shit. Now I’m the one who’s suffering and have to fix things she should have fixed herself before she died. How do I begin to

face those people? Especially after the way I was conceived and took my brother's wife?"

"It's unfair baby I know but I get where she's coming from. I wouldn't want my children near the kind of man Khubonye is too. You should've heard him Lisi, there was no hint of remorse in his voice the first time I heard about him talking about my twin sister. There's no doubt that he would've sacrificed you because you were born with a gift of fortune. I understand why your mom kept you away from that man."

I blow out a sigh. A part of me also understands but I hate how everything is my responsibility to fix now.

"I also do baby and I forgive her on that part but that doesn't change the fact that she neglected me. She was busy chasing dicks when she could've took care of me since she knew very well that she was the only parent I had. Didn't I deserve to be loved and cared for?"

"Of course you did and she made it clear in the letter that her behavior was never about you but her baby. She failed you and

she acknowledged that. How long will you harbour hate for her? I feel like hating someone who is no longer in this world is not beneficial instead it steals your happiness. We have to move on from things we can't change sthandwa sami and one thing I can tell you is that there's always a silver lining in every bad situation. Maybe this discovery is your chance at moving on from everything you've been through throughout your life. Maybe it's time to make peace with the past and go on with life."

I can't dispute what she's saying because it makes sense. I'm also tired of carrying this hate and pain. I take the towel and help up before drying her body. Once I'm done I carry her to the bedroom and dress her up into her panties and her grey Nike warm tracksuits over her vest. This is one of the coldest winter ever and she gets cold easily so I have to ensure that she's warm. I slide the socks in her tiny feet and sneakers before tying the laces.

"Manelisi."

"Sthandwa sami."

“Ngiyakuthanda.”

I can't help a smile that embrace my face. She knows how to warm my heart without me hinting.

“I love you more baby.”

“I'm sorry that I blamed you. I was way out of line and egocentric. It's not your fault we are going through this.”

“But if I listened to you...”

“No Manelisi I shouldn't have said that. You had your reasons why you didn't want to search for him. It's unfair of me to blame you I'm really sorry Dubandlela or is it Ngcamane now?”

“Too soon baby, very too soon.”

“It even sound weird calling you like that.”

“What if that bastard deny me?”

“I doubt he will deny you. Muzikayise once told me that his father wanted boys then daughters. He’s the typical village man who believes that girls can’t lead and grow the family legacy. Our biggest problem since he’s in jail is will his wife accept you considering how you were conceived? Muzikayise is now the head of the family will he welcome you after the pain we put him through?”

“Let’s not think much about it baby. We will deal with everything when we get there. I’m going to take a quick shower.”

I kiss her forehead and skip to the bathroom. When I come back to get dressed she’s packing our clothes into a luggage.

“Babe come on stop overworking yourself. I will pack relax on the bed.”

“Okay.”

I help her sit down on the bed as she bites her bottom lip. I know that she’s trying to stop herself from moaning out of pain because she doesn’t want to worry me. I really appreciate that she cares about me so much that she doesn’t want anything to hurt me or worry me but at times it doesn’t sit well with me to see how far she can go just to protect me from any pain. Just like the good times and joy we’ve shared together throughout our relationship this is our pain to share together as well and I know that we will come out stronger than before. When I’m done getting dressed I pack our clothes and everything we are going to need.

“What else will you need baby?”

“I think you have packed everything sthandwa sami.”

“You don’t need your weaves?”

She giggles and shakes her head.

“I don’t think I will have time to beautify myself. Pack enough beanies. Msinga is very cold it’s not different from Johannesburg. Please give me one to cover these sleeping knots.”

I do as she says and when I finish we leave. It’s 7pm and I’m driving a machine so by 10:30pm we will be at Msinga.

“Are you not hungry?”

“I haven’t eaten the whole day. I don’t have appetite.”

“Why you didn’t tell me? It’s not healthy for you to not eat. The babies are hungry.”

“If I’m not hungry I’m sure they are not hungry too.”

“There’s no such thing. Let’s start at any restaurant and eat.”

“Just buy me a pie in some garage I will be fine.”

“You are not going to eat the pie inside the car.”

“Haibo bhuti this is my car.”

“Who cleanse it?”

“It’s you baby but I pay you njena!”

I giggle as I pull over at Engene garage. I’m thinking of doubling the blow jobs she pays me with after washing her car. They’re so damn amazing! I can’t get enough. She’s becoming a pro in this and it quite funny that she was plainly clueless at first. Now she fallet me like she went to school for it. I don’t know what blows my mind away more between her blow jobs and the sweetness of her pussy. The grip on my dick yeses! It’s ike a farmer milking a cow. I feel a twinge in my dick at these raunchy thoughts invading mind

“What flavor do you want?”

“Pepper steak or chicken mayo.”

I take my wallet and step out of the car.

“Sure man. Fill it up until you can’t anymore.” I say to the petrol attendant and walk to the store to buy the pies and plenty of goodies. After paying I head back with the plastics and find the petrol attendant already waiting for me.

“How much?” I ask as I give Wenhle the plastics inside the car.

“R700.”

I take out 4 R200 notes and tell him to keep the change. He thanks me profusely before fetching my slip while I get in the car.

“So many pies Lisi.”

“And you going to finish them all. Angidlali nawe futhi.” (I’m not playing with you)

She looks at me and bursts into laughter. The petrol attendant gives me the slip then I hit the road. I love and enjoy long drive with my baby. This one is not different but the countless stops are tiring.

“It’s your babies Lisi it’s not me.”

“You always blame my kids even if it’s not them.”

“You know I started peeing frequently after falling pregnant.”

“Whatever. Buckle up please.”

She does as told as I start the engine and when she’s done I drive off. The long drive is filled with banter

stolen kisses in between and laughter. I thank God that she doesn’t get sick on the way and when we arrive at home my

parents are already waiting for us. I had already informed them that we are coming when we were on the way. Blessing is also home with her little Indian kids. We exchange greetings and settle down on the sofa.

“How are you feeling makoti?”

“I feel better Ma thank you for asking.”

“Blessing go and dish up for them.”

“She’s the daughter in law why I am the one who should be serving her?”

I just don’t understand why Blessing doesn’t like Wenhle when she’s actually the one that dumped me for a rich Indian guy.

“She’s sick Blessing...”

“No it’s okay Ma. I’m not hungry we ate on the way.”

“I’m glad you are back home son. I was just telling your mother that you should come home so that we can figure out everything together,” Baba says

“She told me baba. Actually we also have news but we are not sure how accurate they are.” I explain further and they are beyond the word shocked.

“Yhuu hayi kodwa uDumazile wehlule!” Mama says and claps her hands in shock. Dumazile is my mom’s name.

“How would we face those people after you stole their son’s wife Manelisi?”

“With all due respect baba, he didn’t steal me. I’m not a possession that can be stolen. I’m a human being and I made my own choices...”

“The same choices that made you sleep with brothers?”  
Blessing throws her snide comment making my blood to boil with anger.

“You are the last one to judge wena Blessings. You left me for a rich man. Ikula nakhona unesibindi yaz awusabi ngisho isifo zamandiya uroti!” (An Indian moreover you have a nerve and you are not even afraid of Indians disease called roti)

“Wait you two were seeing each other?” Mama asks with stupefaction written on her face. On the other side baba fuming with anger. Shit what have I done?

“You fucked my daughter Manelisi?”

“Cha baba...”

“What do you mean cha!!”

“Calm down Mthiyane. This is not the right time to talk about this we have a pressing issue here.” Mam tries to placate him

but he's breathing fire that I think it's better we sleep in my grams house.

"I'm sorry about that baby."

I say as I pull the covers for her to get inside the bed.

"It's okay baby."

I slide next to her and she nestles on my chest. I kiss her forehead and wrap my arms around her body. I love her warmth against me.

"So what are we going to do?"

"I'm thinking of hearing everything from the horse's mouth first before going to the Maseko homestead. So I'm going to pay the evil man a visit in jail."

“That’s a good idea. Just so you know roti is not a disease but an Indian flatbread,” she says and I laugh.

“Haisuka what kind of a bread called roti? To me it sounds like a disease!”

Now it’s her turn to laugh. Her laughter is music in my ears. I can never measure up to how she always makes me laugh. My woman is funny at times but I try my level best to make her laugh and happy all the time.

.....

As I wait I feel my whole body slightly shaking out of anxiety. I don’t know how will this jailbird receive me. There’s a part of me that wants him to acknowledge me and my mother so that we can get over the part of searching for my father and work on talking to the Masekos to do the ceremonies for me so that my wife can heal already. It brings me pain to watch her in pain and have nothing to do to help her. But the other part of me wants nothing to do with this family. There’s so much complications and pain involved in this whole thing.

He's brought in and our eyes lock as he walks closer to where I'm seated waiting for him. I don't know him that much but I can tell that jail has sucked out the life in him. He's only existing because he's still breathing but there's no life in him. It's like he's waiting for the day he dies. He's not tearing his eyes away from me until he settles down. We have a stare competition I think he's trying to put a name on my face but I doubt he knows me.

"Who..who are you?" He asks and licks his cracked lips. The dryness of his lips subconsciously makes me lick mine.

"What kind of Induna that doesn't know his people?"

"Those people never deserved me to know them. They are bunch of disrespectful people who looked down on people when they are poor and when they're wealthy they worship the ground they walk on as if they never once look down on them."

I know exactly what he's talking about. I guess we have same experience on that. That village is full of shit headed people if

that even makes sense. No one can understand how deep my love is for my wife. She's the first human being to actually acknowledge and love me in that village. I'm not counting the Zondos because they're family.

"Is that why you opted to make a sacrifice to be rich?"

"Yes but I regret doing that with everything in me. I wish I could take back the hands of time and make better decisions....wait who are you and why are you here?"

"I'm Manelisi Maphumulo."

"Oh."

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER NINETY SEVEN

He might not know me face to face but he knows about me. I can tell with that scowl on his face and it's understandable.

"What do you want here?"

"Do you know Dumazile Maphumulo?"

I take out the picture of my mom and slides it across to his direction. He looks at it then me.

"How do you know her?"

"She's my mother. Kanti you never knew where did she stay?"

"Dundee if I'm not mistaken. That where we met. I think she was staying in a friend's place that what she told me if I remember correctly."

“Oh well she lived everywhere it suited her. I know that she also had friends in Dundee. She left a note saying you’re my father.” There’s no time to run around the bush I’m cutting straight to the chase. Just like the picture I slide the letter across his direction on the desk. He fixes his eyes on the letter. I watch as different expressions clouds his face as he reads the letter. When he’s done he looks up at me.

“I... I didn’t know that your grandma is Dumazile’s mother.”

“What kind of relationship did you two have if you knew nothing about her?”

“It was just an affair Manelisi. I didn’t care much about where’s she’s from and whatsoever.”

“So what do you say about all of this.”

“I’m beyond shocked. Jesus! I need time to digest all of this.”

“I don’t have time! My wife is in pain and she could lose my twins!”

“Yey don’t raise your voice at me I’m your father show me some respect!” Now that catches me by surprise. He blows a sigh and looks at me.

“Son I’ve messed up and there’s no way I can right my wrongs because the damage is beyond. I know you hate me for what I did to your grandma and you have every right to do so. Izone zami azixoleleki ndodana but I do acknowledge you as my son and I’m willing to try whatever I can to do right by you. Your mom had no right to keep you away from me. I’m a monster I know but there’s no way I could’ve killed my own son. You don’t know how happy I would have been to know that I have another son. I was so happy when Muzikayise was born because I had given up that I will ever have boys. I’m so angry at your mother for what she did!” (My sins are unforgivable)

“Do you blame her? You are evil baba!”

“Boy I’m not proud of what I did and there’s no day that passes without regretting it. What I did is unforgivable but I can only hope that God has forgiven me since I confessed my sins and now I’m punished for them.”

“What makes you so sure that I’m your son? Don’t you want DNA tests done?”

“Just like your mom said you look exactly like my mother that’s why I asked who are you because I know that there’s no son out there my mother kept from us. If you want to do the DNA test you can do it I’m not stopping you.”

I can’t believe I’m staring at my father. I also don’t need DNA test. The fact he acknowledges me as his son is enough to me.

“The reason that brought me here ngisembangweni wesibongo. Things are spiraling out of control. At work I was accused of stealing money. Now I’m under suspension while there’s an investigation going on. My fiancée is pregnant with twins and she’s in pain. She could lose the twins. We consulted and the

sangoma said there have to ceremonies to be performed for me.” (I’m caught up between two surnames)

“I understand my boy and I wish I’m not locked up. It won’t be easy considering how everything came about but I will phone home and let my wife know.”

“When would that be? I don’t have time my wife is sick and she could lose the twins anytime.”

“Before the end of the day she will know. Just to give her time to digest everything you can go tomorrow morning to her.”

Tomorrow is too far but it’s better then nothing. Time is up but he makes a promise that he will talk to his wife and everything will be okay. When I get home I fill in my parents about everything and we agree that tomorrow morning we are heading to Maseko homestead. I decide to lie on the bed and video call my baby. I drove her to her parents home before I went to see my father.

“Hey baby.” It’s only been hours but I feel like I haven’t seen her for days and I missed her so much.

“Hey sthandwa sami. How are you feeling now.”

“It’s not that bad. Mama uqeda kungithoba kusasenywana. How did it go?”

“He agrees that he’s my father. I look like his mother and he doesn’t need proof. He said he will phone his wife to expect me tomorrow morning.”

“That’s great baby at least we now know that he is your father.”

“Yeah and you were right about how badly he wanted sons. He said mom had no right to keep me away from him. He would have never sacrificed me to become rich.”

“How does that make you feel?”

“I won’t lie to you baby and say I’m not wondering how my life would’ve turned out had mom told him about me because I do. The way he welcomed and accepted me somehow it touched me deep in my heart. I was expecting him to side with Muzikayise you know.”

“I feel you baby at the end of the day he’s your father so it’s natural to feel something for him regardless of what he did.”

“True let’s hope tomorrow his wife won’t give me a hard time. I didn’t choose to be born under such circumstances.”

“Eish baby let’s hope. What are you doing there? I miss you.”

“Want me to come ngizophuza amanzi e-orange?” (to come and kiss you)

“I want more than that I want the bhebhanize joystick

” she says with a sultry voice and I can’t help but feel my rod reacting inside my pants.

“Come and fetch me. I’m in an adventurous mood today. I want us to chase an orgy on top of the mountain.”

I let out a strained sound. We haven’t been intimate for over a week since she’s been sick. She’s tempting me but we can’t risk like that she hasn’t healed yet.

“No baby let’s wait a bit until you heal.”

“Manje ngiyenzenjani lenqanyelo?” (What should I do with the itch?)

“Let me help you reach an orgy...” she cuts me short

“Oh so you are refusing to feed my cravings?”

Here she goes! Now she’s going to start emotional blackmailing me if she’s not going to cry.

“Baby come on...”

“You think I want to fuck on top of the mountain? No I don’t want to break my legs while fucking on top of the mountain. I make ends meet with these legs they are my bread and butter. It’s your children that want sex on the mountain not me!”

I crack into laughter. She always blames my kids but this is on another level. What do my kids know about sex?

“Hayi dombolo lami you had this freak side of you way before you got pregnant so please don’t put a blame on my kids. Ubafundisa ukusa.” (You are teaching them to be naughty) I say and annoy her even more. She ends the video call and when I try to call her back the call sends me straight to voicemail. Yah neh!

It’s a next day and we just arrived at the Maseko homestead. We are not welcomed their demeanor says it all but since they haven’t chased us away I guess they are willing to hear us.

“We are sorry to come by unannounced but we believe that Mr Maseko has informed you already about the issue at hand which brought us here.” Baba

“Yes my brother told me and to be quite honest we are still shocked about these news. You should’ve given us time to digest this as a family before coming here.” The man that looks like my father says next to Muzikayise who’s staring at me. The malevolence glowing in his eyes scares me.

“No babomncane they shouldn’t even bothered to come here because they are not welcomed here!” Muzi bellows angrily.

“Muzi calm down please...”

“No my son is right! Angilifuni levezandlebe la kwami!” (I don’t want this bastard child in my house)

“Maseko family I understand your anguish. This is a lot to take in but please let’s bear in mind that in spite of everything that

happened there are two innocent unborn babies that we have to think about. His fiancée is...”

“You mean the same fiancée he stole from my son? Haibo yaz ninemihlola Zondo! Where do you get the nerve to come here and want us to welcome this boy as a Maseko after everything he’s done to my son? This boy has disrespected us countless times! He’s not welcomed here!” (You are unbelievable Zondo)

“Sisi cela wehlise umoya and think about the innocent...” Muzikayise’s uncle tries to calm down his brother’s wife but she’s hearing none. I’m surprised I haven’t seen steam coming out of her ears. (Sis please calm down)

“Yey I don’t care about those cockroaches! They might as well die!”

“My brother asked me to come here and ensure that everything goes well. I can’t tolerate this noise sisi. You are angry I understand but we haven’t even given the boy a chance to apologize. I’m sure he also has something to say for himself.”

Of course if I knew that we are brothers I would've never did what I did to him.

“Hayi babomncane he want to say something now because he needs our help? There’s nothing we want to hear from him. In fact get out of my mother’s house!”

“Muzikayise!”

“What babomncane? Why does it seems like you have forgotten your place here? You are a leader and a head of the family in your house not here! Awuzukushaya umuthetho la! Baba left me in charge I’m the head of this family now and I say umsebenzi wokwamukela lesihlama kanye nokulungisa ukuzalwa kwakhe embethe izowenzeka ngifile!!” (You won’t make rules here.....the ceremonies to welcome this poop and bringing back the gift of fortune he was born with will be performed over my dead body)

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

Now it makes sense why MaMngomezulu said I was meant to be a Maseko bride. As much as we said we don't care about what the future holds for us and we are going to enjoy our love like the world is ending somehow this Maseko bride thing was niggling me at the back of my mind. I couldn't bare the thought of losing Lisi and going back to Kayise. There's nothing that could ever work out between me and him. We have hurt each other badly and us being a couple again didn't make sense especially not when Lisi is still alive and kicking.

See Manelisi is my lifeline I'd choose him in many worlds I'd find him in. All that I am belongs to him. He makes my soul complete. God I love that herd boy and now I know that meeting him was no coincidence. Our paths were actually meant to cross because we were always meant to fall on each other's arms. I've been waiting for his call to let me know how did it go with the Masekos but it's almost the noon now and he hasn't called.

“He will call stop worrying.”

“He sent me an sms Isisa when he went there. It was around 9 but it’s going for 12 o’clock now still he hasn’t called.”

“Maybe they are still discussing friend. This matter is very delicate and complicated. He will call when they are done. Now eat as a Godmother I won’t watch you starve my kids,” she says shoving a plate of pap and chicken stew in my hands. The sight of chicken stew makes my insides turn as a foam fill my mouth. I push the plate and leap to my feet rushing outside to puke.

“Friend are you okay?” Isisa says rushing to me with a jug of water.

“Yeah friend. Water please.”

I open my hands and she pours the water into my palms. I drink from my palms and rinse my mouth before splattering some on my face.

“Your god children hate chicken.”

“I’m sorry I didn’t know, I mean the pizza I bought you yesterday was chicken flavored.”

“I eat anything that is chicken flavored but not the real chicken.”

“Is everything okay?” Mom’s voice is laced with worry. She’s coming from collecting woods in the forest.

“Yes mama.”

We walk inside the house while mom goes to put the bundle of wood where we put things to make fire next to the kraal.

“What should I make for you then?”

“You don’t have to slave around friend you are my brother’s wife not mine.”

She giggles

“Come on I’m just being nice to you because you are not feeling well. Your mom is the best mother in law ever. She doesn’t slave me around but I can’t wait for us to buy our house. We can’t enjoy sex in your parents house.”

I giggle as I settle down on my bed.

“I just wish Lonhle can let me help you guys with the funds of buying the house.”

“He’s determined to get things done by himself. It’s like accepting help will make him weak or something.”

She lies next to me and massages my tummy.

“He doesn’t have to prove to anyone that he’s a man and he can provide for his family. I’m his sister for crying out loud and I

would really appreciate to help. Is the butchery doing great though?”

“Yes now it’s making a lot of money since he revamped it and turned it into a shisanyama.”

“That’s great friend. He should also sell alcohol. The years I spent selling in my father’s shop I can testify that alcohol makes a lot of money.”

“My brother in law has alcohol sale license connection. He’s working on that soon he will be selling alcohol as well.”

“Awesome he will make a lot of money after that. I also want to own a club someday.”

“In no time you would be owning it. You make a lot of money with your running friend.”

“I’m worried though if I will be able to continue after giving birth.”

“Of course you will friend. One thing I like about your career is that age doesn’t matter. As long as you still want to continue you will and still win those golds.”

“Maybe pregnancy will somehow affect my ability to run again. Look at how swollen my feet are. I’m scared Isisa.” The last sentence comes out as a whisper.

I’ve never been scared like this in my whole life. This pregnancy comes with complications that no doctor can cure nor see. Anything is possible.

“It’s normal to have swollen feet during pregnancy. So your swollen feet has nothing to do with complications. You are going to have a smooth pregnancy and delivery as soon as the Masekos accept Manelisi. Stop stressing my friend. See that Jamaican athlete you love, she won after many people thought she won’t because she’s now a mother. You can also do it.”

“Your friend is right baby. Everything will go well don’t worry,” Mama says walking inside of my bedroom.

“I will go make some sandwich for you.” Isisa gets on her feet and walks away as mom lowers herself on my bed.

“How are you feeling now?”

“For now I feel better.”

“Manelisi hasn’t called?”

“No he hasn’t. I’m worried mama.”

“Let’s hope when he calls he will give us good news. Your sister is on the way.”

“Please tell me she’s coming with Benhle because I really missed that boy.”

“Yes she’s coming with all the kids. Where’s your father?”

“I heard him talking to Isisa that he’s going to see his sister in Ladysmith. Apparently she’s not feeling well.”

“Haibo uMusa actually went ahead with this! How can he go to see his sick sister and leave his sick daughter!”

“Mama I think I should stop coming here.”

“No baby don’t say that. This is your home.”

“I don’t feel like it’s home especially if coming here causes trouble between you and baba.”

“There’s no trouble...”

“I heard you guys arguing last night.”

Ever since I arrived baba hasn't asked how I am but mom told him that I'm not feeling well. I'm afraid that I'm starting to accept that he will never forgive me. Not even my health nor his grandchildren that are in danger moves him.

"Sisi don't worry about anything that is happening between me and your father. We argue and make out you have no right to blame yourself for the arguments between my husband and I. Married couple argue all the time and you know how stubborn your father can be."

"You were arguing about me mama. How can I not blame myself?"

She blows a sigh and looks at me. Sadness is plastered on her face.

"What does he wants from me kahle kahle? Haven't I apologized enough?"

"He will come around don't worry."

“Tell me did he ever forgive me for the humiliation I brought in this family? I feel like this is not about me running away only. It’s more than that. He’s still hung on up on the mortification you guys went through after what I did.”

“You know how your father is baby. He cares more about what people say than anything else. Your marriage made him to calm down and move on from what you did well at least that what I thought. So when you left people talked ill about us. We were labeled as failure of parents. It was like you left your husband to gallivant and whore around with other men. As your parents we were responsible for that because it meant we never raised you well. See all of that affected him badly.”

“Trust me I understand what I put you through mama and it wasn’t my intention at all. It took me time to forgive myself. Every single day I beat myself up about it until coach emphasized the importance of forgiving myself for the mistakes I’ve made in my life. I guess it’s unfair to expect everyone to forgive me while it took time for me to do the same but I was hopeful that we can try to move on you know. How long will we dwell on the past?”

The same people that judged me

called me names and said you guys are failures now when they see me it's like they are seeing God. They praise the ground I walk on. People's opinions don't matter mama look now they've moved on. I'm sure they've even forgotten about that but baba is still hung up on what they said. Abantu amaxoki and if we conform to the society rules then we will never live our lives to how we see it fit. Our lives will always be directionless because we allow people basehlise basenyuse ngezimpilo zethu. I made a vow to myself to never allow what the society say about me destroy me the day I almost killed myself. They move on with their lives while you are still...."

"Wait you wanted to kill yourself?" Mama

"What?" Mpilenhle's voice fills my bedroom the moment she enters. The dejection written all over their faces makes me regret saying that. My sister sits down on the bed and they both look at me expectantly.

"I was just kidding you should've seen your faces!" I say laughing but they are looking at me with straight faces. Lord why did I say that?

“Mbewenhle we are not kids!”

“Hello to you too sis.”

She greets both of us then they focus on me again. It’s absolutely clear that they won’t let this go. So I tell them the truth which makes them more sad. Mom is even crying. Sigh!

“Promise me you will never do that Mbewenhle,” mom says between her snuffles.

“I won’t mama just like I said I would never try to take my life ever again especially because of what people think about me.”

“I’m sorry for everything you went through that you thought taking your life was the best. I feel horrible because I’m also one of the people who judged you. Can you stop hiding things from us and talk to us? No more running away or bottling things up. Talk to us sis please. If I did something that hurt you

please confront me sometimes I might not be aware that I hurt your feelings. Don't push me away."

"I heard you loud and clear sis. I also believe that you will tell me too if I offended you."

I've grown very close not to my mother only but to my sister as well and I couldn't have it any other way then this. It feels good to know that my girls got me. If mom is not available I know that my sister is available. There are things that I can't talk to my mother about of course which I share with my sister. There are also times when I need my mom's advice and comfort of which she's always ready to dish out. I've always been close to Isisa and Lonhle. The only person who's giving me chest pains it's baba.

"Mbeee!"

He runs towards and climbs on the bed before throwing himself on me.

“Hello boy.”

I kiss his lips then he snuggles closer to my chest.

“Haa dade so you don’t wipe your mouth when Mbewenhle kiss you but when it’s me you do.” Mama complains.

“You kiss baba nje wena!” Benhle replies and shock all of us.

“You sisi also kiss bhuti Sbusiso. I don’t kiss people who kiss men.”

Haibo lengane! Mpilenhle and mom don’t know what to say while I’m stifling a laugh. If only he knew that I even suck a dick. My nieces walk in with their brother. They greet mom before coming to snuggle closer to me as well but Benhle is fighting them.

“Hayi senizosmpintsha manje! uMbee wami lo!” God ukhula ngokukhuluma salafuthi.

“Kahle wena!” Azanothe.

I take Mkhonto and kiss his chubby cheeks. He’s now 1 year old. His father went all out on his birthday party. You would’ve thought that he’s 5 years old. I love the love he has for his children and it seems like I’m blessed with a man who’s also like that.

I don’t know who to entertain between these children. They are all talking at once about things that happened at school. Benhle is doing preschool now and he lives with Mpilenhle but I’m contemplating of taking him next year. Uncle G promised to pay for the nanny if I do take him. I see that he wants to build a relationship with his son which baffles me why did he give all the parenting rights to my mom and father then?

It’s around 2pm when Lisi arrives in my parents home. I study his face but he avoids eye contact because he knows that through them I can always tell his emotions. We are settled in the lounge and the kids are playing outside. He greets my mom, sister and my best friend.

“How are you my boy?”

“I’m alive mama.”

“How did it go?” I can’t wait any longer to hear what happened. He looks up at me and my heart sinks to my knees at the sorrow clouding his eyes.

“They refused and they are not willing to do the ceremonies. The uncle tried to talk to them but Muzikayise’s mom and Muzikayise didn’t want to hear it.”

“Wow can’t they think of the babies?” Mpilenhle

“I knew that they will give us hard time. It’s not easy to just accept a child conceived out of your marriage not forgetting what you two put Muzikayise through. Let’s give them time.”  
Mom says

“Mom there’s no time. What if I lose my babies?” I ask with near tears voice. I don’t know if it’s my imagination or it’s hearing these bad news that makes me feel like the pain is now starting to be stronger in my abdomen.

“Baby we can’t force them....”

“No mama! This is wrong! Why can’t they put everything aside and do this for the twins’ sake ke!” My sister shrieks in anger.

“Can’t the uncle do it? He’s also Maseko right?” Isisa asks.

“He can do it but he’s also not willing to go against his sister in law and brother’s son. Besides when you touch these things that concern ancestors everyone has to be on board. Akufuneki kubekhona oqudule ingahle ingahambi kahle lemisebenzi.” (No one has to be angry because the ceremonies may not go well)

I expected this but that doesn’t make it hurt any less. I get up and leave them sitting there in the lounge. When I get inside my bedroom I climb on the bed and cry my lungs out.

“Baby.”

I hear his voice before I feel the bed sinking next to me as he joins me.

“Don’t cry baby I will keep on begging them until they agree. You are hurting me when you cry like this. I would do whatever it takes to save you guys.”

He pulls me in his arms and comforts me as I bawl my eyes out. I don’t see them agreeing to do this. Those people hate us and it’s understandable. I wish they can think of the innocent babies I’m carrying.

“I brought you some fish, chocolates and biltong .”

“Thank you.”

“Ungakhali yezwa soyinqoba lento.” (Don’t cry we will conquer this)

“Even if we lose our children?”

“Baby don’t say that you are not going to lose them do you hear me? Have hope my love I won’t give up. I just need you to hold on for me just a bit longer okay.”

I nod then he plants a wet peck on my lips before holding me tightly in his arms. I must have fallen asleep because I’m jerked awake by an intense pain in my abdomen. I gingerly sit up and my heart skips a beat when I look at my swollen hands, legs and feet. I get up from the bed and slowly walk to the dresser where I get the shock of my life. My face is like a balloon. I can’t even recognize myself. My whole body is numb but the pain in my abdomen is slicing me apart. I manage to make my way to the lounge.

“I was about to wake you up for supp...haibo Mbewenhle! Come sit down.” In an instant she’s on her feet to help me sit down.

“Mama it hurt so bad!” I cry the second we settle on the couch.

“Yhooo look at how swollen she is. We have to take her to the hospital!” Mvelonhle

“The hospital won’t help.” Mpilenhle says defeat lacing her voice.

“Oh God I don’t know what we should do.”

It’s like someone is splitting my womb into halves. I scream in agony.

“Askies baby. Oh Jehova ongcwele! Maybe we should pray.”

Mama

“Mama ngiyasaba!” (I’m scared) I sob.

“Let’s take her to the hospital maybe they can help!” Lonhle says and they all agree to take me to the hospital. Without a waste of time Lonhle is driving me to the hospital. I’m with my mom and sister in the backseat. Manelisi is following behind us with my car. By the time we arrive I feel so weak and I can barely breathe.

“Baby stay with me please!” Manelisi begs me as he scoops me like I weigh nothing and rushes inside the hospital.

“I’m sorry sthandwa sami it’s over now.”

“Help!!!” He screams loudly as we enter into the reception area and everyone’s attention turn to us instantly. Faintly I see the nurses and the doctor attending me what happens after that is blur.

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER NINETY EIGHT

☆ Manelisi ☆

I don't know why are they taking so long we been waiting forever. I can't sit still I'm pacing up and down and that frustrates Mpilenhle.

"Sit down Manelisi!"

"Leave him Mpilenhle."

My whole body is shaking out of fear. I can't lose them! I can't! God please don't do this to me I'm pleading with you. I see the doctor and run to him but he tells me to wait they're still busy with her.

"Jesus! How long do we have to wait huh! It's been hours!!"

"We are doing all we can to save all three of them regardless of how confusing her case is. I will get back to you as soon as

possible Mr Maphumulo.” He pats my shoulder and walks away.

I can't sit here and do nothing. It's frustrating me further. I didn't even tell my parents what's going on.

“I need to be somewhere please update me.”

“Where are you going? Don't tell me you are going to leave my sister in this condition Manelisi just like you left her to face the humiliation alone after you took her innocence.”

“Mpilenhle awuthule maan! Ukhuluma njalo ay!!” Mom in law yells. (Mpilenhle shut up maan. You talk too much)

“Mama come on....”

“I will be back soon mama.”

I head out and drive back to the village. Arriving at the Maseko homestead I knock on Muzikayise's door. He's surprised to see me when he opens the door.

"Nja ufunani?" (Dog what do you want)

"Please let me in so that we can talk."

"I don't want to talk to you."

"Please man I'm begging you."

He makes the space for me to get inside his house. Thuthuka is watching TV and sitting on the couch.

"I will give you guys space."

"No you don't have to go Thuthu. This bastard is going to say whatever he wants to say and leave!"

Thuthu insists to leave though. I settle down on the couch.

“Who said sit down?”

“It’s disrespectful to stand inside the house.”

He doesn’t say anything but joins me on the couch.

“I’m sorry from the bottom of my heart for the pain I put you through and the way I disrespected you countless times. You have every right to hate me I don’t blame you. I’d never forgive myself as well but please man don’t punish my wife and kids for my sins. If it will make you feel happy kill me Muzikayise but spare my children’s lives.”

“Tell me If you didn’t find yourself in this situation would’ve you came and apologize?”

Honestly I don't know but it doesn't mean I have never acknowledged the pain I put him through. Well I did that inwardly.

“See I thought as much. You are here because you need my help not that you are sorry. Get out of my house Manelisi and never ever set your foot here! We are not going to welcome you! I don't care what father said you will wait for him to come out of jail and do these ceremonies for you! Now out!!”

His voice is full of venom with each word he's spitting and that rancour glimmering in his eyes is the confirmation that he will never change his mind. Like a demoralized man that I am

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I find myself on the floor with my knees begging him but my pleas are not moving him.

“It was nice when you were all over my wife. I was the fool and you were clever one right? Now the fool has to welcome you and accept you? No Manelisi it doesn't work like that in this life thing!”

“Tell me what should I do for you to forgive me and give me a chance to right my wrongs?”

“Right your wrongs? Haibo how will you begin to make this right? There’s nothing you can do to change my mind! I don’t want anything from you Manelisi! You don’t owe me anything! Just get out of my house!!”

“Okay do it for her then. She’s in the hospital Muzikayise and in danger. The doctors are confused what’s going on. If you ever loved her please save her and the twins. You got me on my knees bro please soften your heart.”

I swallow a lump in my throat and push back the tears that are threatening to come out. Never in my wildest dreams have ever I thought I’d kneel before my fiancée’s ex husband and expose my weakness to him.

“See those tears swimming in your eyes. They are the same tears I poured when you broke my heart into pieces. It’s not like you didn’t know Manelisi! You knew very well but you fucked me up over and over again! Don’t you dare talk about the love I

had for Mbewenhle because this is not only about her but you as well. Unlike you nothing forced her to apologize to me. She wanted nothing in return and she was sincere but you? Ah you were never going to apologize so leave ndoda!”

The door bursts open and his mom walks in. I bet Thuthuka told her that I’m here. Anger is evident on her face. This woman hates me and she can’t even hide it.

“Eh mfana didn’t I tell you to never set your foot here?”

“Mama I know that...”

“Yey don’t you dare call me mama! Angisiye unyoko mina lo wayehamba evula amathanga evulela amadoda ashadile!” (I’m not your mother that opened her thighs for married man)

Oh Dumazile waze wangenza!

“Get out!”

“Muzikayise...”

“My mom said get out!”

“Please ...”

“Oh you don’t want to go? Okay you will see what I’m made of wena mfana!” His mom says and walks out.

“Mfethu...”

“Yey don’t you dare call me that! Get out Manelisi!!”

“She’s dying...”

“I don’t fucking care! Get out of my house now! Or you want me to drag you out?”

He grabs me with my clothes and violently shoves me outside. I tumble like a pack of potato on the ground. As I'm trying to get up from the ground I feel some liquid splattering on me. When I look up it's the mother I don't know what she poured on me but I can taste a bit of salt in my lips.

"Mama did you have to pour urine on him! That's so wicked of you!" One of the daughters says but I don't know which one is it because it's dark.

"Uyadelela lomfana!" (This boy is rude)

I drag myself up from the ground and head to the car as wet and stinky as I am. I bury my head on the steering wheel and cry like a little boy. My phone rings and I answer without checking who's calling. When I hear that it's Mpilenhle and she's crying my world comes to a standstill as fear wraps around me.

## ☆ Manelisi ☆

“They can’t feel the heartbeats of the twins Manelisi.” That’s all I hear and my whole world freeze.

The phone slips through my fingers and fall down. I start the car but it proves to be a forlorn task due to my hands that are shaking terribly and I keep missing the ignition hole. When I finally manage to bring the engine to life I drive home first to change the wet clothes I can’t go to the hospital smelling urine. Arriving at home I inform the parents about the matter at hand and mom is burning with anger.

“Ukhohlakele lomfazi! How dare she pours you with urine? Who does that? I think it’s better to solve this woman to woman!” (That woman is wicked)

I stop her by the door as she wants to go to the Maseko homestead. We had enough drama for the day.

“Don’t allow that woman rub her evilness to you mama please.”

“No Manelisi that woman needs to be dealt with. Where does she get such bravery to pour another woman’s child with urine? Yey mina angimsabi loyamfazi ngizomsonta intamo!” (I’m not scared of that woman I will twist her neck)

“Manelisi is right nkosikazi fighting won’t help. Right now we have to go to the hospital. Boy go and change so that we can go.”

“Here’s warm water,” Blessings says giving me a kettle. I thank her before heading to my bedroom where I pour the water into my basin. I take a five minutes splash and get dressed then discard the water outside.

Baba insists that we use his car and he’s driving. Mom is calm now and she’s praying for the twins’ and my wife’s recovery as we are going to the hospital. We seriously need a miracle. The moment baba pulls over at the hospital I step out of the car and

run inside the hospital. Mvelonhle is seated in between his mom and sister and comforting both of them.

“What’s going to happen now?” It’s a first thing I say when I get to them.

“The doctor said she’s going to undergo surgical procedure to remove the babies out of her womb.” Mpilenhle

“What? Nooo! She’s five months pregnant!”

“Sbari if they can’t feel the heartbeats of the twins it’s only mean one thing. They can’t keep the babies inside of her if they are no more...” I cut Mvelonhle short before he finish saying that nonsense he’s spitting.

“Don’t you dare say no more and my kids in one sentence sbari! Didn’t they say they are confused? Now they want to operate her? How sure they are that the twins are not alive? No one is going to take those kids out of her not until they know what exactly is going on which is impossible because we all know this

has do with ancestors! Where's the doctor? I want to tell them to stop whatever they are doing!"

I feel a hand grabbing my wrist as I make my way through the wards.

"Don't interrupt the doctors they know what they are doing! It's already late for the twins let them save my sister!"

"Mvelonhle leave me alone!"

He tighten his grip on my wrists and pushes me against the wall.

"I won't leave you alone! Not when you want to kill my sister! Her life is also in danger and the doctors can save her if only she undergo the surgical procedure. You will make other kids man come on! Let them save your wife or you want to lose all of them!"

I open my mouth to talk but a huge lump is lodged in my throat and when I try to swallow it tears involuntarily stream down my face. He pulls me to his arms and holds me tightly.

“I’m sorry I know it hurts but it will get better with time don’t cry,” he whispers in my ear as he strokes my back.

I sob like a little boy. My heart is wrenching. I have no more strength left in my bones and my muscles are out of power. I’ve failed Wenhle and our twins. I made a promise to her that I will save all three of them but I didn’t. She will never be the same after this and it’s all my fault.

Once again she has lost her children because of me and as long as she’s still with me she will keep on losing children until the Masekos agree to accept me as one of their own and do the ceremonies for me of which I doubt they will ever do that.  
Kwaze kwaqansela endondeni!

I jerk back from his embrace and wipe my tears when I hear the doctor speaking. My parents are also here I didn’t hear them getting in. Mvelo and I walk closer to where everyone is to

listen what the doctor has to say. I hope my wife is alive because I can't take more pain than I'm already feeling.

"I have promising news family we now can feel the heartbeats of the twins however they are very faint. We have put her under electronic fetal monitoring to monitor the heartbeats of the twins."

I blow out a sigh as relief surges through me.

"Oh umkhulu baba!" Mama says as everyone exclaim out of relief.

"Can we see her?"

"I can only allow one person she needs to rest."

"Can I go please?"

I direct my question to her family and they agree. The doctor leads the way to her ward and shows me before walking away. I heave a huge sigh and walk towards her bed. She's sleeping and has machines connected to her bare tummy. When we came here earlier I didn't see how swollen she is I can barely recognize her right now. I grab a chair and sit down then hold her hand. I've never felt so powerless and useless.

What kills my soul more is that anything from now can still happen until the ceremonies are done. I kiss her forehead and walk back to the reception area. When we get home I don't eat but go straight to my bedroom and try to sleep. Surprisingly sleep claims me before I expected. It was an exhausting day after all.

I bite my lip stopping myself from moaning but the pleasure is too intense that it jolts me awake. I reach for the switch on the wall and turn the light on before flinging the covers away. Blessing is kneeling on my bed between my thighs and she's in a skimpy silky night dress. My dick is out of my boxer and hard as a rock.

“What the fuck Blessings!”

“You are going through a lot I know you need this.”

“Sex is the last thing in my mind and you’re definitely the last person I’d sleep with! I have a wife and you are married Blessings!”

“Come on Mane. You will feel better after this,” she says crawling towards me and attempt to kiss me but I push her.

“Yini ngawe!” (What’s with you)

“Don’t you want this? See boy boy recognizes me.”

She runs her hands all over her body in a seduction manner and I’d be lying if I say I’m getting turned on. Whatever she was doing with my dick when I was sleeping is the reason I’m hard right now.

“I don’t want you Blessings! Get out of my bedroom now!”

“Don’t play hard to get....”

“Uzongidina!” (You will annoy me)

“Come on big boy. See how ready she is for you,” she says and spread her legs wide open exposing her glistening mound.

“You seriously think ngingafaka ipipi lami lakungena ikhehla lendiya uyangana Blessings!” (You think I’d sink my dick where an Indian old man is also dipping his. You are insane)

Now that seems to get to her as she instantly closes her legs and shame clouds her face. Are those tears I see rolling down her face.

“Bless are you okay?”

She covers her face with her hands and wails. Eh what zisha now? I inch closer to her and pull her in my arms.

“What’s wrong talk to me.”

“You said I’m unattractive.”

“No I didn’t say that.”

“Yes you did Mane.”

“Why are you doing this you are married.”

“We are no longer doing it he’s diabetic.”

“Kodwa nawe wawulisuka ngani ikula elinoshukela.” (What did you want from a diabetic Indian)

“He wasn’t written on the forehead that he’s going to have diabetes Manelisi!”

“You don’t have to shout I was just asking.”

“You don’t want to help me scratch the itch.”

“No I won’t do that to my wife. What kind ofinja will that make me? Ngeke sis try next door. Besides it’s not like you haven’t been fucking that long you have an 18 months old baby.”

“She’s not his baby.”

Say what! Now this I have to hear it while looking at her face. I push her back from my embrace and look at her.

“Eh who is the father because she looks Indian like the other two.”

“It’s his brother’s child.”

“You’re lying! Does he know?”

“No he doesn’t he thinks she’s his because those days I fall pregnant it wasn’t bad as it is now.”

“It wasn’t that bad but already you were fucking his brother. Blessings kanti unjani wena?” (What kind of a person are you)

“Don’t judge itswayi lalingibulala!” (The salt was killing me)

“Wow you did me a favor by dumping me moss.”

“Don’t say that because I really regret dumping you.”

“Now we are more like siblings and we broke up for a reason. I have someone in my life whom I love wholeheartedly and I don’t even dream of breaking her heart like that. You can’t go around opening your legs for anyone just because you want to scratch the itch. If you really do love this old man then do

something. I'm sure there's inyanga out there who can give you umvusanduku. He doesn't need to know but women out there do whatever they can to keep their marriages be that woman nawe. You are Zulu and you believe in nyangas and sangomas don't let this Jagath surname makes you forget who you are. Now get out I want to sleep."

She gets up and drags herself towards the door. I call out for her just as she's about to walk out.

"If you pull this stunt again I'm going to tell Mama."

"Mxm!" She says and bangs the door behind her. Okusalayo uzwile!

☆ Muzikayise ☆

The last time I saw him was two years back and he was way better then how he looks right now. I almost couldn't recognize him and seeing him in this condition has my heart

disintegrating. Being here is taking a toll on him and to think he has to serve 10 years sentence. I can only hope that by the time 10 years is over he will be still alive.

“Son.”

“How are you baba?”

“I’m okay son and yourself.”

“I’m also okay. Mama told me that you summoned me.”

“You make it sound so formal. Can’t a father ask for his son to visit him?”

“Remember that you are the one who stopped us from visiting you baba so you can’t blame me.”

He heaves a sigh and looks at me. His lips are so dry and he has dark circles around his eyes and there's no hope nor life in them.

"Son I called you here to ask you to forgive your brother..."

"He's not my brother!"

"Hayi phela you won't rudely interrupt me when I'm talking to you and shout at me. I'm still your father Muzikayise," he says calmly yet sternly. I look down and sigh. It wasn't my intention to raise my voice at him. The mention of that asswipe boils me up.

"I know the amount of pain and shame you went through because of him. He's remorseful about what he did and if he knew that you are his elder brother he wouldn't have hurt you like that. Soften your heart my boy and do these ceremonies for him. I know sometimes you wish you had a brother because at times it can be quite hard to be born among girls only. You also need a brother whom you can share everything with and whom you will know that he got your back. Thuthuka is young

and he's a Ngema. You were my only hope to hold our family together and grow the Maseko legacy but now you have a brother. You have no idea how lucky you are my boy. Now you don't have to hold the ropes alone Manelisi will assist you. He will ease the burden on your shoulders. I don't want you to focus on our family and forget about your personal life. You have to build your own family as well and with Manelisi by your side you will be able to do your personal things."

True sometimes I do long to have a brother as a sibling but if it's Manelisi I'm okay with my sisters only. I will never see nor accept him as my brother. Not now and not ever!

"Baba I rather not have a brother if it has to be Manelisi. He can fool you but not me. There's no way that he's remorseful he's just desperate and has no choice. Don't worry taking care of my family is not a burden. He will have to wait for you until you come out to do the ceremonies for him because I won't do them."

"Think about the innocent babies..."

“They are his babies baba and it’s not my fault that they are going through whatever they are going through...”

“But you can save them Muzikayise!”

“I don’t owe him shit I don’t have to save his children. Not after what he did to me! It’s his fault that I don’t want to save his children. You reap what you sow!”

“Aw Muzikayise so we will rather lose the innocent babies just because you can’t accept that Mbewenhle was never meant to be yours? What kind of a man are you that cry over a woman for decades that was never even meant to be yours! You’re not the first man to be cheated on and definitely not the last one. Get over it and grow up maan!”

I feel anger swirling through me and clench my jaws hard. I don’t want to end up saying things that I’d regret so I get up and leave

ignoring him as he calls out my name. This is not about Mbewenhle and I. The day she told me that it was never about love I made peace with that and forgave her even though I

didn't tell her. This is about Manelisi who never saw the need to apologize to me until I have to save his kids. It's about how he disrespected me more than once. Now I have to be a bigger person and forgive him just like that uyanya!

I'm surprised to see Khazimula's car parked in the yard. What is she doing here? I haven't seen her since that evening we fucked in the car nor have I talked to her on the phone. That look of disgust or whatever was a motivation for me to step away completely. My heart won't take any more rejection. I find her in the lounge

talking to my mom as if they've known each other for a long time. I greet before settling down on the couch.

"This one is beautiful and perfect for you my boy. You chose very well." Mama

"Ma, she's not my girlfriend so erase those thoughts."

I feel a heavy gaze on me and when I look up Khazimula is staring at me. I can't read her eyes but that look is so intense that it has my whole body breaking into goosebumps.

“If so then ask her out already before they snatch her away from you,” mom says before walking out I’m sure to give us a space. Khazimula puts the glass of juice and sauce of biscuits on the coffee and looks at me.

“I’m sorry to come unannounced.”

“I’m surprised hey.”

“It’s understandable. I came to apologize Muzi for how I behaved that evening. I know I hurt your feelings and I’m sorry.”

“Okay.”

It seems like it’s not the answer she was expecting. Is there anything else I can say?

“Uhm the truth is I also have feelings for you Muzi but you know we can’t be together. Not when you are my patient.”

I didn’t expect her to confess just like that. At least the feelings are mutual.

“I’m no longer your patient now MaCebekhulu and besides who said rules can’t be broken?”

“I don’t know Maseko this is way uncalled for then you think.”

I get up from the couch I’m sitting on and settle next to her. I inhale deeply taking in her scent.

“You always smell good.”

“Thank you.”

“Futhi umuhle.” (And you are beautiful)

“Thank you,” she says blushing this time. I take her hands and kiss them before looking into her eyes. I’ve never wanted someone badly like I want this woman. Having her in my life will be more than like winning lotto.

“I know I’m not a perfect man but I would do whatever it takes to be the perfect man you want for yourself. I don’t know how did you warm your way into my heart. Now you are all I ever think about. You live in my thoughts, mind and dreams. Please give us a chance MaCebukhulu and see if it works out but one thing I can promise you is that once you let me in I won’t let you go. Ngivulele mama ngingene.” (Open up and let me in)

“Ngivule ini?” (Open what) I don’t miss that smirk on her face.

“Konke okuvulekayo asiqale ngamathanga.” (Everything that can be opened let’s start with thighs) I say running my hand between her thighs and she doesn’t stop me until it buried underneath her skirt. I feel the lace fabric of her panties.

“Don’t do that what if your mom walks in,” she whispers while staring down at my lips with almost hooded eyes. Her breathing is heavy and caressing my face.

“You asked.”

Before she can reply to me I capture her lips into mine and when she responds with the same ferocity I feel my dick expanding in my pants and release a throaty groan. We are both panting when we pull apart.

“Let me in please.”

“I’m willing to let you in only if you promise me that I won’t be a consolation prize in your life. I understand that you have been betrayed and your heart is still fragile but you decided to trust me with it right? Don’t compare me to your ex wife. I’m ready to give you the love you deserve only if you promise to give me a special place in your heart. I want to be cherished and treasured Maseko would you do that?”

Aw ngadla mina kababa ngingasaqali! My heart does a back flip.

“That goes without asking sshalaphala. I will treat you like a queen that you are. You won’t regret giving me a chance.”

(Beautiful)

“Oh well let’s start by saving your ex wife’s kids.” How did she...Mpilenhle! Now she’s spoiling my mood.

“Kanti iyona lento ongiqomela yona?” (Is that the reason you are accepting to have a relationship with me)

“Seriously Muzikayise!”

“No I want to know Khazimula!”

“You said you are over her so why are you punishing her?”

“Yes I am over her and you out of people you know that Mula. I’m not punishing her this is not about her but Manelisi.”

“Babe please you are not punishing Manelisi only but the innocent kids. If you won't do this for the kids then do it for your ex wife. You owe her an apology for the pain you put her through and this is the only way you can show her how remorseful you are. She sincerely apologized to you and you forgave her even though you didn't tell her don't you think it's only fair you do the same by saving those kids?”

“Those kids have Manelisi's blood running through them!”

“It's the same blood as yours. Those kids are Manelisi's as much as they are yours Maseko. Don't punish them for their father's sins. If something happens to those kids you will regret not saving them because I know what's talking now it's anger you have towards their father. There's absolutely no way that you can watch little innocent souls die while there's something you can do. That's not you sthandwa sami.”

“I also don't want the kids to die but you know the sins of the father are to be laid upon the children. This exactly what's happening and it will teach him that you don't go around hurting people and expect things to just go smooth for you.

Your sins catch up with you one way or the other. It was fun when he was busy disrespecting me you could've seen him last night on the floor with his knees begging me and swallowing his tears."

"Muzikayise...."

"No Khazimula I'm not doing any ceremonies for that asshole. Not now not ever get that through your thick skull!"

"Don't shout at me I'm not your child. You make wonder if I'm making a right decision to give us a chance. If you can go as far as letting innocent kids die while there's something you can do just because you want to punish the father. This is not the type of a father I want for my child. I'm sure he would also be disappointed when he's older and learns that his father didn't want to save his brothers."

"Are we still talking about Manelisi's kids?"

“I’m pregnant you’re going to be a father. Maybe you will now understand that it’s not like Manelisi was making a show by kneeling before you. No man wants kneel down before another man and expose his weakness especially an ex husband of his fiancée but because he would do anything to save his babies he did. I know that wherever he is he doesn’t regret it nor feel ashamed about it because he did it for his children. When you are about to be a parent you will understand better and there are things you will automatically unlearn such as revenge because now whatever decision you make it’s not about you only. You always have to think about your child and how your decisions will affect him.” with that said she takes her car keys on the coffee table and walks out leaving me trapped in a mixture of emotions.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I don't know how we are still alive and as much as a huge part of me is happy that my babies are still okay even though their heartbeats are faint but there's a part of me that wants these ancestors to take these kids once and for all. I want to start grieving already. Living in fear that I could lose my children is disorienting I can't take it anymore. I'm tired of this pain and constant fear.

"Open your mouth baby."

"Mom I'm not hungry."

"You need eat for the sake of the babies."

"Don't tell me about the babies that are going to die. It's no use to protect and nurture them because they're still going to be snatched away from me."

“Don’t talk like this sis. You can’t give up on your children. Have faith that they will survive whether Muzikayise and his mom accept Manelisi or not. No one is above God even the ancestors are not above God. In the name of Jesus these children are going to survive.”

“Uyakhuluma nje ngoba ungazi ukuthi uthini mama.” (You are just talking but you don’t know what you are saying)

“Ungakhulumi nami kanjalo ngizokugoqa ubeyisgaqa ngiyakutshela,” she says calmly but firmly. I heave a sigh and twiddle my fingers. (Don’t talk to me like that I will squash you into a tiny piece I’m telling you)

“I’m sorry mama.”

“Open your mouth Mbewenhle.”

I split my lips apart and she shoves a spoonful of rice with mincemeat inside my mouth. I chew as tears stream down my face. No one is talking until she's done feeding me.

“See you didn't die.”

But my babies will die! What the use of feeding them. It's a waste to invest feelings on the kids that I won't even get a chance to hold in my arms. Manelisi walks in a with Pick n Pay plastic bag. I haven't seen him since last night they brought me here in the hospital. I keep my eyes locked on him and that despair glimmering in his eyes has my heart shattering in pieces. I wish I can carry his pain as well. He greets mama and they share pleasantries then she tells me that she will come back to see me in the evening.

“Please bring me a beanie when you comeback. Oh and my phone.”

“Okay.”

She kisses my forehead before walking out leaving me with this man who's carrying the world on his shoulders.

"Hey."

"Hey."

"How are you feeling?"

I shrug my shoulders. He settles next to me after placing the plastic bag on the bedside drawer.

"I brought you some food."

"Anything to drink?"

"Yes there's 100% orange juice," he says already taking it and hands it to me. I take a few gulps then give it back to him. He puts it next to the plastic and leans over for a kiss.

“I love you.”

“I love you too.”

There’s a moment of silence. If there’s something that has changed he would’ve told me the moment he got here but I ask either way.

“Still the Masekos are refusing?”

He blows out a sigh and looks at me with eyes filled with defeat.

“Yes baby but let’s not lose hope. I will be a nuisance to them until they agree.”

“If they haven’t agree then why are these kids still alive? Why can’t they just die once and for all!”

“You don’t mean that baby.” Pain is lacing his voice and his eyes are shining with tears.

“Oh well I do Manelisi.”

“How can you say that about our kids Mbewenhle? What kind of a mother that wish death upon her children?”

“A mother who is sick and tired of living in constant fear and in this pain! It is easy for you to judge me because you are not carrying these children. You don’t know the excruciating pain I’m going through. You don’t know how emotional draining it is to know that I will never get a chance to hold these children in my arms. To know that all the plans and dreams I have for them are useless. I don’t understand why these stupid ancestors are still keeping them. Haven’t they tortured me enough? I’m so damn tired I want to start grieving already.” I let out a gut wrenching sob and he envelopes me tightly in his arms.

I feel warm liquid flowing on my forehead and realize that he’s also crying which breaks me even further. I have no strength nor hope left in me. If I feel so empty and cold inside already I

can only imagine how would I be when they finally pass on. I don't think I will ever recover from this pain. It's too much and I can feel it even in my bones. I release all the pain in his arms until I succumb to deep slumber.

I'm not sure what snaps me awake between soft hands that are caressing my tummy and the strong masculine scent filling my nostrils. I flutter my eyes open and find him staring at me intently. His lips curve into a faint smile when our eyes lock.

"Hello," softly he says and his hand is still caressing my tummy.

"Hey." I whisper

"I'm sorry if I woke you up."

I sit on my butt.

"No you didn't."

A brief of silence lingers in the air until he eventually breaks it.

“How are you feeling?”

That question is enough to open the floodgates. How can he asks me that when he knows the situation at hand. Or he’s here to gloat and celebrate my pain.

“Hey I’m sorry. Don’t cry it’s going to be okay.”

He gets up from the chair and comes to sit next to me on the little space on the bed before holding me in his arms.

“Everything is going to be okay I’m going to make sure of that Yeyeye ungakhali.” (Don’t cry)

“What do you mean Kayise?” I ask tilting my head backwards to look at him.

“I know that I’ve been consumed with anger towards Manelisi. I still am but these babies doesn’t deserve to suffer for his sins.”

My heart skips four beats. Are my ears playing tricks with me?

“Are you saying what I think you are saying?”

“Yes I’m going to talk to mama and we are going to do the ceremonies for Manelisi.”

He wipes my tears with his one hand and kisses my forehead.

“Oh Kayise thank you, thank you, thank you so much”

He smiles broadly staring at my teary eyes.

“You are welcome.”

“Wait why are you doing this? I know you don’t have to do it after what we did to you.”

“I’m doing it for my nephews and you of course.”

The last part catches me by surprise.

“Me?”

“Yes why do you seem surprised?”

“I don’t deserve your kindness Kayise.”

“I wasn’t a perfect husband to you either Yeyeye. Ever since I realized how horrible I’ve been to you I’ve never found peace. I’ve been meaning to apologize to you but my cowardice got the better of me. I want to tell you that I’m sorry from the depth of my heart. I never meant to hurt you in any kind of way. Other times I wanted to punish you and my insecurities drove me to do things that I’m not proud of but there are some things that I wasn’t aware of such as how important it is to get

a consent from your partner to sleep with her before you do so. Let's blame my ignorance on that. I'm really sorry for every pain I inflicted on you please find it in your heart to forgive me."

Wow see that? I wasn't expecting it at all. He's really apologizing to me and I can hear how sincere he is with every word rolling out of his mouth.

"It's okay I understand. We have all done things that we are not proud of. I'm glad that you finally realize the part you also played into breaking our marriage."

"Yeah I do and it was unfair of me to blame you. At the end of the day I'm responsible for my behavior regardless of what you did. I shouldn't have allowed pain and anger to change me for worse. Life is doesn't work like that you can't allow every situation you are facing to change the sight of who you are. Now I know that and that's one lesson out of many I learnt from our relationship."

"I'm very pleased to hear that I didn't change you completely  
Ngcamane

” I say and we both chuckle.

“I want you to know that I’m not holding anything against you anymore Yeyeye.”

“Thank you so much you have no idea how much it means to me to hear you say that. Your forgiveness is one thing I’ve always dreamed of but it seemed far fetched. Ngibonga angiqedi Sidwaba Siluthuli.”

“What about me?”

“What about you?”

“Do you think you will ever forgive me for everything I did to you?”

“I’ve long forgiven you Ngcamane.”

“Really?”

He seems very surprised by that yet relieved.

“Yes I couldn’t stay angry at you forever because that was stealing my happiness. Kuna la peace maan when you forgive those who hurt you in the past.”

“You are far a great person then I am MaQwabe. Thank you so much for your forgiveness. Now I can sleep better at night.”

“I would also have peaceful nights from here on knowing that we talked and no one is holding anything against each other.”

He caresses my cheek while staring deep in my eyes.

“I want to kiss you for one last time.”

“Kayise...”

He shuts me up with a kiss before I protest. I hear a rumble against his chest as his tongue delves into my mouth searching for mine. If I didn't realize before that I'm so over him then now is the time. I don't feel any reaction on my body not even a tiny sensation as he devours my lips for the last time. When he breaks the kiss his strabismus is so visible and he's panting like a dog.

"I hope he knows how lucky he is to have won your heart."

"He knows."

"That's good. Take care of yourself."

He kisses my forehead and gets up from the bed fixing his hard member that is menacing to perforate his pants.

"Will do. Thank you once again Ngcamane."

"Don't mention it Yeyeye. Enjoy the rest of your day."

“Same goes to you.”

He dashes out as I sink in a mixture of emotions.

☆ Manelisi ☆

I couldn't believe it when Muzikayise came by at home and told me that we should get started with the preparation of the ceremonies. I'd be lying if I say I know what made him change his mind but whatever that is I'm grateful. I was prepared to pay for everything but he told me to take care of the expenses on my mom's side. From inhlawulo to ukuthengwa he covered those expenses.

I bought the goat of which was used by the Maphumulos to officially send me to the Masekos. They also accepted me with a goat. Bab Zondo asked his friend whose surname is Maphumulo to help us carry out this procedure accordingly. He's the one who was standing on behalf of the Maphumulos. I

couldn't be more grateful for the support I received from the parents.

Now that the welcoming and introducing ceremony is out of the way today it's the gift of fortune ceremony. I insisted to cover all the expenses of this one. We are all gathered in a rondoval which is the house the Masekos use to communicate with the ancestors. Babomnance and myself are kneeling before emsamo with a goat. Once he's done lighting the incense he makes me inhale it then he begins to introduce himself and appease to the ancestors.

“Maseko nina boNgcamame namuhla ngize kini ngodaba laManelisi, indodana kaKhubonye enakhetha ukuyimbathisa incebo kanye nezinhlanhla ukuze ivuse umuzi wenu. Ngalembuzi ngicela ukuvusa ingubo yakhe kanye nezinhlanhla zakhe azalwa nazo. Izinto zakhe mazikhanye zibemhlophe qwa kuhle kwezihlabathi zolwandle.” (Today I'm here regarding Manelisi's situation, the son of Khubonye who you chose to bless with a gift of fortune to build your homestead. With this goat may I please bring back his blanket of fortune and his lucks he was born with. May all his endeavors become successful)

He continues to talk for less than three minutes then he helps me drag the goat outside where we slaughter it. I'm surprised that my sisters welcomed me nicely unlike their mother. You can see that she's allowing all of this to happen because Muzikayise talked to her. I don't think she will ever like me and I'm not anticipating her to like me. I will always be a sore reminder to her but I really appreciate that she chose to listen to her son.

Once the goat is slaughtered babomncane takes its fat and we head to the rondoal where he places the goat's fat on my shoulders. The sisters bring all the traditional food and Muzikayise places all the dishes of food emsamo while babomncane lights 9 candles seven white, one yellow and one blue. After that I'm given a calabash and inside there's muti of luck. I beat the muti inside the calabash with a small stick while asking for all the great things and lucks to rain on me like a tsunami.

When I'm satisfied I put the calabash emsamo and settle on the grass mat. I will be sitting in this rondoal until the ceremony is over. I can't go outside not unless when it's necessary like going to the toilet. I'm also going to sleep here. Thuthuka is keeping me company though.

“So don’t you have any job vacancies in your company?”

“I don’t know man since I’m suspended I don’t know what’s happening in that company but the last time I checked we weren’t hiring.”

“You really stole the money?”

“No Thuthuka I didn’t. So you want a job?”

“Yes when mkhulu got arrested we lost everything. It was a lesson to me that I need to have a stable job for myself. I couldn’t afford to take care of my son’s needs. I had to watch your brother in law take care of my son. It bruised me deeply man.”

“I can imagine how hard it must have been. I’m sure you felt like a failure.”

“Brah you have no idea and Isisa is always praising him. My efforts are never noticed. Mvelo can buy just a lollipop for my son, Isisa would post on WhatsApp kugcwale umhlaba wonke but when it’s me dololo gratitude .”

“Why you want her to thank you for taking care of your son? If it’s not you who is taking care of him then who should it be? I don’t understand why you should be praised for providing your son. It’s your job to do so Thuthuka. Isisa is showing gratitude to Mvelonhle because he’s not Lumi’s father but he never fails to take care of him like he’s his.”

“He dated and married her knowing that she has a son so why she is showing him gratitude for playing his role as Lumi’s step father? He knew what he was getting himself into when he dated Isisa.”

“Why do I feel like you are competing with Mvelonhle?”

“I’m not competing with him but Isisa makes me feel like I’m competing. Last month I bought Lumi sneakers but she told me

that Lumi doesn't wear no name sneakers they make his feet itch imagine!"

I can't help but laugh. I didn't know that none branded sneakers itch. Women!

"I'm sorry to laugh. Eh bayakukukuna ndoda!" (she's punishing you man)

"Eh wena awazi!" (You have no idea)

"Ufelani vele?" (What are you suffering for)

"Ukumphula inhliziyo." (For breaking her heart)

"I'm sorry man I will talk to Mvelonhle and he will talk to his wife. This competition is not healthy, Isisa is wrong. You buy what you can afford for your son."

Just as he's about to reply Ndongoloza walks in with a tray of food and kneels down before me.

"Haibo Ndongoloza!"

"What Thuthu?"

"Since when now do you kneel down when you serve food?"

"Ay kahle ukuphapha wena. Do you need anything else bhuti?"  
(Don't be forward)

"I need to wash my hands please."

"Coming right up."

She disappears as Thuthu looks at me shocked.

"What?"

“Eh ndoda that is Ndondoloza. The spoil brat of the family. Intandokazi kamkhulu and she will never just kneel down to give you food. She’s definitely up to something.”

“Are you saying she’s going to poison me?”

He laughs and shakes his head.

“No man I think she wants money.”

I laugh. I hope she really wants money and not planning to poison me. My wife is too young to be a widow and my kids are not even born yet to be fatherless. Ndondoloza comes back with warm water and dry dish cloth. I wash my hands and dry my hands then start eating.

“You can go fetch your food Thuthu.”

“Hawu you are not serving me.”

“I’m not your wife tshii!”

Thuthuka sucks his teeth and gets on his feet before walking out.

“So bhuti do you have a house in Johannesburg?”

“No not yet.”

“It’s a pity I’ve never been to eGoli.”

“Ha.ah ngishilo! I did say you are up to something!” Manelisi says as he walks in with his plate. He settles next to me. I eat while listening to these two. Their bickering is entertaining.

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The next morning I do the same thing I did yesterday and in the middle of the night with the calabash. Babomncane puts isiphandla on my right hand while the goat is being cooked. Ndongoloza brings me breakfast. Girl is really on a mission to come visit us in Johannesburg. I don't think it would be a good idea considering that she and Wenhle don't get along. My phone rings and my heart dances at the caller ID flashing on the screen.

"Dombolo lami."

"Hey mqwebu wami unjani." (How are you)

"I'm okay baby and you guys."

"We are fine we just miss you."

"I miss you guys too. I will sneak out later to see you okay."

"We will go to the mountain to chase that orgy?"

I giggle

“Yes we will.”

“Oh I can’t wait! How are they treating you there?”

“Everyone is okay.”

“Even your step mom?”

“That one can’t hide the hatred but I’m glad there’s no drama.”

“We should be grateful that she’s allowing the ceremonies to be done.”

“True.”

We continue to talk for a while until she runs out of airtime. By the time it's midday the food is ready. They dish up and serve people. It's around 3pm when we gather again in the rondoval with a second goat. Impepho is burning emsamo. Babomncane addresses the ancestors once again.

“Bo Ngcamane sicela ukubonga kini ngalembuzi ukuthi layikhaya kwazalwa ingane enenhlanhla. Siyayicelela ukuthi niyihlenge futhi niyifumbathise izinhlanhla zayo. Sicela ukuyembula ingane ingubo enayimbathisa yona. Izinto zakhe mazikhanye yonke into ayenzayo ibenempumelelo.” (We would like to thank you Masekos with this goat that in this homestead we have a child that was born with a gift of fortune. Please protect this child and give him his fortunes. Now we are pulling off the blank of fortune on him. May everything he does become a success)

He cuts a bit of the goat's fat which was on my shoulders yesterday and mix it with incense before making me inhale the smoke and ask for the blessings. After that the second goat is slaughtered and when they're done it goes straight to the pot as it's going to be eaten today unlike the first one.

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED

I know that the ceremonies went well when I receive a call from Nhlapho. He apologizes for accusing me. They made a mistake and they want to give me a promotion as a token of an apology. I tell him that we will talk when I arrive I'm at home now. I don't want a promotion I want shares. Bangintshontshisile labantu my reputation was on the line I deserve more than a promotion.

I hang up with a wild smile on my face and make my way to Muzikayise who's smoking at the back of his house. I don't say anything at first but lean against the wall next to him. A moment passes as no one is talking until I eventually strike up a conversation.

"I've just received a call from my boss. They want me back at work."

"That's great, congratulations."

"Thanks to you Muzikayise. I don't know what I would've done without you. I know it wasn't easy for you to do this for me but

you did. Thank you for also talking to your mother and placating her. Ngiswele amagama okubonga Ngcamane.” (I’ve lost words to thank you)

He blows out a smoke and looks at me.

“I wasn’t doing this for you but for my nephews. I still want to kill you. Sleep with an open eye my boy.”

I chuckle and nod my head.

“But still thanks for doing this for your nephews. They’re really blessed to have an uncle like you.”

I can’t make out of an emotion that glints in his eyes before it disappears like it wasn’t there. He passes me the half of cigarette he’s smoking. I don’t smoke but I don’t tell him that. I’m sure two drags won’t hurt. Fuck I spoke too soon. The smoke fills my windpipe and makes me cough hard. I can hear him laughing at him.

“Why you didn’t tell me you don’t smoke!” His voice is lacing amusement. I give him the cigarette as I cough profusely holding on my chest with the other hand.

“Ay nawe you such a sissy usukhohlela ngathi uneTB!” (You such a sissy you cough like you have TB)

I don’t stop coughing hard that I flump on the ground and wheeze uncontrollably. I can’t breathe my airways are blocked. He immediately couches before me and holds me as worry clouds his face. I roll my eyes to the back and my body convulse like I’m having a seizure.

“Hayi Manelisi ndoda ungangenzi kanjalo!!” The panic in his voice is so loud. He screams for help. (Don’t do that to me)

“It doesn’t look like you want me dead as much as you think big bro,” I wink at him and chuckle.

“Fuseg maan yaz udlala kabi nx!” I burst into laughter and watch him as he walks away. (Fuck you maan you are not playing nice!)

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I can't believe that we have been here for 3 hours only but already it feels like it's been a long night ever. I pick up the braids she's yanking out of her head. Now she's left with only 10 braids and if the situation allows me I'd laugh at her.

“Babe sit down on the bed and relax.”

“Don't tell me to relax! You made me like this!!”

She's walking up and down the room. The labour pains keep coming and easing but every time they come back they are more intense than before. The midwife said she's not close to giving birth yet. They have been checking her since we arrived here in the hospital.

“I’m sorry baby. Stop yanking your braids out of your hair uzoba namashanda,” I say and her mom breaks into laughter.

Shiver travels through my body at the look my fiancée throws at me. She charges for me but her mom stops her. Uyihlanya namhlanje maye ngiyamsaba!

“Mom get out of my way please I want to show this one yini amashanda!!”

“Sit down Mbewenhle.”

“Yhooo thixo kodwa ngangenzani!!” (What was I doing) she moans in pain holding onto her mom. It breaks my heart to see her in so much pain and I wish there’s something I can do to ease her labour pains.

The passed months were blissful. I got my job back and a percentage of shares as the token of an apology. They were hesitant about the shares though but I didn’t back down. Idombolo lami and I did our utmost to enjoy the remaining

months of the pregnancy up until this moment. We are both looking forward to meet our little dumplings or biltongs.

Mom in law came the day before yesterday this side and she's going to assist us for a week or so just to show us how it's done. I don't want to be the father that only brag about his children or hold them when they are clean or sleeping. I want to be hands on in every possible way. I don't want my fiancée to feel like she made these children alone.

"Lie on the bed sis." Mama

"How did you manage to go through this for 4 times mama! Ay ngiyakuvuma mfazi! I'm done yesess!"

"When I gave birth to Mpilenhle that what I said."

"Ay ngeke mama he's going to carry the kids that will follow after these ones. I'm never falling pregnant again."

Her mom laughs as I look at Wenhle in shock. Ngathi ngiyabona sengikhulelwe Jesu!

“How will you do that?”

“Nothing money can’t do out there. If it has never been done before then izoqala ngaye lo!!” (It will start with this one) she points at me with her finger angrily. Lord I’m scared with how technology keeps on advancing. In next years men would fall pregnant too I tell you. Maye ngizoba yini! I try to wipe the sweat on her forehead with towel but she slaps my hand.

“Don’t touch me wena!”

Can these babies come out already I miss my loving wife not this crazy woman who’s barking at me every chance she gets.

“Do you think a back flip will hurt the babies? Or maybe I should dance ispansula just to ease these pains.”

Just as her mom is about to reply Wenhle yelps once and bites her bottom lip.

“I want to push mama.”

“Manelisi go and call the midwife.”

I do as I’m told and come back with her. She immediately checks Mbewenhle then I hear her saying.

“They’re finally here!”

My heart skips a beat. The midwife disappears and comes back with a nurse. Now at this moment my fiancée is lying on the bed with her legs wide open. Myself and her mom are standing either of her side and holding her hands.

“Okay Miss Q. On 3 you will push right.”

Wenhle nods her head vigorously and waits for the midwife to count up to 3 then she pushes with all her strength.

“Push Miss Q. You see that last speed you pulled at Tokyo Olympics. Give me that kind of push

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the last one.”

She holds on our hands tightly that I feel my bones hurt as she gives her last powerful push. A little cry fills the room and my heart swells in joy.

“Oh there you go, the little princess is out. One more to go.”

It takes less then I expected before another one comes out crying his little lungs out. Now I’m crying tears of joy of course. They’re finally here and alive I can’t believe it.

“This one is a prince. Well done Miss Q.”

The nurse wraps the twins with their blankets and gives them to Wenhle. Teardrops stream down her face as she looks at our babies. They're so tiny and beautiful.

"Oh they are so beautiful. Hello bonunuza bagogo nzee."

"Wow I can't believe that they're finally here."

"I also can't believe it babe."

"Thingolwenkosazane, that's the name of daddy's princess." I say brushing their tiny cheeks.

"I love it. Mommy's prince is Zizwezikhotheme."

"Oh beautiful I love it MaKhondlo. Thank you so much for holding on to this pregnancy up to this far. Thank you for bearing me such beautiful babies."

“I couldn’t have done it without your support. You are the best life partner a woman could ever asked for,” Wenhle says and looks up at me with a twinkle in her eyes. Fuck I’m falling in love with her all over again.

Dumpling and Biltong are finally here! I’m on cloud nine and to think we almost lost them brings me tears. I really admire my wife for the strength she possesses. It really wasn’t an easy pregnancy but the twins made it to the world safe and sound.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I can hear one of them crying and this woman styling my weave is pulling me roughly which frustrates me even further. It doesn't help that my nerves are getting the better of me. It's the big day of my life and I'm trapped in a mixture of emotions, joy being a prominent one.

"Hayi sisi have you forgotten that this is not a doll's head!" I yell, pushing her hands away from my head and get on my feet.

"I'm sorry sisi." The lady says apologetically. I walk out of my bedroom and allow that piercing cry to guide me. It takes me to Mpilenhle's bedroom and I find her pacing up and down trying to calm down Zizwe.

"What's going on?"

"I don't know Azanothe brought him to me crying."

He's been restless ever since last night. I think the heavy presence of these people in my father's home is affecting him.

"Let me take him."

"No don't worry. Go and get your hair done. Have you seen what time is it?"

"Time can wait Mpilenhle. I can't sit and do my hair while my son is crying."

She sighs and hands over my son. Oh pakithi umtanami his face is reddish now. I try to give him the boob but he's not barging.

"What did they do to you huh?" I ask pacing up and down.

"Usindwa abantu I'm sure."

“Kushuthi lencweba ayisebenzi phela.”

I place him on the bed and search for anything that could make him cry only to not find incweba on his his body.

“Ayikho incweba Mpilenhle.”

“Haibo where’s it? No wonder he’s hysterical. Who took it off?”

“I also don’t know. Who bathed him last night maybe she forget to put it back.”

“Isisa did.”

“Please call her for me.”

She walks out and I try to calm this little boy. A few minutes later Isisa walks in with Mpilenhle.

“Friend iphi incweba?”

“It was on him when I bath him last night.”

“But it’s not here Isisa.”

“Hawu where could it be? Maybe it fall off.”

“It can’t fall off because it wasn’t loose. Jehova umtanami uhabulile Isisa!”

The yard is buzzing with every kind of person who might have used muti that is heavy and strong or who is surrounded with evil spirits.

“Don’t overthink maybe he’s coming up with flue,” Isisa says trying to placate me.

“His temperature is okay.”

Anxiety is choking me. There's no way that incweba can just disappear out of his body. Someone must have to took it off on purpose. They both search for it but they can't find it. Now I'm also crying with my son.

“Umakoti akakagqoki namanje? Ubonile isikhathi ubani?” (The bride is not dressed yet? Did you see what time is it now?) Aunt says as I pass her heading to the lounge.

“I don't fucking care about time aunt! Ngifuna incweba yomtanami and I'm not getting married without finding it!”

“Don't raise your voice at me! I'm just concerned about time. Izulu lizona ntambama!” (It will rain in the afternoon)

I don't care about the rain or the sun. I turn the whole house upside down searching. The relatives are looking at me like I'm a crazy woman.

“Aunty Mbewu what are you looking for?”

“Incweba ka Zizwe sthandwa sami. You didn’t see it?”

“I saw gogo taking it off him last night when Zizwe was sleeping in your bedroom.”

“Which gogo? My mom?”

“No not grams Thembeke. Come I will show you which gogo.”

I follow behind Avumile with my son in my hands as she leads me to the garage where the caterers are busy with cooking. The decor people are decorating the gigantic white tent outside. I don’t know why Aunty is coaching my caterers because they know what they are doing.

“This one,” Avumile says pointing my elder aunt. The one that doesn’t like me more than others.

“Aunt uyithatheleni incweba yomtanami?”

“What? I didn’t take it!”

“I saw you gogo....”

“Yey wena shut up!” Aunt screams as she slaps Avumile with a back slap.

I feel the moisture in my armpits and an urge to return that back slap. I swear if I wasn’t carrying Zizwe I would’ve slapped her back. How dare she slaps my niece like that! Avumile cries hysterically as she runs out.

“She saw you Aunty! Why are you slapping her? What do you want to do with incweba yomtanami?”

“Ungazongibhedela wena! Ngingayenzani incweba yomtwana!!”

Like a speed of light Mpilenhle barges inside of the garage and back slaps Aunty. The caterers gasp in shock.

“Angizalelanga wena!”

Aunt cries hysterically and dashes out. I know that she’s going to search for her brother.

“You are in trouble. Father is going to eat you alive.”

“Hayi umshayelani umtanami?”

“She’s refusing that she took off incweba from Zizwe. Avumile would never lie she saw her.”

“Exactly and remember mama once said she’s responsible for her miscarriage? Uyahamba hamba lo.”

We walk inside the main house and head to my bedroom where we found the makeup artists doing my bridesmaids

faces. Out of all my cousins I chose Mpume only to be one of my bridesmaids because we get along. The other bridesmaids are my girls from the AA club. Ndiwe is the maid of honor, the bride's maid is Isisa.

This ncweba thing is not sitting well with me. What is this woman planning to do to my son? How is he going to survive such a busy day without it? It's going to be a long day ever! We hear baba shouting on the other side of my bedroom then Mpilenhle and I look at each other.

The door bursts open. He's not even knocking what if we are naked? Mama is behind him. He asks everyone to excuse us. They do as they are told leaving Mpilenhle and I with our parents. My son is calm for now but I know it won't last long.

"Why are you two abusing your aunt in my house?"

"She slapped Avumile baba."

“And that give you a right to slap her back? What kind of a child are you that raises hands on elders! So Avumile can’t be disciplined now by her grandmother?”

“She wasn’t disciplining her baba. My daughter didn’t do anything wrong! She slapped her because she didn’t want her to tell the truth!”

“She lied Mpilenhle! Uxabanisa umndeni what would your aunt do with incweba? Why would she take it?”

“Why she’s not here to answer that baba? Avumile is not a liar she saw her taking it out of Zizwe.”

“Wena Mbewenhle unuka u-aunt wakho uthi uyathakatha?”  
(You are accusing your aunt with witchcraft)

Say what? I laugh very hard.

“I didn’t say that baba. I just asked her why she took incweba. Kanti vele what is she planning to do with it?”

“She didn’t take it!”

“How sure are you Qwabe? Why would a child lie?” Mama intervenes.

“You are condoning what these two did?”

“No I’m not condoning anything but one thing I know is that a child will never lie. Mpilenhle go and apologize to your aunt.”

“Mama...”

“Go Mpilenhle!”

My sister huffs as she gets on her feet before walking out.

“This is one should also apologize!”

Mama gives me a look. I sigh and hand her my son before going to apologize to the aunt. Argh I'm so annoyed right now. I wish I can scream. When I come back I find mama taking out some muti from incweba ka Thingo and making another one for Zizwe.

"Get dressed I will take care of the twins. They won't leave my sight. I will prepare their bath once I'm done here."

"Thank you so much mommy."

"You are welcome sisi. Don't worry about your aunt whatever she's planning won't succeed."

"I will try not to worry."

I kiss my puddings on their foreheads who are lying on the bed with their backs and kicking the air. They're now 4 months old. I still remember the day they were born like it was yesterday. 9 August around 11pm. My life immensely changed that night but it changed for the better. The moment I held them in my arms I

knew that I would die protecting them. My husband to be makes this parenthood thing so enjoyable. He's hands on in every possible way. I don't deal with nappy changing and sleepless nights alone. We are both fully parenting and I'm so lucky to have found a partner like him.

Baba walks in carrying a spade that has coals and places it on the floor. He sprinkles izinyamazane on the burning coals and asks me to bring the babies. I take Zizwe first and makes him inhale the smoke before taking Thingo. He loves his grandchildren surprisingly. There are times I'd find him cradling them and baby talking to them. It really warms my heart when I see him do that at least he doesn't hate my kids. Our relationship is still the same. I don't know how he's going to walk me down the aisle.

.....

We just arrived at the Drakensbergkloof Guest House. Isisa helps me out of uncle Zero's Rolls-Royce car. I couldn't have chose any better place then this one. It's so beautiful with its tranquil. I love the impressive views of mountains. Mama

approaches us. Where are the twins? Why she's not with them now?

"Relax they're with your sister," Mama says when she notices the worry on my face. I sigh in relief. I don't trust anyone with my kids except close family now.

"Are you still good?"

"Yes mama."

"You look breathtaking my baby," for the hundredth times she says. No lies there though. Thanks to uncle Jay for designing my wedding dress for free of charge. It's a beautiful mermaid off the shoulder sleeves dress with embellishments of lace and white beads that compliments the white beads on my wavy updo. I look breathtaking and I don't need anyone to tell me otherwise.

"Thank you mama."

“Your father is coming. I will go join others.”

She kisses my cheek before walking away. Isisa holds my tail as we move closer to the chapel. The bridesmaids and groomsmen make their entrance with a step they’ve been practicing for weeks now. Baba looks smashing in his black tuxedo.

“Umuhle baba.” (You are handsome)

No thank you? Just a faint smile. Oh okay! He takes my hands in his and we wait for my song. I can’t believe that I’m finally getting married to the love of my life. To think we only had 3 months to prepare for our wedding I was skeptical that we would manage. Hubby couldn’t wait any longer to make me his wife officially. If it was for him he would have married me the second after giving birth. He waited for this long just to respect me. So here we are getting married few days before my birthday.

J Cooper - The Only Reason starts playing. Baba holds me tightly as if he could feel the nerves wrecking through me. This is it! I’m getting married to my biltong. Luzelwande leads the way

throwing petals on our feet as my father and I follow behind. I lock my eyes on my charming King on the front and everything else cease to exist. His smile is so bright and contagious.

♪♪ It started out in springtime

Against the golden skyline

You spoke to me at last

It started out intensely

And within all my senses I knew

I'm sure I knew

The only reason God gave me eyes was to see you

The only reason God gave me ears was to hear your voice

Say, I will al, I will always love you

And when the wind gets cold

I'll wrap my arms around you

We shared our dreams, endeavors and many things

We never could tell a soul before

I saw you smile through the tears that fell to the floor

I'm sure I knew

The only reason God gave me hands was to hold you

And he finely tuned the drums of my ears just to hear your  
voice

Say, I will al, I will always love you

And when the wind gets cold

I'll build a fire to warm your hands

I'll wrap my arms around you

And I won't let shadows scare you in the stillness of the night

I'll be the cooling voice that tells you everything's alright

And when darkness tries to drag you down there will be a light

And no wind and no storm and no hatred can hide it

I'll help you find it

And I will al, I will always love you

And when the wind gets cold

I'll wrap my arms around you

Oh

Advertisement

and I need love, I will always love you

And when the wind gets cold

I'll build a fire to warm your hands

I'll wrap my arms around you 🎵🎵

Dad hands me to my husband to be and retires to his seat next to his wife. God he looks gorgeous in a gold 3 pieces suit. It was definitely tailored for him. His wavy cut suits him and his beard is so smooth and shiny. I gaze into his eyes and wipe off the tear that has escaped his left eye then he holds my hands in his as we both look at the pastor who starts by welcoming everyone.

“Dearly beloved we are gathered here together in the presence of these witnesses, to join Manelisi Maseko & Mbewenhle Qwabe in holy matrimony which is an honourable estate instituted by God it is therefore not to be entered into unadvisedly, but reverently, joyfully and in the love of God. Into these holy estate this couple come now to be joined. If any here can show just cause why they may lawfully not be joined together speak now or forever hold your peace”

I hold my breath as we wait. Knowing eyes are darting at Muzikayise at the back seat who kisses his girlfriend the

moment he acknowledges that people's eyes are on him. Show off huh? Good move though! That how you shut up gossipers.

"Okay let's proceed." The priest prays before giving us a chance to say our vows. I clear my throat as I stare deep and intently in my husband's eyes.

"Khabangobe I had my vows prepared and ready but now that I'm standing before your gorgeous self I just came to a realization that no words could ever be enough to express how I feel about you. I have never loved someone with so much intensity and passion in my entire life. With every single beat and pound of my heart you are the one and you will always be the one who occupies my my heart. Your presence in my life takes me to a trance where there's no pain nor sorrow. You flow in my blood and live beneath my bones. Life without you is meaningless. You're in every essence of my existence. I'm truly the luckiest woman ever born in the universe to have found the most amazing man there ever was in the world. You have given me a purpose and direction in my life. Our journey together has been beautiful and mesmerizing that it almost feels like I'm dreaming. I promise to never give up on you and to go to the end of the world just to be with you always. I was born to be yours and you to be mine. Our souls were always going find

each other no matter how, when and where. I love you in every possible sense and I will always choose you in any world I'd find you in."

The sweet and beautiful cheers fill the room. His smile spreads across his face as tears escape his eyes. I wipe them off with the back of my palms.

"Oh beautiful. Mr Maseko it's your turn."

"Dombolo Lami, the first day I met you I could have sworn that I met you before. I mean it was the only thing that could've explained the connection I felt towards you. From the very first conversation we had you have never made me feel undesired and worthless. I didn't understand what is that you saw in me but I could see that it was beyond what everyone else saw in me. In your eyes I've always been more than just a poor herd boy who wear rags. In your eyes I've always been more than just a grandson of the witch. You are the one who knows me better than anyone in this universe. Before you I never felt what love is. I never felt the sense of belonging. I never felt so important and valid. Your love healed me. It keep me warm in cold nights and make me happy in sad times. I feel so special

knowing that I have a special place in your heart and life. I love you more than anything I have ever loved in my entire life and my love for you grows every second. Your presence in my life lights up my heart and gives peace to my soul. I can't walk this earth without you by my side. You are the best part of my life. I promise to grow old with you and spend the rest of my life in your arms. I love you and will always love till the sun, moon and stars continue to shine in the sky."

Oh can someone stop these tears. I'm a crying mess.

"Beautiful vows. Can we have the rings please."

Luzelwande brings the rings and the pastor blesses them then hands them to us. I slide the ring on my husband's finger and he does the same.

"I now pronounce you Mr & Mrs Maseko. You may kiss your bride Mr Maseko"

He licks his lips as I glance at my parents. It's not a secret that his kisses are my addiction but man knowing that my parents are watching at me makes this whole thing so awkward.

"Come duze sthandwa sami," he says wiggling his eyebrows. I giggle as I take two steps back.

"Musa ukubaleka sthandwa sakhe," (don't run away his love) the pastor says and the room erupts into laughter.

"Sondela ngikmunce kuqhakhazele intshebe kuQwabe," my husband says but not loud enough for everyone to hear.

The pastor and I laugh. He moves closer to me and cups my face before kissing me deeply and intensely. I hear the screams filling the room and pull back but the man is holding my face in place and plundering my mouth like the world is ending. It's only when someone in the crowd says 'khawulani phela' he stops. I steal a glance at my parents once again only to find dad looking down while mom is laughing next to him.

We are married finally and to say I'm happy would be not doing justice to my feelings. I'm over the moon I could kiss the sky right now. He tugs his hand on mine as we make our way out with Loluthando by Winnie Khumalo.

We go for shooting and take beautiful pictures ever.

After the shoot we head back home and the decor is ready so is the food. I'm more than impressed this is how I wanted the decor. So elegant and beautiful. The back, gold and white colours blend very nicely. A beautiful day it has been though the rain cuts it short but they say a rain is a blessing which means our union is blessed by the angels of heaven.

☆ Manelisi ☆

"You are not going to tell me where are you taking me to?" This wife of mine bathong! I've lost counts of how many times she's been asking this question. What is a surprise kanti? We had agreed that we are not going anywhere for the honeymoon since our twins are only 4 months old and she's breastfeeding but few days away won't hurt. Our mothers agreed to help

each other with babysitting. We deserve some time away from everything and everyone. Away from annoying babies that cry 24/7. Just the two of us.

Hayi kabi I love my kids so much but those rabbits can cry yezwa. I don't know who's better than the other because when one cries the other start crying too. Having twins is not as cute as people make it to be don't be fooled. Lezinto zibhoshha kanye kanye ziphinde zikhale kanye kanye. I wouldn't trade them for anything in the world though. I'd kill and lay my life low for them together with their mother.

"We are going to Bora Bora baby."

"You're fucking lying!" she beams excitedly.

It's funny how madam already planned our honeymoon before we even decided on the date of our wedding. That was before we even got pregnant. Who plans a honeymoon before the wedding? Only my wife would do that. Haisuka maan akusemnandi nje ukuthi 'my wife' phela manje sengisho

kugcwale umlomo. It's not magic bafethu ukuzalwa wembethe nje. Everything just falls in place nawe uze uthuke.

Where was I? Oh yes so wifey dearest already planned our honeymoon and I just had to make the arrangements and payments. I shouldn't be surprised though she loves traveling after all. Bora Bora has exquisite resorts for honeymooners.

“Bora Bora here we come baby!”

“Oh my world you are the best! Woza la ngikbhehhabhehe kancane!”

I can't help but burst into laughter. I never get used to how raw she can get. It doesn't suit her yet it's sexy as fuck! She sits on me, straddling my thighs and wraps her arms around my neck kissing me. At work they offered to borrow us the private jet as the wedding gift. We have the whole privacy that we need. I moan in her mouth as she grinds herself against my hard on. It's been 4 months without having sex but I want to make love to her in our honeymoon destination.

“Baby I don’t want our first love making as married couple to be in a private jet. Hold that thought for more hours.”

“Experiment baby! Maybe the orgasm is even better in the air.”

I giggle.

“We are almost there okay.”

“Uncishana nge air-orgasm Manelisi siseduze kanje ne naseZulwini awusabi ngisho nokuthi izingilosi ziyakuzwa. Cha angeke ulingene iZulu wena!” (You are depriving me an air-orgasm you are not even scared that we are close to heaven and the angels can hear you. You will never go to heaven)

I can’t help but crack up. Urgh she’s the whole mood yazini! I promise her that when we go back home I would fulfill her fantasy. I love how adventurous she is. It such a huge turn on to me.

St. Regis Bora Bora resort is our honeymoon destination. It is surrounded by an open ocean and large lagoon. I must say that this place is beyond beautiful with thatch roofed bungalows perched on stilts over turquoise sea, lush grounds punctuated with winding paths and white sand beach studded with cocunut palms and lapped by clear calm water.

“Babe this place is a dream!”

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED & ONE

“Neh. I love it too dombolo lami.”

A white couple join us as we chilling by the swim up bar sipping on our fruity Tahiti cocktails . The husband recognizes my wife and to say I’m jealous would be an understatement. If he wasn’t going with his wife I’d be worried. He was athlete too but he quit after a leg injury. They talk about the love for the career and all that shit. Me and his wife are just smiling here and there and laughing when they’re laughing too.

“Dombolo lami let’s go for swimming.”

We leave the couple and go the couple swimming pool. It’s arty shaped and set in seclusion amongst lush gardens in the middle of the quiet motu which leads to the over water bungalows.

“I brought you here because I want your full attention not to give some white man with red hair.” I say and she giggles as she swims around to face me before kissing my lips.

“Needy much!”

“Yes is that wrong?”

“Of course not sthandwa sami. I know that ever since the twins were born we haven’t had time to ourselves just the two of us.”

Exactly.

“I’m glad I’m not the only one who feel neglected. Now that we have established this we have to work on it. We must have a balanced life.”

“That’s true my love.”

She clamps her arms around me and kisses me while grinding herself on me. I feel my dick expanding in my swim shorts. We enjoy the romantic pool, swimming around and enjoying each other’s company. Once we are tired we go back to our over-water villa. She takes off her wet swimwear and my eyes can’t help but feast on her body. I love the meat she has gain since

pregnancy. It turns me on not that her fit and sexy body doesn't turn me on.

"You won't shower? Why ain't you taking off your wet shorts."

"Let's forget about shower woza la" (come here)

I pick her up as butt naked as she is and walk to the bed where I throw her on it. She giggles like a little girl as she bounces on the bed. I take out the short and crawl on the bed before kissing her tiny feet and she giggles trying to pull her feet away but I hold her in place. I love her giggles they warm up the depths of my soul and make my heart smile.

"Babe your kisses on my feet are tickling!"

I don't listen to her but continue with my task at hand. I hear her moaning when I suck her big toe.

"Oh God that feels so good!"

I kiss my way up to her leg, trailing soft and tender kisses inside of her knee then look at her reaction. I read somewhere that this is one of their pleasure zones. I move to the other leg seeing the effects of what I'm doing to her.

"Mmmmh baby."

"What my love?"

"Can we please cut straight to the chase. I need no foreplay but the bhebhanize joystick inside of me."

Tempting but a little tease won't hurt I want to worship her body. I spread her legs wide open and her glistening lips stare right back at me. I kiss along the inside of her thighs savoring the taste of her skin. She purrs when I explore her cunt with tantalizing motions of my fingers. I slide my finger within her wet folds and her body shudder sensuously. As I slide my finger in and out of her cunt I continue with kissing delicate part of her leg.

“Baby please...”

I replace my finger with my tongue, smothering her core with long strokes which drives her insane as she fervently rubs her pussy against my face. Her body and her thighs begin to tremble against my ears then she clamps my face in between her creamy thighs. My face soaks in thick juices as rapturous whimpers reverberate the room.

“Fuck!”

I get up between her and crawl on top of the bed pressing her body underneath me as we kiss passionately. She probes her tongue in my mouth and when it tangles with mine I release a throaty moan. Our bodies are pressed against each other and our mouths are making love to each other. The feel of her hard nipples against my chest sends heat radiating through my body.

I balance with one elbow on the other side of the bed and slide my hard rod between her wet folds up and down making the slurping sounds. At the fourth move I pause on the hole and glide my meat inside of her. She squirms as I groan, feeling her walls clench tightly around my dick. Pure bliss!

She sashays her hips back and forth as I begin to pump her. Damn I miss this sweetness! No matter how I try to be gentle the sweetness is fueling me. I can't control my thrusts and she also likes them wilder

deeper and faster. I turn her like a pan cake and hit it from behind while she's lying on the bed with a pillow underneath her tummy.

I kiss the back of her neck and pound into her harder. Her screams of pleasure are good melody in my ears. Each thrust is delivered with more intensity and depth than the last. I feel the sparkling tingles of pleasure throughout my body as her pussy muscles close in around my prick and warm juices flooding my manhood. It's not that long before I bite her shoulder and muffle the sounds of ecstasy rolling out of my throat as I release my DNA into her.

“Fuck!”

I pull out smearing my juices on her butt. She rolls over and snuggles closer to my chest.

“I love you my husband,” she says softly almost as if she’s singing. Her tone tugs at my heart strings. I still wake up at night and check my ring just to see if this whole thing is not a dream. I’m someone’s husband people and not just someone Mbewenhle Qwabe.

“I love you twice back my wife.”

We spend almost the whole day in our over water villa fucking and only come out for dinner after taking a shower. We enjoy the Asian cuisine at Bam Boom restaurant which is one of the 4 restaurants in the resort.

The next day I’m the first one to wake up. The birthday sex which we started midnight until the wee hours of the morning must have exhausted her. This give me time to go to the black

pearl boutique which is just right in the resort and by the time I come back she's awake but she's still wrapped in blankets on the bed. I settle on the bed next to her and kiss her lips.

"Hey birthday bride."

"Hey hubby."

"How did you sleep?"

"Wonderful and yourself?"

"I always sleep well next to you. How does it feel like to be 27 years old."

She giggles and looks at me with a wild smile on her face.

"Amazing. I'm sore I just want to spend the day in bed."

“There’s no way we are spending your birthday in bed. I have plans for today”

“Oh yeah.”

“Yeah we are going to soak ourselves in a jacuzzi and enjoy the Polynesian massage. A bit later we are going for excursions with tour guides and enjoy the submarine exploration of Pacific Ocean to romantic sunset cruise.”

Her smile reaches her eyes and it warms my heart.

“What did I do to deserve you mara?”

“I ask myself that question everyday.”

“Thank you so much for seeing me worthy of being your wife and a mother of your children.”

Awww she’s melting my heart into liquid gold.

“I’m the one who’s thankful to you for choosing me as your husband and a father of your children.”

I lean closer to her and kiss her lips tenderly.

“I have something for you. Happy birthday sthandwa sami.”

I hand her the gift I’ve just bought at the boutique.

“I didn’t know what to get you but when I walked into that boutique that lady told me the story behind the black pearls. Apparently Lustrous black Tahiti pearls were once so rare that they were considered the 'Pearl of Queens'. Tahitian black pearls have been so highly sought after because they are larger, have a more brilliant luster, and round shapes occur in a higher percentage. Also, far less are produced per oyster than fresh water pearls. I thought to myself that this is the perfect gift for the Queen of my heart.”

“Oh baby thank you so much.”

“Why are you crying now you don’t like this neck piece?”

“I love it baby it’s such a sentimental gift and I’m so proud to receive it. I love you so much sthandwa sami.”

She sits on her butt before attacking my lips like it’s the last time she will ever have to kiss me. It can’t be a luck to have her in my life but definitely a blessing!

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

There he is smiling like a retard as he makes his way towards us. The rabbits see him first and scream “daddy” in unison as they scurry off to him. He crouches to meet their level and they both launch themselves in his arms. Like precious cargos they’re he envelopes them tenderly in his arms before kissing their tiny lips. When he’s finally done with his kids he walks towards me and onslaughts me with a kiss.

“Euwww!” Zizwe screams next to us making us to giggle as we break the kiss. I run my hand on his cheek staring deeply in his eyes. Oh I’ve missed him. Six years later he’s still the man my heart beats for and the man I’d choose still in many worlds I’d find him in.

“How are you Bab Maseko?”

“I’m well Mama Maseko and yourself?”

“Now that I’m with you I’m well. I missed you so much.”

“I missed you too my love. Let’s get out of here. Hello Sizakele.”

“Hi Mr Maseko.”

He takes the luggages from us and loads them inside his car before buckling up his kids. Sizakele is the twins’ nanny. I wanted an older woman to be our nanny just to be on the safe side you know. Haaa phela these young nannies can steal your man so snax usale uncela izithupha. Due to my constant traveling I knew that no older woman would handle the ups and downs. Older women are grounded and they like routines. I was left with no choice but to have a young nanny who would be keen and looking forward to these trips I make in and out of the country.

Sizakele is from the village I couldn’t say no when her mom ambushed me and asked me to help her find any job. You know back in the village people think once you live in the City you automatically know every job vacancy there ever is in the world. Being a celebrity is not helping at all. A celebrity fame

that I never signed up for. I only just wanted to sprint but this career of mine comes with a spotlight. Back at home I'm every woman's hope to find her children jobs. I don't enjoy going back to the village now because they always ask me about jobs I have no knowledge of.

If it wasn't for her mom, Sizakele wouldn't be my nanny. I like her though she's nice and my kids are fond of her. She's been their nanny since they were babies and now they just turned 6 years old last month. We took them to Disneyland in Paris and I still can't get over how happy they were. I live to make my kids happy. They've been traveling with me ever since they were 1 year old much to their father's disapproval at first but there was no way I was leaving my babies behind and go to foreign countries for weeks.

I'm not planning to stop traveling with them even if they start real school next year. I will get them a tutor to help them catch up with school work just like I do with Benhle. He's my baby that one to the point that people think I have 3 kids. We didn't go with him though this time. It was his punishment. He's growing up too fast that he thinks he's now a man and can talk to me however it suits him.

“Benhle is still sulking?” I ask as we driving away from the airport and heading home.

We finally bought our house in Midrand and it’s nothing other than an opulent mansion. It has enough rooms to accommodate everyone including our families when they’re visiting. They do come a lot especially his sisters and my brother’s family. Kayise and his wife with their children come when we are hosting birthday parties for the kids. Over the passed years we have managed to build a good relationship between all of us and I’m proud that my husband get along with his siblings especially his brother. Khazimula and I get along not that we have any other choice we are the only Maseko brides.

“Uncle G is this side so he’s spending the night with him.”

Lisi is my husband and during our pillow talks I happen to tell him about Uncle G. Not that he couldn’t see it himself. Ever since I brought my baby brother this side uncle G is always this side and they spend so much time together. Of course Benhle doesn’t know that he’s his father and we are not planning to

tell him. No one knows that they're bonding except me and Lisi.

"Okay."

The rest of the drive we listen the rabbits telling their father about our trip. It's funny how they both want to talk at once. You just never know who to listen first because they'd both be wanting your attention. It can be frustrating at times. Home sweet home! The first thing I do is to go to my special room to put my trophy among the trophies and medals I've won over the years. I always feel proud when I look at the collection of my achievements. My hard work and exceptional performances have made my name known out there.

There's a new framed newspaper article placed among other articles written about me. I reach for it and a huge title catches my eyes. 'Mommy Cheetah has done it again!' After giving birth I continued with sprinting and many were skeptical since I was now a mother but I proved everyone wrong. When I won at the World Championships Athletics again in 100m with 9:70 seconds everyone was stunned and this journalist gave me a

nickname and that how 'Mommy Cheetah' came about. The cheetah being known as the fastest animal in the world.

I continue to read the whole article. 'The sprint Queen shows the world that the sky is the limit. Over the years we have known her as a goat of 100m but this time the athlete won her first gold in 200m at the Diamond League competition which was hosted in London. We say a big congratulations to Mbewenhle Qwabe-Maseko for her victories. We are proud of you!' Tears trickle down my face. I always came at the second place or third place in 200m but this time I came first. I couldn't believe it myself! I feel strong hands wrapping around me and lean my back on the hard body behind me.

"I'm so proud of you my wife and I'm sorry that I couldn't come with you guys to watch you do what you does the best."

"I know baby and thank you so much for this article."

He's made it his duty to frame and display every victory article of mine then put them among my achievements. I can never thank him enough for his unending support. He just never fails

to support me. Work keeps him busy at times that he doesn't come with us but I always know that he's with me spiritually and cheering me louder than anyone else.

"Don't mention it sthandwa sami. You're such a phenomenal sprinter."

"I could never do it without you mqwebu wami. I really appreciate your support."

He turns me around and wipes my tears before kissing me.

"I only return the favor my dumplings. I cooked let's go eat then we will hit a shower. I will give you a full body massage afterwards."

He picks me up and walk downstairs with me where he places me on the couch in the lounge.

"I also want you to carry me daddy!"

Did I tell you that I'm in a polygamy marriage? Whatever her father does to me she also wants it. Her father kisses me she also want him to kiss her. He tickles me the little rabbit want to be tickled as well by her father. He carries me same thing happens. The list goes on I swear if she were to see him sexing me she would ask the same.

"Hayi Thingo you are heavy," my husband says

"But mommy is more heavy then me."

I laugh.

"You have never carried me my girl how do you know I'm heavy?"

"I don't need to carry you. I'm a baby and you are a mommy so you are heavy. Daddy please carry me too."

“Just leave daddy alone Thingo. Can’t he carry his wife without you annoying.”

I gasp at how matured Zizwe sounds at this moment. I didn’t expect such big words from him but then again he always surprises me whenever he opens his mouth. He’s more close to me then he is to his father whereas Thingo is a daddy’s girl.

“Shut up Zizwe we are not talking to you!”

“Don’t shout at your brother Thingo.” The father reprimands his princess.

“But he said I’m annoying daddy,” my little princess says already blinking more then necessary pushing back her tears but they fall down her face. In an instant Zizwe is next to his sister and hugging her.

“Okay I’m sorry neh. I’m really sorry you are not annoying don’t cry.”

He wipes his twin sister's tears. You just never get involved in their fights because you feel like a fool when they make up. They both don't want to see one another crying.

.....

"You didn't bring the biltong!" Trust Isisa to say that.

Now I have to come all the way from Johannesburg with biltong just because I own a biltong den of which was a gift from my husband on my 30th birthday.

"It's not free sisi kuyathengwa!" I say and she laughs out loudly.

"Bitch you are my best friend!"

"I'm running a business not a charity case!"

“Angeke uwe ngomqwebunyana nje Mbewu.” I laugh as I remember that what she always said when she ate things in my father’s shop for free. Friends we keep!

“How are you friend?”

“I’m okay friend and yourself?”

“I’m just exhausted your nephew cries like he’s in the competition.”

They have a six months old baby boy now and there’s another girl after Luzelwande. My brother scores like he’s competing. So all in all now they have 4 children, Lumi being the eldest.

“Where is he now?”

“He’s sleeping.”

“Can I wake him up?”

“Hayi friend I’ve just put him to sleep that kid only shuts his mouth when he’s sleeping. You still have time you will see him.”

“I’m going back to Johannesburg tomorrow.”

“What’s with the rush?”

“I left my husband and kids at home.”

“Haibo I have enough rooms here, you know that. They should’ve came too.”

They finally bought their house in Dundee. I’m really proud of my brother. He’s not only extending his family but he also ensures that he expands his pocket too. The shisanyana have grown into the ‘it’ place people are raving over it. He has pigs now of which he nurture and put them on sale. The last time I talked to him he was planning to have a driving school.

“Hubby wanted to bond with his kids. He missed spending time with them remember that we just came back a week ago from London.”

“Then let them bond and stay a little longer here. I missed you friend and congratulations on your wins. Even though it’s starting to become cliché now to congratulate you because we all know that you are going to win.”

I giggle and throw the grapes in my mouth.

“Thank you friend. The other reason I have to leave tomorrow it’s because of the SA Sports Awards ceremony. It’s the day after tomorrow.”

“Oh yes you did mention that. Congratulations in advanced.”

“You have so much faith in me.”

“You were born for this. I hope you brought my t-shirts.”

“Of course I did but you are a bad friend! Do I always have to give you freebies why can’t you support my hustle.”

She bursts into laughter throwing her head back.

“Aw sis supporting you makes no difference to you shame. You have tons of supporters. I support street vendors because with them I know that my money will mean a lot to them. They would probably put a bread on the table and their kids will sleep on full stomachs unlike you ay phela wena uyinginga.”

I can’t help but laugh. What is the exaggeration for? I’m not even close to be injinga. I’m hustling like everyone else. Trying to secure a great future for my children. Apart from the biltong den and the club I wanted I have my own clothing brand

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MQ. The fact that it’s mine that what makes it to sell more. This fame is coming handy at times. I won’t mention the shares that my husband and I own in few companies.

“Ihaba elani sisi!”

“Aw ngeke I’m sorry my friend. I love you so much and you know that but I will never support you with money. You have all the money in the world. You just won at the diamond league competition more hundreds coming in if not millions.”

“Stop it with drama! I have a proposal for you.”

“Okay I’m listening.”

“Don’t you want to partner with me and Ndiwe. I want us to establish a bursary for students back in the village.”

“You want to help the same kids their mothers insulted you and called you names not once but twice?”

“That’s in the past friend and now they like me.”

“Because you are celebrity not that they care about you friend.”

“I know that they don’t care about me but I believe lack of knowledge is the reason why that village is like that. If their kids can go out there and spread their wings. They can pass that knowledge they would gain to their parents as well as the generations of the generations.”

“Ay if you have too much money friend give it to me I will chow it.”

“It’s not about having too much money friend but it’s helping those who are in need. I believe in helping people to gain something for a better future. Not that I’m saying when you give someone food and clothes it’s wrong but what will happen when the food runs out and the clothes get old? Why not give them something that will buy them food and clothes for the rest of their lives.”

“You are too kind my friend. Let them starve with hunger they don’t deserve to benefit from the fruits of your labour!”

“Friend come on!”

“Okay fine! But how will you make sure that this bursary is not the same as many out there. Not every child is a straight A student like you.”

“I’m glad you asked that question. See this one will be quite different. We would be taking all those who are hard workers not the straight As students. Those have many chances of getting a funding. We want those who are determined in their school work and also participating in any activities such as sport.”

“Go on I’m listening.”

I smile and sit on my feet as I tell her more about what I have in mind. She’s on board though she’s not happy that this is for the village people. My brother makes his way in with his children.

“Haibo to what pleasure do we owe to be visited by thee sprint Queen herself.”

I giggle as I get up and throw myself in his arms. He whisks me off the floor and spins with me. I’m giggling none stop.

“Can’t a girl visit his favorite people.”

He puts me down before kissing my forehead.

“Oh well ibraai vandag!”

I thought he’s joking but he starts preparing for the fire outside and his wife helps him with marinating the meat. Okay I like this! I call the Cebekhulu family to come and join us. I insist that they bring alcohol. By the time they arrive I already had few glasses of wine. Isisa is a wine drinker like myself.

“Hey big sis.”

We share a warm hug.

“Hey sis congratulations once again. Now I should just record myself and every time you win I will send that voice note.” my sister says and we all laugh.

“I was just telling her that it’s starting to become cliché now to congratulate her.”

Laughter fills my brother’s kitchen. I greet sbari Sbu who then joins his brother in law outside. Azanothe sekayintombi nina and the attitude weeh! Weirdly so to me she’s always nice.

“Where are the twins and Ndabe Aunty Mbewu?” Mkhotho

“I left them at home but I will bring them next time.”

“Aunty what did you bring for me in London.” Azanothe

“Why don’t you start by telling your aunt that you seeing boys now?”

I glare at Azanothe who narrows her eyes on her mother.

“Geee mom why are you putting my business out there like that. What’s wrong with you!” she walks away.

“Yewena ngizokunkinya!!!” (Hey you I will strangle you) I stop my sister from chasing after Azanothe. She would definitely strangle her. This girl is driving my sister crazy. Adolescent stage imbambe ngezinza.

“Not here please you will deal with her at home.”

“Yhoo I’m tired of this girl, Mbewenhle. One of these days you are going to hear that I’m in jail stru nasi.”

“Calm down please and have a drink.”

I give her my glass of wine and she gulps all of it down.

“She’s 18 and you know how they get around this age.”

“I wasn’t like that when I was 18 Mbewenhle. Why do you guys make it seem like being a teenage start with these kids? We have been teenagers before and we respected our parents maan!”

And my sister had to be the most behaved child ever. I’m the one who showed our parents flames.

“I don’t think I’m ready as a mother when it comes to this part of them growing up,” Isisa says and fear written all over her face makes me chuckle.

No mother can ever be ready for this but I still have more years before they reach that age. I’m worried about Ndabenhle but hopefully our parenting skills will put him on the line for as long as he’s old enough to make sound decisions about his life.

“Azanothe is a liker of things. That’s how we have to punish her.” I say

“Maybe if her father can be firm with her as well things would be better. Now it’s like I’m always the bad guy because I’d shout at the top of my voice then he would come and be soft on her calling her pet names.”

“Ay usbari uyaganga you guys have to work together. Next year she’s starting university and she will be all alone with no one to supervise her. The last thing we want is for her to come back with pregnancy.”

That moment she’s so brilliant. I fear that stage will be a hindrance to her dreams. We continue with talking while cooking. Around 5pm we are seated by the garden and enjoying our meal which we down it with drinks. The vibe is so chilled and relaxed. I’m having a great time with my siblings and their spouses. The annoying part is when they’re all over each other and kissing. Now I wish my husband was here as well.

It's the next day and I'm meeting mom and her husband who doesn't know though that they're meeting me. Up to this date I'm still singing 'I'm sorry baba' song. Ay cha lendoda inekhanda eliqinile or it actually his heart?

"When are you coming back?" Lonhle asks as he pulls me in for a tight squeeze.

"Muzikayise is doing some ceremony next month and there's no way his brother will miss it."

"Okay at least next month I'm going to see you. Take care of yourself for me please."

"I will do bro. You do the same vha? Oh did I tell you that I'm so proud of you,"

"Aw yabona usisi manje. " He's blushing and I can't but chortle.

"I'm really proud of you little bro. I have never doubted that you're going to grow up to be the man that I've always wanted

you to be and proud to call my brother. Keep on doing what you're doing. You are a good example to Benhle because not only are you a good young man but you're the best brother in the whole world as well."

"You just want to make me cry now hamba uyekwakho!" (Go to your house)

We all laugh then my brother and I share another hug.

"I love you bro."

"I love you too sis."

I move to my sister and we share a warm sisterly hug.

"You are the backbone of the Qwabe family without you just know that we are all lost. Thank you for never giving up on us and always holding us together. I love you sisi wami and I can never thank you enough for the relationship we have built over

the years. That's the relationship I want between our children and so far we are doing."

"You are making me emotional now urgh come here," she says pulling in for another hug.

"Sbari thanks for being the great husband that you are to my sister and a best daddy to my nieces and nephew."

"I couldn't have it any other way then this sbari."

I hug him and go to my best friend, giving her a tight hug.

"Have you ever noticed how most childhood friendship never last but ours is still standing. Thank you so much for sticking up with me even though I never deserved that sometimes. Never allow anyone I mean anyone to make you feel bad about the life choices you've made. If being a pampered and baby making wife is what makes you sleep at night so be it!"

We crack up into laughter. It used to get to her back then when she saw our peers progressing. We don't want the same life and people shouldn't make us feel bad about the life we choose to live.

"I love you friend."

"I love you too friend."

I say goodbye to the kids as well and have a little talk with miss attitude. I hope my words will ring in her ears when she thinks of misbehaving. They all walk me to my Audi Q7. When you have a family you have no other choice but to upgrade to a bigger a car. I hoot once and off I go.

Just as I arrive on the agreed spot I had told my mom that we would meet at I see my parents pulling off next to my car. Of course baba is driving because he will never be driven by a woman and he doesn't care that this is mom's car. I bought her one 3 years back on her birthday.

“What are we doing here?” That’s the first thing dad says when they step out of the car. I walk to mom and she envelopes me in her arms. I miss her so much.

“Hey my baby how are you doing?”

“I’m okay mama and yourself?”

“I’m happy to see you. Why did you bring us here what’s going on.” Mom

I greet baba and he greets me back.

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED & TWO

“Thanks for coming parents. Uhm baba your livestock have increased insanely and I figured that it will be great to have a farm where you will be able to nurture them.”

“You bought this farm for your father?” The shock in mom’s voice is palpable.

“Yes, what do you think baba?”

“Who said I want a farm?”

Ouch now that kills my happy mood. Does this man know how much this farm costed me to say that.

“Aw kahle Qwabe this was very thoughtful of her can’t you be happy and celebrate.”

“Celebrate? She’s trying to buy my forgiveness! I’m not accepting this farm my livestock are okay at home!”

I blow out a sigh as I feel tears sting in my eyes.

“No I’m not buying your forgiveness dad. I’m sorry you feel that way I just bought you this farm because it’s my way of showing gratitude for raising me. I thought why not should you benefit the fruits of my labour after working so hard to raise me. Once again I’m sorry for everything that I’ve done.”

I walk back to my car as tears blur my vision ignoring mom who’s calling me.

“Mbewu wait up!”

I sigh and lean on my car as I wait for mama.

“I’m sorry sisi what you did is very big and I’m really happy for your father.”

“He doesn’t want it nje you can take it mama and sell it or do whatever you want with it.”

“But you bought it for him not for me. It’s the anger that was talking he doesn’t mean that. Don’t cry baby come here.”

She wipes my tears before squeezing me tightly in her arms.

“I just don’t understand how can he punish me for years as if he’s never done mistakes too in his life. Baba is not a perfect father as much as much as I’m not a perfect daughter but this is way beyond me. I’m done trying mom.”

“Awww sisi don’t talk like that.”

“He’s not willing to accept me back as his daughter but it’s cool. I’ve got some few hours to spend before I head back to Johannesburg and I booked us into a spa are you down for that.”

Her lips curve in a sweet smile. At least I do make my mom smile.

“Hell yeah I’m down for that nigga!”

I burst into laughter and she joins me. She goes to give her husband her car keys then we leave for the spa with my car. The few hours I spend with my Queen are a bliss. I even forget about baba.

“Thank you so much sthandwa sami. Umuntu usewazi ukupotozwa nje wuwe. I feel so relaxed and rejuvenated.”

It was her first massage and I can’t believe that I’ve never taken her to one.

“Don’t mention it mommy.”

“Did you sent some money in my account I just saw the sms now.” she says as we are getting inside my car.

“Yes mama.”

“What is it for?”

“Buy anything you like.”

“Haibo imali engaka Mbewu!” (So much money)

“Are you complaining?” I ask tittering

“No I’m not but baby you’re spoiling me too much.”

“You deserve it mommy. That 9 months carrying me was no child’s play I don’t even want to mention the labour pains and raising me. You are the Queen of my heart yezwa.”

“Aww baby don’t make me cry.”

I wipe her tears before kissing her lips. It's only matter of time my husband calls me and asks where I am. He doesn't want me to drive late. I buckle up and start the car then drive home first to drop mom before driving to Johannesburg.

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“Ay ngiyakushiya mina!” (I'm leaving you behind) How can he leave me behind when he's accompanying me? This husband of mine has jokes I tell you.

“I'm almost done baby.”

“You said that an hour ago Mbewenhle. Umuhle ngaphandle kopende don't you know that?”

Paint like really? Uzenza ikhehla nje. I do last touch ups on my face then take one look at myself on the mirror. Stunning! That how I look in this silver sequin mermaid see through dress with embellishments of lace and ruffle thigh split. Hubby is in a grey

suit and we look gorgeous we deserve a well dressed couple of the year award.

“I’m done shall we go?”

“Whuuu kanti unjee!”

Yeah he didn’t see me I’ve been sitting on the vanity chair doing my face.

“You like what you see?”

“Damn baby you fucking sexy! Turn for your husband.”

I smile like an idiot as I turn around for him. He spans my buttocks and I giggle naughtily.

“Baby maan.”

“Shuuu let’s go before I fuck you hard right in this dress.”

My cheeks heat up at that thought. I take his hand and we walk downstairs. The twins stop playing and look at us.

“Wow mommy you beautiful!”

“Thank you my prince.”

“What about me boy? Don’t I look gorgeous too?”

“You do daddy but I always see you in suits.”

“Mxm!” My husband sulks. Sizakele and I laugh.

“You also look beautiful daddy.”

“Thank you my princess. See wena you are my ride or die!”

“Siza we are leaving.”

“Okay sisi. You guys look stunning.”

“Thank you.”

“What time are the awards going to be televised?”

“From 7:30pm”

“Okay we will watch them.”

We kiss the kids and leave for Sun City. Thank God we are not late! After the red carpet formalities the actual ceremony begins. We enjoy the refreshing entertainment in between. I expected the sportswoman of the year but not the sport star of the year as well. I swear I almost faint when I hear my name being called. Hubby kiss the emotional state out of me first before I make my way to the front.

“Yhooo I don’t know what to say!” I say as I look at my second award in a night through my glossy eyes.

“I want to thank my coach for believing in me and always pushing me hard. Chabeli you’re the best! If you don’t win the best coach award bobo bayakurobha.” Laughter fills the whole Sun City.

“I also thank my husband for his unending support and love. Khabangobe I don’t know what I’d be without you. Thanks to my kids at home for always cheering for me. I sent my gratitude to my family, friends, fans and everyone. Thank you!”

It’s such achievements that makes me realize that I didn’t make a mistake by choosing this career. How hilarious that at some point in my life running was my remedy to calm my raging thoughts but now it’s what I live for and what I’m known for. Go outside and ask who Mbewenhle Qwabe is they will tell you.

## ☆ Manelisi ☆

I remember how I used to dream sitting in the balcony with my wife and playing a guitar while singing for her. Our kids swimming in the pool. This moment right now is almost the same but the difference is that we are in the park. The twins are playing with other kids. I cherish the moments I spend with my beautiful wife and our adorable kids.

She's melting like liquid as I sing for her while playing my guitar. There's nothing she enjoys then listening and watching me sing for her which is something that I've grown used to do just to see her smiling like this and happy. She says I have the most beautiful voice ever and it would heal the world but I think she's being biased. I can sing yes but not as much as she claims.

Can you believe that she turned one of the rooms in our house into a mini studio just for me. It was actually my 38th birthday gift. The room is a now studio but a mini one with all the recording equipment and stuff. It was the best gift ever

because she made me realize that not only do I love music but I make music as well. I've written few songs so far and I'm working on the rhythm and beats but there's this one that I want to release soon just for her. It's actually dedicated to her. Ngiyayithanda lengane I don't know what it would become of me if I were to lose her. In fact that's the thought I never entertain.

"Ooooh

Sthandwa sami putsununu

Wena ulove wami putsununu

Sthandwa sami putsununu

Wena ulove wami putsununu

Konke engikudingayo (dingayo) kuwe kuphelele (phelele)

Uthando enginalo (nginalo) luhlula zonke lwandle

Sthandwa sami, yazi mawungekho eduze kwami  
ngiyaphambana

Ngoba uthando lwakho luhlala luhlezi njalo

Noma nini sthandwa ubusuku nemini oh yeah

Ngizotshela abazondi bavume lesimo mina ngikhethe wena

Ngifune zitori uthando luyaphila xa useduze kwami

Mmmmh

Dali wami ngiyakutshela loluthando olwamampela

Awuu, noma nini ngingakufela

Awuu, ngikuthanda okwamampela

Imidlinza yenhliziyoyami ifuna wena (ifuna wena wedwa)

Kanti nothando lwami luhlale lubusa ngawe (ngifuna wena wedwa)

Mina ngeke ngikwaz ukuthanda omunye umuntu (ngifuna wena wedwa)

Dali ngifuna wena kuphela akekho omunye (ngifuna wena wedwa)”

“Wow,” she says clapping her hands happily when I’m done singing for her.

“Tell me why you haven’t released a song already?”

“Be patient my love.” I say as I put the guitar down.

“Okay. I love you though.”

“I know and I love you more.”

I take a piece of chocolate and shove it in her mouth before capturing her lips with mine. We share the sweetness of the chocolate in a sultry kiss. I’m not sure if it’s her moans or it’s the effect of the kiss that is waking up the member underneath my jeans. Our kiss is cut short by tiny hands pulling us apart. I groan as I pull away and cover my boner with my wife’s hat. It’s Thingy of course! This girl is territorial it’s not even funny. She gives me a kiss on my lips before grabbing my wrist.

“Daddy please come and push us on the swings.”

“I’m busy with mommy here baby girl.”

“She doesn’t mind right mommy?”

“I do mind you can’t disturb me when I’m kissing my husband and tell me that I don’t mind.”

“He’s my daddy.”

“He’s my husband. Go and find your own husband to kiss wena garakajane!”

I burst into laughter. It’s always funny to watch when they fight over me like this. As much as it’s cute but the little princess can be exhausting at times. Thingo joins me as well I don’t know if she understands what her mom is saying or it’s because she enjoys to frustrate my wife.

“Come daddy please.”

“Okay I’m coming, go and join your brother.”

“I will count up to 10 if you don’t come I will fetch you.”

“I’m coming just now.”

She scurries away. I need to calm the raging hard on first. I look at my wife who’s stuffing herself with chocolates. This year have been hectic then the other years. My wife has been traveling a lot while on the other side I have deadlines after deadlines. I missed her competitions throughout the season. That’s why I appreciate this moment, spending time with my family.

“Thanks for the family picnic baby.”

“Don’t mention it my biltong. Is the joystick calm now? The last thing we want is your second wife to come here and bully us.”

I laugh at the word ‘second wife’

“Yeah it’s fine now.”

“Let’s go push them for half an hour and go back home. You see the weather is changing now.”

I get up from the picnic blanket and stretch out my hand for her. She takes it then I pull her up. We make our way to the swings and push our rabbits.

“Higher mommy!”

“What if you fall Zizwe.”

“I won’t fall mommy. Higher please!”

She pushes him a bit higher and Thingo is sbwling but my baby girl is scared. We push them until they’re tired then we move to the merry go around. They’re enjoying themselves and it warms my heart. We play with them and stop when it starts raining. By the time we arrive home they’re both sleeping. It must be the exhaustion. I take Zizwe and she takes Thingo. We make our way inside and head upstairs to their bedroom where we tuck them in after taking off their shoes.

“Do you think it’s safe to take a shower while it’s raining?” My wife asks as we exit the kids’ bedroom.

“It’s only raining there’s no thunder nor lightning.”

“So that’s a yes.”

“Yep!”

I pick her up and head to our en-suit bathroom where we undress and enjoy the hot water underneath the shower spray washing each other. She squeezes the shower gel out of the bottle and lathers up my chest. I intake a sharp breath as she runs her small hands on my chest sensuously. The bhebhanize joystick instantly stands proudly at the effect of her hands are doing to my body.

“Someone is forward

” she teases staring at my hard rod that is poking her tummy

“He wants mommy’s attention.”

“Attention seeker that’s one,” she says and grabs the back of my neck pulling me closer for a kiss. I feel her tongue against my teeth and let her in. Our tongues meet in a frenzy dance. We are drinking each other like we have been deprived water for a decade and only pull apart a millisecond just to catch our breathing and attack each other again. Hands roaming on each other’s body.

She wrenches her lips away from mine and goes down to her knees then palms my hard cock, giving it strokes. I bite my lip suppressing a moan that is threatening to burst out of my throat but when she takes me in her mouth I couldn’t hold myself anymore. Her mouth engulfs my dick with enthusiasm that sends shockwaves through my body. With each bob of her head she goes faster and deeper.

Fuck I’m a grunting mess. The soft caress on my balls ceases then I feel her hand sliding to my ass. I open my legs to give her full access. A strange sound roll out of my throat when she sticks her finger into my asshole. I lose myself in between her deep throating and ass finger fucking. My whole body goes rigid

as my balls spams. I growl like a bull as I reach a point of no return and cum so hard that my knee shake violently.

“Damn baby that was hot!”

She gets up from her knees and onslaughts me with a kiss that awakens my prick and from half flaccid it grows harder as a rock. I pick her up she clamps her legs around my waist as I walk to our bedroom where I deposit her on the bed then make love not only to her body but to her soul. I always knew that sex is amazing but when you’re doing it with that one person who owns your soul it becomes a whole new amazing and exhilarating experience. Each day is like it’s for the first time.

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I’m a weeping mess. His strokes are so damn good and leaves me into an emotional mess. He’s touching and embracing every chord of my being. I have him wrapped in my arms so tightly and screaming his name like it’s a chorus. He’s also whispering

sweet nothing in my ear as our bodies are rocking in a sensual dance.

“Oh I love you so much my biltong!”

“I love you million times back my dumplings.”

We vibrate in each other’s arms and scream in pleasure as we reach an earth shattering orgasm. Damn I’m surprised the house is still standing.

“Oh wow that was amazing babe.” I say after catching my breath.

“You can say that again my love.”

He kisses my forehead and flips us over. I’m lying on top of him and he’s still inside of me. I feel sleep creeping in as he runs his fingertips on my back. It doesn’t take that long before I fall asleep because in his arms I always feel home. They’re my safe

heaven and I'm so lucky that I get to spend the rest of my life in them.

The tiny knock on the door wakes me up and when I look around it's almost dark outside. My husband is snoring softly next to me. I switch on the lights before sliding out of the bed to get dressed.

"I'm coming!"

I know for a sure that is Thingy. Once I'm done getting dressed I kiss my husband's lips then walk out. Finding the little princess on the door I pick her up and plant a peck on her lips before walking downstairs with her.

"You have been sleeping for hours mommy. I missed you."

As much as she's a daddy's girl but she has her days where she's needy and want me to give her my magic touch and warmth.

“I’m awake now baby. Where’s your brother?”

“He’s playing a game on your phone.”

The mess that catches my eye when I walk into the lounge makes me drowsy.

“Haibo nina what did you do here!”

The little boy jumps up from the couch he was lying on with his back and engrossed on my phone.

“Ooops.”

“Don’t say oops Zizwe what is the mess for!”

My lounge is scattered with bread, cheese, french polony, bread butter spread heeey you name it all. The cold drink is splattered on the floor and the volume of the TV is so high and it frustrates me even further.

“Lower the volume first!”

I don't know how does he play a game while watching his cartoons. He does as I say and looks at me with an apologetic look biting his lips nervously. I put this one next to him and look them.

“What is this mess?”

“We were hungry mommy.” Zizwe

“Why didn't you wake me up? Since when now do you make food for yourself huh?”

Siza is off for few days and she went to visit home. She left with Ndabenhle who missed his parents and visiting them for the September holidays.

“We didn't want to disturb you while sleeping mommy.”

“You will never disturb me Zizwe. Never make food for yourself again. Always ask and we are going to make it for you.”

At this moment I’m thinking what would’ve happened if they decided to fry something on the stove. I feel a cold rush in my stomach at that thought.

“Okay mommy but we are old now and we should be making food for ourselves.”

“Hayi you’re still young. Next time just take a fruit in the fridge or your yogurt when you’re hungry don’t make food for yourselves. Now let’s clean this mess.”

I hear him complaining under his breath but I can’t grasp his exact words. Typical of him! I’m always cleaning after him more than his sister. He always leaves his things lying around. I don’t know how many times I’ve told him to always put back his toys in the box of toys when he’s done playing but he never listens.

We clean up the mess and they offer to help me cook dinner. Well at least that what they say. I guess their presence in the kitchen and giggles as they're playing around together is their 'help'. Every now and then I have to shout 'Zizwe no! Hayi maan Thingo!' Yhoo guys zalani anginamona!

I'm setting up the table when my husband's scent invades my nostrils. He wraps his arms around my waist and kisses the side of my neck, covering my whole body with a blanket of goosebumps. Yeah up to this date he still gives me goosebumps and makes my tummy flutter. He still makes me feel butterflies in my stomach. My heart still skips beats at the sight of him.

"Hey wifey," he says deeply against my ear causing me to squirm

"Hey hubby. How did you sleep?"

"I rested enough. Why didn't you wake me up to help you with dinner."

“You were sleeping so peaceful and I didn’t want to disturb you my love.”

“Okay let me help you with this while you dish up.”

“Thank you baby.”

I turn around and give him a wet kiss on his lips before walking to the kitchen to dish up. I feel his presence and look up. He’s standing by the door with his hands tucked in his pants and staring at me. He has something in his mind.

“What’s up baby?”

“I think it’s time now we extend our family baby.”

“Huh.”

“Wenhle you said when the twins are 6 years old we can try for another baby or twins even.”

I know what I said but why does it feel like it was just yesterday when I said that.

“Can we wait a bit until they’re 8 years old?”

“You promised baby.”

“I know baby but it’s only between few years since I’m back in sprinting I’m not ready for another break.”

“You call 6 years few? That’s a long time and besides you will still continue with your career just like you did after giving birth.”

“Yes 6 years is a few years to me can’t you wait for me at least for another 4 years. I want to run without a break at least a decade baby please.”

“Yhoo ngeke Wenhle that’s too long!”

“Ngiyakucela Khabangobe.”

“No Wenhle you’re being unfair on me.”

“You also not being fair on me.”

“How am I not being fair? You said when they’re 6 we are going to try for another one but now uyashintsha njengotshwala esiswini!”

“Uyathetha manje.” (You are shouting now)

“I’m sorry but I’m not waiting anymore 4 years.”

“Then you will impregnate yourself.”

I take the food to the dinner table and call for the kids. At least the twins none stop stories lessen the thick tension surrounding

us. I'm being unfair? No I don't think so I thought I would be ready by this time hence I said that but I'm not ready it's not like I made an official statement or an affidavit that state when the twins are 6 I will give my husband another child. I'm allowed to change my mind kanti ngazishaya ngetshe ngaphambili yini!

After eating we both wash the dishes in silence then we bath the kids. I read them a bedtime story and they fall asleep in the middle of my reading. I kiss their foreheads and retire to bed as well. No matter how angry we are at each other we sleep in each other's arms. That's a vow we both made and throughout these years we haven't broke it.

An annoying ringing phone jerks me awake. God who's calling at this time! It's the next morning. I remove myself from his arms and stretch over to take his ringing phone. Just as I'm about to answer the unknown number it stops ringing. I look at him next to me. He's such a gorgeous man I ever laid my eyes on and knowing that all of this is all mine makes me happy. I kiss his slightly opened lips. A message comes through in his phone.

'Please stop blocking me we need to talk urgently. I think I'm pregnant.'

☆ Mbewenhle ☆

I feel my whole body shaking at the thought of what this text means. I don't know if I would be able to wait for him until he wakes up and ask him about this sms. Different emotions are attacking every cell of my body and my head is spinning. I can feel my heart shutting down at the weight and pain this message is carrying. Breathe Mbewenhle this is a misunderstanding!

There's no way that my husband could do this to me. Maybe it's a wrong number, yes whoever this person is sent a text to a wrong number. Guilt gnaws at me as it hit me hard that I've just thought the worst of my husband. How could I even begin to think of him like that? Urgh!

"Your thoughts are so loud baby some of us are still sleeping."

I look at him next to me and smile faintly.

“Morning Khabangobe.”

“Morning MaKhondlo what’s up? Are you still mad about the baby thing? I don’t want to rush you with something you are not ready for. The last thing I want is for you to not bond with our child or even worse hate him because I forced you to fall pregnant. You can take as much time as you want baby we still got our whole lives together.”

I knew that he would come to his senses. This is one of the zillion reasons I love about him. I lean over and place a kiss on his lips.

“Thank you so much sthandwa sami. You have no idea how much it means to me. I promise after this I’m going to bear you 10 children.”

He let out a booming laughter that I can’t help but join him.

“Haaa by the time you give birth to the 10th one I would be dead. Do you remember how crazy you were when you were in labor pains.”

“I wasn’t crazy Lisi!”

“You were yanking out your braids from your hair and by the time we went home you only had 10 braids. I don’t know what is worse between almost stabbing me with a fork and wanting to do back flip or spansula dance,” he says and laughs out loudly.

He’s exaggerating I wasn’t that crazy! Just as I pinch him his phone rings in my hand. It’s the same number that was calling. He looks at me curiously as I hand him his phone. I’m expecting him to answer the call but he rejects it.

“You are not going to answer the phone?”

“No it’s one of those insurance calls babe.”

“I don’t think so check the message the same number sent the text.”

I watch as his big thumb tabs on on the screen then his whole hand begins to shake terribly.

“I think you should call her back and tell her that she sent a wrong text to a wrong number.”

He looks up at me and swallows hard that I hear the sound of his throat swallowing. I don’t know what is perturbing more between his horribly trembling hand that has a phone and his silence.

“Babe are you alright?”

“Uhm yeah.”

He clears his throat and puts his phone on his bedside table.

“Why don’t you call her?”

“I will call her later.”

“Manelisi...”

“Ay Mbewenhle awume!”

I bite my lip hard that I taste blood in my mouth. He curses under his breath and looks at me with bloodshot red eyes.

“Ngiyaxolisa sthndwa sami.” (I’m sorry my love)

“Udliwa yini?” (What’s eating you)

He slides out of the bed and walks around the bed then kneels before me taking my hands. He kisses my hands countless times and looks at me with eyes shining with tears. One blink they fall effortlessly.

“Manelisi uyangithusa.” (Manelisi you are scaring me) It comes out as a whisper.

“Ngiyaxolisa MaKhondlo please don’t leave me.”

Leave him? Why would I leave...No no no no nooo!

“Manelisi please don’t tell me that...nooooo!” I shriek in anguish. Anger and pain wash over me and I feel my heart shattering in pieces.

“I’m sorry baby I didn’t mean to hurt you....”

“You didn’t mean to hurt me! So when you were sticking your dick in another woman’s pussy was that you not meaning to hurt me?”

“Baby it was a mistake....”

“A mistake is spilling milk on the floor! A mistake is misplacing something Manelisi! Fucking another woman while you are married is no mistake! Don’t you fucking dare me!!!”

“Please calm down...”

“You slept with another woman without protection and you are telling me to calm down? Don’t fuck with me Manelisi!!”

I furiously roll out of bed. He tries to stop me but I push him away and head to the bathroom. When he pushes the door I lock it and slide against it until I’m seated on my butt and my face buried on my knees.

“Baby I’m sorry please open the door,” he says on the other side of the door while knocking.

God how could this man hurt me like this? How can he do this to us? Our family! I thought we were happy! The pain is more than my heart can take. He shot the bullet straight into my heart and I can’t feel my heartbeat I swear I’m dying.

“MaKhondlo please let me in and let’s talk about this.”

I’ve never thought that one day this man would hurt me like this. I trusted him with my heart that he will always protect it with everything that he’s got little did I know that I was just fooling myself.

“MaGumude omuhle open the door please. I love you so much and you know I would never hurt you intentionally. Vula mami please.”

I eventually cease crying but my heart is disintegrated. I get up from the floor and take a shower. When I’m done I open the door only to find him sitting on the door.

“Baby,” he says and gets up from the floor. I move away from him and lotion my body.

“I’m sorry sthandwa sami let me explain please.”

“You want explain to me how you fucked another woman until you ejaculated inside of her and never even thought about me or at least the consequences of what you were doing?”

“Of course not baby I just....”

“Who is she?”

“Lerato.”

I thought they are colleagues and their relationship is strictly professional clearly it was just a cover to make me a fool me so that I don't even think there could be something going on between them. My biggest mistake was to trust this fool!

“How long have you been fucking around behind my back!”

I make my way to the walk in closet and take something to wear. He's right behind me and his sight is causing me chest pains.

“Only once baby I swear....”

“Oh that makes it right?”

“No it doesn’t dombolo lami but you have to to believe me that there’s nothing going on between us. That night we were working late.”

“Let me guess one thing led to another.”

“Yeah baby...”

“Nonsense! There’s no such thing! You have been working with this woman for years Manelisi! Surely all this time when I thought you two are just colleagues you were developing feelings for her!”

“Cha akunjalo sthandwa sami. I don’t love her I love you and only you.”

“Yet you hurt me Manelisi! You ripped my heart out of my chest and throw it in the dumpster leaving it to rot!”

“I’m sorry baby...”

“Stop saying sorry because it doesn’t fix anything in fact it infuriates me further!”

I reach for my sport bag and start packing when I finish getting dressed.

“What are you doing?”

“I’m packing can’t you see.”

“Wenhle no don’t do that please! Don’t go baby I’m nothing without you.”

“You didn’t think of that when you were sliding your dick in and out of your bitch!”

“It was a mistake baby ngicela uxolo!”

“What an interesting mistake!”

He takes my hands stopping me from packing but I slap his hands off me.

“Don’t touch me you cheat!”

“I’ve wronged you baby in the most horrible way I own that but please give me a chance to fix this.”

“How would fix this huh? Would you unfuck and upregnant her?”

He blows out a sigh and pinches the bridge of his nose.

“I’m sorry...”

“I thought we were happy Manelisi. I gave you all of me without any reservations. You own everything in me including my soul what is it that I’m not giving you enough?”

The tears I’ve been holding throughout this argument start to flow down my face.

“You are more than enough to me baby. This traveling you have been doing throughout the year somehow it got to me that I felt neglected and lonely. It doesn’t help that you take the kids with you and leave me here all alone. I felt so left out and invalid.”

“Oh so it’s my fault?”

“No it’s not your fault Wenhle but let’s be honest with each other we haven’t spent time together this year. The only time we had our quality time and bonded was when we took the

kids to Disneyland in Paris. Not so long ago you were in London. Ngigcine sengidliwa umzwa ngedwa futhi ngazibona ngingsabalulekile empilweni yakho kanye neyezingane zethu.” The pain in his voice is almost touchable. I had no idea this is how he feels.

“Why you didn’t tell me Lisi. I had no idea this is how you feel.”

“I didn’t want to sound unreasonable. It’s not like you’re traveling for fun baby but your career is the reason you are mostly out of the country. The last thing I wanted was to make you feel like you have to choose between me and your career. I will never stop you from doing what you love with every cell of your body. What kind of a husband would that make me? You support my dreams and push me to be the best version of myself why should I come in between you and your career?”

Oh God. I cover my face with my trembling hands and burst into tears. I feel his arms wrapping around me.

“I’m sorry for hurting you I know I have broken your trust. I’m willing to spend the rest of my life showing you how sorry I am

and fighting to win your trust back. I was weak and vulnerable but I shouldn't have fall into temptation. Please don't give up on us. Give me a chance to mend your broken heart MaKhondlo please."

I pull back from his embrace and he wipes my tears with his thumbs.

"Instead of communicating with me Manelisi you decided to find solace in another woman's vagina. You didn't even protect us from diseases. Now she's pregnant. How do I move on from such betrayal? I don't think I will even love your child. You brought a third person in our marriage with something that we could've talked about and reached a common ground. I'm sorry I can't do this."

"What do you mean you can't do this? Mbewenhle ungangenzi kanjalo ngiyakucela. What would it become of me if you end our marriage? Ngonile sthandwa sami ngiyazi but please don't leave me I'm begging you. I love you so much and I would never lead a life without you. If you don't do this for me please do it for our kids. Think about what our separation would do to them."

“That’s unfair Manelisi! Did you think about our children when you fucked her huh? Did you think how would your whoring fuck up our family! No you didn’t! Now you are talking hogwash! I’m not going to be the woman who stays in her marriage just because she’s doing it for her kids. That’s too old fashioned we go on with life like no one’s business! I’m taking the kids with me.”

I take my fully packed sport bag and go to the kids bedroom. He tries to stop me but I tell him to back off.

“Where are you taking my kids?”

“Away from you Manelisi. Right now they’re the only thing that makes sense to me. Your sight disgust me I can’t stand looking at you knowing what you did to me!”

He blinks more then necessary pushing back the tears but they drop down his cheeks. I walk to the kids’ bedroom and find them already awake and playing. I pack some of their clothes and everything they might need.

“Where are we going mommy?”

“Stop asking questions Thingo and get dressed.”

“Were you crying mommy? Your eyes are red.”

“No boy my eyes are sore.”

I finish getting them dressed. They will bathe in the hotel. I take their bag and go to my bedroom to take my phone, charger and my handbag. We head downstairs and find their father gulping down water in the kitchen. The kids greet their father.

“Kids let’s go.”

“We are not going with daddy?”

“No Thingo. Come.”

“I want to go with daddy too.”

“Baby girl,” Lisi says as he crouches before his daughter placing his hands on her small shoulders.

“Go with mommy my girl. Daddy will join you guys soon he just have some work to finish.”

“Okay. I love you daddy.”

“I love you too sweetheart.”

He hugs both of them then we head out. I buckle them up and throw the bags and the box of their toys in the boot. I jump in the car and bring the engine to life. He’s standing by the door and watching us until we are out of his sight.

A few days have passed but the pain in my heart is still the same yet this fool of an organ is yearning for him. I long for his

touch, hugs, kisses, dick, laughter, smile, lame jokes. I even long for his scolding. How can I stop my heart from loving him when all it ever do is to call out for his name? I don't know what to do. Every time I think of forgiving him I remember the baby that is on the way and how it will always be the reminder.

He's been calling none stop I had to switch off my phone to have peace of mind. I know it's only a matter of time he finds out that I'm in our hotel and comes here. Well it's not really our own hotel but we own part of it as we are shareholders. I haven't talked to anyone about this I'm embarrassed and ashamed to share but I need someone to talk to. I feel like I'm going to lose my sanity.

The last thing I want is to tell someone who will hate my husband and always see him as a cheater. He's still the father of my children and he's the best father ever that is something I can't take away from him. I call Chabeli but her phone sends me to voicemail. She will call me back when she finds my missed call.

I've been spending my days in bed and crying myself to sleep. Gosh it hurts immensely. Now I understand the pain I put

Kayise through. Maybe this is my punishment who knows? I can't down anything not even water. I feel a bit drowsy. I tried to drink my sorrows away but the wine couldn't go down my throat. That left me with no choice but to feel this pain as sober as I am.

"Mommy did you and daddy fight? Is that a reason we are staying in a hotel?"

I look at my son and blow out a sigh not knowing what to say to him.

"No boy, daddy need a space to work. He doesn't want us to disturb him. As soon as he's done we are going home."

I know I'm wrong for making such a big lie to him. What if we never go back home? But I can't think of something that I should've said.

"Then who hurt you?"

"No one my prince."

"You've been crying every night mommy."

“I also heard you last night crying mommy.” I thought this one has fallen asleep.

They’re both lying either of my side and their heads nestled against my chest. I have my arms wrapped around their tiny frames. They’re the only thing that makes sense to me at this moment. I don’t even know if I were to start going on with life where to from here.

“I had stomachache bantwana bami. You also cry when you sick right? Mommy cries too when she’s sick.” I say and look down on them. Zizwe is not convinced but his sister believes me.

“You should’ve called daddy to bring you medicine for pain. How are you feeling now?” Thingo

“I feel better baby thank you. I love you my babies.”

“We love you too mommy.”

I kiss both of their foreheads and sing for them. I may not be as good as their father when it comes to singing but they love it when I sing for them since they were babies.

## CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED & FOUR

☆ Manelisi ☆

I'm not Jesus I've never woken up from the dead but now I think I know how do the dead feel in their graves especially the first day they're laid to rest. They feel so alone and deserted. That's exactly how I feel without my wife and kids. It's been few days since they went to the hotel. Of course the moment they left I had to call the car tracking company and that's when I found out that they're staying in our hotel.

God knows I never meant to broke her heart. That incident still haunts me up to this date and I was hoping that she never finds out because it will break her apart. And boy she's broken. I hate myself for what I did to her I wish there was an option to reverse it. Now I'm in a brink of losing my wife and my family breaking apart.

"I'm so disappointed in you bra like how could you?"

“I’m disappointed in myself too Sizwe. I should have controlled myself! I knew from the beginning what I was getting myself into marrying an athlete.”

“You should’ve communicated with her bra. I’m sure there’s something that she could’ve done. I think you also didn’t try enough. Remember how you used to take leaves at work just to go with her what happened to that?”

“Work man, work got in the way.”

“Throughout all her competitions Manelisi? You didn’t even took just one leave and go support your wife. See as much as you felt neglected you also didn’t do anything about that. You just got too relaxed and comfortable as much as she did. There are compromises that you two had to make along the way not assume that you both are okay with the situation. Your work is not a problem and her career is also not a problem. The problem is the both of you somehow you two got too comfortable with your careers oblivious to what the time you spent apart is doing to your marriage. Life always have to have a balance man.”

“I hear you Sizwe. I just wish this is just a big horrible dream because I won’t be able to survive if I were to lose her man. I love that woman with everything in me. There’s no me without her.”

“I know man and let’s hope you two are going to be able to move on from this. She loves you I don’t think she would let you go just like that you just need to show her how remorseful you are and fight for her forgiveness. Cheating alone on its own is huge now imagine a child out of your marriage? Umoshile kodwa Manelisi.”

“I know man I know please stop reminding me that.”

“So what are you going to do with Lerato?”

“I will deal with her for now I just want my family back. I don’t understand how did she got pregnant bru I bought her the morning after pills myself! Then she do this to me?”

“I’m sure there’s a reason...”

“I don’t fucking care about her reason! If she’s really pregnant I’m not sure I want her to keep this baby. I can’t lose my wife because of her trying to trap me with a baby! There’s only one woman I want to bear me children and that is my wife.”

“You would ask her to abort?”

“I’m not sure but all I know is that this baby is going to be a painful reminder to my wife. She will never forgive me fully because this baby will always be there reminding her how I betrayed her.”

“Eish neh but I don’t think she will agree. You have to be prepared for that

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” he says and twitches his wrist then glances at his wristwatch

“I have to go man. I will pray for your family to survive this ordeal.”

“Ta man for always being here for me when I need you.”

“Sisonke mfethu.”

“Asiphumisane nami ngifuna ukuyobona umfazi wami nabantwana bami. I can't spend any more day without seeing them.” (let's leave together I also want to see my wife and kids)

I run upstairs to take my car keys then we both drive to separate ways. I start at the mall first to buy her some flowers and chocolates then leave for our hotel.

“Urgh!” It's what she says when she opens the door for me.

“Hey my beautiful wife.”

“What do you want Manelisi?”

It breaks my heart to see her looking like this. The stress lines are so visible on her face and those swollen eyes. I'm sure all

she ever does is cry herself to sleep. The pain in her eyes I will never forget it as long as I live. It will always haunt me.

“I miss you and the kids baby. Can you let me in please.”

She makes the space for me to get inside.

“I brought you these.”

“You think chocolate and flowers can fix what you did?”

“Of course not baby. Can we talk about this please?”

“No I don’t want to talk. No talking will change anything I don’t want you to see you.”

“You are angry and I’m going to give you all the time you need to think things through but please come back home. I will stay out of your way my love you won’t even feel my presence. The house is so cold without you guys.”

“Why didn’t you call your baby mama and celebrate your pregnancy,” she says and takes the twins’ box of toys before walking away. I put the flowers and the box of chocolates on the coffee table and follow her behind.

“The kids will wake up soon I don’t want them to hear us arguing. They were just asking me what’s going on. See what you’ve done to us Manelisi?”

Oh did that not break me any further.

“What did they say?”

She tells me as she picks up the toys that are scattered around the balcony and throwing them in the box of toys. My heart sinks to my knees. Yhooo ngazengazisola. What was I thinking?

“Ngiyaxolisa MaKhondlo....”

“I don’t want to hear your sorries I want you to leave!”

“Baby please give us a chance to fix our marriage...”

“You broke our marriage why should I help you to fix it huh? After everything we have been through Manelisi is this how recklessly you can be? The storms and struggles we survive just to be together you do this to us? We have fought so hard to be together but it only took you just one fuck to make all of that seem worthless! How can I face the world after this humiliation and pain you have put me through? How could you strip off my dignity like this Lisi! Waze wabukisa ngami ezweni!” I cannot miss the pain in her tone. Tears stream down her face relentlessly. I walk close to her and attempt to touch her but she pushes me away.

“Just leave Manelisi. I don’t want to see you right now. I don’t think I can ever look at you and not feel the pain you’ve caused me. You promised to protect my heart and I trusted you but this is what you do with it. It feels like you have stabbed it countless times with a sword and left it for the rats to come and eat it.”

I kneel down on the floor before her and press my hands together.

“No amount of sorries could ever change everything I’ve done. I have broken you beyond the word broken itself I know baby but please give me a chance. Don’t discard me like this please I need you in my life. Ngenze iphutha sthandwa sami. Please come back home let’s try to work on our marriage. I promise to be the best husband that I’ve always wanted to be for you. Ngicela ukona kwami kungakwenzi ungabaze uthando enginalo ngawe. Uyazi nawe uyabusa enhlizweni yami. Buya ekhaya please.”

“Musa ukungithela ngezinyembezi. Awuyazi into oyikhalelayo! Angifune nyembezi zendoda endala. Ubungakhali la ngenkathi uphisana with my bhebhanize joystick. You were enjoying yourself! Get up from the floor and leave!!”

“Babe..”

“Go Manelisi!”

I let out a sigh of defeat and get up from the floor. She continues with her task at hand which is picking up the toys and throwing them in the box. I want to hold her close in my arms and squeeze the pain out of her but she doesn't want me to touch her. I walk closer to her and attempt to hold her but she vigorously wiggles herself and reels backward stepping on Zizwe's truck toy. It wheels backwards causing her to stumble. She can't hold anything for balance as her hands are full with the twins toys. Everything happens so fast the next thing I hear is her piercing scream as she tumbles over the balcony. I try to hold her but it's too late. My body freezes and my eyes moisten with tears as I watch her going down the building.

"Baby noooo!!!" I scream in agony as I stretch my hand for her but she keeps going down as force of gravity pulling her down. Like a mad man I run out heading to the elevator. Furiously pressing the ground floor with my shaking hands. My face is wet with tears which are flowing like a waterfall. When I get to the ground floor. I run as fast as my legs could carry me but my knees are refusing. They're jelly. By the time I get to the scene she's already surrounded by people and they're taking pictures and videos of her as she's lying down on the road in disturbing manner that will always be imprinted in my mind.

“Dombolo lami!!”

I run to her and push the people out of my way then kneel before her body. There’s so much blood I don’t know where’s it coming from. I cradle her in my arms and try to wake her up.

“Wenhle? Wenhle vuka! Vuka Wenhle! Vuka Mbewenhle!!!!!!”

I shake her roughly but she’s not waking up. My tears are falling on her bloody face.

“Dombolo lami vuka!!!!!!”

I’m trying to do mouth to mouth cpr when I feel hands pulling me away from her. In the twinkling of an eye we are surrounded by police, paramedics and so many people.

“Sir please let us do our job.” The paramedic says as I fight him.

“Leave me alone! I’m trying to save my wife!!”

They pull me away and examine her. I feel my chest closing in when they cover her with that plastic to cover dead bodies.

“Noooo don’t do that please nooo! Vuka sthandwa sami ngiyakucela!!!!”

“I’m sorry sir she’s gone.”

They hold me tightly in their arms as I scream in agony wiggling myself and trying to go where’s my wife is lying on the ground lifelessly.

“Cela ungangishiyi dombolo lami! You promised me that we would grow old together. Ungangishiyi sthandwa sami what will I say to our kids!”

☆ Manelisi ☆

I'm trapped in a dark cocoon and drowning in waves of sorrow. I want to scream loudly but the realization that no one could ever save me not even myself kills my broken soul. Maybe I don't deserve any saving. This is what I deserve.

"I don't understand why are you keeping me here. I told you everything! Am I suspect?"

"No you're not a suspect yet but you are the only person who was with your wife when she fell off the balcony. I have to ask you questions."

"And I have answered them! What more do you want from me? I just lost my wife man, my kids needs me at home let me go!"

"Your wife has been staying in the hotel for days now if I may ask why?"

“She wanted some space we were not seeing eye to eye.”

“So you went there to see her right. What are the odds that amidst whatever you two were not ‘seeing eye to eye’ about you got angry and pushed her?”

God is this man seriously accusing me of killing my wife? Why would I do that? The door opens and Ndiwe walks in.

“Oh Dlomo.”

“Ya Shabalala. I don’t understand why are you harassing my client. He just seen his wife dying in the most agonizing way, he’s traumatized and you are keeping him here for what? Are you not ashamed of yourself for taking an advantage of a broken and devastated man Maseko let’s go.”

I get up from the chair and we both leave. The heavy silence in the car is deafening as we are driving home.

“Thank you for coming to my rescue.”

“You should thank Sizwe. He’s the one that called me but I want to hear everything from the horse’s mouth. How can my best friend....” she bites her bottom lip as tears roll down her face.

“It was an accident Ndiwe.”

“What kind of an accident? Did you push her?”

It dawns on me that people will think I pushed her. I have to be prepared for the stones that are going to be thrown at me.

“I can’t believe that you are also asking me that. Why did you fetch me if you also believe I have a hand in my wife’s death. Goddam I love that woman! The last thing I need is people accusing me of killing her! Umfazi wami ufe ngephutha lami ngiyavuma kodwa ukuwa kwakhe was an innocent accident.”

I bury my head in my hands and cry like a widower that I am. What have I done? If I didn’t insist to touch her she wouldn’t

have fall. If I didn't go there she would be here. No if I didn't cheat from the first place she would still be alive. How do I begin to go on with life without my wife? How do I make peace with her death when I'm the cause of it? How do I raise my kids knowing that I'm the reason they are now motherless? Do I have strength to lead a life without my wife just my kids only? God you should have at least spared her life. I'm the one who deserve to die not her.

"I'm sorry Manelisi. I wasn't supposed to say that. I'm grieving and looking for someone to blame. Such things happen it's only when they hit home do we really see that they do happen. I'm really sorry for your loss I know how much you love your wife. You need to be strong for your children."

I feel her hand stroking my back. Ngigqemeke ingozi engeqiwa ntwala. I'm walking on the road of shards that can only be traveled with bare feet and I have no one else but myself to blame.

"Mpilenhle called I couldn't help myself but tell her."

I pull my head up from my hands and look at her through my teary eyes. Mam Thembeke would die ngomtanakhe.

“It’s okay at least you saved me from the heavy task of telling them. I would call them though just to so they hear it from me when we get home.” I say wiping my tears.

“Okay. I can’t believe she’s really gone. Mbewenhle was full of life no one could’ve thought that she would die so soon. She was...”

“Please don’t talk about her as a past tense. I don’t want her memory to be a past. She will always be present and with us.”

“I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay. Where are my kids?”

“Sizwe is with them in your house.”

Arriving at home my kids run to me and ask me about their mother. Now that's a difficult part a parent ever had to go through. How do you tell 6 years olds that their mother is no more.

"Come here kids."

There's someone at the gate just as I'm about to sit my kids down and explain to them. Sizwe goes to attend whoever that person is. A few minutes later I hear the commotion in the kitchen and make my way there. The nerve of this bitch!

"I was telling her bro to leave this is not the right time but she insists to see you." Sizwe says and disappears to the lounge.

"The audacity you have to come in my wife's house bitch after that stunt you pulled!"

"Mane I didn't pull any stunt. I have been trying to call you with different numbers but you are not answering my calls."

“Don’t you get a hint that I don’t want to speak to you not after trapping me with a baby!”

“Mane I really thought I was pregnant but the doctor confirmed that I’m not pregnant that is what I wanted to tell you I’m really sorry.”

“No no no Lerato! Don’t fucking tell me that my wife just died because of your lies!!!”

I don’t know what got into me but the next minute I have my hands wrapped around her neck and squeezing it tightly. She’s struggling to breathe and wiggling her body trying to get away from me. I tighten my grip around her neck as the scene of my wife dying plays before my eyes like a movie.

☆ Mpilenhle ☆

Tears spill down the sides of her face as she takes her husband’s rod down her throat. It has always been a difficult

task to deep throat him due to her gag reflex but she's trying to impress him.

"Ah fuck!!" The husband groans as he fists on her weave and directing her head. He feels shockwaves through his body. A loud sound disturbs them as the door swings open violently. They both jerk up to look at the door with shock.

"Azanothe why the fuck are you not knocking!!!" Sbusiso bellows angrily as he tries to hide his private with a pillow but his daughter is shocked to even notice her father's privates.

"Aunty Mbewu is dead!" Those are the 4 words the teenage girl says before she bursts into tears. The couple look at each other then their daughter who's hysterical by the door. Mpilenhle leaps to her feet, luckily she's fully dressed.

"What...what do mean Azanothe?"

Azanothe shows her mother the phone. No one knows who posted on Facebook the pictures and videos of the scene that

took place at the hotel. As much as Mpilenhle can see her brother in law crying and screaming for her sister as the paramedics pull him away still she can't believe it. There's no way such tragedy can be posted on social media before the family even know about it.

The drumming sound of her heartbeat is deafening. She walks to her bedside table and calls her sister but the call goes to voicemail so she tries her brother in law and his phone rings unanswered. No maybe there's a misunderstanding

"Babe what's going on?"

Mpilenhle throws her daughter's phone to her husband who's still sitting on the bed half naked on his lower body with a pillow covering his manhood.

"I can't reach both of them what if all of this is true Sbusiso?" It comes out as a whisper as fear settles on every cell of her body.

“It is true mommy. You saw uncle Manelisi crying and those pictures I can spot Aunty Mbewu even a far distance!”

“No no no let’s not get over ourselves with something that we saw on social media. Who can post something like this without the family knowing? What is this world becoming? Let’s try to get hold of Manelisi or someone close to them first. Azanothe please give us a space.”

“My phone?”

“Go we will bring your phone!” Sbusiso

Azanothe leaves closing the door behind her. The more Mpilennhle is playing the video it’s the more what she’s watching becoming a reality. Her body begins to shake as tears flood her eyes. This can’t be happening!

“Baby calm down please. Let’s confirm this first,” Her husband says as he slips into his sweat pants.

“She can’t be dead! This can’t be true! They say she fall on the balcony! How is that possible? What was she doing in the hotel from the first place.”

“Kanti the hotel is not in one of the countries she goes to?”

“This is the same hotel she once told me that they own part of it. What was she doing there? Something is not adding up.”

“Call Uthandiwe baby I will also try Sizwe I do have his numbers

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” Sbusiso suggests as he reaches for his phone. He tabs on the phone going through his contacts list while Mpilenhle is calling Uthandiwe who answers on the second ring.

“Sis Mpilenhle.” Mpilenhle can’t help but notice how down her voice is or maybe it’s her imagination.

“Hey Ndiwe how are you?”

“Uhm....fine.”

“Have you talked to my sister? I’ve been trying to call her but I can’t reach her.”

“Uhm uh..sis Mpilenhle I’m driving, talk later.”

“Uthandiwe what’s going on? Please don’t tell me what’s trending on social media is true?”

“Oh my goodness it’s trending already! I’m sorry you have to hear like this,” Ndiwe says and lets out a sob.

“No no no what happened? Where’s Manelisi I want to talk to him!”

“She fell on the balcony in a hotel and died on the spot.”

The phone slips from Mpilenhle’s hand and falls down the floor as a loud scream escapes her lips. She feels strong arms

wrapping around her as she cries in agony. God why snatch away her beloved sister just when they're so close. How would she begin to tell her parents? Oh the thought of their poor mother. Not another child again! She was the only thing that reminds them of Ndalwenhle now they've lost her too. The thought of her brothers makes her wail even louder. They're both fond of Mbewenhle. What about her kids? In fact it's a loss to everyone.

"I'm so sorry my love," her husband whispers in her ears as she rocks her back and forth like a baby. Her gut wrenching sob is slicing his heart apart and the fact that there's nothing he can do to take the pain away makes him feel so useless and helpless.

It's almost an hour now and Mpilenhle is still crying in her husband's arms. This loss hit harder than any loss she's ever experienced in her entire life. They might have not got along back then but they were able to let the past be and their relationship improved. It's safe to say they were besties now. Death? How could you take away her bestie? No wonder they say you are a thief! You just take away a loved one when no one expect it.

“Tell me what should I do baby.”

“Please tell your friend to borrow us his Vito. I have to take my family to Johannesburg. There has to be a driver as well no one will have a strength to drive especially a long distance.”

“I’m on it baby.” The husband gets on the task given to him while Mpilenhle gets up and starts packing.

Meanwhile at the Qwabe household Mam Thembeke is sipping on tea in the lounge and thinking about her daughter that she can’t reach on the phone. It’s been two days now calling her but she always reaches the white lady instead of her. Qwabe walks in with his bhopopo of a phone. He might be illiterate but he knows very well how to use his phone.

“I’ve been trying to call Mbewenhle but her phone doesn’t go through. Did she block me?” Mam Thembeke is surprised to hear that. Why would her husband call Mbewenhle? He settles down on the couch next to his wife waiting for her response.

“I have been trying to call her too for two days now but her phone goes straight to voicemail.”

“Oh.” Qwabe says a bit relieved. If his wife can't reach her as well then it means she's unavailable she didn't block him not that he would blame her though. He's been very harsh towards her not because he hates her. He can never hate his daughter. He loves her maybe even more than he loves his other children. It sounds unbelievable understandably so but she's the only daughter who he calls 'ntombi yami'. That harshness and anger towards her stems from pure love. Like any other parent he thought so high of his daughter but then she humiliated and disappointed him. Not even once but twice! It was like umumbule ibheshu kwavela izinga zabonwa umhlaba wonke.

See when you work hard for something you don't misuse it nor do you take it for granted. He wanted her to earn his forgiveness not give her easily because there are chances that she might take it for granted. She's proved that she's capable of repeating one mistake in a different way. Muzikayise gave her a second chance and married her after she cheated on him.

Didn't she run away with the same man that was the reason her first marriage almost broke before it's even begin?

You have to learn the hard way in order to not repeat the same mistake. That's what his father always told him and that man in his eyes he was always right. He was close to his father and he looked up to him. He's the man that he is today because of his father. He also wanted his daughter to learn from her mistakes in a way that will ensure that she will never do something like that again hence he took his sweet perfect time to finally want to accept her and welcome her with warm arms little does he know that we don't have time as much as we think we have. Tomorrow is not certain. We are living on a borrowed time.

"Is she out of the country? My sister said you can't reach a person when she's out of the country."

"No she's not. What do you want from her? I didn't even know that you have her numbers."

"Hawu nkosikazi how can I not have my daughter's numbers."

'my daughter' did Mam Thembeke heard that right? She pinches herself to see if she's not dreaming.

“Haibo Qwabe the last time she was here you broke her heart by not accepting the farm. Now you have been calling her?”

“That why I’ve been calling her. I want to talk to her. It’s about time we move on from everything that happened. Now I know that she’s learnt her lesson. I’ve seen how matured and grown she’s become over the years.”

Now this is the best news Mam Thembeke ever heard in a while. Lord knows how long she’s been begging her husband to forgive their daughter. Mbewenhle should come back home and they will slaughter a sheep to celebrate.

“Oh myeni wami zazinhle izindaba. Let me call her again.”

Just as she’s about to call her daughter they see an unfamiliar car parking before the opened door of the lounge. They’re not expecting anyone so they wait curiously. Mpilenhle, Isisa and Mvelonhle step out of the Vito. The couple have no knowledge what’s going on. Mpilenhle called them and told them she’s coming to pick them up with their kids they must be ready. They tried to probe but she didn’t give them answers which puzzled them especially when she said they must pack enough clothes as well.

## **CONTINUATION OF CHAPTER ONE HUNDRED & FIVE**

“Are you going to tell us what’s going on?” Mvelonhle asks impatiently. He noticed the red and swollen eyes on his sister and something told him that there’s something unpleasant going on. Now that they’re home he thinks of something happening to his mother and anxiety cripples him. When his sister doesn’t reply he skips inside the house. His parents are seated on the couch and all smiles. A surge of relief is what he feels at their sight.

“Hawu mfana you bought a new car?”

“No baba it’s one of sbari Sbu’s car.”

Mvelonhle settles down on the empty couch. His sister and wife walk in. They all settle down as they exchange greetings.

“You just arrived on time. Your father was telling me that he will finally forgive Mbewenhle. We are trying to call her but her phone is off.” Mam Thembeke.

“Really baba? That’s fantastic! The farm she bought you softened your heart? You’re so materialistic!” Mvelonhle teases and they all laugh except Mpilenhle who fails to contain herself but let tears to fall down her face. She’s always been the strongest but she doesn’t think she will be able to be strong. There’s no strength within her soul.

“Mpilenhle kwenzenjani?” Mam Thembeke asks alarmed

“It’s...she...I...oh God!” She covers her face with her hands and cries. Now everyone is worried. Mam Thembeke gets up from the couch and goes to where Mpilenhle is seated stroking her back.

“Talk to us sisi what’s going on?”

“Mbewenhle passed away.”

“Whaaaat?” Mvelonhle and his wife exclaims in shock. Qwabe is still trying to register what his daughter just said.

“They say she fall on the balcony in a hotel and died on the spot,” cries Mpilenhle

The silence that follows as everyone process everything, in that moment of silence Mam Thembeke faints. Luckily Qwabe is fast enough to hold her before she falls on the floor. He carries her and puts her on the sofa waving his hand on his wife’s face.

“Get me water!”

No one hears him they’re shocked to even move. Azanothe who’s been standing next to the door and listening to the adults’ conversation comes into rescue by fetching the water in the rondoal with a jug. The other kids are oblivious and busy playing outside. They’ve even forgotten that they have to get inside and greet the grandparents. It’s only Avumile who can see there’s something going on judging at her sister’s behavior but who knows maybe Azanothe broke up with her boyfriend.

“Here’s water mkhulu.”

Qwabe takes the water and sprinkles it on his wife's face. He's trying to wrap his mind around what Mpilenhle said. Mam Thembeke wakes up and looks around.

"Mpilenhle who told you?" The tremor in Mvelonhle's voice is loud.

"Uthandiwe."

She tells them everything that happened. They call Manelisi and this time he answers the call.

"I'm sorry I missed your calls I've been meaning to call you back."

"Sbari please tell me it's not true!"

"Akasekho Mpilenhle." Manelisi sobs on the other side and it's all that it takes for the Qwabe house to erupt into screams of anguish. The kids come running but Azonothe handles them and they leave the lounge.

“Ohh umtanami!!” Mam Thembeke screams in agony as she pictures the state of her daughter when she fell over the balcony from a huge building. That image in her mind breaks her heart that she even feel the pain physically. It’s like someone is twisting her heart over and over again. Why does she have to lose her children tragically? The pain now has doubled up and when she thinks of the last time they were together she wonders if she knew she was saying her last goodbye? Because she’s really not ready to say goodbye to her daughter. God did you have to take her now and in such a tragic manner? Now who will spoil and pamper her? Who will take her to places she’s never been? Who will give her so much money and tell her to buy anything she likes? Who will bring her something she’s bought in any of the foreign countries she was going to? Who will call her midnight to wish her a happy birthday? As much as they faced challenges throughout their mother and daughter relationship that child really did know how to make a mother feel ‘ukuzala ukuzelula amathambo’

Qwabe comforts his wife trying to hold back his tears. When he fails to hold them he gets up and disappears to his bedroom where sits on the floor and cries like an orphan. How could God take her away before he could tell her that he forgives her and

he loves her so much? How could God take intombi yakhe before he tells her how proud he is of her and how grateful he is for the farm. Oh only if he knew he wouldn't have punished her for that long. He would have made peace before she's taken away from him. He wouldn't have wasted time now he will never see her again. He will never spend time with her. He remembers when she said 'umuhle baba' on her wedding day how he wishes he responded to her. His daughter died with no last good memories of him as her father and that will haunt him as long as he lives.

His cry is disturbed by his wife who walks in the bedroom and begins packing their clothes as tears keep flowing down her face. Once she's done and Azanothe has called Ndabenhle in the soccer grounds they leave but not after he demands to know what's going on. He could sense something is not right and when they tell him the little boy breaks into a hysterical cry. Mvelonhle has him wrapped in his arms at the back of the Vito. As he's trying to calm his little brother his mind harks back to the day Mbewenhle visited them. Now that he's reliving the day from how she was professing her love for them and encouraging them he could swear that she really was saying her last goodbye. He's in denial there's no way that her precious sister is gone he refuses to believe such nonsense!

The drive to Johannesburg is somber and filled with cries every now and then. Mam Thembeke is cuddled in her husband's arm weeping and trying so hard to block the last memory she has of her daughter with the good ones but it's proving to be futile. It's like she was there in the scene watching her daughter falling and crashing down. Dear God what have her daughter done to deserve such a painful departure. Isisa and Mpilenhle are in each other's arms. The children are staring sadly and they're awfully quiet. Azanothe has Mvelonhle's baby boy in her arms while comforting her sister

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Avumile.

On arrival around 7pm. As the driver pulls off in the yard Qwabe looks ahead of him and see such a beautiful house he's ever seen in real life. He always seen these kinds of houses in TV. After all he's the only one who never set his foot here and see what a beautiful home his daughter has. This right here would make any father proud but his heart shrinks at how late it is now to be 'proud of her'. Ntombi yakhe is gone and she never knew that her father is proud of her. It hurt him beyond that he's setting his foot in his daughter's home for the first

time only to bury her. Ndabenhle runs inside the house the moment he's out of the Vito calling out for his Mbee.

"Where's Mbeee buti Manelisi!"

"Boy come here."

"No I want Mbeee!" He scurries up the staircase leaving Manelisi sinking in misery and fear. His wife's parents are here and he sure knows they're going to demand answers. Answers that he also doesn't have and some of them he's not ready for them to know about.

"You will be alright boy?"

"Yeah man. Thank you for everything."

"I've got you boy. Kuzondlula yezwa."

Manelisi nods faintly. See now that seems impossible. How things would be okay without his wife? He wants to tell him to just shut up if he doesn't know what to say but he knows that his friend means well. They share a brotherly hug then Sizwe walks out bumping into the Qwabe family. Manelisi tries to welcome them as nicely as he can.

“Kids please go upstairs .” Mpilenhle

“Please don't wake up the twins. I struggle getting them to calm down. They're not handling the situation well,” Manelisi comments and the children nods then leave the elders.

“Yini le esiyizwayo mfoka Maseko?”

“I'm sorry baba that you had to hear such news on social media. I also have no idea who made the incident go viral. You know how the world has become. Everything spread within seconds. I deeply apologize for that.”

“What happened Manelisi? Where were you when my daughter crash down the building?” Mam Thembeke

Manelisi explains what happened in tears though he doesn't go through the details of what they were arguing about.

“What were you arguing about? Why were you even in the hotel?”

“Sbari couples argue. Going through the details of our argument will not help. I don't even remember what exactly we were arguing about.”

“We have every right to know what were you arguing about! My sister can't fall off the balcony while you were there Manelisi then you tell us that going through the details of the argument won't help! We need answers how my sister died in your watch!!” Mvelonhle

“What kind of a hotel that is Manelisi? Safety surely must be guaranteed in high buildings!” Mpilenhle adds

“I don’t build hotels buildings Mpilenhle! Everything happened so fast Zizwe’s truck tripped her before I could blink she was falling over the balcony!”

“Yey wemfana ungazosenza izingane la wena! Angithi uthi benilwa uyiphushile intombi yami! Tell us the truth dammit!!”  
(Hey you boy we are not children! You are saying you were arguing right you pushed my girl!)

More tears run down, dampening Manelisi’s face.

“Baba I swear I didn’t push her...”

“You are lying wena mfana! I can see it in your eyes that there’s something you are not telling us! You are not going to kill intombi yami just like that and expect us to believe that nonsense that she fall? You will tell me what did you do to my daughter!”

Qwabe leaps to his feet and grabs his son in law with his washing and drags him outside.

“Driver come we have a drive to take!”

“Dad please don’t hurt him. Give him a chance to explain. Mbewenhle wouldn’t be happy to see you dragging her husband like a criminal.” What Mpilenhle says falls in deaf ears. She spots a gun tucked in her father’s behind and nudges her mother.

“Talk to your husband please. The twins jus lost their mother they can’t lose their father too.”

“Qwabe calm down please.” Mam Thembeke weakly pleads her husband but he’s allowing pain to get best of him. Mvelonhle follows his father and the driver. When they’re outside Manelisi is shoved inside the Vito like pack of potato. The father and son jump inside the car as the driver starts the car. Once the engine is on off they leave.

## EPILOGUE

☆ Muzikayise ☆

The first person I thought when I received the news about Yeyeye is my brother and I couldn't help but take my wife and kids then drive to Johannesburg. I can't claim to know exactly how he's feeling right now but knowing how it will become the end of me if I were to lose my wife I think I do have a clue.

Khazimula, my beautiful wife, she's everything and more a man could ever want in a wife. We have been married for 4 years now and have beautiful 3 children. Our first born, Sabelosethu is 5 years old. Nkazimulo is the second born and he's 3 years old then my little princess, Hlelolwenkosi is 1 year old.

I'm happily married and if I knew this is how happy I would be in my marriage I would've waited until I meet her. But then again I wouldn't have met her had I not went through what I went through in my first marriage. Every bad situation has a silver lining as she would say. Now I fully understand what she means and I can testify to that. This woman brings out the best

in me. I still pinch myself seeing how my brother and I get along now. My heart is aching for him.

I hope this is a prank or a misunderstanding. Mbewenhle is dead? That doesn't sound right. Not Yeyeye I refuse to believe that she's gone and left my brother with the kids alone. I refuse to believe that she left us. I refuse to believe that she left the whole world. That woman had so much to live for. She can't die so suddenly and unexpectedly like that.

"Hey you are awfully quiet."

I heave a sigh and look at her next to me then focus on the road again. We are almost there in half an hour we will be there but I'm not sure I'm ready to get the confirmation of these sad news. As I'm driving there's this part of me that believes that there's some sort of a mistake or maybe she's in ICU.

"I can't believe she's gone babe."

“Neither do I my love. I was talking to her on the phone last week and she was asking to confirm about that ceremony you want to do.”

“Maybe when we get there we will get different news.” I say though my voice doesn’t sound as hopeful as I feel.

She gives my thigh a squeeze and I take a glance at her.

“She’s really gone baby that what my brother said.”

We heard the news from her brother and he told us that the Qwabe family left for Johannesburg this afternoon. I can’t believe that they left without letting the in laws of their daughter know. I understand my brother is traumatized and devastated hence he hasn’t called us and his phone is ringing unanswered. The Qwabes should’ve told us before they left. We arrive a few minutes after 8’o’clock.

My heart thuds harder as we step out of my car. Lord we have arrived! Our kids are sleeping in the back seat. I take both of our boys while my wife takes our daughter. Azanothe is the one that opens the door for us. I don’t know if it’s my imagination

or what but I can sense the absence of that homely feel. She greets us and leads us to the lounge where the Qwabe family is. I don't see the father and the son though and my brother. We settle down and exchange greetings. Everyone has red eyes and the ambience is sorrowful. It dawns on me that she's really gone. Kodwa Yeyeye usenzani!

"We heard the news from my brother and came as fast as we could."

"Yes I told him to let you guys know." Mpilenhle

"God this is heartbreaking. Phephisani Qwabe family. Mama I'm really sorry no mother deserves to bury her own child. Siggemeke ingozi sonke," my wife says and Mam Thembeke lets out a painful sob waking up the kids. I swallow a lump lodged in my throat. Now it's sinking and I can't cry for my ex wife's death in front of my wife but I'd be lying if I say it doesn't hurt. Grief is coming in waves that are threatening to drown me.

"Where's my brother?"

They all look at each other and say nothing.

“Mpilenhle.”

“Uhm. Baba left with him.”

“To where?”

“I don’t know.”

I study her and see that there’s something she’s not telling me.

“Mpilenhle please I need to see my brother.”

“I’m sorry Muzi I don’t know where baba is taking him. He was angry and demanding answers about how my sister died.”

My heart skips a bit. I know what an angry Qwabe is capable of. That night we went to rescue Yeyeye from Siyabonga I saw another side of him. What is he going to do to my brother?

“And you watched him take him? Didn’t Mbewenhle fall off the hotel building what answers now does he want?”

“He thinks he pushed her. They were arguing after all.”

I chuckle in disbelief.

“That’s nonsense! Manelisi will never ever do anything to put Mbewenhle’s life in danger! Which car did they left with? Doesn’t it have a tracker? We need to find them before your father kills my brother for an accident that could’ve happened to anyone. I don’t understand why now he’s acting like a super daddy when he failed to be one while his daughter was still alive!”

“The car tracking company! Yes let me call my husband to call his friend.”

Yeses. Now I'm fuming with anger. What makes me more angry is that they are relaxing while Qwabe is killing my brother wherever they are. Basile maan badlala ngomtaka baba ngoba akhule eyintandane. Not while I'm still alive! This is the last thing he needs right now. It's about 30 minutes later when Sbusiso calls back and gives us the location of the car.

"Babe please be safe."

"I will."

I dash outside and get in my car then drive away using the GPS to lead me where they're. When I spot the Vito from a distance I press the accelerator harder. Why can't this car just grow wings once and fly like those in fast and furious movies. The tyres screeches as I pull over next to the Vito. I take my gun in the glove box and step out of the car following the groans that are coming from the bushes.

"You pushed her!"

“No I didn’t baba I swe...” Manelisi groans before he finish defending himself. Lekhehla liyanya! I run towards them and he points the gun at my direction.

“Who the hell are you?”

“It’s Muzikayise don’t shoot and there’s absolutely no reason for doing this. He didn’t push her it was an accident that could’ve happened to anyone. I won’t watch you kill my brother Qwabe because of the death of your daughter that is affecting him as well. Deal with your pain the right way don’t let it control you. Mbewenhle is gone and there’s nothing that is going to change even if you kill my brother. Instead you are just going to join my father in jail and you two would be even now. The twins will never forgive you for killing their father as if they haven’t lost their mother already. I understand what you are feeling trust me, you spend years angry at her but now she’s gone and there’s no way that you can take back the hands of time so that you can tell her that you forgive her and you love her. We all lost her luckily for us we did spend time with her when the time allowed us unlike you and you are dealing

with that pain and guilt in a wrong way. Let my brother go and let's all go back to prepare for the funeral.”

He lowers his gun and walks away without saying a word. Mvelonhle and the other gentleman I assume is the driver follow him. I walk close to Manelisi and he launches himself in my arms and cries like a little boy. I hold him tightly in attempt to squeeze the pain out of him.

“Did they hurt you?”

“No he just gave me a few blows. We got a tyre puncher in the middle of the busy road which took them time to fix it. The tyre didn't want to come out but after sometime it did. When you arrive he was only getting started and I knew that he was going to kill me had you arrived here minutes later. I think the tyre was to delay time so that you can arrive before he could kill me. I'm grateful you saved me but at the same time I wish he killed me so that I can join my wife. Kubuhlungu ekujuleni kwenhliziyo yami I'm not strong enough to go through this bafo.”

Eish I don't even know how to comfort him. I'm really not that good at consoling people.

"No don't say that bafo. The twins still need you. They can't lose both of their parents. You are going through the king of pains in the world, losing your other half it's heartbreaking and I'm sure you feel like it's the end of the world but I want you to think of your children man. Let's get out of here."

We walk to my car and drive home. His house is my home as much as mine is his home. It wasn't easy at first as I was still angry at him but somehow blood played a huge role. Blood is thicker than water is what came in handy to soften my heart and bring us close. We are the only boys among girls I guess at some point we had to put our differences aside and unite. I must say I really enjoy having a little brother. We are one year apart but he never forgets that I'm older than him. He respects me as his elder brother and I return the favor as well. If father were to see us I know he would be proud.

My wife attacks me with a hug the moment we get inside the house. I'm sure she got worried when the Qwabe and his son arrived without us. We join the family in the lounge. Qwabe

and his son apologize to my brother for what they did. They express how unfair they were for their behavior and for that they are really sorry. I'm glad that they realize their mistake. What they did was really uncalled for. This is not the time to be blaming each other but to be holding one another. That's what Mbewenhle would've wanted I know for sure.

"Daddy why everyone is here are we going to surprise mommy with a birthday party?" Thingo comes running into the lounge.

"Thingo come to grandma." Mam Thembeke

"You didn't tell them?" I whisper to Manelisi's ear next to me.

"I told them. They're not handling it well bafo."

"Shit. I'm sorry man."

"Daddy when is mommy coming back home?"

“Baby girl remember I told you that mommy is in heaven.”

“Let’s go to her I want her daddy.”

“We can’t go there we will never see her again sweetheart.”

“No I want mommy!!”

A painful little cry follows after that and before I know it everyone is crying. I take my brother and we go to his study room where I comfort him on the couch.

“Shhh bafo kuzophola.”

“It won’t trust me it won’t. It’s all my fault she’s gone.”

“No don’t blame yourself..”

“I blame myself because it’s my damn fault that she’s gone. It’s my fault my kids are motherless. It’s my...”

“Manelisi akusilo iphutha lakho...”

“I cheated on her!”

I continue to stroke his back as I wait for him to continue and he does, telling me everything that happened. Yhooo my heart is in pieces. One lousy message that carried false information birthed this agonizing pain. Okay not entirely false but if only he didn’t cheat none of this would’ve happened. I refuse to put a blame on him though it’s unfair but then again if only...shit! The pain and guilt will haunt him as long as he lives.

“I’m telling you in confidence man and I don’t want her family to know about this.”

“Of course bafo you know our business stays between us. Damn I’m really sorry. In fact I don’t know what to say but I feel your pain.”

“Couldn’t God spare her life at least. A wheelchair would’ve been better than her dying.”

“Maybe it sounds better but it wouldn’t have been easy to see her hurting because she can’t do things for herself anymore. I don’t even want to mention sprinting. It would’ve killed her to not be able to do what she loved the most.”

“Maybe but she will still be alive that what would’ve mattered to me. That I still have a chance to hold her in my arms and tell her how much I love her. To kiss her and make love to her. To take care of her. To listen to her giggles and see her smiling. Idombolo lami langishiya nje kanjalo ngesihluku esingaka.”

I hold him tightly to send the message to him that I’m here for him no matter what. Listening to him crying triggers the tears I’ve been holding since I learned about Yeyeye’s departure. Through his raw and gut wrenching sob I can feel how broken he is and wish there’s something I can do to soothe the pain but unfortunately he has to go through it all. I can only hope that grief won’t swallow him alive and take him away from me.

☆ Isisa ☆

Can somebody please wake me up! I'm having a horrible dream. This has to be a nightmare and a mother of them all. She can't be gone not this soon and not like this! Mbewu was that kind of a person that you'd think ukufa akucabangi nje ukudlalela ngakuyena. Crazy I know! She was a crazy, strong willed

resilient, and ambitious character that you'd never think death can claim her so soon. I still can't believe that she's gone without a goodbye at least or was that a goodbye when she visited me. There more I think about it I could swear it's really was a goodbye. Did she perhaps felt it that she will never see us again or was it a coincidence? I'd like to believe it was a coincidence because I'd be angry at her that she felt that she would die but she didn't tell me! Maybe there's something we could've done to prevent it who knows but then again elokufa alitsheli.

I'm struggling to accept that she's gone. I keep hoping that someone will wake me up from this dream but days keep on moving by and I can see how serious this is with the preparation of the funeral taking place, people coming in and out to express their condolences and the number of family members increasing each passing day. From the Qwabes, Ndwandwes, Masekos to the Zondos. Isiphithiphithi but at least the house can accommodate them. You know the bigger the crowd the more the drama. The Qwabe aunts wanted Mbewenhle to be buried in KZN next to her twin but Manelisi put his foot down. These aunts have drama for days how can a married woman be buried in her parents house? They least could've said she must be buried at the Maseko homestead but Manelisi still wouldn't have agreed. He wants to be close to his wife so that he can go visit her with his kids whenever he feels the need to.

It's been a hard and painful week ever. My heart shatters in million pieces at how the twins cry for their mother. No child deserves to go through this maan! Where's that God then? How can he let innocent little souls feel the pain of losing their mother at such a tender age. When they cry I can't help but wonder at what age would I leave mine. I'm 33 years old now but I still need my mom and I won't stop needing her. I'm still

lucky that she's still alive and I want that more than anything for my kids as well. My best friend loved her kids sometimes I even thought a bit too much and the plans she had for them were so big. No wonder they're finding it hard to handle this. She treated them like glasses yet she never spoiled them. In my eyes she was a perfect mother though they say there's nothing as a perfect parent.

"You need to have something to eat mama." I say giving my mother in law a plate of food. Ndiwe cooked beef stew, rice and salads for lunch. She's lost so much weight within few days. I'm not sure who's worse between her and Mpilenhle. They're really not coping. Most of the time you'd find them staring into space. I'm afraid they're sinking into depression. Mpilenhle doesn't even want to get out of the bed. I have to force her to bath and eat.

"I'm fine sis but thank you. Give it to Mpilenhle."

I sigh and walk out of the bedroom heading straight to Mpilenhle's bedroom. I can hear snuffles, she's crying. I put the food on bedside table and lie next to her. I don't have comforting words but I offer her my arms for comfort.

“Kodwa bekumele afe kabuhlungu kangaka Isisa?”

“Cha sis bengamele.”

“Pho kungani?”

I wish I have answers to her questions. I also have my own questions that no one can answer them. My heart is bleeding. I didn't just lose a best friend but a sister. I've never had any friend in my life except her. You can only imagine how long it has been since we've been friends and I never imagined not even once that death would do us apart so soon and in the most painful way.

“I'd be lying if I say I knew sis. I brought you food.”

“I'm not hungry go give it to mom.”

I chuckle. These two are playing with me. My phone rings in the pocket of my apron. It's my sister and when I answer she tells me that they will be late her husband is held up somewhere. I'm a little sad because I was looking forward to see my mom and throw myself in her arms. I really need and miss her warmth. I assure my sister that as long as they're going to be here for the funeral that's what important to me.

"You need some fresh air come let's go sit by the pool or the balcony at least."

"I hate a balcony!"

Eish too soon Isisa!

"Pool?"

"No I'm fine I just want to sleep."

She turns around giving me her back. I blow out a sigh and get up from the bed before walking out. I make my way downstairs

to the kitchen and curse under my breath at the conversation I walk into.

“Like really now? My best friend hasn’t been laid to rest you are already planning to seduce her husband? What kind of cousins are you huh!!”

“Ay kahle sis ufile ufile uMbewu angeke asavuka. uManelisi uzodinga umfazi ozomnakekela!”

Wow our cousins bafethu! I stop myself from slapping her and walk away. I bump into Ndiwe carrying an empty tray. I’m sure she was serving the aunts who want to be served and pampered like it’s a hotel.

“Eh who made you angry.”

“Mbewenhle’s cousins can you believe what they are saying.”

By the time I’m done telling her I’m already crying. Why do they make it sound as if Mbewenhle wanted to die? Given a chance I

know that she would be here with her husband and kids. She loved them so much to just die on them now they already want to inherit her husband sies!

“Yhuu they’re so wicked! They won’t go anywhere with life trust me. They will always wish and talk but nothing will ever go right for them. Don’t cry okay,” she says embracing me in her arms.

“Did she tell you about the bursary?”

“Yes she did.”

“I think we should continue to do it just to honor her we might as well name it after her.”

“That’s a brilliant idea babe. Let me continue with serving Manelisi’s step mother, she’s such a bore and have too many demands.”

I pull away from her embrace and wipe my tears.

“Urgh that one!”

“You know her.”

She giggles before walking away. I heave a sigh as I stare at my surroundings. It feels weird to be here without my best friend I can already feel her absence and that warmth that has always surrounded this home is no more.

“Koti.” My father in law’s voice snaps me out of my reverie.

“Baba.”

“Come here please.”

I walk towards him and he leads me to the garden where there’s no one just the two of us. We find a spot to settle down then he hands me a folded piece of paper.

“Please read this for me koti.”

“Eh baba.” I say as I unfold it then begin to read for him.

‘Dear Baba

I don’t know why I was expecting that you will listen to me and hear me out because you never listens to a child

but I thought what is a better way then to write you a letter where I can be able to articulate my apologies towards you without you interrupting me or dismissing me. Baba I’m sorry for everything that I did, from the shame I brought in this family to how I disappointed you. Ngiyaxolisa ukuthi angisiyo indodakazi eqotho futhi oziqhenyayo ngayo. I hope maybe someday that you will also understand that I’m also not proud of what I did. I wish I can take it back but I can’t. The only thing I can do is to ask for forgiveness to everyone I’ve wronged.

I know that I disappointed you even worse when I ran away from home and left my ex husband behind. Not that I’m not sorry for how I went about it but it was the only way that could free me. I wasn’t happy in my marriage baba and the sad part is

that I knew that if I came to you as your daughter and told you this there's no way that you could've protected me. Ubungeke ungikhusele futhi ungifukamele baba. Instead you were going to tell me that I must hold on because this is what I put myself into.

Maybe you would've even make this about yourself. Divorce is taboo in our area but to you it's wrongful. You would've told me how am I going to embarrass you if I end my marriage and what's not. After all it has always been about you and your image from way beginning baba. Sometimes I wish you care less about what people say and more about our feelings as your children. Sometimes I wish you give us a chance to listen to us as your children. Don't get me wrong I'm not blaming you for my actions and I can never will because they're all on me but some of the things could've been prevented from happening if we weren't scared of you more then we respect you. You know when you do something out of fear there are many chances that it might fail because of the pressure and trying so hard to make it work.

I always want to make you proud baba and seeing how proud you were the day Kayise asked my hand in marriage I was happy. I still imagine that twinkle in your eyes and for once you

were proud of me. Sometimes being your daughter is hard baba. Your expectations and rules are hard to adhere to. I remember how hurt I was that you didn't want me to go further my studies. I couldn't understand what kind of a father that doesn't want his child to further her studies so that she can be something better in life.

I'd like to believe that you want all the best in life for me as your daughter but then again I realized that what you want and what I want for me clash because we are not from the same generation. Mom used to say 'you know how your father is' I couldn't understand why we should understand the type of a person you are while you don't want to understand the type of people your children are. But then I came to a realization that we are who we are because of our backgrounds and there's nothing wrong about that. Life doesn't have a manual for a reason. It's okay to abide by our principles but opening a room for change is also not wrong.

I'm sorry once again to be a disappointment and humiliation. I hope one day you will open your heart for me and forgive me for my past mistakes. I don't promise to be a perfect daughter thereafter but I will try my best to be the daughter you're proud of to call your daughter only if you could give me a

chance. I still need you in my life baba I can't walk this earth without you by my side. I still need your guidance and protection. Ubani ozongicosha mangilahlwa uwena baba wami. Kukhokonke engikwenzile ngithi ngicela uxolo Gumede omuhle ayidle izishiyele Yeyeye. I love you.'

God this is sad. I give him the letter and notice that his hand is shaking.

"Thank you." I can't miss then tremor in his voice. He gets to his feet and walks away. Kwazekwanzima! Lesson learned is to forgive while the time still allow us because tomorrow is not certain. I make my way back to the house. I need some shut eye I'm so exhausted in more ways then one. I sneak into my bedroom and lie myself next to my baby boy.

When I wake up my son is not next to me. I start to the bathroom to release myself first before making my way downstairs. I'm welcomed by screams of agony and when I look ahead of me I see the males of the family walking in with her casket. I'm supposed to sit down and respect my best friend as they take her to the bedroom but for some reason I'm frozen in my spot and I can feel my face getting wet with tears. My

husband's scent invades my nostrils before I feel his arms wrapping around me.

"Please tell me that's not her? This is all a mistake."

"I'm sorry Manjinji."

I bawl my eyes out against his chest. The pain is more than I could bear. He's been so strong throughout the week that I'm even worried about him. I haven't seen him shedding a single tear. I reserve my tears for tomorrow and take him to my bedroom. We settle on the bed and I cup his face.

"Babe it's okay to cry don't hold your tears. I haven't seen you crying. Let it all out my love."

"I don't know what hurts the most that she's gone or the way she passed on ngayo kodwa kubuhlungu Manjinji," he whispers and tears roll down his cheeks.

"I know baby I know." I pull him to my chest and encourage him to cry. He holds me tightly as sobs wreck against his chest wetting my chest with his tears. I can't help but let my own tears to fall too. Kodwa Jehova what have we done to you to punish us like this?

## CONTINUATION OF THE EPILOGUE

☆ Manelisi ☆

I can't bear the furnace of this pain. I'm losing my sanity with each passing day. I want my wife I want to hold her in my arms and tell her how much I love her. I want to kiss her and make sweet love to her. I want to listen to her giggles and her silly jokes. I want...God I want her back please bring my wife back I promise to join every church there ever is in this world.

It's the day of the funeral but I'm not strong enough to go through it. I'm still rolled up in bed and weeping in agony. How am I expected to say goodbye to the love of my life? I don't want to say my goodbye not yet please! I don't know what is weighing heavily on me between the guilt of being the cause of all this from the first place and the pain of losing her in such an agonizing manner.

Every media platform she's the talk of it and RIPs are thrown left, right and center but how can she Rest In Peace when she left her husband and 6 years old twins in this pain? How can she Rest In Peace when she still wanted to spend time in this

world? How can she Rest In Peace when the last days she spent in this world she was broken? I so fucking hate myself for that! I hate Lerato!

Yes I do I hate her for sending that message! That message changed my life into misery. It shattered my life into pieces that I don't think they can ever be puzzled together. What hurts me more is that she's not pregnant! Why did she 'thought' of being pregnant instead of confirming first before telling me? Why she couldn't wait for us to meet at work before she tells me not send a text dammit!

I swear there are so many ways we could've prevented the devastating turn out of events since I already cheated on my wife and there's nothing I could've done to take it back. Maybe my wife would've forgave me if I'm the one who told her myself not the way she found out. Maybe we would've work on our marriage if she knew that there's no baby. I don't see myself riding the waves of pain and grief it's only a matter of time they drown me to death.

"Bafo wake up."

“Leave me alone Muzikayse!” I say through my nasal speech. My nostrils are blocked and I have a mother of headaches.

“Bafo I know you are not looking forward to this day but you have to get up man please. Time is against you.”

“I don’t want to say goodbye to her.”

“You’re not saying goodbye to her but rather telling her to rest as she’s done her role in this world.”

“I don’t want her role to be done she still got so much to live for.”

“I know bafo but unfortunately you don’t get to choose now. You just have to let the pain flow through you as a river and it will create new channels yet your new self will arise as more stronger then ever. Come go take a shower.”

He pulls the blanket away from me and I sit on my butt with my feet on the floor.

“You’re a Maseko and you’re strong. You don’t show weakness and you don’t break down that easily. Qina bafo.”

He squeezes my shoulder before walking out. I wipe my tears and drag myself to the bathroom. 30 minutes later I’m done and ready. As I’m struggling to fix my tie I can’t help but think that my wife would walk to me in this moment and help me out. God every single thing reminds me of her.

“You ready?” I didn’t see him walking in. I’m sure he came to check if I really did took a shower.

“Yes.”

“It’s time you view her.”

I heave a sigh and follow behind him. We walk to the bedroom where my wife is and I’m glad they allow me to have a space with her.

“I will wait outside the door,” Muzikayise says and walks out. I can feel my knees buckling as I proceed towards her opened casket. It’s really her but she looks so different. Though she’s swollen and pale but she’s still the most beautiful woman I’ve ever laid my eyes on. I touch her cheeks and her flesh is so cold reminding of the beautiful life that is lost.

I burst into tears as I tell her how sorry I am and how much I love her. The pain flows out of my body seeing her lying in this coffin lifelessly. I long for her response with that sweet voice of hers. I long for her embrace and warmth as an assurance that we will survive the storm. But she’s gone and she’s never coming back to me.

I feel so weak and I’m not sure how long my knees will contain my weight. I place a wet kiss on her lips and all that it takes for me to go down on the floor. Muzikayise’s arms wraps around me as I cry in agony. I feel the sudden tightness in my chest and struggle to breathe. I don’t fight for breathing but welcome darkness to consume me.

The cold water that splatters on me jerks me awake and when I look around I see different worried faces, especially my mom’s.

I assure them that I'm okay then we leave for the venue. I have my shades on to hide the tears I can't afford to have cameras capturing me crying. I can't show my weakness in front of the world. Her burial is televised and it's the longest funeral ever with all the speeches from the friends and family to a few members in the department of athletics.

After the sweet sorrow of the service we head to the cemetery. The final place where it hits me hard that there's no point of return. I watch with my twins on my laps and their heads nestled against my chest as their mother descend into the ground.

"Don't cry my children mommy will always be with us."

I kiss the foreheads and squeeze them tightly in my arms as tears fall down my face. The sound of spades and soil as men covers her grave leaves a dark void deep in my heart.

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“Are you sure you are going to cope with the kids? I can take them son.” Mam Thembeke says

“No mama I will be fine. I will lose my mind if they go stay in the village. This house will be too big for me if I’m alone. I will be working home for a month until I’m ready to face the world.”

“Okay baba if you need anything let us know. You are still our son and the father of our grandchildren. Your wife’s passing doesn’t change anything. We are still family and we will always be.”

“Thank you mama.”

Everyone went back to their lives except my parents in law and my parents. They stayed behind for two weeks but today they’re going back to KZN. I really appreciate the support I got from everyone especially my brother. He was with me throughout this sad ordeal.

“Son can you take me to my daughter’s grave before we leave for KZN?”

“No problem baba.”

I take my car keys on the glass table and we leave. I had to make sure that she got the tombstone that she deserves. It was custom made for her.

“You want a space?”

“No son you can stay.”

We both kneel before the gigantic tombstone that screams my wife in every possible sense. ‘In loving memory of Mbewenhle “Mommy Cheetah” Maseko . Gone from our sight but never from our hearts’

“Ntombi yami it’s me your father and I’m with your husband. We are going back home now but I couldn’t go without coming to say goodbye. We will come to visit you every chance we get.

I also want to tell you that I read your letter and I have to admit that it opened my eyes to some of the other things. It's a pity that you are gone now and I can't rectify my mistakes but being a parent didn't end with you leaving us. I'm sorry that I never forgave you when the time was right and it's not that I hate you my child

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I just wanted you to earn my forgiveness. Unfortunately I've learnt the hard way to do the right thing before it's too late. Now you are gone and you don't know how proud I am as your father. You don't know that I love you so much and I'm very grateful for the farm you bought for me. I don't know how I'm going to live with this pain and guilt but I can only hope that now you are on the other side of the world you can see through my heart that I never meant any harm. Kwesinye iskhathi ntombi yami sike sithi siyalungisa kanti sesiyona. I never told you why my family moved to Ladysmith. Your younger late aunt went to the city to further her studies after finishing her grade 12 but when she got there she became a prostitute. We were so disappointed and humiliated. One day we received a call that she overdosed drugs and died. She was the only one in the family to go to university and we bragged about her but unfortunately we were left with an egg on our faces. That's why my family relocated to Ladysmith they couldn't take the

humiliation she brought upon the family but I stayed behind. What I'm trying to say to you ntombi yami is that it's not that I refused to hurt you or destroy your dreams but I was scared that the same thing could happen to you. Once beaten twice shy. I'm really sorry for that and I'm proud that you fought for your dreams. Father loves you my girl never doubt that. Please make your husband strong to accept your passing and give him strength to raise your kids." with that said he asks me if I want to say anything but I tell him no then we leave.

At home they're already waiting for us. We exchange goodbyes then they leave. Life begins without my wife and each passing day is proving to be hard to hold on. I don't see the reason why should I wake up and look forward to each day. I shut everyone out and not even my kids are the motivation to hold on because they're also hurting. All I want to do is take the pain away from them and myself.

We can't go on without their mother everything reminds us of her. The house is so cold and empty without her it has no warmth nor that homely feel. I don't know how do we make it through the month. It's been one month and two weeks since she passed on and life is meaningless and gloomy. Other days,

weeks, months and years that are yet to follow don't seem worth it if we are going to live them without her.

"Daddy why heaven doesn't allow us to visit mom?" This is one of the many questions I deal with everyday and they are going through this because of me. I took their mother away from them.

"I don't know boy that how it is. You want to visit mommy?"

"Yes."

"We will when your sister wakes up."

"No I don't want to visit her grave but her. I want to see her I want her to hug me and kiss me. I miss her so much daddy."

His tears fall down his face. I pull him to my lap and cradle him. A loud cry bursts out of him. I rock him back and forth when he doesn't calm down I go get the allelegex and panado. That's what I give them to put them to sleep when it's one of those days

they miss their mother. It doesn't take long before I hear him snoring lightly. I take him to their bedroom and tuck him in then go down to take a bottle of whiskey. My wife's special room where we used to place her achievements and articles of victory is where I lock myself and down the whiskey through the bottle while listening to Lala ngoxolo by Ami Faku and Mtee.

She once told me that she listened to this song the day of my 'funeral'. How I wish this situation could be the same and she would return to me. That she would walk in right in this moment and hold me in her arms telling me that I should stop crying now because she's still alive. Unfortunately that just wishful. The article of her passing is staring back at me right next to the 200m victory in London. It's like it laughing at me for wishing something that can never happen. I don't know why did I framed and plastered this article among the others. To show maybe that's where her journey ended? I'm halfway through my bottle of whiskey but I'm not drunk just tipsy. Alcohol never numbs my pain I don't know what happens to my system.

There's no life without my wife. I can't keep on going. Where am I even going without her? This is beyond me it's time to end this misery and be happy again. I get up from the couch and

head downstairs to the garage where I take out the tube of the vacuum and connect it to my car exhaust before inserting the other end of the tube through the window of the car. I make my way upstairs to get my car keys and pick up the sleeping twins then walk back to the garage. I place the twins in the back seat and run the engine then settle down at the back. I ensure that all the windows are closed and put these two on my laps.

“Don’t worry my babies we are now going to mommy. You guys will also meet your big brother there, Zukhanye. We will unite and be a happy family again.”

.....**The End**.....

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