

POURING FROM AN EMPTY CUP

♡CHAPTER 01♡

SHANDU

She have been scanning and fiddling through the newspaper, turning pages and returning to the one she have opened since her neighbour lend her the newspaper to check if her name is also out like those thousand kids who manage to pass their matrics. Her dream is to become a doctor, so she have to perform very well in maths and life science as they are highly recommended and prescribed to study medicine.

"Shandu, you have to hurry sis. I am in hurry too" her neighbour says looking at the watch that fits perfectly well on his left hand and his cologne smells like a mint. His shirt tucked in his formal oversize trouser and the belt looks worn out and those sharp noise shoes that looks a size and half bigger than his normal size. He have just started working at town as a manager so they say and he was one of the guys who made it in life around Tshakhuma.

But that was not the case, she had to check her exam number for the 8th time as she struggles to find it.

"I am sorry...I can't seems to locate my name" she says squinting her eyes putting down the newspaper on the gravel road filled with dust, while her hands are shakey and sweaty.

The road is not only filled with dust, but potholes,papers cans and all litters lingering around and laying on the ground with no one that sees it wrong. The municipal take it's time to come and collect the garbage nor to clean the streets, making the community not the clean environment.

The man grid his teeth seeing his paper being placed on the dirt.

He only love to check on work ads, upcoming artists and sports and now the sport part is covered with dirt because he chose to help her.

He looks at his watch again with so much frustration, he is running late and not only is he running late but he cant leave his newspaper with her because he doesn't have another money to replace the paper and they are already sold out due to matric results.

Shandu's little sister saw frustration on the man's face and kneel down also trying to help her sister locate her exam number.

"Sis, what is your examination number" Tendani ask trying to help her sister.

"It ends with 026" she says and continues checking one by one. She have checked and she didn't find her name. But she just have to try again to be sure.

"I am sorry Shandu" she says as a confirmation of what she already know.

She shakes her head and sits down as tears wells in her eyes and the vividly find their way down her cheeks. She quickly wipes them and pick the newspaper stand up and trying to wipe dust that have filled the front and the back of the newspaper using her dress and the man smiles politely even though he is angry and didn't wait for his newspaper to be handed back to him but he snatch it and rushes to where people catch the taxi in hurry.

Shandu sits down with her 14 years old sister Tendani trying to console her. But how do she do that. Shandu have put all her hope and trust to this. Passing her matric was their ticket to better life but she didn't, her name failed to make it to the daily sun printers and her dreams crush just like that.

Her forehead is filled with little drops of sweats covering her forehead and her dress is soaked in sweat at the bag and the sweats drips down her spine making her dress to hug her back making it uncomfortable way. He unruly afro, that looks thirty and it dont even shine inching and she dug her nails on her clap scratching it slowly.

"Go home I will go to the river on my own" Tendani says, standing up and try to help Shandu to stand up too.

She stands up and walk back home with her head hanging up held by her neck and disappointment and shame hang with her head too and she shakes it not understanding how is it possible. She have given it her all and study hard even through her situation. Seeing other grade 12 learners running around, jumping and screaming mama I made it makes her heart beat bitterly leaving a hole is her heart. Why me? Why me made her not understand. She hurriedly strode to their yard and stand next to the avocado tree that is by the gate as she leans on it and silently cry.

Through all the things she was going through from the death of her mother to the death of her grandmother in the same year, same months and to become a bread winner and a matric learner also that was a burden on its own.

But she tried to carry it well, tried to be a mother to another teenager as she is also a teenager herself and make sure they were food on the table.

Coming from a disadvantaged home also played a huge role in her life as well, because when her mother died she never left them anything as she was just working at an Indian shop and she only earns R 500-00, and her grandma had grant. They only left few cents that managed to keep them going for 2 months and then she had to hustle.

Life haven't been fair and have never been fair at all, their two roundovel that is built from mud bricks and decorated buy a cow dug but the decorations seems to be fading away. The thatched roof is also starting to be in bad condition as it have to be renewed soon before rainy days.

After sometime she walks to their kitchen and sits down looking around, the kitchen is not cemented, and she search something to eat but there is nothing. She stands up and walk out to the other roundovel which is their bedroom and takes her bag and check if she have few coins, she have to use them wisely. Life have to go on no matter what and she ain't going back to school. She have to look after Tendani and that means she have to be the breadwinner without attached to school, she will fail again and she ain't ready for another flood of disappointment. She take a glance on the wall where the picture of her mother and grandmother hang looking straight at her and she smiles her tears away, it was not time to cry. What's the use of crying over spilled milk. She is not the only one who failed and failing didn't start with her and is never ending with her. But she feels like she disappointed them, they believed so much in her dream of becoming a doctor and that at times kept her going but today become a day where reality told her to dream like every girl child in this community. Not dreaming beyond marriage to a well off boy and getting to enjoy money you never worked hard for.

"Mama grandma. I am sorry, I am sorry I disappoint you but I promise to make sure Tendani doesn't fail like me, she will go to school you will see" she mumbles.

Throwing herself on the bed and it sunk down as it an old and broken bed that is no longer comfortable to sleep on and you wake up with an aching body.

Tendani comes back and make a soft porridge for both of them adding a bit of lemon for Shandu, she loves it a bit sour. And they eat in silence.

"What's the plan?" Tendani asks breaking the silence.

"I will starts to fully sell on the market and you go to school" she says taking a spoonful with her porridge and her tummy grumbles, I think in excitement because her nostrils are already smelling the lemon, they last eat yesterday in the afternoon so they are really hungry.

"You're no longer going back to school?" Asking the obvious, her statement says it all and because she is Tendani she asks everything.

And Shandu nods in agreement.

"You cant do that" she continues.

"I don't want you to fail also because you have to worry about what you will eat or wear, you did see that you didn't perform like you always do also so please. I understand that education is a key but I want you to be educated" she says looking at Tendani and she nods, not because she doesn't

want to say anything further but because the way she said it makes her waiting to say anything else she will be zipped her lips with a clap.

That is how Shandu is when she is frustrated or angry, she can beat the hell out fo you for just dropping a spoon and it makes a noise.

They continue to empty their bowels in silence only spoons are heard beating the the bowels.

When they are done eating they start with the daily chores, and that is to make a garden where they plant tomatoes, spinach and cabbage. The plan is to sell them and others to eat.

By the time they are done its already midday and the sun is blazing hot, they are smelling and covered with sweat all over their bodies and their legs covered with dirt. Shandu's friend makes her way in with a plastic on her hands and Shandu walks to her.

"I didn't see you at school today" she says sitting on the stoop of their bedroom.

"There was no need for me to go to school" she mumbles wiping dirt on her hands with her dress and her torn sun hat covered with dust and its condition is super bad.

"So it's true, you didn't make it" she says looking at her and holding her laugh. Everyone knows who didn't make it and those who made it as learners because their know each others exam numbers. But her friend here was here to gloat . But she nods anyway.

"You're lying" she says holding her mouth acting suprised. She was here to confirm.

"Why would I lie?" She asks getting annoyed.

"So medunsa dream is crushed just like that shame my friend. But you can go back to school" she says, fishing her future plans.

"Yeah, but I am not going back. I have responsibilities to do" she says.

"Okay, let me get going then, I will see you when do, I dont know when because UL have accepted me to study journalism and I will be driving with my uncle tonight. Take care" she says walking out and Shandu looks at her as she runs to the groups of other girls and they seems to have been waiting for her to come back with a confirmation. And they laugh clapping hands and that hurts so bad, but in life we have to understand that there are those who will cry with you on your downfalls then go and rejoice with their other friends and also those who will cry with you on your down fall and try to help you stand back on your own again. But those types of people are hard to differentiate as some are wolves in a sheep skin and they get mixed with sheep's and becomes hard to locate wolves because you see sheeps only.

KHUMBUDZO

Everyone hates alarms and mondays, isnt so. Especially if you had a busy Sunday night and now you have to wake up and go to work like everyone else. But what the point of working when you have enough to last you and future generation,hunger will have draw and colour is before its claws cage us.

Living being shadowed by the parents status and live off by their wealth wasn't the plan but what can you do when the family see you as their leader beside his reckless older brother and now that caused him to wake up and work hard like everyone.

Continuing with the ropes given to him by his father when he resigned a year ago unfortunately he died two months after that from a car accident.

The alarm rings again and he grunts throwing the duvet off his body and to the floor it goes. He flinched when his legs makes contact to the cold tiles and he grunt more making his was to the bathroom.

In ten minutes his done preparing himself and walk to the kitchen and find his mother sipping her morning coffee.

No matter how many times she is told to slow down on her coffee intake it's like you are talking to a stone, she never listens and you would always find her sipping it and she tells you it's hers and her husband's money. They worked hard live a lavish life, so let her enjoy things she couldn't back in her day.

"Morning ma" he says kissing her cheek and ready to make his way out.

"Khumbu" his mother high pitch voice says making him to stop and look at his mother with so much impatience.

"Dont forget forget the family dinner tonight please" she says as she continues with her coffee.

He gets into his red polo and fly out. He is supposed to be meeting the supermarket manager that mbedzi dairy wants to supply its fresh milk to but he is already 5 minutes late.

Before the clock hits 8:30 he is parking his car on one of the restuarant they are meeting at and he takes his files and makes his way inside the restaurant.

"Mr mbedzi" he says taking a sit and looking straight at him "sorry for being late" he says.

"I thought you were no longer coming" mr mbedzi says taking a sip of his whiskey.

How can one stomach alcohol right before midday still fascinates me. I do drink, and a lot but I never touch a bottle before midday.

"We can start"he says

And the meeting starts after sometime, the meeting is adjourned as they have reached an agreement.

He stand up fix his suit and walks out with his head held high.

It's now midday and busy with his papers in the office when his brother Rendani gets in without even knocking.

"And now..." he says lifting his eyes to this man infront of him.

"Why didn't you tell me?" Rendani says taking a sit across him and put his legs on the table.

"Take your legs off my table and what isn't that I should have told you" he says looking at him.

"That Mbengi will be arriving her today" Rendani says like it's a big deal. What so big about his arrival, he is nothing but a family black sheep and the family have choose to distance themselves from him but Khumbudzo and Rendani are the only one left who are in contact with him.

"Maybe he is here to claim his rightful place" he says focus back on the stash of files in front of him.

"That will be the day your father will even resurrect" he says throwing a chappie in his mouth. And trust me his chewing game is not up at all.

"Get out of my office and come back when you are done with the chewing or you have thrown that thing away." He says, everyone knows how much Khumbudzo hates chappies and he is the reason why he hates chappies.

He wonders why Mbengi chose to come back home now after 6 years of not making any contact with the family.

♡CHAPTER 02♡

KHUMBUDZO

With a mother with such a character he is not looking forward for tonight dinner but promise is a promise and have to be kept at all times. He sighs packing his laptop in his bag and a file he is thinking on working on tonight after the family meeting is it dinner but whatever it is he will have to use work as his escape. No matter how much he hates waking up but he is a late sleeper and most of the time if not Friday to Sunday he is buried in his work. He has done so much for Mbedzi Dairy to be where it is today and he still has plans to take it to higher heights. He has sacrificed a lot for this company and that includes letting go of his dreams of becoming a dancer, he has got good moves but who makes money by just dancing that thing is not stable and won't make him live the life of high class like his mother said it but she didn't know that this generation makes money with everything and dancing being one of it like Kamo Mphela, she is living her life and she is a dancer but what does Khumbudzo know she is just a child and needs to be guarded to a right path.

After packing everything he walks out of the office and heads to his parking area and starts his car and drives slowly home, mostly because of traffic, we all know how traffic is like after 17:00. He feels like dreading this moment and gets home 2 hours late for the meeting, there are no family meetings that last that long unless they want to discuss who is marrying who from the witchcraft family and how is making it in life and the question that almost all of those working sisters and brothers who seem to have all their things in order 'when are you getting married question' or 'I want grandchildren, I am old and home is boring' that question is also the reason why he doesn't want to attend this meeting but he has to as the family leader. Since his father died he has been taking care of the family and at times he feels like he has been doing more than enough and should be enjoying his life dancing his life away.

He is a heavy drinker but on Friday, Saturday and Sundays if he managed to dodge his mother's claws and how much God is important and that they should continue hold tight in their spiritual growth. But tell me, who doesn't drink alcohol then go to church we all do right.

He gets home and looking at how full the yard is parked, with cars that have filled the whole yard the meeting seems to be more serious than he actually thought is it.

He squeezing his little polo car, he loves this car with all his being actually it fits to be his first wife. He do have other cars but this one he bought it cash with whis own money, even though he earned it through working at a family business but he did work for his money. He stepped out and we makes a little prayer for mercy to fall upon him and he walks inside. He uses the kitchen door and finds Rendani sitting on a kitchen island drinking something on a water bottle. Tell me who is the 23 years old boy who drinks juice using a water bottle, we all know he isnt drinking juice but alcohol. He is not allowed to drink in this house so using a water bottle seems to be the best option and he is sitting on a island wow, someone have a death wish and that wish will come to pass only, only of Mmamunyai makes her way in here.

"And now" he says placing his bags there and opening a fridge for water and apple. That his life, everytime he comes home from somewhere the first think he think of is an apple and a glass of ice cold water.

"Yoh, I am happy you are here. They are killing each other at the lounge" rendani says as he continues to drink from his bottle with no care and khumbu gulps down his water and place an apple down.

"Who is killing who and why are you sitting here" khumbu asks with his eyes ready to fall and roll on the floor.

"Your mother

your uncles, your aunts and the mighty mbengi" he says and chuckles to himself.

It was funny to watch the boxing match that almost happend few minutes back. When MaMunyai tried to slap Mbengi and him being strong well built he grab his mother's hand before he clap hit his cheek and now he is labelled a wrestler named after mark hendry that one who from www smackdown or raw whatsoever you call it with big zulu dread locks but Mbengi is nothing like those two men but hey what will one say.

"So he is here" he asks and doesn't wait for wait for Rendani to say anything or giving him a chance to take a sip further as he snatch the bottle and drink from it the liquid inside and that burning feeling from deep his throat that always leave him craving for more soothes and give him back his bottle. Rendani is ready for a lecture but none is lashed out to him yet he is not off the hook that he knows.

He gets to the lounge and find his mother leaning on her sister and she looks like she have been crying. And the uncles busy throwing a blazing hot gaze at Mbengi who seems to not even bothered by that and the clicking of tounge is thrown here and there after few moments.

"Ma" he says and mamunyai raise her head to her son, with face covered with tears and her eyes are red from all her dramatic crying. Khumbudzo talking to her made the things worse as she starts screaming and her voice would have faded by tomorrow by the rate she is screaming.

"He beats me khumbu, this good fo nothing...satan" she says and and he tries by all means to calm his mother but what's the point of crying rather than talking it out. And he also choose the wrong day to come back home and now he is seen as a bad person here.

****SHANDU****

Being a breadwinner, being a protector, and being a bigger person through it all it ain't child's play. It's a work and half on it's own and that a 19 years old who have a lot of growing to do and will never experience what others her age are experiencing because adulthood claimed her at a young age. It's true that some kids grow older when they are still young and never get the opportunity to be like other kids. She sits down and counted the few coins they are left with and thinking of how expensive things are. After every hard labour the tummy complains as it needs to be fed and energy needs to be restored. But with what, a soft porridge which they have used their last sugar on it in the morning.

"What are you going to do sis?" she asks the question that she also have. Being an elder sister is tough, she should be asking 'what are we going to do sis' not what she is going to do all alone. But this is her burden for life or atleast until light shines upon them but till them from hand to mouth is how they are going to live. And she is the one who have to make that two hands have something to feed two tummies.

"Go buy bread, I will think of something. Maybe I have to look for work, the crops are still small for being sold and this money is our last money" she says giving her R7-00 for a brown spar bread.

"Okay, what are we going to eat bread with" tendani asks, because she expects her to give her atleast R 1-00 extra for cola sweet aid.

"Water" she says and placed the left R10-00 coins on top of the table at the middle of their one room bedroom.

"But what are you..." she didn't finish the sentence as Shandu cuts her short.

"Are, you going to buy bread or not. We dont have money for sugar what more do you want from me." She says and walks out going to the outside kitchen to start fire for water to wash the dishes and bathing and other things that might need fire tonight they will be finishing off their last tin of fish and that will be it.

She makes a fire and starts to pack plates in a dish ready to wash them, she was feeling sweaty and dizzy because of hunger and working on the sun earlier also made her dehydrated.

She placed the dish down and starts to wash plates sitting on the sack after she is done Tendani makes her way in the kitchen with a bread and a cola sweet aid and a cup of archar. Where she find the money to buy all that is known only to herself.

"And now?" Shandu asks seeing all the things she didn't know R7-00 can buy.

"Thendo gave me them" she says like it's not big deal but it is.

Where is she going to get money to pay back Thendo, because he have been try to pursue a relationship with her but she got alot in her plate that takes relationship out of her books.

"Next time dont agree such advances from him please or any boy" shandu says and tendani being her self continues with what she does best.

"Why?" She says

"Because I said so" she says taking the cups out of the dish and Tendani rolls her her large marbles and Shandu clicks her toungue.

"Do that again, if you think we are agemate"she says then clicks her tounge and tendani mumbles .

"We are both teenagers" unfortunately her ancestors were not on her side as Shandu jumps on her giving her few slaps and Tendani managed to get out of her grip and runs out crying. This is who the bubbly Shandu have turned to some bitter person ever since their grandmother died, she cant even count how many times she have been slapped for nothing at all. Shandu makes everything a big deal and takes it with much negativity. That what Tendani thinks.

****CHAPTER 03****

****KHUMBUDZO****

All families have drama but his take the cup, the gold medal, belt and the flowers. But the problem starts when the mother is like Mmamunyai, her drama is more than of any dramatic person you have even known.

"This is a sign of bad luck" one of the uncle says shaking his head.

"That is the honest truth" the other one adds also shaking his head.

"Who in their right state of mind beat their own mother" the aunt adds and claps her hands while other nods their heads in agreement.

Mbengi just looks at them and takes out a packet of his cigarette and take one. He just needed few puffs and he will be done, he take his gun light and light his cigarette and start to smoke infront of everyone and the aunties starts coughing from the smoke but it wasnt enough to make them cough they are just bunch of dramatic people like mmamunyai.

Smoke coming out of his mouths and nostrils.

"He is disrespectful...you see what he is doing now" the other uncle adds

"He is disrespecting the memory of my husband...look how he is setting my lounge is fire" mmamunyai says wiping her tears.

"Do you want some, but it taste sweeter and better mixed with marijuana" his deep husky voice be wells the lounge.it his first time opening his lips. He have been staring at them and saying nothing at all and he knows a way better to get down with this is when he is calm.

"Can you please go and smoke outside Mbengi" khumbu says looking at him with so much disappointment. How could he do him...them like this. He was ready to talk and plead on his behalf now tell me how would he do that.

"One more puff just one bro, I will be done" he says placing his cigar on his lips, takes one last puff and the air comes on his nostrils and mouth then he stop his cigar from burning further by squirting down and use their tiles and everyone exclaimed.

"As for everyone who wants me gone, forget it. This is home to me too and I am not going anywhere"he stands up and take his bags from the floor. Walk few feets away from them then stop realizing that maybe they give his room to someone else.

"I hope my room is still vacant if not I want rent to whoever been staying there without my permission" then he walks to the direction of his room.

"You let him disrespect me, is that what has become of me in this house my husband built for me. Just a woman who doesn't have a say and I feel unsafe her khumbudzo." She says looking at khumbudzo and all eyes stare at him.

What is he supposed to do, drag Mbengi out of the house but how he is his big brother no matter what.

He stands up and go and open the windows and Rendani walks in.

"I can see you have managed to be the referee like always" he says looking at khumbudzo and he shakes his head.

"So what was the family meeting going to be all about" he says sitting down...he looks at his mother who looks disgusted and ready to lash out at anyone.

"Mbengi should be home all the time. You look beautiful mama" he say holding her mother's chin and he smiles. Beside the fact that alcohol was starting to have effect on him, his like that always annoying people all the time.

"Dont touch me" she say roughly taking his hand off her chin.

"Should I call Mbengi, from today you lay your hands on me mama, mbengi will deal with you. With his look that can make you pee on your pants..." he says and khumbudzo poke him at the back of his head. Who on their right mind tell their mother about peeing their pants.

This is another reason he doesn't like family meeting...family dinner...family gathering. We will all meet in funerals. Now this uncles and aunts here have a biggest scoops for their family when they get home. They will be talking about them and there is nothing they can do as they have invited them to come and be the spectators of this circus.

"I will be in my room" he says walking out going to the kitchen. But his uncle's voice stops him and he turn back.

"That satanic boy is not the reason we are here" one of the uncle says and he turns to give them his attention he sits done and his mother is wiping her tears away and sitting up straight.

"Then why are you here" he say looking at them.

They take out the brown envelope and hand it to him, he opens it and Rendani goes and sit next to khumbudzo to also have a look on the papers. Who wouldn't like to know what the uneducated uncles and aunts have in the brown envelope.

"This is crazy" Rendani says laughing, how couldn't he say so.

"And where am i supposed to get this kind of money from" Khumbudzo says looking at them.

"You have to help family khumbu, families help each other" mmamunyi says and he laugh in disbelief.

"I am not denying that ma, but I am asking where I am supposed to get money to take their children to school and give them comfortable life" he says

"The company is making alot of money and dont forget nwana wa murathu wants, uri he ila it's a family business" (don't forget my nephew, that it's a family business) one of the uncle says.

"But that money is used for business purposes" he says

"He will help you, this is just overwhelming for him" his mother chip in.

Rendani laugh so hard, this is funny to him . How could a whole man who fits to be a father shift his parental responsibilities to a mere boy. Who doesnt even have a girl friend.

"Perform miracles wena jesus" Rendani says patting khumbudzo's shoulder. This is one of the reason he have to let go of the company. And follow his dancing passion

maybe he could have been broke like his mother says it and no one would have been expecting him to do things that aren't possible. It's true the company is doing well, but now he is expected to take all the profit and give it up for family just like that.

He wish to be the don't care Mbengi right now or maybe switch place with the joker Rendi.

He slowly stands up and walks out go to the kitchen and take his bags and pass them again going to his room. He bangs the door throw himself on the bed. And look at the space.

****SHANDU****

The clock is slowly moving, and the times slowly moves to the next minute, then minutes and hour. She have been starring at the door waiting for it to open and ask for forgiveness. Like any person she have rehearsed her sorry speech and she praying it doesn't fell on deaf ears.

She stand up from the corner of the bed pacing up and down biting her nails.

She knows and understands she have done her wrong but she is willing to admit her wrongs and makes things right with her.

She looks at the time again and it few minutes pass 9. 'Where would this child be', 'what I'd something bad happen to her'. There are many cases if missing people and others are never found it have happened many times here in Tshakhuma, people going missing and people strike after two to three days life goes on without any trace of those missing people. What if Tendani also goes missing. Who is going to help an orphan with no relatives because their mother and grandmother died because of HIV and aids. It's funny that even after a lot of have change and HIV and aids people are still stigmatized. And others are afraid to seek medical health because they know people will discriminate them because of their status instead of medical health they seek spiritual health. And give credits to their enemies that they bewitched them while they themselves slowly deteriorate and the virus eats them slowly.

Like her mother, she never admitted that she was HIV positive. Her grandmother tried her best from taking her to churches, prophets and sangomas. But nothing worked and because her grandmother because she didn't know she was helping her child but she didn't know that's the same virus that is eating her child eats her also even though Shandu gets lucky she didn't get it when looking after her grandmother but she was taught this things at school the family sees them as infected people and they can't associate themselves with infected people.

She goes and sit on the bed and then lay down, she will wait until Tendani comes back and the talk this out. The clock keeps ticking and time keeps moving but Tendani is no where in sight. And she slowly falls asleep.

Like everyday before the sun even attempt to rise, she is kicking the blankets off her body and she looks at her side and she smiles a little seeing Tendani sleeping there also.

She walks out brush her teeth and wash her face with cold water then goes and water their crops. This crops don't only bring them money and food but happiness. Seeing them growing makes her happy.

After watering the crops she sweeps the whole yard, today is Tendani's lucky day no one is screaming at her telling her she should wake up. Then she takes yesterday tin cooked tin fish and warm it up and goes to wake the sleeping beauty.

"Tendi...Tendi, wake up" she says shaking her lightly.

"Mmmmh...not now please give me five minutes" she says and Shandu looks at the watch that hang nicely on the wall and the time is almost 9 0'clock in the morning a whole girl says five more minutes please but she wants to ask for forgiveness so five more minutes it is.

While waiting for five minutes to come to pass she put a big pot filled with water, they have to bath and she have to look for work schools are opening in two weeks time and Tendani no longer have school shoes and her bag is no longer in good condition. So while waiting for crops to be ready for harvest, she will look for job and maybe learn to make beads bracelets, and others they wear on neck and on their head. To be able to provide and pay extra classes for Tendani.

In five minutes she walks out rubbing her eyes and yawning walking bear footed.

She handed her, her teeth brush and a cup of water.

"Here, go brush your teeth. I am hungry" shandu says flashing her a Colgate smile and she returns it.

Tendani is not the kind of person who hold grudges, she is the lazy bubbly type.

After brushing her teeth she takes a sit and be served warm pap with hot porridge. How she warmed the pap is a mystery but Shandu is Shandu and make things happen.

"Thank you, I am sorry Shandu for coming home late last night" Tendani says, she have been with Thendo after running away and Thendo made her see things in a different way, he made her realize the how stressed Shandu is and all the burdens that comes with being a child and a mother and a provider all at once.

"I should be the one to say sorry tendi, I shouldn't have....I shouldn't have done that you know" she says and the sit down and enjoy their last meal.

♡not edited♡

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CHAPTER 04

SHANDU

The satisfaction of walking inside the shop and pick a school bag and school shoes for her sister filled all the space in her heart. She was a happy woman that day and it has filled and brought joy in her heart.

She takes pride in making sure tendini lacks nothing at all. From attending extra classes to having lunch box everyday. That was her plan for when the school opens and that means hard work for her and she have been doing that with no fail.

She have been selling fruits and other things as a vendor in thohoyandou. Joining other vendors there filling the town everyday and crowding the space.

If you have ever been there you would see how crowded the place is. Especially months end, people walk in between the the vendors tents and trying so hard to not step on each other foots and that also increases the rate of pocket picking.

But they are all trying to make the ends meet, they aren't sleeping with empty tummies and others are building homes that are of second class living people and take their kids to school and have clothes to wear.

It have been three weeks since she have also pitch her tenant there and start hustling like everyone else and that cost her sleepless nights as she have to wake up by Crack of dawn to water the crops and to pack the fresh avocados, oranges, mangoes, and other fruits that she is going to sell on a box. She have to walk around the village asking them to sell those things to her and at some houses she even book the bananas before they are even ready for harvest.

She was doing well for a first timer and her smile that brightens her melanin face and make her a goddess, with her five cornrows that shows off her face as its ovaly shaped and her narrow chin. Her lips shinning with Vaseline.

People love her, who wouldn't want to buy from a always smiling person.

And she was happy with how things are going.

They haven't been sleeping hungry and and they don't sleep without knowing what tomorrow brings in their plates.

She is drowsy, and the noise here isn't helping at all even the fact that people are going up and down isn't even helping. Today have been one of the days we're you pray that even one customer buy, its in the middle of the months and people keep passing them not looking twice at what they are selling. She is even tired to call them and trying to convince them to buy.

"Shandu" one of the ladies calls out her name making her to widely open her eyes and sits up straight.

"Mmmmh" she says looking around and there he stands making her regret even opening her eyes. They should have let her savour on the moment in peace.

"How can I help you Thendo, teeth brush cost five rand each and apples there are three rand each as for bananas they are ten rand for ten bananas and six rand an avocado..." she says smiling because she always have to smile for a customer. This was one of the customer that don't want to buy anything buy waste her time with emotional blackmails of why she doesn't give him a chance with her. Tell me who have time for love when they want to further their studies and doesn't have money to do so, when they have to make money and stress have taken a toll in them. Who does that when the economy is busy crawling and no hope for the future. When you don't when is the country is going to be in next few years financially when it already drowning deep debts. Who does that...exactly no one but Thendo.

Nothing love is going to do nor fix but to add on the stress that she just doesn't need now. She have to focus on giving Tendini opportunities she never had and that can only happen if she doesn't fall in love trap.

"I am not here for bananas, you know that. How can I buy a banana when they..." he didn't even have a chance to finish his sentence.

"Then teeth brush...here" she says taking them and shoving it to his hand.

"What time are you leaving?" He asks.

"Are you here to buy or not Thendo" she says and he takes out his wallet and take fifty rand note and give it to her.

And she takes it, mxm, only annoying customers like Thendo buy a five rand thing with a fifty rand where the hell is she supposed to get forty-five rand from. She had to pinch herself several times to not tell him to go jump at the nearest bridge.

She turns to look at the neighbour beside her "hello mama, can you please help me with change" she says holding fifty rand for her to see and she smiles back to her.

"Unfortunately shandu, I also don't have it" she says and she turns to find him looking at her.

Its not like he doesn't have Ten rand or 5 rand, he do have them but if he had immediately took that out she was going to chaise him out of sight with a lightning speed. She is feisty and likes being in control and that makes him to love her more and feel the need of having her in his life.

"Mmmh,I don't have a change Thendo" she says looking at him with those big marble eyes of hers and her lips shining and you can see yourself through the grease that have lotioned those big lips he wishes to Savour on and he also can't wait to find his lips nibble on those to mountains that stand still and unshaken on her chest.

They weren't huge and small either but a fit cup and could fill his hands perfectly. Her v-neck yellow cotton dress weren't helping as she wasn't wearing a bra and her nipples prints on her dress.

She looks and him and trace his eyes to her chest and she shakes her head.

"Actually, I am keeping the change. You have been undressing me with your thirsty eyes and that harassment" she says throwing herself back to the chair jerking her those two mountains up a bit as she fold her arms right below them leaving a line that separated them on display and he chuckles.

"As you wish my lady" he say biting his lower lip and his eyes looks straight at her and he places the teeth brush down and walk away away with his one hand buried deep on his pocket and he stops on his tracks "the day

I claim you as mine,my lady. Make you mine nc nc."he says and walk away.

She realise a sigh she never know she was holding and smiles a little. Three full years with him running after her like a headless chicken but that doesn't change that timing and everything is against the fire that burns within him to spread fast to her.

"He loves you and I see wedding bells soon" one of the ladies adds and she laughs.

"Maybe after I have made enough money for my sister to realize her dreams and then chaise mine" she says smiling.

"But that can happen with Mr charming right by your side" the neighbor continues to say and she laughs shaking her head.

The most funny thing is that this ladies talks about anything while everyone is sitting right at at their own tents. They even engage on sexual topics and they will be giving each other tips on how to please their man, beauty tips and life tips. They are a group of mothers and sisters who

take care of each other and that makes them one family with same goal of having food and providing for their families. They aren't more of competitors as they don't wish each other bad but advises and encourages each other at all cost. They know at a perfect market customers have freedom of choice to whom they buy its all on their hands as they sell on same price.

Before she knows it, it's time to go back home. She packs her things and carry them to the rented place where they leave their things at when they go home. And then walk to where their half truck waits for them to take them back home. From thohoyandou to Tshakhuma is 45 minutes drive.

They are busy chatting about how their day was like and others telling her about an Indian shop that sells most of their stocks at lower prices and in bulk. She even want to start make beards especially traditional ones. Its like they are in fashion and evening is being matched with them not only how it used to be like with their traditional clothes(minwenda, musisi) but now with their black attires...yellow attires...green attires you name them. And she knows she can make much more money by making and selling those.

She gets home and walks in the yard, the whole yard needs some serious cleaning but that can only happen on Sunday as she will be reserving them for such cleaning. Ever since the schools open Tendani is hardly at home. She have joined other learners in studying at school until late at night. Making Shandu subjected to house chores as well when she gets back from town. She takes the bucket of water and walks to the corner of her street where there's street pipe and fill her bucket. She have to come four times so that she doesn't come back tomorrow early in the morning so they can have bathing water.

She starts the fire and boil water so she can do the dishes and use some to cook stiff pap, she have come back with a litter of amasi and they will be eating pap and amasi as their dinner tonight. Then she bath after. Eat her food and have a cup of lemon tea then head to bed. Because of tiredness she does even take long to land at dream land.

I felt like I was dreaming when I heard the banging on the door. They were so loud and I could swear that someone had the intations to break down the door and left us with no door and winter won't play with us.

She raises her head with so much annoyance and rub her eyes. She flinched as her foot makes contact with the cold floor and whimpered as the coldness shot through her flesh to bones. Walking to the door with her short pink silk pyjamas and a head scarfs ready to fall anytime. She didn't even ask who the person was and what they wanted at this time of the time that couldn't even wait till morning and opens the door meeting the one and only Thendo.

"Really..." she says as she feels energy leave her.

"Take your sleepers and throw something over your body." He say and she looks at him. Asking herself how crazy the guy is, who invites a sane person just after midnight.

"Its about your sister Shandu, I can't be coming at your place this time of the night" he says and her eyes wide open and the sleepiness leaves her body instantly.

"What about my sister" she says in a panick tone.

"She...she, she" he stutter "go take your shoes shandu" he says not knowing how to break this down to her. Maybe she have to see it with her own eyes that way it could have break itself to her.

"How do I know that..." she says and did even finish her sentence as Masindi, her neighbor comes panting running out of an oxygen. It's funny how one think everyone are asleep but the whole community is up and walking around aimlessly and end up at her home.

"Come sis" she says pulling her toward the gate and running back with her. Thendo closes the door and follow them. With those small stone making it uncomfortable for her to walk and she would flinch each time she places her size four foot on those sharp stones.

She sees a group of people in a distant they are in circle and her heart rate picked up. Not only because she is running but because she wonders what have she done that the whole community would be here to witness at this time of the night.

They manoeuvre through the crowd and her eyes land on the white short dress, soaked in blood. The green pumps she knows very well and before she could fully examine her masindi touch her shoulder like she is giving her strength.

She squatted, and tears gushed out. Touching her then take her hand to feel her pulse. Its there but weak.

If she is to die who would be left with her. She have seen dead bodies two times and her wish is to never see another one. Not anytime soon if not forever, the wound is still fresh because she never made any attempt to make it heal, but she fought so hard to make the ends meet, to grow and help her sister realize her dreams not her dying on the process.

If she dies what would be left of shandu. Who is shandu without Tendani. She have mastered the surviving skills without her mother and grandmother even though she is fully aware that her father is still alive, she choose to let him be because he choose to walk away in the first place. But tendani...tendani was the reason why she goes to church every God's favored Sunday. The reason why she choose to know the lord's prayer by heart. Hoping that maybe when she recites it the lord will listen and and protect what's close to her heart and that is her sister.

Where would life begin without her, she close her eyes and opens them again.

"Can someone call the ambulance please" she says suppressing the bile that raise deep from the pit of her stomach and gulp at nothingness as her throat feels dry.

♡not edited♡

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****CHAPTER 05****

****SHANDU****

"It's on its way" masindi says, kneeling down next to her. And she keeps quiet starring at Tendani. As their memories flood her mind making the ball that has formed and stuck on her throat burn her throat mercilessly.

Tears fails to hold still and they floods out as they race down her cheeks and she sniffs others in. Smiling remembering her smile, her bubbly personality and their fighting moments.

There was nothing she cannot give for her sister to be lying on their bed not by the road side, without knowing just one person who would do them like this.

The question that remains unknown is who did this to her sister, what were the intentions.

Rape...Rape, she pray she is intact but what are the chances as she can see blood in between her thighs but still she choose a leap of faith , the faith of the blind man. To believe that who ever did this to her didn't rape her. If he did or they did...

"Sorry miss" the paramedic says stepping next to tendani , making shandu to jump off her train of thoughts.

She stands up and takes two steps back with her eyes fixed on her sister she have to see everything they are doing to her.

He touched her hand checking her pulse, then her neck back to her hand then shakes his head.

"I can't feel it" he says to his colleagues.

And sweat drops down her spine, she feels lightly...like she can faint any moment then she bent touch her knees fighting for her chest not to close in but it was getting weak, and weaker and oxygen feels like a luxury. Too luxurious for her, too luxurious to fill her small nostrils and her few cents can't even buy a little bit of it.

But even though she was able to buy it would she buy it. Why would she buy it because her purpose for being here choose to succumb to pain too early.

"Let me try" the other paramedic says kneeling as well.

He did the same as the first one but his results were positive.

"Its there but weak" he says. Then they lift her gently placed her on the stretcher and connects her to oxygen. And put her inside the ambulance.

Shandu jumps in before the paramedics even give her a chance.

"Madam" the paramedic says looking at her.

"I am her sister" she says sitting comfortably beside her looking at her and they close the door and speed to the hospital.

The drive wasn't even comfortable one as the driver didn't even attempt to avoid potholes.

"You can't leave me now, Tendi please hold on for me" she says placing tendini's hand on top of hers and she placed a kiss on it.

She loved her very much and live for her.

They get to the hospital and they wheeled her in leaving her filling the admission form at the reception area.

Then she sits on the cold steel bench that is placed there for people to sit and look around.

She have been here countless times, visiting her mother and grandmother.

There is no place that is cold like here even her roundovel is much warmer than this place. And the blankets given to patients also are not warm.

She is even shivering from coldness and her pyjamas are not even warm her bare feet on bitter cold tiles. She rubs herself making her friction it will give her a little warmth as her whole body is covered with goose bums.

She sits there quietly praying for her sister to make it, the rest they will face it together.

****KHUMBUDZO****

Have you ever felt tired of living, that you just wanted break from everything and everyone around you. That how khumbudzo feels, everyone depends on him and have to make decisions for them as well. He have to take punishment for sins he didn't commit and rectify them but what about his own life. His own problems, we all do have them the difference is how we deal and handle them. Some walk carrying a bucket full of problems and letting everyone see and knows that things are bad their side while other are carrying tons of buckets filled with problems and never complain and that is khumbudzo. He takes everything like a man and move on. Not knowing that he is drowning with another people's baggage while his, is only a bucket half full problem. Rendini, his mother and Mbengi all of them expect so much of him yet he can't do much but he tries.

Okay, let's scratch mbengi. Mbengi

doesn't want anyone on his business and he also don't invites himself on other people's business but on the other side his mother. Yoh, that woman is problem and half she is handful. Can you believe that she have given him a month to get mbengi out of the house.

How do he do that, she even went to an extent of moving out until he get the spawn of Satan out of his father's house.

Rendani on the other side is busy fucking everything that wears a skirt and trousers it doesn't matter. As long as he fuck, and party his life away but he have never seen him drunk or smelling alcohol other than that day he caught him drinking from a water bottle. He said he is attracted to both gender, female and male and that alone makes his skin to cringe as the thought of him doing all dirty things with male yoh,hayi this is one of the thing that is above him and he can't seems to know how to do this.

The door flies open and mbengi walks in followed by Rendani. It's for the first time he have been here and that makes him wonder what is it that so important that can't wait for him to get back home.

"You will die young small" mbengi says sitting on the visitor chair and Rendani sits on the desk looking at the door.

"What a nice surprise"he say throwing a death stare to rendani who is taking out a bubblegum out and trow it in his mouth and the war being.

"How are the things here, I have had there are real improvements here at Mbedzi dairy" mbengi says sitting comfortably at the chair.

"That will be the thing of the past...he has cousins to take to school as the business is doing well" Rendani blunt out not realizing what he is saying. Khunbudzo have asked him countless times to never tell mbengi about this because it may cause a war he aren't willing to be a referee of it.

"Ooh...so the old folks are sly after all" he sat raising his one eyebrow and the toothpick o his mouth moves to the other side.

"Tell me about it and mmamunyai said he will give them money and guess what" Rendani continues to fill mbengi in, he have to know what is going on here.

"The reason why she moved out is because she wants Khumbu to get you out of her house. He is only given a month to do so and two three weeks have elapsed from those four weeks." Rendani say chewing on his gum not knowing what he is doing.

Khumbudzo was going to find a better way to handle this, not throw mbengi out like a black sheep he is, he was also going to make a deal with his mother and that deal will include her and mbengi staying under the same roof.

"Small..." mbengi says to khumbu who wipes his shinny forehead and takes off his jackets as he starts feeling hot.

He starts to clear his throat countless times avoiding eye contact and that is the answer enough but not with Mbengi, everything you have to tell him. Even though actions are so loud but at the end he will be like 'what is this?...is this true' even though it's out in open.

"Aaah, sorry...I thought...yoh me and my big mouth" he says throwing his dangling legs back and forth and chewing his gum mercilessly.

"Don't worry small, ndi madi matuku hayo" mbengi says.

"Its your father's house mbengi, mom can't..." khumbu didn't even finish his sentence as mbengi cuts him short.

"I have a house at Tshakhuma, Diambele" he says making khumbu to breath out relieved. One problem down.

"What are you doing here?" Khumbu ask running away from that topic.

"Was just checking on my little brothers and he says" looking around.

"You don't even have a whiskey here he says and khumbu chuckles

"I have to be sober here so no alcohol at work" he says.

"And the money, don't take money from the business to help them if you know the company doesn't have that money. Leave them to me. I will deal with them" mbengi says still looking around.

"We have to help family mbengi" khumbu says defending even though he doesn't like it one bit.

"Family...family, where were they when we sleep hungry and didn't have nice clothes to wear. Where were they, when dad almost died from heartattack after the company drown in debts and we were left with nothing where were they. They never attempt to take us in but we survived, mbengi helped dad rebuild this company and he helped us go to school while he drops out and hustle for is and now he is an enemy and they are family " Rendani says making them to keep quiet.

"That in the past now" khumbu says looking at mbengi feeling like he betrayed him, he should be the one running this company but no he is deemed unfit and that doesn't even bother him even a little.

"Don't...you will die young small. All I did was for you guys, I didn't want you to be uneducated like me and you don't owe me anything it was my decision and I would do it all again if I have to" mbengi sa**CHAPTER 06**

SHANDU

"Tendani" the voice calls out two times and its so faint. Maybe its because she is sleepy.

She raise my head from the bench and her feet feels freezy cold. They are ice cold.

"She is my sister" she says rubbing her eyes and Thendo makes his way in. Looking fresh and smelling nice.

"Hi" thendo says and she nod but head, her eyes shoot straight back to the doctor infront of her.

"Mmmh, I don't know how to say this but..." he says and I cut him short, he should just head straight to the point and not beat around the bush, whats the use. He better say it like it is.

"Straight to the point please" she says, shivering from coldness she will be a flu patient real soon. But this is the matter of live or death, catching cold is nothing...there is nothing a lemon and lemon leaves cannot do.

"Your sister has two stabbed wounds on her thighs, bruises on her stomach and a broken rib. Fractured noise and other than the swollen face she will be okay. " the doctor says, holding for a dear life on the file in his hands and the emotionless face.

"Ra...rape" she say, her throat even get dry and becomes hard to pronounces the word but it can't be avoided.

"I am sorry miss, we have given her the emergency pill so that it cleans her system"he says. But what about Aids...pregnancy she thought to herself.

"Everything will be alright don't worry, you can come and see her during visiting hours" the doctor says turning back.

"Wait" she say, she can't be heading back home and coming here again. She have to see her...her sister as in yesterday.

"Allow me to see her please doctor" she desperately say and the doctor shakes his head.

"You have to follow the visiting rules miss, I can't be bending them every now and then"he politely says and walks away. But there is nothing polite or should I say good in denying a person to see their sick relatives. Especially the sexually violented one, and be left to die on the street like a dog. She can't deny the fact that they orphans but that doesn't mean they amount to nothing.

Which brings her questions that no one can answer beside Tendani, herself. She sits down defeated

life teaches you to be strong and one have to whirled some fighting spirit but until when, if everything you try things go south.

Its not so long ago she was trying to better her life and her sister and now she have other prseing issues to focus on.

She didn't feel her tears running down her cheeks until Thendo takes her in his arms. She even forget about the company she have. Being in his arms brings some assurance that atleast she is not alone. And her tears is like they can feel it as her emotions take control over her and cry for her sister who never gets the chance to enjoy her virginity, who will never gets chance to experience what romantic first time will be like as the painful memory of yesternight will torment her mind and she pray she learns to live and move on with those scars.

She cried for her mother who choose to leave them her on this cruel and crazy world. And lastly for her grandmother whose kisses and warmth makes an avoidable sounds and the spot not filled in her heart feels emptier. She cried for quieting school, that was a huge sacrifice that she have to soldier on and remind herself hundred times a day why she have to be okay with everything.

They say when life throws you lemon be sure to catch them and make a juicy lemonade then enjoy. But they never said who much bitter the lemonade is, they made it sound sweet and they

forgets it made by lemons, so to her its all the same where you eat it as it is or you make the lemonade, but be sure breath.

Her going in and holding on motives is as long as she breath she have to move on. Life is on the move and what's the reason of seeing in moving by and complain of the dust thats blinds you from those who are moving.

"When will we know peace Thendo" she says crying holding on his gold t-shirt like her life depend on it. His chest is soaking wet from the flood of her tears.

"Let's take you home, to freshen up. We will come back by 11am so to catch the 12 0'clock visiting hour." Thendo says making her look at him and wipe her tears with his fingers.

"Okay" she says and he takes her hand and leads her out.

They get out of the hospital then to the road, to catch a taxi back home. They cross the road and lucky Tshakhuma taxis have filled the road and that makes it easy to catch a taxi to anywhere from Tshakhuma to sibasa anytime of the day.

They get inside the empty taxi, the driver is on his way to collect school kids those who attends at thohoyandou or sibasa, lwamondo and other long distances schools.

She sits with her head on shoulder. This is not the pleasant situation for him to enjoy being this close with a woman of his dreams but hey. This is the first time and he knows he wants many more days like this.

She is on her black jean and a white jersey plus flops. With a plastic bag that has two containers. One for porridge and the other of spinach. Thendo haven't even attempt to leave her sight since morning he didn't even go to work today.

They are 30 minutes early and are sitted on the lawn, waiting for visiting hours like the rest of people.

"Thank you" she says looking at him.

"For" he says with a smile that had his cheeks touch his eyelids and she smile back too. Who couldn't smile back when a pair on nicely packed white teeth are out on display like they are advertising Colgate.

"Being here with me, I appreciate it" she says as she smiles back.

"Anything for you babe" he says and takes her hand into hers. Then plant some kisses on them.

"Stop it" she gigles and he laughs.

"If it makes you happy and takes you out of miseries why not." He says still smiling and she laughs out loud making him to follow her.

They sit there while Thendo is being his crazy self and making her laugh out so loud and hard at times. Making the 30 minutes to fly so easy and now she is walking in women ward 09.

Her eyes lands on the woman who is thin to her skeleton. She looks all bones and her heart sink and feels sorry for her. She must be going through worse.

Her eyes searches around until they see her sister and strides to her with a smile on her face. A smile that hides thousand chest pains and closing in chest in pains.

"My angel" she says kissing her forehead.

"Hi"tendani says with her crachy voice.

"Are you hungry" she says placing her plastic on the drawer thing they place the patient things inside.

And she shakes her head.

"Thendo" she says acknowledging his presence.

"How are you little one" he says

"Beside pains,I am okay." She says then turn her gaze to shandu.

"What happened?" She asks and Shandu,don't have answers as well.

"I don't know but you were found on the road soaked in blood and...and" she gulped down the burning ball on her throat and looks at the otherside to gather her emotions together.

"Okay" she says.

And continue to have their conversation. Cheering her up and talking about anything and everything. But this needs family, and they have none because no one cares typical family members who makes heart felt speeches at their mother and grandmother's funeral promising them support and protection but before they sun set half of them were long gone and focusing on their family. While they left to suffer, and taking care of each other. Maybe she have to find another way to help her sister study at home without any disturbance.

****CHAPTER 07****

****SHANDU****

"How much are tomatoes sis" the lady says searching her bag.

"R10-00 mma" she says smiling that smile that never leave her face no matter what.

"Okay, can I have two plastics please" the lady says handing her twenty rand note.

"Bless you mma" she says and the lady proceeds with her journey.

Its have been two weeks since the predicament that have befell them. Tendani's situation makes her to never want to leave her sight but they have to eat and that means she must work and hard to build another room for her sister to have her own bedroom so she can study at home with no disturbance from her. Tendani is healing physically real quick but the internal scar you can see that they are bleeding none stop. That is the wound that will never heal and this time its unfortunate that the case have landed on the hands of social workers.

Its not like Shandu cannot take care of her sister, she can and she is above 18 so what is it that can stop her. Instead of them focusing on finding the perpetrators they are busy finding social workers. Will social workers help on the enormous rate of crime that is on a rapid growth and villagers fear for their lives.

If people are not mugged and stabbed then they are also raped both man and woman.

Its not so long ago when the boy in the community was raped and because of stigma that comes with being raped and how people didn't understand that him penetrating the woman even though if it was him, he was forced to do so and it is still rape. But in this case he was raped...penetrated in his butt. He couldn't live with it and takes an easy way out. And people talked, others try to understand why he did what he did others name call him as a coward but it is what it is. And shandu fear that Tendi might just do like that, she haven't said anything to anyone about that day and the police, she heard they visited her when she was here and she didn't ask her what she told the police.

Time flies real quick and she is the first person to pack her wares before five o'clock she couldn't wait to see her sister. Leaving her alone makes her to drag her feet in the morning and make her float on air by the time go home.

After some time she reach home and find Thendo sitting on the chair next to tendani helping her with math. It really feels nice to have someone to lean on no matter what Thendo have always been there for them even though he never hides his feelings for shandu and no matter how many times she rejected him he never seize to be there for them. Maybe she should give him a chance and they will be this small happy family. Thendo is an artisan by profession and he also uses his skills outside the company as his own person. He even have a contract with Mbedzi dairy as their maintenance guy when it comes to electricity things.

She stands there looking at them, and thank the heaven for him. Whenever he got time he comes by to check on tendani and helps her out. After sometime he raise his head and look at shandu.

"Ooh baby, your here. How was your day" he say standing up and going towards her. He is such a gentleman if I can say that. And she smile feeling shyly.

"Come here" he says wrapping his arms around her and she fits perfectly. He let go of me and look at me and I look at him then look done.

"Mmmh, romeo and juliet" tendani says smiling and clapping her hands.

"Now you are being stupid" I say breaking the hug and walks in. With a happy heart and cheerful smile.

"I will remind you of my craziness when I am your maid of honor" she says turn to her books. I take a sit on the bed because there are no more chairs and take off my pumps looking for flops under the table. Yes its towards winter and the weather have started to be cold but slippers are costly and rather save that money.

"How was your day babe" she asks looking at tendani.

"It was okay sis, I think I am ready to go to school now" tendani says

"But..." tendani cuts her short.

"These walls become depressing when I am all alone sis, please allow me" she says limping to her on the bed.

Shandu keeps quiet like she is thinking hard.

"Please sis, I don't want to give them satisfaction that they have break me please. I have to do this to show them that I am more than what they think and very strong for that matter" she says pleading with her hand on top of shandu's hand.

"I don't want you to rush yourself tendani, I am afraid" she confesses, she is afraid and that the first time she have ever said her feelings....she is afraid.

"Don't be sis" tendani says

"You know how cruel people are and I don't want you to feel suffocating at the same time" she says .

"I am already suffocating...here please let me go to school. If it's get too much I will take a break" tendani says.

"If only you agree to talk to someone" shandu says.

"Okay I will talk to you

I don't want to talk with strangers" tendandi says.

And shandu nods in agreement, what there to lose other than knowing and seeing the pain and the scars her sister have first hand. She won't be assuming how she feels like but knows and experience pain with more understanding maybe then she can find a way to heal with her.

****KHUMBUDZO****

The price we all pay for our family is great. Other have to turn a blind eye to the wrongs happening because they don't want to be labeled jealousy of other people's ideas and how they choose to live their lives. Other have to be loyal to people who aren't loyal to them, others have to go against what they believe in to make the family happy and keep it intact. And we all forget once the doors are closed and we all scatter all around the world we talk bad behind each others backs and pray for bad lucks to follow those cousins who seems like they have made it in life. And those who walk holding their status, what they have and have achieved in life comparing it to those who are still on their way there. That the same situation is faced by khumbudzo. He have tried to do that and still trying to do that even though mbengi and rendani are against it. But he have to do it for his family, provide for them and make it his problems even though his shoulders ain't wide enough but he have to do it. Mmamunyai will strangle him to death if he stands and look aside.

Helping family members who don't give a damn about them but the so called 'money' their brothers have left for family when he die.

He have been buried to work when his phone rings, its none other than his mother. She is coming back home today and he prays that his mother didn't find Rendani still with his crew. He isn't ready for any lecture right at the moment.

"Ma" he say answering the call

"Come home as in yesterday " mmamunyai says screaming at the phone.

He pack his laptop and files and speed home, only to find the group of friends sitting on the floor with Rendani looking down like a lost puppy.

"Whats going on ma...rendani" he says knowing exactly what's going on.

"Sit down" his mother says and he tempt to sit on the couch but he is told to sit on the floor.

"Join your crew boy...on the floor" she says pointing with her finger.

He sits his black ass down on the cold tile and he keeps quiet angry.

"So...you do your filthy and unholy things in my house. Tainting it with your evilness and makes it worse what mbengeni(mbengi in short) did." She says looking at khumbu. Its clear she have nothing to say to Rendani's companion and also Cristal clear that she is blaming khumbudzo in all this.

"Mma, but khumbudzo haven't done anything" rendani says in my defense but that fell on deaf's ears.

"Dont even try to deny it, he is dirty as you all. Tell me who sleeps with women and men all at the same time mani watter soort kak is dit nie"(what kind of shit is this). She says with smoke

coming out of her nostrils because of anger and with a serious face. She is ready to murder them all. But where does all this include khumbu.

"Ma, where does all this include me" he says.

"Your are an elder khumbu, you should take responsibility. I left you in charge and you choose to allow waarsin(madness) in my house. My home, and people are fucking each other here...here khumbudzo and you act like nothing is wrong" she screams poking khumbu with her finger and he flinched. As his tears build up, he is all strong but a baby in the inside. Who tried all his best to be on top of the situation. But what have he done that require him to be poked infront of kids. What are his mistakes. He is not the one who is sleeping with men and women all at the same time. Where does all this group sex have to do with him.

****CHAPTER 08****

****SHANDU****

She didn't know what she was signing herself up to. She wasn't emotionally ready but she have to wear the big sister pants and take the psychologist's post.

Tendani have to offload so that this situation doesn't hinder her from spreading her wings. That it doesn't make her shy away from love. Especially that comes from the opposite gender.

They are sitting around the around the table, Thendo have been long gone to give them freedom and easiness when Tendani offload to her sister.

Shandu is looking at her a she took a sip of her trigo tea with freshly squeezed lemon. While tendani keeps stirring her tea, she stirs it like she want it to turn cold. She is taking her time before she says what transpired that day and she swear to mark it on the calendar as it will forever be the reminder what happend that day. Only the grace was able to save her life from all that.

"Zwoluga and Lufuno choose to go home early" tendani says and exhale the oxygen that seems to tighten her chest. Shandu keeps quiet, listening attentively.

"They...then I was left all alone. They left around 20:00 saying they were tired and..."she says with the cup in between her plums. She have been doing like that and she never sip, all she do is to play with her tea or try to sip it but it never reach her lips.

"By 23:30 I was all alone at school, so I decided that it's time I retire and come back home. I put my earphones because I was alone and a bit afraid. I was walking fast with my heart galloping

like I was on a race..."she pause and wipe her tears shaking. And shandu looks at her feeling her pain, she looked at her with pained eyes that are burning with tears right behind them.

After sometime tendani gathers herself and wipe her tears and continues. She is doing this because she wants to go back to school, if it wasn't that she wasn't going to share with anyone what transpired that day as she feels disgusting. Her self esteem and confidence is no longer there. She tries so much to put together the scattered pieces of herself but tell me if you tier a paper in to small pieces and then takes a glue and trues to glue those pieces together does that paper remain the same...in same shape like before.

"Someone calls and ask me to wait so we can walk together, even though I had earphones on, they weren't loud and I could here everything that was going on in my surroundings. I keep quiet and keep walking, who asks for a person to wait so they can walk together right after 11 pm it was already the sacred time. I can tell that the guy was increasing his pace each and every step he takes so I increased mine as well and when we reaching the corner at the red spaza four guys walks towards me hovering the whole place because they scattered all over the road and the guy who asked Me to walk with him was no longer alone but with two more guys as well. My minds starts to tell me what is going to happen to me and I shiver because of what my mind was telling me while sweats fills my plans my heart keeps up a racing pace as it continues ready to beat out of my chest. I don't know if I stumble on my own leg but fall and that was game over." She is no longer crying but stirring her already cold cup of tea. Then the other guy touches my faces running his fingers up and done. I forcefully pushed his hand off me and he chuckles saying 'I enjoy them fierce. But he can tame the beast that makes them fierce by only few slaps and laying the pipe' and I tell him and his friends to go to hell and if they think they are going to hurt me they have the other thing coming" she chuckles thinking of that day, but not a happy chuckle but it was I am hurt, in pain and broken and what will you do kind of chuckle.

"The other squart and start to brush my thigh, I push him too with my leg sending him to the ground I guess he wasn't just skinny but also starving with no energy at all if not sick. And after that I regret pushing him as he coughed uncontrollably until he the coughs dies and that lands me kicks on my stomach

punches on my face and tummy and slaps. I cursed them when they were doing so, I prayed they never get happiness in their life. I prayed they get to be ran by a car and became a wheelchair bound or die. And I didn't even hide what I was praying for. I scream it all out and they never seems to care. One of them even called me by my name, but I could pin point his voice to anyone.

They beat me like an animal, even the animal association will never allow animals to be beaten like that my I fought them I tell myself I have to die fighting and where I find courage to fight I don't know. But I did try, I did have them few slaps but what was I going to do to eight guys. One of them managed to get in between my legs and he made a mistake on looking down

untying his in belt and I chew his ear and he scream in pain calling me a bitch I try fighting him and I feel something penetrating my skin, opening my thing into half and a cried out in pain. The beating, kicking pain was compared to nothing from that pain. I cried out loud and try to wiggle my way out of him as I was under him. I squirm and another stab come through and this times I was no longer screaming that loud and he tears something, I guess was a condom then forces him self in me. I felt something tear in me and I scream with no energy of pushing him out. I was tired and broken, my fighting spirit taken like that and the beast finally tamed like he promised. They take turns, with blood coming out my broken noise and my thighs I was becoming weaker and weaker by minute. I was no longer crying no scream but just lie there listening to their groans. That paper was only teared and used by the first guy when the rest takes turn just like that. I listen to their groans and their moans was the only thing I hear. I can nolonger feels the stones on the road. I feel my body becoming weak and my breath becoming slow." She says and stands up and stands by the window looking out. She is no longer in physical pain but scars run deep more than shandu I have ever imagine. Shandu breath out and look at the door feeling anger brewing from the pit of her stomach. This was alot to take in but...but...how can 8 man enjoy a 15 year old who isn't even willing to do what they want. For sure the world is turning into something else. She sees it no different from everyday cases of a man raping his 4 months niece. What the difference, they are all not willing but they do it anyway. Because they feel like they have control over us, it's no longer about what you wear and how you carry yourself but the men who needs to be castrated if they are failing to find women who are willing to give it freely. We are all not safe at all.

♡not edited♡

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****CHAPTER 09****

****SHANDU****

Her noise flares with frustration and anger, her eyes twitches as they burn from all the hot tank of waters that brews and fight so much to make their presence visible but not to shandu, she is a master in keeping her emotions intact and to never show them to anyone she aren't a weakling even Tendani have never seen her tears until that day of revelations...the results day and after that one tear that streamed down her cheek she have never seen another one. As for Thendo he is the only one who have witnessed the mighty break down and that day might never happen.

She sips at her lemon tea and it soothes her heart. While Tendani looks out the window, silence find a room in their little roundovel and they both makes peace dealing with their emotions separately.

After some minutes of silences shandu breaks it.

"When are you planning to go back" she asks hoping that maybe she will say next week but not Tendani, she is ready to show the world or should I say the community that she one strong being...having been made by steel and stones but we will all see how it goes.

"To...tomorrow" Shandu keeps quiet as draw circles with her finger on top of her cup "I will be safe, don't worry" tendani continue to assure her sister. Who have already made a promise and she intend to keep. Shandu just nod her head, after some time she stands up and walk her sister and hug her. Her hug says you're strong and I am proud of you. Don't forget that I love you. That kind of a hug.

****KHUMBUDZO****

Hurting is an understatement, he is crushed, miserable, angry, sad ,mad heart broken, confidence broken, esteem broken, all in all his broken. But he loves his mother, he loves his brothers both of them, he loves his cousins, he loves his aunts, he loves his uncles, he loves his grandparents and he loves everyone. But in all those in the list he loves his mother more, he see her as a hero, imbokoto, a caring and loving woman, whose laugh is so tiny is her high pitch squeaky voice and with a drama that won Grammy awards...but she is his mother and he lives her for that. But embarrassing him infront of the crowd, takes all awards from SAFA to the Grammy you name them.

How is he supposed to look at Rendani's friends after this, he has never find himself engaging on group sex or let alone been attracted to both gender that Rendani's life style. How he handle both is known to him. And now is is being embarrassed and punished of Rendani's sins, if having sex is a sin.

Today there is pastor Mulaudzi of the church his mother attends to and he is here to pray for them against the mbengi's demonic spirit, that mmamunyi for you what ever that have transpired between her and mbengi is only known to them and how it is going to be solved is a not known.

Khumbu is busy watching soccer and rendani in his bedroom for sure drinking the burning liquor that always fill his water/juice bottle. The pastor is going to have a lot of praying to do.

Mmamunyi is busy going all out in the kitchen baking and cooking seven colors to impress pastor Mulaudzi. She have already taken out the guests plates from one of her buckets because her plates, cups, glass, tapeworms, knives, spoons and forks are to many and wouldn't be placed all of them at the kitchen unit shelves so buckets do a better job I guess, that what all african mothers do anyway nothing new there.

The Satan's fork make its way to the kitchen taking some sliced tomatoes in the plate and mmamunyi screams her lungs out, making khumbu to turn down a volume a little. He is angry but his mother can't burn with oils whilst he is watching people running after a stupid ball like she says it. Then he heard his laughter and he knows it's going down tonight.

"Why is your mother cooking a storm in the kitchen" mbengi says throwing himself on the sofa, making mmamunyi to feel like beating him with the kitchen cloth on her hand.

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Everyone is sitted on their chairs around the table. Rendani is the only person who haven't come to the table. Plates and spoons making noise as they come to contact.

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CHAPTER 11

THENDO

Love taste sweet he knows that, but this love taster sweeter than honey. He have told so many women that count pass his fingers and toes all combined that he loved them, promised them to bring heaven to earth and lay the world just on their feets but this surpass all that, thi was love at first sight and requires no empty promises from his and talking like he is God.

He looks at her smiling and blushing and that moves something in him and replace it with ego. He have the woman of his dreams and his dream job what more can a guy asks for this just allows him to be egoistic and proud himself.

His blackberry sitting on those fluffy pillows looking all beautiful. He loved her no doubt about that and he prays God strengthen their love for each other, that she is the rib of his missing rib. He loves her no doubt and he see a mother of his children and warm home.

"You're late Thendo" his mother says badging in his room like defectives with search warrant. You have seen how those feels and looks so arrogant hold those search warrant especially if they have been trying to get you with no luck.

"Hayi mani Sindi, what if I was naked" he says looking at his mother. Who have just intrupt his moments of reflexes on yesterday moments. The stolen pictures, videos and all pictures and memories made. He can't seems to put his phone down even though he was called by few people he never attempts to answer them as he was busy looking at the love of his life.

"I have seen naked and wash you, so what there impressive that I will be interested in a naked boy" she says snatching his phone from his hands.

"Ma" he says, even though they are close but what if he was seeing some nude or porn videos. Its his private phone after all.

"What...I also want to see my daughter in law yoh...yoh..yoh o naka mazwale" she says shaking her body in excitement. Making thendo to laugh out loud.

"But what if I was seeing nudes and porn" he says and his mother face change to a frown one then continues to look at the pictures.

"And she is so shy yeses, so innocent yet so strong. And if you where watching nudes I could watch them with you and those porns of you young generations. But shandu doesn't seems as a porn or nudes girl musi" she says "Ooh you have internet for that, nowadays generation's with watch other people sextapes like they don't know what sex is like I guess you enjoy watching another man's privates parts more than yours. That is why you end up using those engagement pills because why would you like to enlarge for if you haven't seen another man's size" she says looking at their video with shoni murep'song nda muhumbula nne ndi a shenga shi sibe nne and she smiles seeing them both happy.

Love is so beauty she can testify to that, even though her inlaws never loved her so is her sister and the rest of her family members, actually she used to have no one in life until she met the love of his life Charles Namadzavho Mudau and that changed everything. He loved and stood by her until his last day and she will always remember his love for her, may his soul continue to rest in peace. And she made a vow not to hate his daughter in law for no reason and to raise her child to respect woman and never make fun or reap on another person's tears.

Thendo is her miracle child from endless miscarriages to a very complicated and high risk pregnancy, it was by hers and her husband's faith and belief in God that God decided to bless them with him and that is why she named him Thendo.

"How ma, we learn new styles there and you know a doggystyle mom, cow gir, girl on top" he says sticking out his tongue and his mother throw him his phone.

"Yoh...I don't want to know anything about who ma chicken styles, all I know is that your father was happy with what he was fed and very much satisfied"

"Yoh...masindi wee cut cut, I am still a baby joh, you want expose me to child phonograph" he says getting out of his bed.

"So you sleep dressed in jeans now" she says "and I was exposing you to no phonograph I was just stating the fact not your chicken stuff that made those young girls to have back pains at a younger age mani. Woman on top of who, for what, where am I supposed to learn those tsipatsipa styles." She says walking sitting down also laughing at her own statements. She is happy he is old and she figured she she let loose and talk about anything with him it not only a girl child that needs sex talk. Even boys they needs it and what happens when they have unprotected sex with a person who they don't their health status, the problem of having multiple partners and consequences of sleeping with a girl who have just had abortion and not yet cleansed. Even though at times he looks like he isn't interested nor listen but from the younger age she have been teaching him about sex education but what ever she says goes with what age he is in. She never wanted him to do things because of curiosity but because he knows what he getting himself into which made them to have a closer relationship and for him to share even not everything but most crucial things with his mother.

"Because I have been up since dawn and now I have to go" he says taking his backpack placing his working boots inside and worksuit.

"So when is she coming to cook for us" she say, she is ready to have a kitchen mate, it's been long using that kitchen on his own and having a 25 years old son means makoti is on her way.

"We started dating yesterday and you ready to take her away from me forget that my lady forget I still want to enjoy my time with my lady" he says taking his phone charge throwing it in his bag.

"But I am old and will be dying soon musu" she says and she knows this statement makes him do what she wants but that is not happening today.

"Your still so much fine mother, so is your life span is still 10 years old" he says and she life a life span of 10 years old when she will be reaching 60 next year.

He takes his phone, kisses her cheeks and forehead "bye, don't miss me too much my queen" he says and run out.

It's time he buy a car joh, he is super tired of being a pedestrian and he have been saving seen he started working on a permanent position last year.

****SHANDU****

I will just in front of a train for you
You know I will do anything for you'

Not sure if she is singing the lyrics correctly but they talk about doing anything for you and jumping in front of the train so yeah they have to be correct. She have heard tendani sing those things few times not, she is not any fan of any music but good music is a good music. From the blues, reggae to amapiano and from local artist to international ones she loves them all as long as they give her good music.

She don't mind listening to those olden struggle songs all day, we all know what that song do to all of us 'thula mtwanami' when you here it struggle songs are game I tell you. But let's forget about that but her, his blackberry.

She have been floating on the kitchen cooking sof porridge for breakfast. She is happy and it's visible, tendani have leaning on a door frame looking at her sister who doesn't even feel a presence of second person. After all they have been through she is happy that she found her happiness. Even though anything happen to her she will leave her happy. She so wanted to go and be with the rest of the family but she can't hurt her when she have just found happiness right. She smiles her tears away and do breathing exercises to clear up her voice.

"I will catch a gradenade for you baby" she sings with her beautiful voice. And makes shandu to smile wide.

"I told you that soon you will be all blushing and smiling because of him and what did you say" she say taking plates out. She have to be at school in 30 minutes...and can't skip breakfast when shandu have woke up early to water the plants, prepare hot water for her and now cook for her to go to school with full tummy.

"You said being a maid of honor baby girl not dating" she says

"Kani, you won't be marrying him. Don't you love him" tendani says helping her dish up while she sits on the chair.

"To tell you the truth I am afraid" she sigh. Thinking about her fears.

"Why are you so afraid my love" tendani asks handing her, her plate then turns to take a container of sugar and a lemon for shandu.

"What do I have to offer in this relationship, he works a well paying job and I head him taking about promotion. He looks good and " she says but tendi cuts her short.

"Breath my love" she says looking at her and smiles. She is just being insecure while she, herself have to deal with people who looks at her weirdly and her voices in her head calling her name. She have what she call little nice life problems.

"But tendani..." she says and she sigh again.

"But nothing, have you seen yourself. Or should I take you to the mirror so you ahve a good look at yourself. Even if you wear a sack or newspapers my love you will still look beautiful. Look at those curves and have you check that ass, yeses full package and not only appearance but you are beautiful inside out. Not everyone can make sacrifice that you did for me, stopping school to provide for me, making sure I get educated at your own expense. Making sure I sleep eating and have close to wear, paying my extra classes. You didn't it because of love you have for those close to you yes but it's strength and compation and for that I will always be indepted to you. You might not be working a professional job, but your my love are an entrepreneur, you see the gap in the market and make ways to exploit it...and for now you are able to provide for me...for us. Don't get intimidated by those with qualification and an empty head my love."tendani says

and her smiles Crack into a smile and that made her happy. At least she helped her sister with something today.

"Thank you Tendi, I needed that. And finish up before you get late" she says and tendi smiles.

"Yes mom, and keep floating in cloud nine and fill this house with love. Have a wonderful and productive day bye" tendani walks out running to school. If she take tortoise steps she will be late and no one likes getting 3 fat whips in winter.

Shandu cleans up the kitchen take her ware and go to the road to catch a taxi. With her heart happy after receiving a good morning text that made her smile and blush like she can see his tall, to much dark and buff up hunk of hers.

"What are you doing to me T-man" she mumbles to herself.

CHAPTER 12

SHANDU

Time flies struu, yesterday she was just falling in love and today she is deep in it. She smiles for no reason and blush by just hearing his name. Love is beautiful and she is happy that she gets the chance to rid and experience it with Thendo.

They have been sailing smoothly and she prays that nothing ever gets to them. She have even enrolled for a computer class in town and she is happy with her life and improvements.

Today they will be having dinner at Thendo's house, his mother came to her place earlier this morning for an invite and she couldn't even deny such gesture.

"Two teeth brush please"the customer says handing her R10.00 note.

"Green or yellow baba" she asks smiling.

"Kha sokou disa inwe na inwe mudulu"(any colour is okay my granddaughter) the customer says and she gives him the brush and walks away.

"Yoh, I think now it's high time we sex educate our sister, because mo'girl is in love" one of he colleagues say screaming from other side.

Shandu smiles hiding her face with her hands. Sex education, is she ready for sex or not but Thendo said no rush. What does no rush mean?. Doesn't it mean we will do the deeds in honeymoon. Maybe she doesn't understand what no rush means.

"Hayi, my man is a gentleman, he said no rush" she says throwing back. She have gotten used to them. Beside everything they are one big family and they talk about everything and they give each other serious advices. They don't lead each other astray.

"Oooh, we can see that, from the way he looks at you and hold your hand with care not wanting to crush your bones" the other one says and she smile thinking of him.

How last Sunday he helped her with laundry and carry it home for her. How he spin her while they hug after 4 hours of not seeing each other. How he looks at her like she is the most beautiful thing in this world. Love taste good my friends.

"So,vho-musoliwa, please come closer. We have to educate the child here" the other one adds.

"Why are you on my love life, while you are single. I have never heard you say you are in relationship" shandu says because she have been so wanting to talk to her about her sex life.

"Because we can ask vho-musoliwa to check if I am sealed like you my love, I know how to grab it and lick it until he loose few screws. " she says standing up like wanting to demonstrate what she is saying and shandu chokes on her saliva when laughing. But a bit embarrassed, they can't be talking about dicks, vaginas, licking while customers are passing by. But not this ladies. They will be like 'who don't know a dick, if you don't know then watch porn if you want to know one. Or come to us we will tell you how it's like. And how good it taste if you find a person who knows what he is doing not some ametures, who fails to make a woman cum' and they scream that loud and shandu will feel like hiding herself her table because wow, this is too much for her and her innocence.

"And as for Thendo

he isn't an amature he knows his business, her finger and lick it like it's the last day. He eats it like he haven't eaten anything in days and when it comes to laying it...yoh mo'guy can lay the pipe aarrh I can feel my clit dancing vosho and wanting daddy T-man's remedy" mulalo says, she is here to visit her friend who sells here and is also Thendo's ex. She is also Thendo's ex, but was it necessary to talk about that when Shandu is here.

Does she have to laugh when they are talking about her man like that, she don't mind them sharing jokes about her and all but her man...no mani. Now they are making him like a man whore musi. Mulola had no right to talk about how he does things nor his size. She is lucky she knows and have tasted it but now this...this is pure madness.

"Ooh sorry, I didn't mean to...you know. I was...yoh what have I done" mulalo says after she have realized uri Shandu is not happy with what she have just said.

That was an end to sex education before it even starts, she was no longer in the mood to entertain them and she starts playing game on her small button Nokia phone.

What happened today at work is still going on in her mind. But she keeps reminding herself that we all have a past and because they were lovers for sure they used to sleep together but why is it bothering her now.

She wears her knee length dangri black dress and a white long sleeve t-shirt inside then her white takkies. With a black coat on her hand for when she comes back if it's too cold.

She is waiting for tendani to finish up when thendo knocks and she gets out, because Tendani is still busy with herself.

"Look at my lady wow, you look beautiful give me a 360 spin" he says holding her hand and she spin laughing and blushing.

"My wife yoh! yoh! yoh!" he says and she smiles then he gave her a bone crushing hug and then kiss her forehead.

"Where is tendani, my mother will say it's me who made you late" he says still looking at her and love is evident from his eyes but he could also see that something is wrong.

"So are you going to tell me what is wrong or..." he says pecking her lips and she giggles like a school girl.

"Or what?" Challenge, she likes Challenge and always ready for one. That's her.

"Or, I will find a way to make you talk at my place" he says lowering his head to her booby and squeeze it making her smile a little but a nervous smile and she knows she is not up for that challenge.

"But you said no rush" she whispers

"And I can still say it again, no rush" he whispers on her ear and his voice vibrated to a clit and it dances with happiness.

"But..." she couldn't finish her sentence as she instantly feel hot. His presence makes her to feel things she never thought existed, being this close is like adding fuel to an already burn bright fire and with his lips on her ear, and hand cupping her booby that is a mess.

"You can't talk now wow" he says smirking and feeling proud.

"Mulalo...mulalo was at the market today" she says and sigh remembering about what she said.

"So..." he see nothing wrong with that. Is he dump or...how can he not see that everything is wrong a current and a past in the same room. It all ends in tears if not killing each other by looks.

"Do you love her" shandu asks, and then feels defeated where is all this coming from. Mulalo is his ex and shandu is his present and future according to him. So who do he love.past or present with future in it.

"You gotta be kidding me my love" he says and she chuckles. The I don't care shandu making her way out to play and that answer sends different answer than he intend to.

"Tendani...tendani, then do is here and we are late, we will leave you behind " she calls out her sister leaving the conversations as it is. She untangle herself from him and walks back to the house.

Tendani comes out before she even reach the lock with shandu's coat and handbag and then lock. She can see that things are tense but she is just a kid what does she know.

They reach Thendo's place, with them not talking and he tried to start a conversation only tendani interact with him and that was a sign that he wasn't supposed to sound like defending Mulalo.

His mother was happy to have them here as she have gone all out for them. She loves visitors even though she hardly have one visitor a year but once you come to her place she goes all out to make you happy and welcomed.

Thendo excused himself as he goes to take a quick shower and shandu and tendani helps his mother out.

In 30minutes they are done and enjoying their food. She could see that something happened and she doesn't know whether to ask or not but both are her kids so she asks.

"Is everything okay?...between you too, I can see how much you try to avoid each other but busy stealing glances to each other" Thendo's mother says.

"Yes...No" shandu and Thendo says at the same time.

"So what is wrong then do?" He is the one who said no, so she asks and shandu focus on the food in her plate.

"She is mad because she saw my ex" he says

"I am not mad but disappointed that you are with me while you love your ex" she mumbles while pushing her plate away she is done eating.

"I didn't say I love her" he defended.

"Lols but fails to say whether you still want her or not. You love her and just playing dump with me." She throw back and he looks at her in disbelief.

"If I love her why would I be with you...all the time you were playing hid and seek but I didn't give up. And now you say I love her...her who it's between 6 months without talking and I even blocked and delete her number for us to have a wonderful relationship and you accuse me of loving her" he says

"You did that all because you want to not because you love her any less " she says. "Mma thank you for dinner but I think I should get going" she says then looks at tendani who is busy staffing herself with rice even though she is already full but she have to keep herself occupied.

"Tendani let's go" she says and stands up and tendani reluctantly stands and follow her sister.

****CHAPTER 13****

****KHUMBUDZO****

He is back home and he have been looking for houses but around thohoyandou, even though they will be living in the same area with his mother but it's better than staying with her.

It's time he grows and spread his wings, bring girls and guys over for drinks without a ping of guilt anywhere near him.

He is ready to have Indian nebourbours and maybe, just crossing his fingers and holding his thumb and hope for the best that he sees kuju,abudul or marinas daughter and date her, that will score him a plate full of paprika, jalapeños and Indian curries, but right now he has to inform the dramatic queen of his plans.

He is busy sipping kn his coffee mindlessly and gathering his nerves together when she makings her way in the kitchen busy looking like ready to go enjoy the married housewives people, and she didn't greet when she gets into the kitchen.

They haven't been in talking terms ever since the incident. And that motivates hi. More to move out.

"Morning Ma" he says as he continues to sip his coffee.

"Ooh and he got his voice back after a year of being mute maybe I should throw a party" she says clapping her hands shaking her head this is news to her.

"Don't be dramatic ma, I had always had my voice" he says and she exclaims from his statement.

"Yoh Yeso, and he insults me just like that yoh" she says and he shakes his head,this proves to be more harder than he thought.

"I am moving out" he blurt it out and she stands there with her eyes popping out. And then she starts laughing, this maybe to her it's the best joke she have ever head but she then sees how serious he is.

"To where, and who will live with and who whispers that to your ears,is this mbengi's doings. Why are you moving" she says bombard him with questions.

"I have been trying to decide between two houses and are around block G." He says

"Not only are you moving out of home but far from home" she says.

But in an honest sense how far is block g to block f...only Mmamunyai can calculate the speed, distance and time it will take to get there but that not the point.

She takes her phone and dials mbengi's number, she might not even speak to him or see eye to eye but she is a mother and his mother to be more exact so she still have the toe of Satan's number just incase she finds herself in Satan's presence then she can call her son for help from his master.

It rings, and rings and rings then it stops and she tries again.

Then he answer the call.

"And now" mbendi says at the other side as soon as he answers the call. He too have his mother's number saved as the queen but that doesn't change how he loves putting her sugar level sky rocketing at all times.

"Is that how you answer your phone, do you know I am the one who pushed the big head filled with waters to this world and you know what that mean" she say standing like a statue in the kitchen

khumbu is curious who she is calling but hearing the convo he knows.

" I don't know what it means, so how can I help you. Or you want to be Satan's left handy man" he says and that makes her even agitated.

"So you are the one who have been telling khumbumbo to move out heh" she says and mbengi laughs out loud.

"I guess, small is growing up and ready to live his life not hiding behind your skirt" he says mindlessly and that set her to another level of hotness.

"How dare you...leave my son out of what ever satanic demons you have" she says screaming her already high pitch voice and now uts like she is talking using her livers and all other stomach crews.

"He is your son after all son after all and we all take after you. The Satan herself who hides behind the Bible. If there is nothing more to say then I guess it's good bye."he hangs his phone before they even resolve the issue and she chuckles in disbelief and look and khumbu who at this rate is ready to move out.

"Maybe I should visit mamasindi for a time being" he says

"And work" she says

"From tshakhuma to sibasa, I can handle that very well thank you" he says and stands up to walk to his room.

"You wouldn't dare, what do you want from that woman"

"I would like to sit with my cousin and get to know him. And her as well" he stands and walk to his room.

Thendo's mother and mmamunyai are sisters...blood sisters but hate over came love and now they are strangers, what went wrong between those two is only know to them.

Because all that the kids know beside mbengi he knows everything that why his mother and him are always fighting. Respect was lost somewhere in the journey and not they are enemies.

But as for rendani,khumbudzo none of them knows what went wrong. Only family elders knows what happened that day.

They had what looked like a family meeting/gathering and they starts to throw insults to each other and from that day she walks away and never look back and her names runs out of family members lips.

And now he is ready to go and visit an aunt he last saw when he was about 10 years old.

****SHANDU****

She sings and dances here and there, today she has decided not to go to market as she don't have any stock. She will have to walk around asking asking buy bananas as hers ain't ripped yet and get boys to get avocados for her. But before that he have to walk around selling her veggies, she knows she have regular customers who buys everything from her from thanga(I don't know it in English, is also a vegetable) to cabbages, spinach and akara seeds.

Her phone beeps and she takes it out and a smile flashes on her face and she blushes at the same time , it's it's message from Thendo, telling her to have a wonderful day and declaring his love for her. Which he recently never gets tired to say. He loves her and everyone who cares to listen knows he loves her.

She smiles and place the phone near her chest as he hold it closely like the message with moves to her heart like that. After the moment of blushing and smiling for no reason at all, she then place her phone back at the back pocket of her jean and starts to push her wheelbarrow screaming what she is selling and at times getting inside the houses telling them about what she is selling.

Thendo and her, have sort out their misunderstanding and she got to learn that she can't be angry by things of the past. It happnesf in the past and now he is with her and she should be angry if he hurt her when they are together.

She unders that he got a past and lucky for him, she don't have any and unlucky for her, she got to deal with Thendo's bitter exes and ready to ruin their relationship but they don't know that they are now strong than that first fight .

She even apologized to mamudau for they way she left and she understands and now they are best of friends.

When she failed her matric she thought life coming to an end but because she got responsibilities to raise her younger sister she toughen up and race on like an adult and today, she got a happy sister, a boyfriend who loves her so much and a mother in law who us ready to fight all her battles with her.

Life truly does work in mysterious ways and not she can proudly attest to that God truly gives up battle he know we can fight and mountains he know we can climb, rivers he knows we can cross no matter how wide it is. And from everything her life has been sailing smoothly and she is more than happy with that.

Even her computer course it's going okay and in 3 month time she will be holding her computer certificate. What more can she ask for other than this.

CHAPTER 14

SHANDU

Sitting there looking at them, with her eyes full of disbelief. She needs someone to tell her that she is hallucinating, things can't be this bad. Her eyes are deceiving her and she needs an explanation to understand.

"What were we expecting when the older one quite" one of the teachers says folding her arms. She never loved them, her or Tendani and she is also an award winning gossip. She looks at the report once again, then the principal and she looks at Tendani with her head bowed in shame, she should be ashamed isn't so...but what went wrong, that question keeps ringing in her head.

She knew that this meeting was out of ordinary when she received a call from Mr Malinga, the principal of her former school, where Tendani attends, so she woke up and nicely packed her wares for when she comes back she doesn't want to lose more time. This wasn't what she expected, a total fail from Tendani, last year she was a number one in the whole school and today she got a total fail...but at least that can be improved in the next report.

"Shandu, I called you here, because we all care about her performance and we are still in disbelief about this..." Mr Malinga says and Shandu nods.

"I understand and appreciate your concern sir, I will try by all means to get to the root of all this" she says, she is supposed to be angry for all her hard earned money that has gone to waste but she knows that this is not what it seems.

"After the..." he clears his throat and tries to show by hands and his head "...the you know" he then clears his throat again. "I think she should find counselling" he says and Shandu nods again.

"I don't need counselling" Tendani says whipping her tears. One of the teachers exclaims and claps once, she didn't expect that. After all the order and a person refuses counselling.

"What do you need" Shandu asks calmly.

"I want fair chance" she says and everyone looks at her. 'fair chance...fair chance' in this world forget. But they wait for her to explain her fair chance.

"What do you mean" Mr Malinga the principal asks.

"To be treated equally with others" she says.

"Are they treating you differently?" Shandu asks.

"Yes...no...everyone treats me differently, even you. You keep walking on eggshells and afraid to crash me at any moment. You are all waiting for me to explode. You all talk bad behind my back if not making examples about me...you say my situation because you are afraid to say that I am a rape victim. That I was stabbed and beaten badly for nothing by someone I know...by your kids...my brothers. And...and..." she breaks down and cries, she lets out a sob she has been trying

so hard to keep it inside. She wants breakthrough...she wants freedom and her heart mourns for peace but how is that possible for a 'person like her'. Shandu takes her to her arms and she wiggles and squirm her way out of her embrace. She pulls out the chair and run out. Shandu tries to stand up up ran after her but Mr Malinga says she should let her be...give her a space.

After some few minutes of silences she talks.

"I will talk to her...thanks for this" shandu says and walk out of the office with a heavy heart.

She made a callback to her man on her way home, she wants to offload the load that have been placed on her shoulders. But he doesn't send an sms nor call her back. So she strolles her way home and doesn't have anymore strength to go to the market. She gets home and take care of her garden then goes to the river to wash their clothes then come back and prepare food.

After preparing, she bath and it is already 6 Ockock, tendini is not yet back. She is worried and afraid at the same time. She tried sending a callback to thendo but he doesn't call her back. She is anxious and busy biting her nails. She switched the radio on just to try to keep her company.

But it ain't helping the scenarios that keeps playing in her head. Like how she found her that fateful night...that night where she have to run with no shoes and in her shot pjams. And prays that she is okay. She stands and pace up and down then feel like the radio is making noise then switch it off. She stands and look outside the window but nothing is happening. She glance a the watch on the wall and it's already nine Oclock. She is worried sick and couldn't eat anything.

She feels the urge to cry and let it all out, she cries like she haven't been hurt before. She cries for her fears to not come true, she cries for her sister to walk in through the door and work together to try and find how to heal her. But not happening.

She fell asleep, then wake up when hearing commotion outside.

She stands up and and try to look for something to protect herself she finds the broom. Before she even reach the door and the door open and she stands in a position ready to act all Jackie China on who ever wanting to harm her, her karate is on emergency mode so is her Kung fu.

Thendo walk in pulling tendani who looks drunk and still have a half bottle of Castel black label beer on her hand. She stands in awe and feel her anger rising up.

Thendo could see that shandu was boiling and he remember last time he bought tendini things at the spaza shop and shandu beats her for that. He could see that she is ready to jump and feast on her.

"Baby...my love calm down" thendo says, he is bit drunk himself but not like tendani.

"Am calm...too calm" she says dropping the broom and her hands forming fists.

Thendo have been quiet the whole day and now he brings back the one person... who don't want to be here, who doesn't want to be brought back home.

Tendani sits down on the floor and look at her sister and chuckles shaking her head.

"Munwe khoyu"(here is the other one) she says shaking her head "she is uptight and like to act like my mother...my mother.mxm, those shoes are too big for her, little size." She says and gulped down her beer. "You know what thendo

I hate her...I hate her with passion but at the same time I love her and feel sorry for her. She have placed her life and happiness on other people. Even me...I dispoint at some point. She does everything for me and forgets herself."

Shandu feels her world shaking and attempt to control herself. Her nose flares in anger and her hands inch to just slap or grab that neck of hers.

She takes two calculated and measured steps and Tendani receive two slaps before Thendo could manage to hold her back.

"Don't talk nonsense about me. You don't know what I go through to give you the life you are living" Shandu screams at Tendani.

"Ooh please, who asked you. You will always be that girl who better other people's lives do you think Thendo will stay with a magogo for ever forget and starts buying yourself some lingers, you are selling vegetables like other illiterate people like you." Tendani screams back.

"So...you think you are better than me...huh, you are better than me and literate for that matter" she screams back.

"I know I am, I am way better than you." She clicks her tongue and walks to the wardrobe and take out a plastic of Shandu's undergarments and throws them on the bed and floor they are not really on bad condition but they have few loose elastic bands.

Shandu tries to jump on her but Thendo holds her back then pulls her out of the room. She so much wants to fight him, she angry at him too but she is also ashamed for what her sister just did.

He also like Tendani...avoiding her all day and just show up with no apology.

****KHUMBUDZO****

He packed everything that he think he might need for the time he is going to spend with his aunt and her family. After that he stands and double check if he left anything important. He doesn't want to come back here before his house is finalized and on his name.

Rendani makes his way in and throw himself on the bed.

"And now where are you going" Rendani asks and Khumbu heave a sigh.

"Visiting aunty" he says then look at his bag once again.

"Yoh...its been a minute" he says and Khumbu nod.

They haven't really talked about what have occurred in the past weeks and Rendani wants to talk about it, but he doesn't know how to start that kind of conversation. It's might be sensitive to Khumbu.

"Ummmh..." he clears his throat and sit up straight "ummmh...I am sorry" he says looking at his fingers. And that sends Khumbu to wondering land. Rendi, being sorry, that's first.

"Are you okay?" Khumbu asks, surprised.

"Mxm, don't fuck with me, you won't keep up." Rendi says with smirk.

"Who knows, I might just fuck that madness out of your small brains" he says throwing a punch back.

"With what...do you even know the difference between making love and fucking, remember we use the same route" Khumbudzo laughs, he is not used to talk like this with anyone. Not that he haven't done the deeds he have couple of times, but doesn't discuss it with anyone.

"I will throw you out of my room" Khumbu says and Rendani laughs out loud. Until his tummy hurts because of laughing. They haven't start to talk in deep like how they...you know do it as a group but hey that the story of the other day.

"I want to say sorry for what mom did to you because of my mess. I will try to stop getting you in trouble and do my things outside of this fence." He says genuinely, but he forgets that even though he do it outside and his mother find out, she will still blame khumbu for that.

"Its okay rendi, don't beat yourself up for that. We both know how she is like" khumbu Says and rendani nods, that was easy and simple.

"How about I go with you. Let me mingle with tshakhuma chicks" he stands up and runs out. Khumbu haven't even make a comment on that nor agree but already he have already invited himself.

After an hour they are driving out, mmamunyai is busy walk back and forth in her kitchen. They did bid their goodbyes but she was too angry to answer that and in all this she blame Mbengi, her family was okay just before he shows his satanic and demonic face at her place and things starts to go south.

They reach Tshakuma spar and buy few foods and drinks then drive to Thendo's place. They didn't know where they stay around tshakhuma and that means asking around for directions until they make it.

To a Grey painted house mixed with a bit of cream white here and there and beautiful lawn.

Rendani gets out and open the gate as khumbu drives in, the house isn't too small nor too big but it's enough considering the people who stays here.

Thendo's mother looks outside from the kitchen window not recognizing the car, she knows thendo said he wants to but a car but not this one, he have showed her what model he wants and this one looks bigger than costly compared to her son's pocket.

Khumbu gets out and she almost screams in excitement, he is all grown but she still knows him, her sister's child khumbu. She closes her pots and and runs to the front, she opens the door before he knocks and she can see fear in his face with Rendani behind khumbu.

Before he opens his mouth she hugs him and kiss his cheeks. Then move to rendani and do the same, she leads them inside the house to the lounge.

Then they sit down and exchange greetings. She is happy to have them here and that so visible no pretense.

And that makes rendani and khumbudzo to be at easy. And feel welcomed and the warmth in this place is unmissable.

CHAPTER 15

KHUMBUDZO

He hasn't sleep like a baby in such a long time and yester night was just what he need. He is a morning person so he is already up and ready to start the day, yesterday he didn't see his cousin because he come home late, he is hoping to see him today and catch up, maybe he will find what he does in weekends interesting and joins him.

He walk out of his given bed room to the kitchen, it just few minutes after 7 and what he needs now is just a cup of hot chocolate. The smell of bacon calls him from the passage to the kitchen

and laughs shaking his head, why would his aunty wake up so early to make breakfast for three grown ass men, but he wasn't ready for what he finds the kitchen.

A dark skinned lady, who looks not really young but should be at school, maybe it's his aunt's younger daughter but he would have known, the girl looks so fine and he couldn't take his eyes off her. He clears his throat and she turns to look at him. And she flashes the brightest smiles of them all, and if this was a Colgate challenge she would have won.

"Ooh hi" Shandu says still smiling.

Her facial features are welcoming and her sweet hoarse warm voice makes him wonder if she was crying the whole night. But his brain betrays him.

"I wonder what would make an angel like you to cry the whole night" he say, and he realises what he is saying as those words flows out of his mouth but he can't take them back.

"Mmmh...you don't know me that much to know if I was or was not crying the whole night and how did you get in?" she asks.

His aunt makes her way before he could answer that and immediately when she see the girl her face beam with so much excitement.

"Ooh baby I didn't know you were coming over" she says side hugging her and she smiles looking down.

"It was a last minute thing ma, I didn't know I will be sleeping over" she says.

"Khumbu come here...this is Thendo's girlfriend, my baby this is my nephew, would you like some tea" she says to khumbu.

"Hot chocolate ma, if you have it" he says, wondering where would Thendo get this girl from, but it's not his business. Was it wrong him for to wonder who she is? Maybe seeing himself is pursuing something with her, if she was not his cousin of course but now it's none factor...just nothing at all just his cousin's wife.

Thendo makes his way to the kitchen with the many people in the kitchen, he greeted his cousins, and it's been long without seeing each other so is their relationship. Even though they do follow each other on Facebook and instagram, they haven't meet and it's been a minute.

During breakfast Rendani could see that his brother is smitten about this girl and he just pray that he doesn't do anything about it...he have seen how he looks at her and at times he will find him looking at her smiling to himself. After breakfast Shandu bid goodbyes her Thendo goes with his woman saying he would be back late he is going to polokwane with his lady of course and Thendo's mother is just a happy woman. Her son is going to buy a car, his son is dating most respectful and goal driven girl, her sister sons are here to visit after a decade so she is allowed to even throw a party for any matter.

He is now sitting in his bedroom going through something on his laptop when Rendani walks in without knocking. He has lost all hope in him knowing what the purpose of door is.

"How can I help you" he says still looking at his laptop.

"Don't do it" Rendani says throwing himself on the bed.

"Do what?"

"we are not here to cause any problems khumbu, please don't even think of it, he is your cousin's girlfriend so no, no, no" Rendani says and that makes khumbu to wonder is it so visible for people to see that he is taken by her.

"Was it that obvious" he says, he can't deny that he finds her interesting but who said its love.

But now he is failing to say he doesn't love her. Mxm, hope it makes sense. Rendani nods.

“She looks young and stubborn too” he smiles reliving the earlier moment with her in the kitchen. How he felt, and how his mind function connected to his heart.

“Stubborn, mmmh...and it should end there” who would have thought that one day Rendani would be giving advises to khumbu

tables do turns struu.

****THENDO****

Guilt eats us up until we become empty vessels its true. He is starting to become a true example of that. Just only one kiss...just one, not meaningless but maybe meaningless, but what he do know is that the kiss woke up so much feeling.

He didn't meant to kiss her but it happened and so fast, he was waking then asked to be given a screw driver, one moment their hand lock then eyes and before they know it their hands are over each other body while his finger rubs Mulalo's pussy outside her work overalls. They were both breathing heavily when he realises that he is not supposed to do this, break the kiss say sorry then focus on his work even though it wasn't easy...the awkwardness and the fact that they both have unresolved issues makes things more awkward adding the kiss plus his guilt.

Shandu's call backs makes it worse so he though the better way to say sorry it to take her to polokwane with him, he will no longer be surprising her with the car but also asking her to help him in deciding between the grey or red colour of his first car. After work he goes to the local tavern, the spot the one person he never thought he will see here. There were boys touching her inappropriately but she never seems to care. She looks crush and tired so alcohol was her only solution, she looks like she is tired of running from her demons so he chooses to keep an eye on her so that he can take her home.

It was just few minutes after 1 am, when the people she was with were trying to get her out of here but he knows better and he knows that this will be a gang sex and without her consent so he choose to take her home. At their way home she was blubbing nonsense. Talking about how she thinks thendo is not good for her sister after sometime she starts saying about how much she wishes to end her life and go and be with her mother and grandmother. And how much she wishes she knew her father.

When they get there he knows he isn't ready to explain to Shandu what happened but he also couldn't leave at the gate, so he has to get in and face his girlfriend. Then they had a fall out, start fighting and the sprits were very high so he thought it will be great taking Shandu with him before they kill each other.

Now they are in the taxi, going to polokwane and not more than five words have been said to him ever since last night. He takes her hand not caring that they are in the public transport and hold it tight then plant a kiss on her hand. And they continue with their ride silently, with people giving him weird stares but they can all go to hell if they have a problem with him.

“Hold her tight bra; don't ever let her go...it's rare these days to find love these. Young couples in love and not afraid to show it wow.” the guy says and the whole taxi starts to comment on their beautiful blossoming relationship. Making Shandu a bit shy and a blushing mess, Thendo stole a kiss on her cheek and that could have turn her a tomato if she was of a lighter shade, she

must just thank her ancestors for letting her be of extra dark shade and now she can just blushes without turning red.

They get to where they should get off then then they head to the garage where they will be collecting their car. They got to the reception and they were taken to where the cars are showcased and his colours where there, Shandu was busy looking around with her eyes on some black land rover but that need people with deep pockets. Not like he can't afford it in instalments but he doesn't want to work for one car for the rest of his life.

"Baby, what colour do you think fit us best" thendo says taking Shandu off her own train of thoughts.

"Mmmh, any colour..."she says and thendo looks at her defected, he understands he got a lots of explaining to do but not a cold shoulder for the rest, of his day, he planned for this day to be wonderful and making memories. He looks at her and she smiles.

"I like the grey one" she says and he smiles.

"The grey one mam" he says to the lady with them and they he tests drive it. After that they head to the office and all the paper work was done. They gave him a bottle of wine and balloons and take pictures then drive out in excitement.

"So you are going the polo drivers club" Shandu says, she have loosen up a bit, but who but wouldn't when their better half have just bought a car. She takes Thendo's phone and starts to take videos of thendo driving, the outside, taking endless pictures and he takes her to mike's kitchen for late lunch.

The atmosphere was good, he then post few statuses in Facebook story, posts, and Whatsapp statuses and even change his profile picture to the one with Shandu next to the car.

"I love you, Shandu" smiling proudly.

"I love you too my love" she says and his face beam with joy.

Its love he feels fir her and lust to everything that have a vagina.

****CHAPTER 16****

****SHANDU****

"Are we okay..."she deletes the message then type another one

"my love, what is going on..." she clicks her tongue and rubs her face in frustration then delete it again then hold the phone close to her heart as tears prickles down burning her cheeks.

Her first shot at love... her first shot at love, makes her hate falling in love. It was great when she was just a girl, a girl focused in her own life and her sister's life then she allows love to calls her name from afar and the only wrong thing she did was to answer that call...the call of love.

She won't lie, those first three months of being relationship made her fall head over heels in love with thendo. As the results at times she felt like she can't have a life without him that he is the only sensible thing in this world and no one understands her better than him.

He was there through all the squabbles with her sister, he even asked Khumbu to give her a job and Mbedzi dairy as a receptionist, the fact that she has computer certificate worked on her favour plus the relative card as well. He was there bring and picking her to and from work. And people admire their love but where is he today.

It has been three weeks with all this change, she saw the first red flag which were lies and excuses after another excuse but she thought maybe she is reading too much into this. In those three weeks they have only talked less than three times having a meaningful conversation if not fighting. They haven't seen each other much.

If he is not going to vacations with his friends he have things to do, that she have already rate them as more important than her.

"Are you okay" the voice takes her out of the pool of thoughts, she smiles and nods.

"how can I help you sir" she flash a Colgate smile and politely asks looking at this guy whose locks looks like it's been long ever since they have found themselves in the hands of hairstylist but he aren't that bad.

"I know my way around here madam, so dinner tonight" the guy says and she frowns a little.

"I take that as a yes" the guy says and continues to go to where he was going, leaving her still frowning.

After sometime she gets herself together and then continues with her work, as much as she loves to work at the market but here there is a guaranteed better life and fixed income which come with medical benefits. And a bursary for her sister for next year if she wants to study anything on agricultural industry especially animal science.

Her relationship with tendani have improved a lot even though she still refuses to go cancelling but at least she is trying even the teachers are no longer complaining about her performance.

After work, she runs out of the building hoping for that guy to not get to her before she gets into a taxi back home. And its like her God heard her as she breath out closing the taxi door and the message come through.

"You won't run forever mama, one day I will catch you and you might have to start from breakfast to dinner and maybe a sleep over" the message from the unknown number says and she believes it's the rasta guy. But atleast today she manages to run away

****THENDO****

"Oooh fuck...yes...ye...yes love...yes yes" he keeps screaming as he feels himself wondering at his wonderland. Mulalo keeps bouncing up and down, there's she rides his D. What he is feeling is out of this world and its been a long time since he had some...so yeah,it's reliving those tantalizing feeling.

Yoh! Muthu u a fa nga dora fhedzi a tshidzula tsini na tshisima(you can die because of blue ball when you have woman), shandu is busy play black mapatile or its grapes who knows but she is playing hide and seek with her cookie.

Mulalo screams as her body tense up and her cookie grips tight his D as she reach her finishing line. Then he quickly turns her underneath him as he takes control chaising for his own finish end. After three deep strokes he realise all his seeds inside her farm land as he tries to catch his breath.

"That was good" he says lying beside her.

"Too good" mulalo replay and Thendo's phone rings he takes it then he sees it Shandu he set it to flight mode.

After some few moments of silences mulalo breaks the silence, no matter how much she loves Thendo it hurts her that he loves someone else but what calms her is that she is the one who quench his thirst.

"Thendo..." she says and he looks at her brushing her stomach to her breast.

"Mmmh" he says nibbling on her neck and it makes her feel good. Thendo know what he is doing and he gives it to her good. His foreplay is game and she cums before the real thing ravages her cookie.

"Do you love her" she says after some few breath in and breath our session, this right here feels good and at home.

"Yes, I love you and you Nana here" he says as he starts to rub her cookies with his index finger, and it gets swallowed by her fat cookie lips and she finds herself opening her legs a bit more.

"...mmmhh...but" she says and Thendo stops rubbing and nibbling her neck and talks with his deep sexy bedroom voice. Sending a sensation down her spine.

"Let's not think about her, this is about us not her...OK" he says and mulalo keeps quiet for sometime .

"But what about how I feel about you, I love you Thendo" she says laying her cards on the table.

"I love you too but I love her more" he says and she feels her heart break.

She have been heart broken before but no one has had a chance to break her again and again like Thendo.

Its like she breaks her heart then she go and mend it then come back for more heart breaks.

"So...so what...what are we doing here." She says.

"Do you want to be here?"he lays taking his hand off her and lay on his back. She didn't answer.

"If you dont want to be here you should have told me

I have booked this room for the whole night just for us to make love to each other not the nonsense you are blurring out of your mouth. You think I dint know that about shandu, I am here with you because I want to be with you not her and you are busy with 'do you love her...do you live her shit here mxm' " he says getting worked up.

She keeps quiet then wipes her tears and had to remind herself that this here was her man first and she shouldn't let some girl come out of nowhere to come and take him away from her.

"Mxm...I should get going, I paid to sleep here for a pussy not some girlfriend mood yeses" he says getting out of the bed and mulalo stands up to and go to him picking up his boxers ready to wear.

"I am sorry babe, I will never talk about her ever again please don't go" she says lowering her hands inside his boxers and grip his rod with her hands busy placing wet kisses on his spine and he takes a deep breath as he feels his blood starts racing making his feel hot.

NARRATED

"Please...please let me go, I won't saying anything to anyone please please" she keeps pleading but they continue to kick her then she feels a sharp object penetrating her thigh opening it and she screams in agony.

"Tendani...tendani " she feels someone shaking her and shoot her eyes open and look around. She starts vibrating in fear and cry.

"Shhh it's okay...its okay" shandu says rocking her back and forth.

"It hurts...they wanted to kill me...they wanted to kill me " she says in between her sobs and shandu's heart breaks. This here hurts than being ignored by someone's son.

"It was just a dream my love, only a dream" she says and she keeps sobbing until she falls asleep.

Then she goes to sleep as well.

Today it's Sunday bright and beautiful Sunday, and she feels like going to church. She have taken out her black dress and gold heels. She have already bathed what's left is to wear her clothes. Then she looks at them then the two pictures of the most beautiful women she have ever layed her eyes on and she smiles. She needed this moment by herself. Shandu is not yet at home, she have went to community meeting and when she comes back she better find her ready but now she wants to offload to this ladies.

She runs her finger on the photo and chuckles then gulps down the ball that have found a home in her throat, as she fight back her tears.

"Mama...gugu(grandma)...I know you are resting in peace and how I am about to do things right now it's not the way." She chuckles wiping her tears "if I knew how to brow Mahafhe(african beer) or how to use tshinefu() I would have been on my knees know asking you to greet them...them, my great great what so ever family and extended but today I want to talk to you guys...you whom I know. You guys seems like you have forget about me your pet, you forget that even in your Graves I still need you, I understand you are resting and have been set free from all the things that were eating you up, but who would free me if you don't look out for me in your Graves. Today I am even going to church, and it's been long to long if you ask me but I am afraid I am not going to seek his presence there and his everlasting love but I wanna feel your presence there, I am too desperate for your presence and I would do anything...I mean anything mama. I am broken as you have witnessed what happened that day and you fail to even send one snake to just bite those people atleast one if not all of them but hey you are resting I peace. I am not trying to make you feel bad if ancseotes do feel bad but I am just offloading and looking for someone to blame. Going back to me wanting your presence do can you believe I ahve thought of taking my own life countless times, I even wrote my suicidal note but I ended up crushing it, I had planned my freedom from all this but I guess I am too coward then shift the blame on not wanting to her shandu" she chuckles thinking of that day she have bought razors to take her to a land she doesn't know yet she yearns to be there. And fear kick her gut and she couldn't stomach the pain and also being an outcast ancestors because she head God doesn't like people who take their own life, he sees them as sinners so she did want to be a the wrong side of him so she stops. "...can you come and take me to be with you, Shandu is a good sister and also trys her best but

she can't be like you, she try but she is herself not you, she fails even on trying to imitates you. Please if you are listen talk to me on my sleep come yo my dreams and take our those tormenting night mares. Please bless Shandu for me, and also tells her than I love her when you visit her also. Tell her to be patient with me I am just a troubled child..."After offloading attest helf a cup of what is troubling her she stands up wipe her face and wear her clothes. Shandu comes back and they head to church after some many Sundays without attending any service.

****CHAPTER 17****

****SHANDU****

"Are you still in love with me?...like do you love you?" She asks the burning question that have eating her up daily for the past weeks adjusting a car sit to her comfort.

"What kind of question is that" Thendo asks while taking his eyes off the cellphone screen he have been glued on...smiling and zooming the screen to see clearly what have been entertaining him for the past half an hour.

She shrugs her shoulders and gulped down nothingness "I think we better revisits our feelings for each other" she says playing with her fingers.

"What...? Why?" He says powering off his phone before he toss it on a dashboard.

If he is not placing his phone with screen facing down, he is powering it off not to mention the change of password.

"I need a breather...I need a break...I am tired" she says with her hearting galloping.

"A break...a break from us...from this, you need a break" he says annoyed and she nods. That is what she wants break.

"Now because I have find you a better job you need a break...now that I have cleansed you up you need a break...don't forget I found you with nothing...nothing at all and now because you have tasted a better life you need a break...a break while I have nothing but a good man to you" he says getting angry.

"And I am grateful but that doesn't mean I am bond to overlook the fact that you have other things going more important then me...that you go vacations with your friends and their girlfriend's and leave me behind, should I go on" she says trying not to break down.

"So that makes you think you want a break...Hai mani fuskek...that kak a pure point kak." He says clicking his tounge.

"That no all what about the condoms that are always in your wallet what are you doing with them. Because last time I checked we were waiting for me to be ready" she says and he chuckles rubs her face and look at her.

"I didn't say I wasn't ready for sex...you said you were not ready and I respected that but as for me...I have been ready for a long time and I know I will need some so buy...yeah I buy " he says looking at her.

"You...you...buy"she says with her eyes popped out. "...you me from those people who sell their bodies" she says uncomfortably.

"Yeah...and condoms are for protection and do you want me to go skin to skin with them" he says and she keeps quiet.

"As for vacations I go alone, because you are always busy baby sitting your sister" he says and then takes his phone and starts typing.

Shandu keeps quiet...she is supposed to feel angry right. But she is not she feels guilty of not wanting to satisfy his needs. Now he have to go around buying for something that he have not for different taste but to eat while waiting for his to get ready or to rip. But it's ready just the owner is just selfish and feels like he is not worth been given her pride. There is nothing horrible with having sex right all people have it and they are not written onthe foreheads that they just had it so...

"Mmmh...Uncle snoopy(Thendo's friend) who do I came with at the vacations we always have" thendo says taking her off her thoughts and the phone is on loud speaker.

"You come alone man...I am this close to tell madam to shoot your arse for always leaving her behind man." He says, and that becomes a final nail to shandu's coffin of guilt.

"She wants to leave me because she think I bring some other woman with me" thendo says and shandu asks for the earth to elope her right at the moment.

"Yoh...damn bro that bad. How can you survive without her. Let me talk to her" he says.

"You are on load speaker snoopy my man, I don't know what to do" he says

"Madam...shandu our love, my brother's heart and oxygen" he says and shandu blushes while Thendo's heart dances in joy, uncle snoopy charm is working real fast.

"I dont what you heard my love...but Thendo loves you so much. And we also love you so much, we would allow him to do you like that...nah not like that. We will fry his black arse and find you a better hunk" he says and shandu laughs.

"You're lying coz he is your friend." Shandu says and uncle snoopy laughs.

"Never our love...never and in the next vacation he don't invites you, I will personally invite you I am sure my queen this side won't mind" uncle snoopy says

"...okay, I will hold you to that" she says and they says their goodbyes and cut the call.

"I am sorry" she says and thendo looks at her and chuckles bring her face closer for a kiss.

"Dont ever do that, now you are making me to include my friends in our business" he says while pinching her cheeks playful.

"Thanks for not telling him about our not doing the deeds" she says

"I will never tell that anyone even if I am drunk my love come here give me a sugar" he say.

"I think I am ready" she says before their lips touch,making thendo to pause. Are you saying what I think you are saying my love.

"Yes, I want to give it to you...tonight" she says and that makes thendo to grin like he have won a jackpot.

"Are you sure...sure...sure that you are ready my love" he says kissing her cheeks.

"I am sure my love...I can't have you spend money on useless things like buying a vagina while I have one so nope. No more buying" she says and he laughs.

And they both laughs, and shandu stops laughing and look at thendo with his white set teeth out in display and his one side dimple clearly visible and she feel that feeling that was starting to die lights up and brightens her whole mood. She missed these...she missed the butterfly feeling of her tummy and that electric shock he feels when his finger lands on her arms and slowly brushes her or lands under her chin with eyes looking at her fill with lust and love.

He stops laughing and look at he with his face beaming with joy.

"Dont you miss this? Because I have been longing for it" she says and he look at her confused.

"I mean us happy not fighting and you dropping my calls" she says and then she sighs and holds her hands.

"It was just hectic at work my love like I told you before...but next time I will make sure to inform you before hand" he says and she smiles

"That's all I want to hear my love" Okay let's keep going, I have to go past home first to take my bag for tomorrow's clothes.

****KHUMBUDZO****

She looks flawless, she looks beautiful, she is everything he has ever sent to father Christmas for his kind of a woman. Let not forget her voice...sweet...so sweet and too sweet.

There is no day that passes without him thinking of her no matter how many times he has tried to erase her from his mind but still the heart refuses to work with his brains. He has few pictures of her, at some she was smiling at others she looks sad or in her thoughts but she is a goddess in all.

The fact that she works here doesn't help at all his feeling grows deeper and deeper everyday and he finds himself thinking of what to say and behave in her presence.

He smiles with his hand going brushing through the print picture he has for her.

"Day dreaming at work" Mbengi says, taking him off the pool of his in love but I can't tell her thoughts. And he quickly tosses the picture in his laptop keyboard closing it.

"Mmhh, me, no, no, no..." he let out a nervous laugh "not...not at all

you're seeing things" he talks using his hands and Mbengi smiles and shakes his head.

"Who is she?" He asks walking further and sits on the chair opposite Khumbu.

"Why do you think it's a she....there is no she to know about. So what do you want" he says looking at him.

"Okay, if you don't have a she...I do have one" he says looking around.

"Mmh who is she?...do I know her" he asks and Mbengi laughs.

"Let me just say, she is a goddess and I think if she is not involved with someone else, she is afraid of falling in love. You get what I am saying" he says with a side smile.

"No I don't get what you're saying. My big bro is finally in love but afraid to tell the girl his feelings" he says swinging in his chair, something is happening to him....coating is not easy.

"Gwavhava (being afraid of woman) runs in the family" Mbengi says and they laugh till their stomach hurts.

"On a serious note, I need a florist" Mbengi says "...and what should I add chocolates?" Mbengi asks his brother.

"Ooh, you're going for her tonight?" He says talking a pen and a paper writing the florist number he knows and the company uses when there are events that need flowers as part of deco.

"No want to sweep her off her feet, but they time I open my mouth and tell her I like her...she would be like 'yes papa...go deeper and deeper papa'" he says smirking. And Khumbu couldn't hold it but to laugh out loud as well. Not only because Mbengi mimics a woman voice but by his actions. Yoh...hayi...man, it should be illegal for a man to mimic a woman's voice but legal for a woman to mimic a man's voice, it's...it's sexy.

"Get out of here...you dont fit to be called papa, yoh...imagine" khumbu says with tears rolling down his cheeks because of laughter.

"No...I don't fit to be called papa by you it's...gross but by her...tell you what I will be turning a hot potato each time and a red tomato. I don't not if potatoes and tomato goes together but...actually they do, chips and tomato sauce" and that sent Khumbu to the floor. Love is making his brother to say senseless things yoh...he can't wait to say how he behave around that woman.

"No,no,no,no let's get going before you kill me with laughter. Yeses your sense of humor is on another level today." He says packing his things as he prays the picture doesn't fall and embrass him and his prayers gets to be answered real quick.

"Mxm...atlest you won't be an angry ancestor like how your great great great grandma is doing. She is bored down there and talks nasty things...imagine me and you fighting because of our choices." He says laughing and khumbu laughs as well as they walk out the office to parking lot and and they take different directions to their car.

****SHANDU****

"I will be sleeping over Thendo's place, if you feel any unsettling sound please call me okay" she says to her sister and tendani laughs.

"I am not a baby Shandu, I will be fine don't worry. So you will be giving it up?" Tendani asks throwing herself on the bed.

"I don't know what you are talking about" she says blushing and tendani laughs her ass off.

"she is even blushing people" tendani says clapping her hands.

"But use protection..." she says getting off the bed and walking to her side of wardrobe and take out a packet of choice condoms. "Here, just incase he don't have some" and shandu's eyes pop out.

"You have condoms...condoms for what " Shandu says turning to her.

"Stop being like that...I need to realise some salt here and there so be glad I am protecting myself...and you now" she says handing them to her and she throw them on her bag. Kiss her sister and walk out to thendo.

He kissed her cheek and look at her with hunger eyes and she looks down playing with her hands.

"Mom...is not around today, so we got the house to ourselves" he says as he starts the car and drive out.

They get to Thendo's place and already Thendo couldn't wait to bury himself between her legs. The minute they get to the longe they start kissing each other softly until thendo deepen the kiss and kiss her hungrier. With their tounques dancing together in sync, eyes closed holding him tighter. While his hands travels through her body squeezing her but cheeks her and there, pressing her closer to his body as she feels his boner.

Thendo is still in his work clothes, curiosity gets to shandu and she gets doesn't want to feel his hard member on his hand but maybe through the pocket proofs will be better. She lower her hands to his pockets and instantly feel something lacy....her minds stops and that foreign feelings she was feeling a second ago disappear like they were never there. Thendo feels the

mood change and open his eyes ready to tell her he would be gentle...that she shouldn't be afraid. She pulls her hand out of the pocket and it have a white thong on her hand, body gets covered by goosebumps and she shiver. Thendo's eyes pop out and he tries to pinch himself several times to act normal.

****Chapter 18****

****THENDO****

"I ...it...my pockets...i don't know" he says scratching his head.

Shandu chuckles' in disbelief while shaking her head and stomping her feet "you don't know"... "You're telling me...me... that you don't know" shandu says hitting him with the panty on his face.

"listen my love...this..." he heave a sigh and dig his nails on his head and mumbles a low shit kicking a sofa while at it in frustration. " can we sit and talk about this" he says in a defeated voice.

"talk...sit" she laughs out loud clapping hands " what are we going to talk about heh...how good it was that you even come back home with her panty...heh" her voice was loud so loud in a way it fits to be on loud speakers.

"Please my love" he says looking at her with pleading eyes.

"No, no Thendo you don't get to beg now...you don't have to...no it's not the time firstly tell me what you do with women panties in your pockets"... "Actually you...you don't deserve me" she clicks her tongue "you don't at all...you find it easy to disrespect me...me...shandu yoh! You don't know me wena...wena yeses" she was boiling with anger but she was heart.

"babe...I swear I don't know how..." his phone rings on top on the table making him to stop talking and his ancestors were on vacations struu... its none other than mulalo. Shandu see it first and runs to the table to get it first it and her face shatter, hurt becomes so visible and her hearts increases the pace her hands becomes so hot and she feels a sweat dripping down get spine. She feels hot and cold at the same and her minds tells her the panty belongs to her.

She looks at him with her red eyes and she hands shivering. "Is it hers..." the strong and ready to fight shandu is long gone what left is the defeated one.

"I...my love..."he stutters

"DON'T CALL ME THAT DON'T, JUST TELL ME DAMMAT...JUST TELL ME, TELL ME...SAY IT TO MY FACE THAT YOU FUCK YOURE EX TELL" she screams out loud.

"It's not what you think my love..."

She laughs pacing up and down placing her hands on her head with tears rolling down her cheeks "yoh! Murena wanga wee" (yoh! My Jesus) "sathane tshinga u linga struu" (Satan can tempt you struu)

"Babe..."

"Do you love her?" she says turning looking at him and he swallows. He hasn't seen her like this and this is the first time seeing his woman this angry. His phone rings again and she laughs then answer it.

She puts the phone in the loud speaker and looks straight in Thendo's eyes and he had his hands inside his pockets. He is afraid to go near her, because he knows an angry Shandu can beat the hell out of person, he has seen it with Tendi.

"Hey lover boy

I am missing you here can you can I come over" mulalo says seductively on the phone and shandu clears her throat

"Thendo lover girl u khou vhudzisa answer her" (Thendo, lover girl is asking answer her) she says and Mulalo immediately cuts the call and her anger was on roof top, her eyes burns with fire and throw the phone towards him but he didn't catch it and it hit the wall then falls down in pieces. He closes his eyes as his iPhone 12 pro get damage beyond repair, all the saving he did to buy that phone and now it's a thing of the past.

"Tell me you didn't..." he says opening his eyes with clenched jaws and his fists formed looking angry this time around.

He takes few calculated steps towards her boiling too, he loves his phone like he loves his car and now...she is angry and understandable but this tops the cherry and...yoh! Hayi.

"I did what you will do...Mxm" she says looking straight in his eyes too with so much dominant.

"What do you want to see, tell me what is it" he asks with his hands shaking with rage.

"What do you want to show? What do you think you can show that scares me? Your dick...that's the only thing you can show...and know how to show it" she carelessly says

"Don't tempt me" he says

"I dare you" she says and she wasn't ready the clap lands on her cheek and it stings so bad and she feels like her blood and brains are getting mixed. She stags n]back holding her cheek and tastes blood coming out of her mouth and she returns a fists to his ribs and he flinch a little as they began to with the game of fists.

After sometime, they are both breathing heavily, shandu badly hurt with her face swollen and thendo with few scratches on his face and painful ribs.

Thendo flinches when he stands up and forces himself outside taking his car keys leaving shandu laying on the floor with tears running down her face. Physical pan was nothing but emotionally she is becoming unconscious.

CHAPTER 18 CONTINUATION.

****SHANDU****

After he left she forced herself to get up and stumble her way to the bedroom. She didn't care about the mess on the living room but all she wants is to rest. Sleep, wake head home before the Crack of dawn.

She gets to the bedroom and throw herself in bed still in her jeans and shirt. Her head is busy banging so hard and she feel like ripping it off her neck and put it aside to cool down. She takes a fleece and covers herself as tears gush down her face. She just can't believe it, that a mare cheating scene could excalete to violence...violence, if someone was to tell her that thendo is violent she could have disagreed...because, he can't, he looks like he can't even slaughter a chicken but today yeses...he butchered her so bad, if her ancestors loves her so much they would have taken her.

She eventually fall asleep.

*** In the morning ***

She wake up when she hears shuffling of things in the room and tries to open her eyes but the other one doesn't even badge to do so. Thendo is busy shuffling his clothes in the wardrobe and he sees that she is awake.

"I am sorry I didn't mean to wake you" Thendo says picking out his worksuit and starts wearing. She is afraid to answer what if it becomes a wrong answer and he hit her again. But also afraid to ignore him, she just nod her head.

"I will be going" he says walking out leaving her laying on the bed, she gets out of the bed goes to the bathroom. After half an hour she is out wearing her clothes then pack her things. When she opens the front door Thendo's mother is about to open and her jaws drops in disbelief when she sees Shandu's face.

"Oooh baby, what happened" she says throwing her bag down and her hands gently touching her face. Tears escape her eyes but she quickly but she quickly wipes it off and her mouth attest to the lie we all do.

"I accidentally bump to a wall" she says making sure her voice don't break.

"That wall could only be a person...and that person please tell me it's not my son" she says looking at her with pained eyes.

"Mma,I, I shall get going, I am sorry" she says try to walk away from her embrass but she hold her tight. She knows how she is feeling, she is a mother, she is a woman and her heart breaks each time seeing women lives being taken for granted, seeing how vulnerable women are, seeing women being brutally slaughtered by their loved ones and they don't even regret that...and if they do its because they get caught...if not caught they keep on luring women to their traps so that they drink their blood their evil, they are vultures.

But not in a million years have she ever thought of her son...her one and only son laying his hands on someone's daughter the same hands she bless and pray that everything they touch should turn to gold, that when facing trobles his mind shouldn't shut and let hands do the talking, but today here they are.

"I am sorry, I am so sorry shandu" she says holding her close to her heart, while her tears run down her cheek, she hates murders, she hates killers, she hates women beaters she hate everything bad being done to women but the question remains would she hate her son?

Come, she takes her hand and pull her inside the longe.

She goes to the kitchen and takes a cloth and some ice cubes and put it on her swollen eye.

"What are you planning to do?" Thendo's mother asks her and she shrugs her shoulders. She haven't thought of anything beside getting out of here.

"I know he is my son shandu, but if you want to open a case don't be afraid do it. I don't want you to be one of statistic because of love" she says and shandu shuffles uncomfortable, after all she fought back so she is not a victim, or maybe she is a victim but a little victim. Not a victim victim.

"So tell me what happened?" Thendo's mother asks and shandu continues to keep quiet, she is hurt and wants to get out of here but not wanting to turn down her help. She wouldn't want

thendo to fight with her mother, she wants them happy so it's best she remains quiet she will do the math on her own.

It's been three days without going to work or being in communication with Thendo. Her face have finally swollen down only black patches left on her face but it's nothing make up cannot hide.

Tendani have been very helpful with taking care of her and taking her little sister role that sometimes converted to big sister as she tells her to leave him, not advise her, but tell her, and she wants it done as soon as possible.

Today she is going to work, so she walks to the road to catch a taxi and people were looking at her, news travel fast and she is a new talk of the village, but it's okay. People keep staring at her and her visibility is more visible more than that of a new coin, they stare, claps hands, Shame looks and shaking of heads and awards greetings but it will pass as soon as munzhedzi's chickens eats the crops at her neighbor compound, that how village life is like.

She gets to work finding her desk filled with flowers and her mouth hang open as her mind begins to tell her that they have find her replacement. But she called and tell them she is not well and they understand, but now...

"Morning..." khumbu's voice startle her and quickly gather her acts together. And smiles a little as she turns and finds Thendo with the rasta guy.

"Morning sir" she says and then gets disturbed by the delivery guy.

"A delivery for the receptionist" the guy says, khumbu and the rasta guy looks at her and she looks at the guy.

"Did you guys find new receptionist" she says with an awkward smile "because..." she says pointing to the full desk with flowers .

"Ummmh, no

no,not at all shandu. They are yours" khumbu says while mbengi is still smitten by her beauty but he could spot dark spot under her eye and he choose to keep his mouth shut.

"Mine, like how? Who bought them for me?" She says with smoke Cracking from her lips.

"So madam, how could you act like this when your name is registered in the dating streets" khumbu says playfully and mbengi frowns a little then compose himself back.

"Dating streets neh...maybe mujolo streets" she says walking to her desk. Mbengi eyes lands on her waist and runs on her curves and butt then clears his throat. Following khumbu.

"Where am I going to put all this follows, maybe I should give them to other female colleagues, but I will only take the cards because they are mine" she says smelling the new batch delivered few minutes ago.

"Who are they from" khumbu asks, and she laughs a little. She searches for a card but there is nothing only 24 slabs of KitKat chocolate and she smiles. Who doesn't love sugar. She puts them done and searches for a card on the other three batch of flowers but only finds chocolate of different kinds and she smile, the smile smoothes mbengi's heart as he imagine her plum thick

lips as they collide with his. He feels his other member thickening in his pants then bury his hands deep inside his pockets to hid it.

Khumbu and mbengi leave her to her work and before she knew it, it is time to go home. She packs her bag and a message comes through from the unknown numbers that always sent her a message.

~today was good seeing you at work my angel, I hope you love chocolate and the smell of fresh flowers. ~

That what the message says and she smile a little until the thought hit her mind. What if she is being stalked, what if the person is bipolar, what if he is obsessed, what if...

She looks around and there is no one then immediately takes her bag and fly out the office building until her eyes lands on thendo polo. He is standing leaning on his car, legs crossed and staring at the sun set. He looks like he is deep I thoughts and she makes a little prayer before she turns ready to run to a different direction.

Until his eyes lands on her and he walks more like run to her.

"Shandu, my love" he says in a calm voice and she looks at him with fear.

"Come, please can we talk" she looks at him and then his hand, he immediately gets the message and let her hand go.

"Please my love can we talk" he begs and she fills tears wells done her eyes and before her hand could wipe them off, his hand touches her cheeks first and wipes her tears bring her slowly to his chest and she sobs silently.

"I am sorry, I am sorry, I am sorry" is what he keeps says until she calm down.

"Come" he says leading her to his car, open the door for her, she gets in then he close the door and jog to his side then get in.

They sit in a silence for about a minute or so then he talks.

"My love...shandu, I am sorry for what I did, I was frustrated, and angry that you throw away my phone. That phone was new my love and you know how much I have been wanting that phone and what I sacrificed to buy that phone" he says, then pause, heave a sigh and brush his head.

"About mulalo, it was just a moment of weakness and I wasn't getting fed at home and he offers herself in a silver platter, I am sorry I didn't fight the urge to make lov...to fuck her. But that only occurs because you weren't giving it to me and I needed some action my love I am sorry. I will never do that , I have learnt my lesson.

"Do you still love her" she says after some good five minutes of debating herself on whether to engage on this or not.

"No...no, I don't love her, I love you" he says.

"Do you love me?" Thendo asks and she keeps quiet, her mind replays how tendi have been making her practice her break up speech but her heart recites the love anthem and knows it lyrics and understands the deeper meaning behind those big and bombastic words like 'I will die for you', 'you're the air I breathe', 'I love you more than I love myself', 'without you am nothing', I am sure now you can sing the love national anthem as will.

"I love you Thendo,more than you could ever imagine" her lips says out loud the love national anthem and her brains tells her how much tendi will be disappointed.

"So, my love, my queen, african queen, please forgive me" she says holding her hand close to his chest and she instantly becomes a blushing mess. As she nods her head shyly and then chuckles then kiss her all over her face making her giggle and end up laughing out loud.

"Listen to that" he says and she keeps quiet trying to listen attentively.

"Can you smell it" he says and she furrows her eyebrows and he laugh out loud.

"Love my love..." he continues to says and and looks lost.

"The melody of love...the mind blowing smell of love" he says breathing in and that sends shandu to a stand up comedy talks.

Love bafowethu, love, mjolo the dating.

****CHAPTER 20****

****NARRATED****

AT THENDO'S PLACE

She tiptoes making sure she doesn't wake Thendo's mother, she isn't ready to face her now. She will be just adding to the list of judgmental people who already hates her relationship with Tendani being their spokesperson, president and the keeper of all the files.

Thendo's mother we just be her right hand as most of the events unfolded her at her premises.

"Shandu, why are you walking with your toes? Hayibo" she says sipping her early in the morning cup of coffee.

"Mma, morning" she says walking towards her.

This wasn't the plan, the plan was to get out of here before she wake up, Thendo would have found her inside the car already. Great, great ,great.

"And now, your back together " she says mindlessly.

"Who told you we weren't together?, morning Ma" then do says walking in, kissing his mother's cheek and then look at Shandu with those eyes undressing her.

"Shandu..." she says and shandu smiles neaveously.

"Thendo, why is she sneaking out of my house" she says and Thendo smiles, that smile that you can see he loves her, unconditionally for that matter.

"You know how she is mom, she said she is afraid of you and your cross examinations" he says.

"Ooh let's get started, dzulani fhasi(sit down)" she says

"Mma, we are running late" shandu

"But ma..." then do complains

"I want to talk to you now, a thi ri, you guys have started to sneak in and out of here. And we have to talk now before I forget what I wanted to say later...sit" she sternly says and they both stretch the chairs on Thendo's mother tiles and she gives them disapproval look.

"Let's do this again, stand, place my chair like it was before you start scratching my tiles with it and hold the chair with both your hand lift it a bit off MY TILES, bring it close to you, put it down then sit after sitting lift it a bit again and pull it back near the table then ri do kona u amba ndo vha ndi sa zwidivhi uri you guys don't know how to sit properly (...then we will talk, I didn't know that you guys don't know how to sit properly)" she says.

They turn to look at each other then do as they were told, they know arguing with her will make them both late for work.

"Khezwo(there you go)..." she says and turns to look at Thendo.

"Whats going on here?", between you too" she says

"Ma, you know Shandu is my girlfriend " he says, stating the obvious according to him.

"And Mulalo, what is she too you?" She asks, shandu gets little suprised about that but she keep it intact.

"What are you talking about, what have you heard and from where."he says getting worked up a bit.

"Dont asks questions, just answer. I am an adult and I have eyes and ears so now are you going to answer me or you are still 'figuring things out'" she says.

"Well mulalo is my past" thendo says.

"Okay, do you love her" she asks and he shakes his head.

"Okay, sorted"she says and turn to shandu.

"And you, are you sure about this" she says.

Shandu plays with her fingers and keeps quiet for a little time then nod her head.

"I,I am sure mma" she says.

"Even though he did what he did?"she asks.

"It wasn't his fault Ma" she says in his defense.

"Ooh, I guess maybe I should repeat my question. I kind of sugar-coated it at first and now you're answering under effect of it honey, so let me call a spade a spade" she says adjusting herself.

"Do you remember that day, that day I found you walking out my house, your one eye could see it was swollen, your cheeks, the cracked and swollen lips and how badly injured you were, and you told me you bump into a wall" she says and shandu nods.

"What did I tell you" she asks

"That if I want to open a case against him you will support me and that I should leave him" she says in faint voice.

"And now what do you want, a casket to get you out of this relationship" she asks.

"Mma..." thendo says and she looks at him.

"What heh, what? Your father never in his life beat me, you didn't grow up witnessing boxing matches or being a refree at all but you go and learn you disgusting, shameful acts from where ever you did and you practice it. Dont you see you a bring curses...generational curses what you are introducing today put end up being a generational curse and that will need someone strong to end it like you have introduced it. " she says.

"I wasn't thinking straight, I was...I was just angry ma" he defended himself.

"People make each other angry all the time, imagine if she batted each other all the time, we kill each other all the time. You have made me angry should I stab you to death because I am angry now...what will happen when I am no longer feeling angry." She asks as her one eye tear escape.

"She might have forgiven you, but I haven't. I don't bless you to beat on women I don't. Who is supposed to treat her right when you are busy acting like a monster. You are supposed to love her, respect her for others to do the same, to respect her as well but you are busy instilling fear on her and making her think you are the only best thing that happend after sliced bread."

"Mma, we...we have talked about it and we are working it out" shandu stutter as Thendo fight off the urge,the burning sensation deep within him.

"It okay, but if he ever lays his filthy hands on you let me know, I wil) castrate him myself" she stands up and walk towards her bedroom.

They sit quietly for sometime both indulging into their own thoughts. Thendo clicks her tongue bring them both off the pool of thoughts.

He looks at his watch then Shandu, his eyes are reddish. He looks like he is angry.

"Fuck, you will catch a taxi" thendo says standing up and walking out still angry. There is nothing shandu could say but feel like this talk took them 10 steps back. And it's her fault once again.

****SHANDU****

She looks at the time for the 12th time now and the time is not moving at all, it's like it's on snail trail moves and that is making her anxious. She wants to go home asked or maybe talk to Thendo about what happened this morning, she didn't plan for Thendo's mother to find her still in the house that day but it happend, all other things she was just voicing herself out.

They haven't talked since then, maybe it's the best but wait, she can't stop to think what if he seek for comfort from Mulalo, she have learnt that man seek comfort from other women if they don't find it at home but she doesn't want to come across desperate and insecure by leaving him forty hundred thousands missed calls and voicenotes.

"What bothering a beautiful lady like you" the deep voice Says and she recognize it. It is the not so clean dreadlocks guy.

He looks...he looks eatable, all sorts of yummy scrumptious food but they are just not hers to eat. She just have to suffer from the mouthwatering plate design and while the smell of it sends you to the dinner table with clean hands ready to drink your plate away.

"You can drool any day, anytime my love. I know when handsome people list is being written my name makes the first one in the list" she says smirking.

Today his dreads ain't in bun like always they are left dangling and that somehow makes his color pop a little. Damn those lips yoh.

"Am sorry, what were you saying" she says and that makes the guy laughs.

She stares at him as his stretch his cheeks reveling his deep dimples on both cheeks and you could drop panties any day at any time just for this beauty, if is not a criminal offense to call man beautiful because handsome doesn't give the satisfaction.

"The first woman to agree that she was drooling" he says still laughing.

"I didn't agree sir" shandu says and that makes him to frown a little then he smiles revealing the white perfectly packed white teeth set.

"Mbengi...my name is mbengi" he says and she smiles shly.

"Shandu" she says.

"Like shandukani in full?"He asks.

"Like Mbengeni in full?" She returns the gesture and the both laughs and start conversing.

"Stop lying...yoh I will die" she says laughing, in a way that her stomach hurt.

"I have been waiting on you for about 20 minutes" Thendo's voice says and that makes her to stop smiling immediately.

Mbengi's voice light up when he sees his aunt's son, it's been a decade if not two without seeing each other.

"Thendo, yoh it's great seeing you after sometime" mbengi says and he looks at him and smile a little.

"Yeah, it's been long." Then he looks at shandu who us busy packing her things and he sees flowers on her desk not one batch but four and they were both in vase.

"Uum it was knowing your name at last Mbengi, see you around" she says politely

"Uum sure" he says and stands there as he watches shandu runs behind Thendo and he shakes his head.

He doesn't like that, how can a woman walk behind a man, it's the man who runs after a woman not the other way round or this day's the worm runs after the chicken hayike, that news to him.

****CHAPTER 21****

****MBENGI****

He is a shitty person, with a shitty past. He wouldn't like to drag someone's daughter into his life, he made a vow to himself. He promised never to look at someone's daughter with the love eyes but with lust eyes. Lust wear off and life moves on, and no commitment needed but those walls seems so strong years back just in few weeks of knowing her they are slowly melting down and love fluid warms his heart. His heart doesn't skip a beat when he lays his eyes on her it gallops and makes him tounge tide.

She is the one, the one he have been dreaming about but he also know that things got mixed up. Sacrifices have to made but who is strong enough to make them between him and the other guy who loves the same lady dearly as him.

"Are you okay?" Khumbu asks. He have been holding his whiskey glass for the past ten minutes or so, and he seems like he is drowning in his own thoughts.

"Mmmh" he clears his throat "Am good little one" he says gulping down the liquid and he almost spit it out because it is no longer cold.

"Hot stuff" rendani says laughing. His a carefree this one and accepts lemons that life throw his way with a bigger heart than them all.

He is unlike khumbu or mbengi but in actual sense they are all different. Mbengi is a calm guy who sleeps with a gun just in case the past comes creeping in through the dark moon of the night, while khumbu is the peaceful one and he allows his heart to make decisions for him and lastly the clown the man who hides behind his laughter and you will swear that nothing bad ever happens in his life, when you ask him how he does that, he be like 'every situation have a bad and a good side and it's up you to choose which side you want to take or look things from...I choose positive side'.

"You can say that again" mbengi says placing the glass on the table.

"I have something to share with you guys" Khumbu says and rendani scoffed.

"Stressing stuff yoh, it's Friday for fuck sake. We should be drinking and getting some two legged hot stuff because some of us have to realise " he says opening another can of beer.

"This is called brotherly session" khumbu says and rendani throws his hands up in dramatic manner.

"Sure...let's see what Shandu has done now" Rendani says.

Mbengi chokes on his drink and masks it with a cough and prays to God it's not Shandu the receptionist.

"I don't know, I just feel like she smiles more while breaking down behind that smile...like have you ever feel like you want to help someone to a point where you feel like it's your duty...I don't know but I got this feeling deep inside and " he brushes his head in frustration then sighs loudly.

"I don't know if you guys get me or am I not making any sense" he says again.

Then Mbengi immediately knows that he is flushed. He can't be fighting for a woman with his brother especially Khumbu.

"Do you love her?" Mbengi asks the question he knows he isn't ready for the answer coming but he asks anyway his Mbengeni in full after all.

"Love, he no longer just loves her. He is whipped, obsessed lover this one and Cinderella doesn't know that she charmed two princes at the same time" Rendani says laughing hard. And Khumbu throws a cushion towards him and he dodges it with Mbengi just looking at them.

"I am not whipped nor obsessed Rendani, actually who is your mate here go play with your two-faced mates like you" he says laughing and Mbengi chuckles.

"Do you love her?" He asks again and he blushes, his eyes lit up, you can see he is lively and just thinking about Shandu the receptionist makes him lose some screws.

"I, I can say I like her" he says thinking then he takes his glass of whiskey "screw this I love" he says gulping his drink and Rendani screams like a little girl and Mbengi knew she is off the market. No go area for him.

"And you what about the mystery woman"

"She is taken" Mbengi says. Closing the topic, he doesn't want his brother know about who the woman after his heart is to avoid complications.

****THENDO****

"Tshisevho tshi khou fhela"(they are sleeping with her)he says as tears cloud his eyes.

"WHAT" his friends say in unison.

"They...they even send her flowers can you believe that" he says opening the 6th bottle of savanna since they have get here. They are at bottle store drinking as always.

"Who are you talking about" one of his friends asks.

He chuckles and shakes his head in frustration as his tears fall down his face. " To think that I loved her, I loved her and give her time all time in the world she ever needed to be ready for me but...but she only wants the benefits without wanting to give it to me, me, me Thendo " he says hitting his chest.

"Your not talking about mulalo right" the other friend asks. They used to believe that he loves mulalo more but now it's a pity that he is crying for a woman who is not mulalo, maybe they also failed to read in between the lines as well.

"No...Mulalo is a sweetheart but not enough. I wanted a woman, my woman the one that is only known to me and Shandu was perfect for that but now...she is giving it away for free just like that making those Mf to eat

touch, lick actually miss use my property. When is she going to realise that she is mine, mine alone.

"You found her being banged by another man?" The friend asks and Thendo laughs.

"No...but I know" he says

"How...?" Thendo cuts him short.

"I am a man, I can see and feel that" he says then finishes the substance left in the bottle and goes for the 7th one.

They changed the topic and they continue to drink and enjoying themselves. He is now drunk then he takes his phone and finds few missed calls from both his women, Shandu and Mulalo.

Then he calls Shandu after the fourth ring she answered, it is just after twelve midnight.

"He...hello" she says in a lower tone not wanting to make noise Tendani is still studying.

"I will be at your age in five minutes pack an overnight bag will be going to Mangwele lodge for the weekend. He says then drops the call. Bid goodbyes to his friends other offers to take him home as he is drunk but he refused so they let him go.

****SHANDU****

It's been two days since she last saw Thendo, he doesn't answer her calls nor reply to her SMSes. She wants to go to his house but also fear holds her back, but curiosity makes her mind a playground playing with her emotions breaking her heart in the process.

Her relationship with her sister isn't good, Tendani is a bubbly person that even after the whole ordeal she went through, she changed a little but whenever she feels free her older self creeps in sometime and now, now she talks when she is being talked to and no longer asks questions. She is with a heavy heart but she has to endure it all in silent, every relationship has its ups and downs and hers it's on the ups preparing for a smooth ride on the downs.

It's just a few minutes after 12 midnight and she is busy packing her bag and Tendani gives her the looks but doesn't say anything.

"Before you play the responsible parent on me, I am going to Mangwele lodge with Thendo I think will be back Sunday late." Shandu says and Tendani chuckles when shaking her head.

"With an estimate of fifty one percent of women who fall victim of gender based violence and you still want to add up to that percentage. You want to fall victim of love, die because of love is it worth it sis what is making you go back to him time and time. You have been crying lately even though I turned a blind eye but whose blood should be shed first for you to see that you are allowing pain for yourself. You will keep running after him until when? Do you even think about me sis, that we are all we have, that it's me and you then amen do you, or you're just running after that bastard who thinks that you're his puppet...that he is your God when he says jump you say how high is that so." Tendani says and Shandu's phone rings, she answers then picks her bag.

"I will be safe and whatever percentage you have said be rest assured I will not be part of it, and no one's blood will be shed he just needs me to be a good woman to him that all. Stay safe, come and lock" she says walking out not wanting to anger the man waiting for her.

****CHAPTER 22****

“Baby you’re drunk?” she state the obvious case.

“No, I am not. I just had few bottles only” he says while starting the car not waiting for her to put on her safety belt. As he hit the accelerators hard and only dust leaves evidence that he was here. Shandu recites the last prayer she remembers since she have been to church because she can see that he is trying to match his skills with those fast and furious drivers... Vin Diesel or Paul walker but driving the wrong machine. She feels her intestine moving up to her throat and her brains tell her that it, one mistake they crush. Tears wells on her eyes and she repeatedly blinks them away, getting ready to say sorry but what has she done this time around.

Is it because he found her talking to the Rasta guy, or he saw the flowers but whatever can be solved by mouth not with her life, is it so. That only Jesus Christ died on the cross for her sins not that she has to die for her sins but only needs to repent. Whatever way but her life now is in the hands of a drunkard driving recklessly and that goes down to the books of history, she have never been in this kind of speed in her while life. Normally the drive from Tshakhuma dam view to mangwele lodge its less than five minutes but this was in a speed of a thunder an ancient bolt aren’t nothing to this speed and she thanked her ancestors when the car park right in front the reception building of mangwele lodge and she let out a relief chuckle.

Thendo gets out of the car walk to the reception area make the bookings then walk back with the keys to their room. She gets out of the car, take her travel; bag from the trunk and follow behind Thendo as usual.

The music is so loud at the open space area and they would here in from where they are its Friday or after all we all know South African vibe the whole weekend and if nothing ties them down we vibe from Monday to Sunday with no break. They get to their room and once the close the door they can no longer hear the loud amapiano music that calls for a get down even though you know once you get down there will be no standing up. Thendo throws himself on top of the bed looking at Shandu taking off her shoes, earrings then throw herself on the bed as well and she decides to ask the question she have reprimand herself from asking hundred times since she get inside the car with him.

“Babe, are you okay?” Thendo.

Thendo gives her a question eye, and then she feels the need to continue

“Like...are we okay?” she says playing with her hands. And he looks at her like really look at her. Then shrug his shoulders then bite his lower lip.

“You tell me Shandu, I don’t know” he says sitting up straight.

“Then explain the silent treatment, the speeding and this offish feeling I am getting from you” she says and thank her lucky stars for not getting a clap.

“Do you love him?” he says with a straight face and she can see he isn’t joking.

“Love...love him, who?” she stutters and he shakes his head.

“Mbengi, do you find him attractive?”

She is caught off guard, how can he ask her such question, she only knows him as Khumbudzo’s visitor and not even once have she see him otherwise

he is handsome it’s true but Thendo is cuter then him.

“No...no I don’t” she says shaking her head.

“Then the flowers who sent them to you, don’t lie and tell me they are your colleagues because I can see through you and you know the consequences, I don’t like a liar” he says still keeping a straight face and she knows that if she fuck up she is dead.

“I don’t know who they are from but whoever who send them told the delivery guy that they are for the receptionist” she says biting her nails.

“You expect me to believe that?” he says tilting his head and she feels sweat runs down her spine and tears slowly forming from her eyes.

“Ye...yes, I am telling you the truth. I don’t know who send the flowers and they always don’t have card only different flavours of chocolate and brands” she says hoping he believes her.

“Let’s say I believe that, my question is are you a still a virgin or already dzo no vha mavheleni” (have already engage on it)

“I am still” she says breathing out loudly because of relief she have been holding her breathe for too long.

“How can you prove that to me?” he says with a naughty grin and she immediately gets the message loud and clear.

“But baby...” he cuts her short before she could go any further.

“But last time you were ready, don’t tell me now you are no longer ready” he says sounding like he is getting pissed.

“I dint say anything my love, it’s just that I dint expect that today or now I thought we will firstly sit and talk about...”

“We still have our whole life ahead of us my love, let’s enjoy the moment. Okay” he says taking her face to his plums and he teases her before smashing her lips.

She tense up then he breaks the kiss and stare deep into her eyes and she feels the intense feeling like it is passing through their eyes, her heart beating fast and her stomach in butterflies like how things were like back before the beating. She loves him, whole heartedly and life without him none exists.

“I love you shandu” he whispers in his now horse and much deeper voice and she blushes more than before. This here is sweat love she knows, fairy tale love and she knows only the key to that always happy door, this kind of happiness door is through her legs, not by running away but open them wide enough of him to quench his thirst.

“I love you too Thendo” she says smiling kind of shy smile and their lips slowly lock. Their kiss is so slow, evoking the sleeping volcano even the one which have never erupted before. Thendo then deepens the kiss and he immediately feels lively. His mouth leaves her mouth to her neck nibbling on it while squeezing her twins leaving her moaning as emotions takes her to another level of love.

Clothes starts flying in the room as they keep the momentum going. He then pushed her to the bed gently as he kisses her from her chest to her navel then change direction as he starts kissing her from the outside of her things to the inside with his hands running from her butt cheeks to her thighs down her legs. His mouth finds its way to her nana and she feels the warms of his tongue on his clit as he licks her nana. He then blows same air and she moans louder. He starts eating her nana like his life depends on it. She starts to jug up then he uses his hand to keep her down as he eats her up. After sometime she feels the tension to realise but hold it back.

“let it go my love, let it go for me please” Thendo mumbles and she obeys. Immediately she feels a liquid dripping out of her nana as her toes curls she panting trying to catch her breathe while Thendo stood up and kiss her hard making her taste herself.

“Hello” he says after kissing her looking straight on her eyes.

“Hey” she says

“How was it” he says grinning with satisfaction.

“Foreign...goes it was good” she says and he chuckles and stand up took off his briefs and Shandu immediately regret her decision. Is she ready or not ready?

“I will be gently, don’t worry my love’ he says kissing her forehead and she nods but not convinced.

“I...I am not ready”

CHAPTER 23

Pain, best describes what she is feeling now. But what was she thinking leaving juicy mouth-watering chicken and hope the dog just stare at it just like that. Others would ask what is it that she was expecting from all this, a just cuddling weekend gate away with your significant other and emotions just let them be. But hers...hers were manipulated, he wasn’t feeling like it but what done it’s done.

“Babe” his voice vibrated on his ear.

She immediately wipes away the tears that are freshly running down her face. Ever since he took it she has been crying silently busy blaming herself.

“Mmmh” she says and her voice sold her away immediately.

“Look at me my love” he says bringing her closer to him and she could feel the big man down there happy and ready for action but not now, anyway who is she kidding.

“Don’t cry, my love” he says wiping her tears off and she nods helping him wipe away her tears.

“I am sorry” she says.

“Shh, it’s okay. Did I hurt you?” he asks

And as usual she nods.

“Should we go to the doctor, I mean if you’re crying like this it might mean that we have...” she cuts him short

“No...No doctor please if I am still not okay by tomorrow then I will go in Monday” she says laying her head to his bare chest.

They lay there quietly for some time until Thendo breaks the silence.

“What do you want us to do today; this is our weekend with no disruption”. Thendo says massaging her head.

“What did you plan for us?”

“Mmh, how about some romantic breakfast then we go shopping but firstly we go to phiphidi waterfall my friends are having braai there with their woman so it high time I also introduce my woman”

She smiles then takes the duvet covering her body with it and tries to get out of the bed.

“And now sweetheart”

“What?”

“The duvet, why are you hiding my food like that baby girl and not choosing between going and chill with my friends or our time only me and you shopping till we drop dead” he says sitting up.

“Ooh, being with your friends is what I am choosing and let me be please” she says walking to the bathroom and thendo laughs.

“I will find that nana of ours and I will eat it in a new style my love and you will need a surgery after I am done” he says getting out of the bed following her.

After their showering they drive to Thohoyandou and have breakfast at wimpy then he buys few siders for shandu and Heineken for himself. He wasn't planning on making himself a brewery 6 pack is enough.

Then they head to waterfall. In a less than an hour they were packing then thendo buys the tickets for both of them and head to where the other guys were.

“Hey thendo you're here?” one of his friends says to him and the first bump and share greetings. And thendo introduces Shandu, woman of his dreams mme a vhana. (Mother of his children).

Shandu go and sit with the other lady and thendo makes it his purpose to introduce her, he was beside himself and busy being clingy and this is the first time she have seen thendo like this.

“Will you be alright with them babe?” he asks bring her close to him.

“Yes babe, they dint bite my love” she says.

Right at this moment she no longer regrets what has happened to her earlier in the morning to day.

“So shandu right” one of the laddies says as soon as Thendo is gone leaving them to some gossip.

“Yeah, shandu”

“How does it feel like you know like girl I admire your courage I could have long left if it was me” she says sipping some red wine and her face nicely decorated by lively colours.

You can tell that she knows her way on beauty and knows all beauty hacks. Her eyebrows are on flick and she did them very well let's not mention the eye shadow. Morgurl knows her stuff and fits for a beautician post or is it makeup artist.

“Hai mani shudu, di bviseni mafhungoni a vathu” (no shandu, don't involve yourself in other people's business) one of the laddies says.

“What did I say” she says raising her hands in defeat “I was just complimenting her for the strength she have in eating shit that aren't hers because she is being served that” she says standing up and starting to dance.

That was a clear indication that everyone knows everything about her and now she is being compared to a shit eater

actually she is compared to a dog or a pig.

****KHUMBUDZO****

‘CAN WE MEET’ he writes the message then deletes it again.

‘SHANDU, I AM NOT TRYING TO SCARE YOU BUT I WANT TO TELL YOU THAT I LOVE YOU AND’ he deletes again then throw the phone beside her and all this time Mbengi is looking at him silently.

He has done a lot of inner self debating and he feels like he has to tell him about the ‘mystery woman’

“Khumbu” he says throwing himself on the couch.

“I don't know what to write to her, imagine having to tell her face to face about it” he hits his head in frustration and mbengi chuckles.

“Just be yourself man, what there not to love in you” mbengi says.

“What if...”

“You’re young, successful, running a family company and have dreams that you’re trying to work towards them. You’re what they call in English goal oriented” mbengi says trying to make him feel better.

“But when it comes to the woman you love those papers that gives us titles that means nothing when you love someone, I love her and it’s her or no one else” he says brushing his head.

“No man stop doubting yourself” mbengi says and he nods in agreement.

They fall in comfortable silence. Then mbengi speaks.

“Don’t hurt her small” he says with a serious face.

“I wouldn’t man, you know me” khumbu says.

“That is the only reason I am letting her go, because it’s you. You make her cry, I shot your balls” he says then chuckles.

“Letting her go” confused, “the...the mystery lady, the flowers and chocolate” khumbu says looking at her brother.

“Guilty as charged small, I love that girl. I was ready to settle down with her. Make her a mother of my handsome soccer team and you an uncle to some little naughty me but at what price.

Fighting you over a woman, no” mbengi says.

“You love her” khumbu asks

“I do and I also don’t understand my feelings for her but I know you will love her better” he says then stands up part khumbu’s back and walk out with his head held up high as always.

****CHAPTER 24****

****MBENGI****

Sacrifices are made all the time but not even once has it even hit his mind that one day he will sacrifice a woman. The woman who he have loved with no effort at all and give up on her to his brother without fighting him.

He is looking at him busy preparing his love declaration speech and he have to listen to it first before it got to be finalised.

“Are you even listening Mbengi?” Khumbu says throwing himself on the couch that is in his office.

“Yeah, I am” he says standing from where he was sitting going to sit next to his brother.

“Maybe you don’t have to go through all this...”

“Not go through all this, do you even know when was the last time I asked a girl out, actually no I have never asked a woman out in my whole life and here I am busy calling myself a man when I was busy playing with boys damn” he says with his nerves shooting high.

“Slow down man, and don’t forget to breath. We don’t want you dying before shooting your shoot” he says patting his back.

“I feel like I will pass out before, I even utter them out” he says.

And that made Mbengi to chuckle, such drama from a man. This kind of things is expected from woman or Rendani at least but not Khumbu.

“If you’re like this how about you let things be, if you’re meant to be then things will work out on their own” Mbengi suggested.

“With vultures roaming around, yoh! It’s a death warrant.

“A death warrant really?”

Khumbu nods emphasizing on what he is saying.

“Okay, let say she walks in now will you be able to tell her how you feel about her” he asks.

“of course not but...” the knock disturb them before they even go further.

“Mmh, come in” Khumbu shout.

The door slowly opens and Shandu walks in with a stack of files in her arms. She is wearing a black long sleeves bodycon dress and gold heels. She is looking amazing as always but truth be told in the eyes of both men in this room she will be beautiful even on sack.

“These are the files you asked for sir” she says seeing that four pairs of eyes are on her and its bit uncomfortable.

“Thank you Shandu, place them on the table” Mbengi says hitting his shoulders to Khumbu.

“Mmh Shandu wee” she turns to look at them.

And that made the Rasta guy (Mbengi) to brush his head, little nervous.

“Khumbu have something to ask you” he quickly says.

Her eyes moves from Mbengi to Khumbu and that speaks volumes on its own. ‘They were talking about me’ it’s comes to his mind. She haven’t been a good person lately, she have been moody and rude at time. Few days back she almost punch colleagues face. And in such a serious offense she was left off the hook with just a warning, she could have got a written warning and thanks her lucky stars she didn’t.

“Mmh, lunch. Can you have dinner with me” Khumbu says. He wasn’t ready for this and his prepared speech leaves his brains long before he throws himself on the coach.

“Lunch...dinner” she says raising her eyebrows in confusion.

The he realises what he have just said.

“Mmh, I mean dinner” he says looking at her.

“I can’t, you do know that Thendo is you’re relative musi” she says.

“I know that, but now I am asking my cousin’s woman to have dinner with me. Is it wrong I trying to know the woman my cousin loves” he says

“That weird” Shandu says shrugging her shoulders.

“Don’t over think about it, just say yes” he says.

“Okay, when?” she asks

“Tonight” he says

“Okay, is it all sir” she says

“Yes, that all...oh before you go what time should I fetch you” he ask

“How about we go immediately after work” she suggested.

“Anything the lady wants, the lady gets”

She then leaves, and then Mbengi bust out in laughter Khumbu follows through.

“What did just happen?” Mbengi says.

“I just got myself a woman” Khumbu says not believing it. a dinner is something right, starring in to the right direction I tell you.

The sit there with Mbengi busy making fun of him

how he was like. Until they decides to part ways. Khumbu says he want to freshen up first before going for the lunch dinner date.

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He scrolls on his phone and come across his number. He owes him favours and now its high time he cash up on one of those favours. He dialled his numbers and rings few minutes before he answers.

“Such a cock blocker” he says answering the call.

“Rofhiwa my friend, the IT specialist’ Mbengi says, grinning like a chipanzi but his line of job means smiling even though you want to kill and destroy other people.

“Get to the point man” he says

“You’re rude yeses, but I want you to hack someone’s phone” he says.

“Phone...” Rofhiwa ask shocked.

“It’s some full trying to mess with a treasure” he says.

“But that a small job you can do it yourself” Rofhiwa says.

“But I want you doing it, I will do the rest on my own” he says

“Okay sure, I will update you later” Rofhiwa says and drops the call.

Then he send him the details if the person he want his account hacked.

He looks at the pictures he had of her, looks at them contemplating on whether to delete them or not. He has a whole fold of her pictures having close to 200 stolen pictures.

****KHUMBUDZO****

A decade ago, that is the last time he have been in relationship with anyone. He has been into few commitments but they weren’t serious commitment. Ever since that relationship that left him heart broken and he almost die not only because of shock of what has just happened, but he stopped taking care of himself, and he almost losses his mind.

Ele, his proof of mjolo and it ended up in tears like how the witches proclaims when you fell in love. To make the story short, he have been in love with Ele since their varsity days and one day Ele comes with that story titled it’s not you it’s me, till to this day he might faint if someone Ever pull that shit on him again. That shit is pain full more painful than to be told blank straight ‘it’s over’ or ‘I no longer love you’ but any what will we say. What was like pouring salt to the wound was when she tied the knot four weeks after leaving him to find herself.

Anyway, now he is humming a lively song, you remember the house he bought few houses away from his home, yes that one. He has already moved in enjoying his space, no one to disturb his peace.

His phone rings and he looks at it, talk about peace to early.

“Ma” he says talking the call.

“Ma...ma, talk about two faced children” she says and he knows he is about to pay for someone’s sins.

“Do you even love me?” trust black parents to emotionally black mail their kids.

“With no questions ma” he says assuring her.

“Then come for dinner later” she says

“But ma, I can’t I already have plans” he says

“Don’t make me mad Khumbu please, your elders requested a meeting, what should I tell them. Your CEO son is busy cant dine with you guys. Don’t be surprised if I drop dead one day he

choose to leave me with the mental disturbed brother of his and never cares to check on me” she dramatically says as usual.

“Ma, Rendani is not mentally disturbed...” she cuts him short.

“Did you birth him?”

Of course he didn’t birth him but he knows him. Just because he is living his youth life enjoying sex from both genders doesn’t make him mentally disturbed person.

“no I didn’t” he says then heave a sigh.

“So, 19h00 don’t be late and also call the Satan toe for me” she says then drop the call.

His dinner date yoh! Why is the devil like this? Now he has to call Mbengi. He can’t defy his mother and if Mbengi will be there it means he should also be there to stop them from killing each other.

CHAPTER 25

Ever since the ‘supposed’ weekend gateway she hasn’t been in her right emotional state. She is busy drowning and trying to hold everything together in place shutting the world out of her ‘inner peace’ as she believes.

She hasn’t been in contact with Shudu, Thendo fed her half lies half-truth about her and that made her hate Shudu more. But through the hate that is made for her to believe that Shudu is like that she still wonders why? Why she compared her to a dog? What is it that she knows about her? What have she heard about her, what did they said she did? And who told her that? Those questions hunt her every time she lays her head down.

Her relationship with Thendo has been going well. He is back to the Thendo she knows and fell in love with, the caring Thendo, the one who can do anything to lay the world right to her feet. And there have been a hint of lobola mahadi real soon. But they have to sit down with Thendo’s mother first make her realise that they need her support more as she doesn’t have parents or an elder to lean on, on her side. Siblings bond is no longer there. They are just living with each other with no more than five words being shared between them. She can’t say she hates her but she will hate to choose between her sister and her prince charming if ever the shove come pushing.

Right at the moment she is talking to her heart beat, her oxygen her reason to ntoni ntoni, dinga la mbilu yawe.

“Guess what” she says smiling like a ratted.

“What baby” he says in that charming voice leaves a swarm of butterflies making a home in her tummy.

“Sir, asked me for dinner tonight” she says holding a laugh.

“Who is sir my love” he say with his voice sound a little bit cold.

“Khumbu, said he want to talk me out for dinner as your woman of course” she says

“Ooh, alright. Make sure you order takeaway as well. He should remember me when his busy chatting and dining with my woman” he says and she releases the breath she was holding. She knows no matter how things might be looking all cosy and normal between her and Thendo, he can change anytime with no warning at all.

“Ooh that went well” she mumbles

“Ooh, so you expected me to turn all Bruce lee or Jackie china on you” he says playfully and they both chuckle.

“Let me get going my love, u will call you after dining with the big boss” she says laughing.
“No problem my heart...oh before I forget I told mom we have something to tell her on Saturday” he drops the bomb.

Then they drop the call. She continues with her day doing what she is paid for. She don't want to find herself on the bad side of Khumbu she knows a written warning she is gone. Going back to be a street Venda.

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.**CHAPTER 26**

KHUMBUDZO

He is late as usual, but not later than the Satan toe, he is not yet here, maybe he is busy sharpening the Satan's fork. As all family meetings are like, the yard is parked with different models of cars and then they will be asking for petrol money. That how these people behaves, they act all deep pockets when walking tall and proud to the garage picking their dream cars then calls a family meeting for the maintenance of the same car.

“Ooh, my baby you're here” his mother says smiling like a kid with a candy.

“Of course mother” he says kissing her cheek and side hugging her.

“Where is...” she didn't finish as Mbengi makes his way in. Mbengi frown when he sees Khumbu here.

“And now...?” Mbengi says confused.

“Not here, we will talk” he says walking further inside the house.

“What is he doing here?” one of the aunties asks looking at Mbengi with a frown.

“In his father's house yeses” Rendani says and his mother gives him a shut up look. And he shrug his shoulders, he did nothing wrong, just reminding people who suffers from short term memory storage that this is their father's house not theirs.

“Mmh, can we sit please some of us have things to do” he say and they walk to the living room, adjourning their own meeting that was going to go south before the real reason they are is said. There are three young laddies sitting there with other six elderly people that Khumbu doesn't know. They both greet the people whom they found there and sit down.

The uncles and the other aunts make their way inside and they sit on their chairs. Mbengi looks around the table and let out a loud laugh irritating his mother mostly but she choose to keep quiet.

“Khumbudzo...and your brothers the reason for this meeting is...” she pauses and bit her lower lip and one of the uncles takes the matter into his own hands.

Mrs Munyai, uncles and aunties are not afraid of Khumbu and Rendani's reaction but of Mbengi. He is a ticking bomb that one and walks around with a gun and his manners sticks if he want to he might just light his cigar and blows it onto your face that how he is.

“What she is trying to say is that, you guys are old now and its time you bare children for the legacy of your father to grow” he says and Mrs Munyai chip in.

“I am growing old and I want grandchildren to keep me on my feet when I still have strength...” Mbengi's laugh makes her stop and throws a dead stare to him and he laugh harder.

“Hayi, little bros just imagines leaving your kids with her. By the time you come back the baby will be long dead by heart attack” he says with tears running down his face.

“What are you trying to say Mbengi heh” she says with a pained voice

It is now after work; she [parks her things ready to go and order that large burger the largest of the all plus chips and a coke, or is she is supposed to order chicken salad and a glass of still water. Hayi dining with the boss is not easy but if she gets the chance she knows her lady manners that Thendo is busy instilling would be bent today. Today is a burger day if Khumbu doesn't feel offended by it.

She stands there busy abusing company WIFI, her eyes at times moves from the phone to the lift but he wasn't coming. She checks her diary for his number and sent him a call back.

She continues tapping on her phone and after few minute a call come through.

“Hello” she says placing the phone against her ear.

“Hello, I have seen a call back” and she recognises that it's Khumbu's voice.

“You stood me up Mr” she says and she hears Khumbu mumbling a low fuck.

“I am sorry Shandu, something come up” he says in an apologetic voice,

“No its okay sir” she says a bit disappointed when is she ever going to enjoy two full chickens, buns and a 2,5liter of coke. This was the day but anyway she have to accept and get ready to eat chicken salads, cow food, she is slowly becoming a herbivore.

“Where are you at” he asks.

“Getting out of the office” she says

“Okay, stay there I will find someone to take you home okay, give me a minute...” he says

“No...no sir” she says

“Sir...sir” she take her phone off her ear and looks at it. Damn he has already hanged up. Now she has to wait.

“did you die...did you. I am the one who pushed that huge brainless head of yours to this world and nurture you. And now is this your dankie...you're thanking me with a plate of shit” she says breathing fire with veins popping and that doesn't scare Mbengi at all.

“Ma, calm down please” Khumbu says rubbing her hand.

She clicks her tongue and his uncles gladly takes the ropes, continuing breaking the ice.

“These laddies here are you're women. Rendani yours is Thina, the lady in black dress. Khumbu dzo yours is the middle the lady in red dress her name is Khumbelo and lastly is Tshisamphiri, Mbengi is woman.” He says like he is busy adorning them.

All brothers are dumb struck, they are in awe shocked and their jaws are on the floor. A message comes through disturbing them and Khumbudzo opens it then make a call, walking out. He needed a breather and this was a cue.

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After sometime he walks back to the house, the people were arguing and as usual Mbengi is telling them where to get off.

“I am not marrying anyone of your choice, I will choose my own lady when I have too” Mbengi says looking straight to the eyes of one of the uncle who think his world is the law but Mbengi will never allow anyone to play on his head never.

“You will, if you still want to be considered a member of this family” the uncles says back

“I am a member of this family by blood...blood note that down. Not by marrying cheap skirts you bring for me. That will never happen” he says back clicking his tongue.

“Boy...”he says pointing a finger at Mbengi

“Call me a boy again; I will wipe this floor with face. I am not your friend after all” he says and the uncle look at his accomplices for a backup but none have the nerve.

“Khumbu lets go” Mbengi says

“if you want to go, go and leave my son alone” Mrs Munayi says taking Khumbu’s hand into hers.

Mbengi clicks his tongue and walks out.

“pheh that was tense...” Rendani says and laughs.

“So the dowry will be...” Rendani cuts his uncle short while still taking.

“I am gay” Rendani says, and others gasp.

“Didn’t the pastor pray for you Rendani” his mother says with tears falling down her face. Her family is falling apart and it’s all on her, only Khumbu listens to her and he is what normal kids do.

“Like you sleep with other men” one of the uncles says clapping his hands. This is one fucked up family; Rendani nods the uncle stands up and walk out.

“Are you going to marry one of them Khumbu?” Rendani asks looking at him and all eyes lands on him.

“Mmmh...I...I think” his mother’s eyes are begging him to say yes, he let out I sigh then brush his head.

****CHAPTER 27****

****KHUMBUDZO****

His eyes travels from one aunt to another, from one uncle to another, then his mother. Suspense killing them one by one but what was the cause because at the end of the day, they are going to bully him do as they like.

“Son” his uncle’s voice brings him back to the table and Mbengi is as well standing by the passage ready to hear what he wants.

“Tell me you will shame the devil my son” her mother’s shaky voice.

She knows she can’t be having all this laddies going back especially Khumbelo, the promises made that needs to come to pass and now is the time. Both Khumbu and Khumbelo are adults. They have to understand that most family business they came with the price to pay and for every business to flourish contracts are made and all have to get some bargain in all. And now it’s their turn to pay and here is the payment.

“He is not marrying anyone’s daughter, especially the one you guys think she will be a best suitor for him. Why do you guys take your sons to marry them” Mbengi says walking further in

the room smelling like marijuana and one of the aunts closes their noise with a hand. That sends Mbengi to the ground with laughter as Rendani joins him.

“I am glad that my daughter won’t be marrying this lunatic” one of the elders who come with girls says.

“I am usually crazier than this mama. She was going to go crazy by just staying with me for three hours. So in low key I love to save her from mental break down” he says pulling the chair sitting down. “Ooh and thanks for compliment mama, your two cents is just a confidence boaster” and Rendani dies with laughter.

Others were livid with how things are; the boys were disrespecting them tarnishing the family name further.

“khumbu my baby what do you say” his mother says bring back the attention back to him.

“I am sorry ma but I can’t...”his mother looks at him with tears forming on her eyes.

“You can’t do that...Khumbu ple...please” she says holding her chest and she fall.

“Mma...” they both hover around her trying to check her pulse.

“Can someone please call the ambulance” Rendani say checking her pulse.

Everyone seems shocked and just looking at what was happening.

“Is the pulse there?” Mbengi says trying to fan her.

“Ambulance...you know how to find us a suitable suitor but fails to call ambulance...call 123 its free” he screams

****SHANDU****

Today, it’s the day she have been dragging this day to come. She isn’t ready to face her mother in law, but she have to do this. For Thendo, before he starts to accuse her of not wanting to marry him and starts with his ways of cheating. She wraps her head with a scarf and finish off her look with a red lipstick. She looks dashing in knit wear red dress; it bit chilly black high boots.

She checks the time of her phone and heave a sigh then lock the doors, most of the Saturdays Tendani doesn’t spend the day at home. She walks to his place, it is not that far.

In few she is knocking at the door and Thendo opens the door for her.

“Baby” he says flashing a Colgate smile and she blushes.

“Hey...” she says and Thendo ushers her inside.

She looks around uncomfortable, and sit on the coach biting her nails.

“She is not here, don’t worry but she will be here any minute from her. Do you want anything to drink” he asks pulling her to a hug then kisses her cheek.

“water will be fine” she says, after training her tongue to not ask for a cold drink, only a glass of coke can cool her nerves but it’s not ‘healthy Shandu’ Thendo always reminds Her. Like when his drinking his beers he is nourishing his body.

“Okay my love” he says, and the front door opens making them to look at the door.

“Ooh, bedroom is that side” Thendo’s mother says throwing her handbag on the coach and she follows.

“Mma” Thendo says and she shrug.

“Can you get me a glass of water” she says looking at Thendo “ndi masiari shandu

hu rini?” (Good afternoon Shandu, how are you?) She says looking at Shandu who is busy panicking. About what they are about to tell her, marriage is a big step but the question remains unasked is she ready?

She smiles nervously “masisari avhudi mma” (good afternoon to you too mom” she says. Then Thendo walks in and gives both the laddies their glasses of water.

“Ma, there is something we would like to tell you” Thendo says and Shandu almost spill the water.

“What...don’t tell me you knock her up” she says placing the glass on the tray that is on the table.

And Shandu choke in her water, Thendo gently pat her on the back.

“Will it be a bad thing after all we are grownups” Thendo says and his mother looks at him like really look at him.

“You’re not ready for a baby, and what will you be teaching my poor grandchild...” she says.

She haven’t comes to terms that her son, her one and only child beats his girlfriend and since then their relationship has been in pits as she says he must take anger management classes and he says he doesn’t have problem controlling his anger.

“We are getting married” he cuts her short.

“As in paying dowry for her?”... “Like all the western marriage and African” she says with her jaws on the floor.

“That will be on her, but we want to talk to you before making it official” Thendo says.

“Ooh...what did you want to tell me” she says, like he didn’t tell her that they are getting married.

“That we are getting married ma” he says and she sigh.

“Shandu, what is you’re say in all this” his mother asks looking at her. And she gets covered with goose bumps. As coldness makes a home in her.

“Yea...yes, it is what I want ma” she says looking down.

“No...don’t be shy Shandu. A thi you’re the one who want to stay with him while makes you his punching bag.” She says.

“Mma...” Shandu says

“No Shandu, you should be encouraging him to get help and you’re busy giving him a cookie Shandu, to lure him in but until when” she says looking straight at her.

“Mma...” Thendo says in a reprimanding voice.

“Don’t reprimand me Thendo; you guys want to get married. You want to kill each other in my compound and people are going to say I hated her that I look aside when you kill her.” she says and Thendo is beside himself with anger.

“What do you want Shandu, tell what do you want. After all the tribulations you have been through. You still make yourself a carpet for a man. He is my son and I love him so much, but I can’t act like I don’t see the wrongs he is doing but if this is what you want then its fine, marry him and for your sake I hoe you’re right that he change because if not. You might not survive this, you might not die but emotionally...” she stands up takes her bag and walk towards her bedroom.

CHAPTER 28

I couldn't have taken your responsibility as a first son. I would have been dancing my life away following my dreams and today here I am stuck because of you Mbengi. It's all because of you" he says yelling at him.

"Ooh like it's my fault that you allow her to walk over you. I might be all things, everything you think of me but I am a man...I stand my ground. I have done bad things in the past and maybe still involved but the reason I did what I did was to give you a better life and an experience. I never get the opportunity to further my studies because I was busy hustling, for us. Where do you think your father found money to start the same business that is said that I can not own any shares because I am a bad person...my blood money funds it and today you talk English like a white person because of me. And you feel like I am to be blamed for every wrong thing that happened in this family. Actually you're all self-centered people the same reason that your mother's sister choose to isolate herself from..."

"Not here guys" Rendani says and look at them with bloodshot eyes.

Mbengi clicks his tongue and take out a cigar out of his pocket and a lighter, he starts smoking busy clicking his tongue calming himself.

"she is awake" Rendani says after some time and khumbu runs back in leaving Rendani and Mbengi behind.

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THENDO

"You're marring her..." she says with a broken voice.

He is with mulalo at mulalo's place. It's just after steamy session and now they are catching up.

Thendo sees as a perfect opportunity to tell her about the arrangements with Shandu.

"First...I will marry you too my love. Soon" he says kissing her head.

"Do you think I fit for being the second best" she says with tears flowing down. It hurts to be honest, she have been with him for far to long for him to introduce another woman and be ready to marry her. What is it that she haven't been doing right? Is the only question that keeps pestering her.

"Do you love her?" she asks.

And Thendo keeps quiet for some time then breathe out.

"I love that she is a wife material, she is submissive, she wears accordingly and her presence makes me look respectable. She is warm by nature and violent as well" he says smiling and she regrets her question immediately. Why did she ask that.

"And me?" she asks. She has to know where she stands with him, and whether he will smile more than he did when taking about her.

"And you my love, are what my heart wans" he says smiling and his face lighting up.

"But why do you bring other woman." She asks

“For stability my love, for a home. I don’t want to tie you to a housewife shit but wants you to be right next to me when we explore the world with her bust making my home warm” he says and she smile.

“Let’s stop talking about other people, in our bed and do this” he says lowering his hand to her nana. And she gasps as his finger enters her with no warning.

“I love you” he says moving his finger in circle while trying to make her open up a bit. His other and grabs his breast and she let out a morn.

“I love you to Thendo” she mumbles as pleasure engulfs her.

****KHUMBUDZO****

He can’t let this kill his mother, he have to do ask she asked and as usual she wins. It always have been her way or no way and now he was about to say no...no from finding himself in an entanglement that he didn’t entangle himself with but he was entangled with.

The doors have been busy with his mother and the whole family is there waiting for the results. Everybody seems saddened by all this and worried as well. Even Mbengi is busy popping his fingers then blows out some air. Rendani looks like his world have just stooped.

This is the true definition of no matter how much we fight with our parents we love them and if anything happens to them it affects them. Who would have thought that Mbengi will be with them here and also looking worried and stressed.

“I will marry her...” Khumbu says breaking the eyes and all eyes lift to him and a smile forms on Khumbelo’s face.

“Son...” he cuts his uncle short.

“No...it fine, arrange everything and tell me attire, time , dates and place and I will be there” he says looking at khumbelo then stands up and walks out.

Mbengi follows him.

“Are you mad” he says breathing fire just behind him and he stops with eyes filled with tears. One blink, it becomes a river.

“I don’t want her death to be on my hands...I don’t want her blood on my hands...” khumbu standing there looking at his brother.

“It’s not your fault, khumb...”he cuts her short again.

“it doesn’t matter, I am not like you. I care about mom, I feel for her unlike you...” he says

“ooh, is that so now khumbu. With all the sacrifice I have done and I never claim for any benefits...from all the shit I have been involving myself into for the sake of your protection, Rendani and the same woman you’re busy saying I don’t respect” Mbengi says getting pissed.

****CHAPTER 29****

****SHANDU****

It have been a week since they talked to thendo’s mother, she wasn’t happy about us getting married, but at the end of the day it’s our choice, she have to accept it as it is.

Now she have to tell tendi, even though their relationship is unstable, she is her sister and she still want her to be there when she walk down the aisle.

“Tendi” I says an soon as she walks inside the house from the school. Today I didn’t go to work, I called in sick.

“Hello” she says throwing her school bag on the bed then walking to the wardrobe to pick out clothes to wear.

“I...I am getting married” I say then let out sigh of relief.

“Congratulation” she says not looking at her.

“is that all you’re going to say?” she asked feeling a bit hurt she expected more than this from her, she is her sister after all and even though they fight a lot lately but a little bit of happiness wouldnr make her a bitter bitch like she is right now.

“What do you want from me shandu?”She is ask tired from fighting this, this isn’t her life, maybe she should also stop parenting her and look at her sign her own death certificate.

“I want you to act like any sister out there...to be happy for me, to make that sis screams saying ooh my god fanning yourself, is it too hard” she says sitting on the bed.

“Ooh, I hate to pretend Shandu. I don’t want to lie and say I am happy for you while I am not. I feel sorry for you my love, it’s true what they say when they says give a dog a rope and it will hang its self. You’re busy living that proverb” she says sitting next to him.

That word “dog”, someone else calls her a dog...it doesn’t matter where its comparability but a dog is a dog and a bird is a bird. She cannot be compared to one if they don’t see one when looking at her.

She looks down, breathing in and out, trying to get hold of her emotions before they vacate her body.

“Do you have a death wish?” tendani says after some moment of silence.

“No...no I don’t, I am just a girl who is madly in love. Someone who is not you...grandma or mom. Someone of the other gender. Showing me the kind of love I have never get from anyone else. I love him to death and if you think I am signing my death certificate so be it. There is no other man’s love I know other than his and how do I know his is not true. Comparing to whose love. Whose warms? I don’t expect you to understand Tendi you’re still young but I want you on my corner, I want you to be there when in my lowest, you are all I have Tendi, I have done and still doing all I can to provide for you. To make you a better person than me but that doesn’t me judge me Tendi.” She says with tears falling down her face.

Maybe growing up in a matriarch family messed with her but they taught us right. They make sure to teach us wrong from right. To know when to walk away when someone hurts you, to stand tall and brave when situations come but this...the way Shandu behaves because of love its new to her.

“Shandu

do what best for you. I will forever be there for you. I might not like what you’re doing with your life but it’s yours sis, do you but I want to ask you one question” she says

“Is it worth it...your life? Is it all worth him, a man who have made you his punching bag, a laughing stock...a gossiping stock among his friends and a door mat” tendi says looking at her with tear flowing down her left eye.

They might have drift apart, but they are bond by blood. And blood is thicker than water. Shandu nods her head wiping her own tears as well.

"I love him...I just have to make him love me the way I love him too" she says

"What do you stand to benefit in this relationship, after all the giving you have been doing? You're willing to sacrifice anything for this relationship but what is it that he is sacrificing. What is it that he is bringing on the table? Or is it going to be you pouring to fill his cup...to feel my cup and everyone else cup but who will fill yours." Tendani says as silence makes a home for a moment, finding a home in their one roundover house that is already fully packed.

"Don't answer me, but think about it. Do self-introspection then you will know if this is all worth it" she says standing up.

"If it worth it, then marry him. I will come to the wedding; I will be there for you but don't expect me to accept him. To look aside when he kill you. Because if it's a war he wants then it's a war he will get. The fact that I am young doesn't matter, what matters is you" she then walks out of house, leaving shandu gulled to where have been sitting.

An hour has elapsed now and she haven't moved from the bed, tendi have given her something to think about. And she has trying to do that for the past hour...thinking about it. her phone rings taking her off her pool of thoughts and she looks at it as she tempt to toss it aside , but she knows better than to do so.

"Babe" thendo says as soon as she answers the call

"Hey..." she heave a sigh.

"Is everything right baby" Thendo asks like he is concerned.

She shakes her head, then sniff. She has been a cry maybe as well lately.

"Is everything alright baby?" he asks genially concerned and worried as well this time around.

"Just heard a talk with my sister" she says

"And then...did she say something that hurts you?" he asks

"No...it was just a genuine conversation"

"So, what made you cry" he asks rolling his eyes

"Nothing I can't handle...are you still at town" she asks. She doesn't want to cook today, so she better ask him to buy them take away.

"Yes, what do you want" he asks.

"Full chicken...actually make it a family meal with coke" she says and he laughs.

"That shit aren't healthy. I will order you a chicken salad, do you want still water or tap water will be fine?" he says changing her order from fatty and greasy to dry and not appetising at all. She will turn a cow one day in the name of eating healthy, but have a man to please.

"Yeah, tap water will be fine" she says.

"I love you" she says

"Me to" he, mumbles back.

CHAPTER 30

Things do move with time if you putting an effort, it can move ahead of time. Like the wedding shandu is not sure about it while khumbu just don't care while khumbelo is more willing to put in extra effort for her day. But that is an easy assignment she have all assistance in world, even though the groom just awaits the "theme, date, time and place" they are his words not anyone else.

It have been two weeks with both wedding preparations undergoing and according to those who are hands on, everything is going accordingly and just awaits the I DO date to come.

Shandu is busy fighting the computer keyboard if not losing patience with the customers.

Khumbu on the other side is a walking zombie. He have a lot on his shoulder but he can't seems to make his heart understands that Shandu can never be his but his cousin. They are both tying the knot and should celebrate that achievement like he is expected to, but how do he celebrate marriage to someone he knows nothing about nor is he interested in starting anything with but this...this is his bed, he made it so he should lie on it.

He is sitting by the window viewing Sibasa people go up and down, the vendas and those who finds a taxi for you, he calls them hustellers of high note. But what hurts most is the money they get they use it for substance abuse, at least they aren't stealing from anyone.

This takes him back to his cheerful days where he was young with no burdens.

"The view that side isn't that good" Mbengi's voice echos behind him.

He didn't expect him here, not today at least but after that drama that nearly took the wrong turn they have never meet, he have been making sure and now he is here, like nothing happened.

Maybe that how people of his kind are like, they stab each other and after sit together and share a Scaife.

"Mmmh, but I love it here" he says moving from the where he is to his chair.

"How can I help you?" He says not tearing his eyes off the chunk of papers that are in front of him. Moving them from this side of the table to the other end.

"So...you're married to her..." mbengi says throughing himself on the coach.

"Mmmh, yeah....hello" he says.

A moment of silence passes with eyes boring khumbu's skin and sighs follows.

"Can I please talk to my brother not my mother's skive " he says breaking the silence.

"Ooh...now he insults me" he says dramatically throughinh his hands in the air.

He sure knows how to get inside his skin and he was successfully doing so. But Mbengi as always he knows how to control himself or should I say his lungs takes a punishment for every punch he should have been throwing it on someone's son. But he choose to lit up his cigar and puff it like his life depends on it. Bad habit kani, but he ain't perfect as well.

"Here is how is going to be like" he says blowing the Marijuana smoke right into Khumbu's face and he coughs.

"Dinner date...tonight my place" he says looking at Khumbu with reddish eyes.

"I am not coming." he protested.

" I dont remember asking you Khumbu and please don't belate. Shandu will be there as well" he says and makes puts the other half of his joint inside the pocket. Then took out a bubblegum throws it in his mouth and start the chewing game.

He stands up and fix his jacket.

"7 Oclock don't be late" he takes few steps to the door and then turns to him.

"I love you ntwana

"What have you done heh? Tell me what is it that you have done other than causing pain and heartaches for our mother. Your doings killed our father mbengi, it left us fatherless and now you're here telling me about protection. Why didn't you protect him from yourself, he wouldn't have died

we might fight but it's brotherhood that makes us fight but that doesn't call for a war. What happens back then should stay there. What matters I now not things that none of us can change. So change your attitude small" he says then opens the door and closes it then he is gone.

Living khumbu astonished by his behavior, but what new there. Mbengi does his own things when he thinks they are best things to do and never cares who says what about what in his life. It's his after all.

****MBENGI****

He lives his life with no rules, trying to live his life to the fullest but with past he can't change. He ain't ashamed of his scares his wrongs and everything he have done to make ends meet. But he is a human being, a man with a heart, the same heart he thought he have built enough long walls around it but he the day his eyes lands right on her, his inner self told him, there is the one. But because of circumstances he let her go for his brother. Letting her go didn't me not caring for her it means doing anything for them to end up together, he will be happy if shandu and mbengi tie the knot. He will know the love of his life is in good hands but hearing and seeing khumbu succumb to his mother's tricks like always made him to dig more deeper of what really happens behind closed doors between Shandu and Thendo. But that was a very easy task as Thendo airs his bedroom laundry out in open. He knows everything but he can't help her it weird right. Going to someone with file of their loved ones and throws it to their face and say "look, this is what your other half do when you're not around" but one way or the other he will help her but first thing first is to make her fall inlovr with khumbu. The dinner date is the start. He walks out of the lift and walks towards her desk.

"Hooo, what have it done to you now my lady"he asks shandu who is busy giving the poor computer the hard time.

"This thing isn't working...ahhh..." she answers frustrated, she is trying to do her work and it's standing on her way.

"Let me help" he says going to her side and move click few things then everything becomes alright.

"Thank you" she says smiling and he smiles back.

"No...its nothing" he says smiling back. Going back to the other side.

"I owe with my life" she says and mbengi laughs.

"You don't value your life then...you owe me dinner date not your life" he says and she stop smiling.

"No...I don't do dinner date with..." he cuts her short.

" I am not asking you out to be my wife but to know you and you said it yourself you owe me" he says and she keeps quiet.

"I know you have a fiance...Thendo, so it's just dinner with me and I will drive you back home I promise" he says and she shakes her head. She knows better, than to disrespect Thendo like that. "Please, only this once..." he pleads

"My man is..." he cuts her short.

"He don't have to know, just an half or half an hour please" she asks and she nods.

"Okay...only 30minites " she says and he nods flashing her a smile.

"My place, I stay at Diambele" he says and that sounds better. From tshakhuma diamabele to tshakhuma maungani, it's not that far.

"I will come and get you after work" she nods and he runs out a happy man. He has dinner date to prepare for even though he won't be part of it.

CHAPTER 31

She has been looking at her reflection for about five minutes now, checking if everything is on point. The lipstick is still intact, make up we all know those sheen shine your shoe make up are like. Once the sun bakes your black skin you sweat like no body's business and not forget the oil that our skin produces. You shine through those face mud and feel sorry for yourself and also embarrassed.

She might not have dressed to kill, no scratch that she doesn't want to kill him but if she looks good the dinner partner feels good as well.

"ndo naka shem"(I am beautiful shame" she says biting her lower lip and smile forms on her face.

She put the mirror down and park her stuff, its almost time to go home and she is looking forward to a dinner date, underline that a dinner date where she can eat meat hayi chicken salad and tap water...still water or what what water from which ever river river they find and make it a healthy diet water. She is allowed to eat a whole chicken leg with no question asked.

It is so obvious that she is ready, and looking forward to the dinner. After parking her stuff and stands up ready to walk out of the building when her phone beams indicating she have a message.

Baby, I can't come to fetch you today, I will be spending weekend with my friend. Call when you sleep, I LOVE YOU, the message says and she heaves a sigh.

She has long forgotten to inform her fiancé that she will be having dinner with Mbengi at least now she doesn't have to let anyone know. She walks out with a smile on her face and finds him parking, he have just gotten here.

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He had gone beyond everything superstition thing. The candles, the lighting, the music set the atmosphere of Mbengi's living room. He has out did himself and you can swear this is his own dinner date but what less to expect as he loves the girl also.

Shandu is dumbstruck feeling out of place, with her sweaty self; tell me who would feel comfortable going to a dinner date without freshening out. She knows nothing about a romantic gesture; the only romance she knows is when he pulls her panty off her using his teeth and that it.

"Wow" she said in awe, looking around

"Do you like it?" he asks grinning

“Like is an understatement. I love it. It’s...its beautiful” she says feeling so small inside the biggest lounge she have ever been into other than seeing it on those home choice magazines. Mbengi’s house is beautiful, no other house can be compared to his in the whole of Tshakhuma not just Diambele but the whole tshakhuma, it is just a one storey house with double garage, a kitchen, a lounge, TV room and four bedrooms with suite in all rooms. The grass and the flowers can make you wander if he have time to do gardening or to clean a yard but his yard is so clean.
“mmmmh”

Some clears his throat and to her surprise its none other than Khumbu and mbengi smiles nervously.

“Ooh, I thought...” she says looking at Mbengi feeling like a slut. Not long ago, khumbu asked her for dinner and she accepted it now she is here with his big brother while dating their cousin that slut-ish but food is food and has nothing to do with this.

“You can sit here” mbengi says opening the chair for her to sit and cutting her short. He will leave Khumbu to do the rest.

He signals to Khumbu trying to tell him to say something and to save him.

“mmh

drinks” khumbu says running to the kitchen before anyone answers, leaving shandu confused.

Mbengi’s phone rings and he thank his lucky star, even though it’s his mother calling but at least now it’s something.

“Let me go answer the call” he says walking out. khumbu walks back with a tray that have four glasses they were three and now...okay.

“I remember I don’t know what you will like to drink so I bought you water, orange juice and a cold drink” he says placing the tray right in the middle of the small table that only fits two people.

“you and my brother...” he says sitting down taking his glass of water and leaving other three glasses for shandu to choose and of course she is tired of water so cold drink all the way.

“Nothing is going on between me and your brother. He just helped me with something and I owe him dinner that all” he says taking a sip of her drink and he smiles.

“Actually he was doing it for us” he says

“Us...like how” he asks

“To talk, because he doubted if you would give me chance for another dinner because of last time” he lies.

“Ooh I would have, who would say no to free food” she says laughing and he stands up.

“Let me dish up. We will talk while eating” he says walking to the kitchen. And come back with a tray of that has two plates and closed by the other plate. He shows her the kitchen to wash her hands then waits for her to come back. She opens her dish and the appetizing smell hits her nostrils and her stomach grumbles, a smile forms on her face. Nothing beats a chicken and rice. African festive meal and eating rice and chicken with all seven colours before Christmas to her it’s a blessing. Yes she works but her salary has a lot more to do than to invest in food.

“You like it” khumbu asks seeing how her face immediately light up when her eyes lands on her plate.

“I love chicken” she says and starts stuffing herself with her food.

“I am getting married” Khumbu says and she shrug. It’s not like it’s her business, they aren’t best of friends so whoever he is marrying is a lucky girl.

“Me too” she says stating the obvious; everyone knows that she is getting married. Thendo made it his job to tell whoever is willing to listen that he is marrying the love of his life and social media was the best place to publish such news. He has about 6000 followers so, letting those all people know that was enough to let the whole world know.

“Yeah, how is thendo” he asks and that question almost ruined her appetite.

“He is good and you’re fiancé?” she asks looking at him as she witnesses a frown lines forms on his forehead. She isn’t the only one who frowns when she is being asked about her sugar and spice. Even Khumbu meaning they have a lot in common.

“Let’s not talk about her” he says after some few minutes of silence. Butchering the poor chicken with knife.

Shandu, is eating using her own hands.

“I love you...” his mouth betrays him.

Shandu chokes on her cold drink and spill on her dress.

“Ooh...sorry, I, I. damn this is hard” khumbu says trying to dry her using the cloths that that he have already went to take from the kitchen”.

Everything happened so fast, none of them had seen it happening. Their lips lock to each other with his hand caressing her breast, the kiss have a lot of emotions involved, and they find themselves acting based on their emotions. The chemistry and the sparks where too much. Her hand went inside his t-shirt and caress his bare packs going up to his chest and back to his stomach while he bring her closer to him.

“khu...khumbu” she says

“Babe” he whispers. The kiss is amazing and doesn’t want it to stop.

“Stop...Stop” she says and he stop. She doesn’t push him away and he doesn’t move away from her.

A minute passes, with their eyes locked; she moves her eyes from his and her eyes lands just below his waist on his boner and she swallows. He moves his eyes to where hers are and he clears his throat.

“Let’s get you something to where” he says standing and pull her to his bedroom when he is here and loot through his closet and find tracksuits and a t shirt. Leave her ton change. He finds Mbengi making plating the food.

“Where is my guest?” mbengi asks.

“Changing, she spill cold drink to herself” so I gave her my clothes. He says taking a glass and pours himself some water.

After sometime she walks down with her clothes on her hand.

“mbengi” she say avoiding eyes contact with khumbu,

Hey he says back, they talk a little then khumbu accompanies her.

The drive to her place was a silence one, and there was a car parked at her place then she panics when she sees, the car.

“You can drop me here” she says and he looks at her.

“Here?” he asks with a frown.

“Yes” she says but he ignores her, and drops her off at her gate. She gets out very fast closes the door running to Thendo’s car with khumbu following her.

CHAPTER 32

He is fuming; he is boiling in anger, the disrespect, and the pain of betrayal written on his face. He is watching her running to his car with a man following her. She said she will be going home when they talk and after work confirmed that but not answering. And here she is running to him because “their thing” didn’t go well he assumes. He then unlocks his car and get out composing himself. Shandu throws herself on him.

“Where from?” he asks through his teeth.

She flinches as he grabs her arm tight but she can’t show the pain right. Khumbu catch up to her and stands there looking at them.

“Thendo...” he says.

Thendo snorts in anger.

“What are you doing with my woman, Thendo” he asks his claws still dipped on her arm, but because it is already late and dark, his car lights aren’t doing enough justice to the darkness.

“We were having dinner and...” khumbu says justifying why they come home late. But he cuts him short.

“It’s okay cuz, thanks for bring her home after wards” he says forcing a smile, Shandu’s heart is racing and she can tell. It’s about to go down.

Khumbu can see that something is clearly not right but a person doesn’t meddle in another person’s business. He looks at shandu who looks like she is praying then back at Thendo.

“Will you be alright?” he asks and Thendo nods then his eyes moves to Shandu.

She feels herself getting emotional than chooses to nod also, she don’t trust her voice to come out clear.

“Okay then I will be on my way” he then turns to go then stop, look at shandu and get a very good glimpse of her face. But he walks back to his car pushing what he saw at the back of his head. He gets into his car and he drives out.

They stand there quiet and still, looking at his car until it disappears then the heavy night and its coldness makes its presence felt. Her harm has been burning and she could swear his claws have dug deep to her bone.

“Thendo” she says after some silence and he keep quiet then heave a sigh.

“Are you giving him my pussy?” he asks his voice filled with anger and pain at the same time. She shakes her head, remembering the kiss and what she felt, but is it safe to tell him now.

“You don’t know how to talk now shandu, you sleep with my cousin shandu, come back smelling like him, wearing his clothes and...he, he have the nerve to run after you” he says brushing his head.

“Let’s go” he says pushing him to her home. They get inside and lucky Tendi is not around, she is busy with the exams, so she goes to school to study with others.

The moment they walk in a clap lands on her cheek and she falls on top on the bed with no intention of waking up.

You reek of a man shandu, not me shandu...not me” thendo says with tears falling down his cheeks. His ego is bruised, how will he...

He paces up and down then looks at her for a long time

then looks the door, then takes out a gun from his hip and places it on the table. He forcefully takes off her clothes and pulls his trouser down. She tries fighting him.

“Thendo please, I didn’t do anything” she says with tears running down her face.

He shakes his head and forcefully spread her legs wide open and slum hard to her not wet nana and she screams out loud.

“You’re making noise” he says giving her a back hand clap on her face and she sees stars and blood runs out her nose. He then start humming her nana in a fast pace, he go on and on until he feel himself feeling ready to explode, he then pulls out and splashes his sperms on her tummy.

“That how you like it bitch” he says say then looks at her.

“What where you doing with him?” he ask, she doesn’t have strengths anymore she continues to sob softly.

Then he takes off his belt and looks at her.

“I ask you answer?” okay, she nods and a whip lands on her tummy and she cries out loud in agony.

“You now don’t have a voice?” he screams at her

“I...I have it” she says in between her sobs.

“So, why did you sleep with him?” he asks and she takes few minutes to collect her voice and another whip lands on her arm and she flinches crying out loud.

This was bad, and she can see that only mercy can save her today.

“I didn’t sleep with him” she says and that answer wasn’t the best, he whips her until her voice can’t come out loud, she sobs in silence and sleeping on the cold floor with blood on the bed and floor. He whips her calling her a whore, a liar, a slut and any type of an insult that comes from his mind.

He is like a possess man, nothing is stopping him. He then gets tired of whipping her then starts to kick her on her tummy she cries out and pleads with him until a knock on the door stops him.

“Shandu” Tendi’s voice says from the other side.

Thendo cocks his gun then signals shandu to keep quiet then opens the door. She had a frying pan on her hands because she heard unpleasant sound coming from the house and the first thing was to help her sister. She wanted to run but to where?

Thendo unlocks the door and hide behind the door, Tendi hears the keys turn but, the door is not opened so she opens the door and her eyes pop out and got alarmed when she sees her sister on the floor with blood on her thighs she drops the pot and runs to her sister.

“Ma...Shandu” she says in a panic and then feels a cold object on her head and tears steams down her face.

“Shandu” she whispers.

Shandu was weak, just staring at everything taking place.

“You’re cheating on me” thendo says with his gun still in pointed to tendi. Shandu clears her voice and try her best with her last strength.

“One last time, or I blow her brains” he says

“I...I didn’t cheat Thendo, he kissed me that all” she says.

He chuckles in anger “what do you want to say to your sister boss lady before you meet your bitchy ancestors” thendo says with no care hardening his gun to tendi and her tears falls looking at her sister.

“I asked you, what you were looking for in this relationship shandu, countless time. We even fought about it. But you choose to stay, look at you and then me **BECOMING THE SACRIFICE OF YOUR LOVE SHANDU**” she says with tears and then closes her eyes awaits her time.

Shandu is losing too much blood and struggling to stay awake.

“I am sorry baby girl” he says letting the trigger go. He shoots her three times and the fourth one goes to shandu on her stomach.

****CHAPTER 33****

****Three months later****

“The most painful goodbyes are the ones that are left unsaid and never explained” ~Jonathan harnisch, freak

He looks at her with all machines attached to her body, he feels guilty of everything. I shouldn't have left her in his hands is what keeps running in his mind. He is guilty of ignorance, he might not have pulled the trigger but guilt makes him her bitch not every night but anytime a day, and he is tired.

“We were burying her today” he says taking her hand into his and chuckles in pain. “It was painful, like how it happened. People...people helped a lot but shandu we are sorry you didn't get the chance to bid farewell to her but she can't stay in the morgue any longer, we shouldn't have kept her so long in the morgue while you're not making any healing process” he says with tears running down his face.

Remembering that day like how it was, from the kiss they shared that is always in his mind, to the look of fear on her face when he left her with thendo, but it didn't occur to him that his cousin was capable of such cruelty.

****FLASH BACKS****

“tell me how was it like?” mbengi asks, sitting next to khumbu who have just throw himself on the coach looking upset minded, he looks occupied but at the moment mbengi wanted to know how everything, as he was the one who planned everything.

“Mmh, well I think” he says shrugging then brushes his head then heave a sigh.

“What's wrong, did she reject you?” mbengi asks in a whisper feeling defeated, he thought that this will make him happy and also changes his decision on their doomed marriage. He doesn't want his brother to live his life in regret.

“We kissed...but...” he rubs his hands as the picture of her face and emotions where like when he leaves her.

“But what khumbu, stop playing games” he says punching him a little on his shoulder.

“I am not, it's just...you know what let's just leave it” he says standing up.

“But...” mbengi says in defeat, he could see something is bothering his little brother but what is it that he finds it hard to share with him, he will just let it be for now.

Khumbu goes to his bedroom to lie down a little, but he couldn't sleep he keeps thinking about her

he then takes his phone and calls her, it rings until it leads him to voice mail. After sometimes he walks back to the lounge and finds mbengi drinking his beer with a cigar on the other hand while watch soccer highlights.

“what would you do if your woman comes home in a another man’s clothes and late at night?” he asks throwing himself next to his brother then takes the half empty can of beer and drinks as well.

“Kill the mother fucker who have the nerve to give my woman his dirty clothes” he says looking at the TV. Khumbu nods.

“Why are you asking?” he says turning to him.

“When we get to shandu’s place Thendo was there and...” before he could even finish, mbengi stood up runs to his room then comes back with a gun in his hand.

“Mulandu?”(What’s wrong?) khumbu asks in panic.

“I hope he didn’t kill her” mbengi says grabbing his car keys.

“Do you think...” mbengi cuts him short before he even continues.

“Don’t tell me you haven’t notice the dark marks beneath that heavy makeup she wear sometimes, the scarfs, the lipping. She is always sick or “her sister” as she claims” he says running out.

Khumbu’s jaws drops, he didn’t think about it that much, he haven’t...he never thought that maybe... yoh whatever he was thought-ting was never...Anyway he also stood up and runs after mbengi. He jumps in the car and mbengi flies to shandu place, how he knows the place no one knows how but it’s not the time for that at moment as he is busy questioning his level of stupidity if not ignorance.

They get there, in a minute; Thendo’s car is still parked at the gate.

The yard was filled with neighbours who were just standing there. He jumps out of the car before it even stops and runs towards the house, pushing through the crowd.

Mbengi catches up with him and they walk inside the house, and what they found was...it was all like some horror movie or some story that is fabricated but it was the truth three bodies lying on the floor. Blood streams and the gun next to Thendo.

“Yoh...mma” Khumbu says, holding his head in defeat.

END OF FLASH BACKS

After few minutes the police finally come and the ambulance follows through shortly. Shandu’s little sister was certified dead on the spot as she was short three times on the head and thendo who shot himself on the head. Whilst shandu was in a critical state so she was rushed to the hospital.

“Nwananga” (my baby), thendo’s mother says getting inside the ward shandu is in.

“Mma” he says raising his head.

“How are you holding up?” she asks and he shrugs.

“I am fine mma and you” he says and she smiles.

“I am okay” she says sitting down.

She has lost some weight, and she looks older than her age by all the wrinkles on her face and pain is detectable on her face. It’s all understandable, she lost a son, her daughter in law is in hospital and her daughter in law’s sister was just buried few hours ago. Hi son is the cause of all

these; he is not here to answer any of the questions. And now, people are questioning her parental skills, they gossip about her. Heads turn as she parades on the streets. She is strong but also needs a shoulder to cry on but whom would she cry to as she doesn't have anyone. She touches shandu's hand and brushes it, the machines start to make loud sound while she vigorously shakes.

"No...no...No shandu" she says trying to hold her down crying.

"Nurse! Nurse!" khumbu screams running to the door.

The doctors and nurses flood, shandu's ward and chase khumbu and thendo's mother out of the ward trying to stabilize her.

"She can't die" she says holding her chest bending as her chest tightens with tears streaming down her face.

"Mama..." he says before he could finish. Thendo's mother falls, and she shakes violently.

"Nurse!" he screams loud kneeling next to her.

CHAPTER 34

"Mrs Modau" the doctor says walking towards the corridors that leads to the waiting area.

His brothers have been here, even his mother and his fiancée too. They arrived few minutes after his aunt was admitted and being attended by the doctors.

"What's happening doctor?" he says jumping right in front of the doctor.

"Mmmh..." the doctor says giving him the looks.

"She is my aunt and we are her family" he says.

"She is my sister" his mother says adding to the statement.

She has been quiet ever since she has get here, and that is unlucky for her. Khumbu knows that his mother doesn't like Thendo's mother but her being here shocked everyone.

"Okay...we are sorry to inform you that Mrs Modau have severely suffered from stroke. Her left side can no longer function well, she will have to attend physiotherapy for that."

The room gets quiet for a few moments, doctors giving them a moment to digest the news.

"How is she now?" mbengi asks

"She is okay, but we will be admitting her to check her progress and her high blood pressure" the doctor says.

Mrs munyai's tears fall freely on her face and mbengi just look at her.

"Mma..." both khumbu and rendi says including khumbelo hugging her.

"We are only two...two only and I hated her now, now she is alone" she says while khumbelo's tears fall as well. It's not an easy thing to witness an adult crying. It hardly happens and when it does it makes those around her to cry as well.

"Can we see her" mbengi asks and the doctors lead the way going back to her ward.

Walking in they find her looking at space, with dry marks of tears on her cheeks.

"Mma" mbengi says kneeling beside her bed as the doctor walks out leaving them there.

"Mbengi" she softly says with a faint voice.

"How are you feeling" rendani says sitting next to her on the bed. She still remembers him even though she has never seen him a lot. By the time rendani was born her sister has already cast her out of the family pond.

But she loves him; he brings positive energy because of his always cheerful face that reminds her of her husband a lot.

She chuckles before answering.

“I am just waiting for my day, there is nothing else left for me” she says with a smile.

“Don’t talk like that ma” mbengi says with his eyes wide open.

“It is bound to happen nwananga ri nga si zwi shavhe” (it is bound to happen my baby we can’t run away from it) she says.

“And who is the lovely sister” she asks and khumbelo smiles.

“She is Khumbudzo’s fiancée” rendani says and Mrs Modau seems surprised but she let it be.

It’s not her business anyway.

They start conversing about anything and everything; laughing here and there but the two sisters have not shared anything amongst each other. They would just steal glances at each other.

For 22 years with them not meeting, calling, or sending letters to each other at least. Even by a snail mail but nix

and today they sit like strangers.

“Mrs Munyai” she says looking at her sister.

And the kids shares looks among each other than walks out. Leaving khumbelo back inside.

“Where is your wife?” mbengi asks.

“Ooh! Shit” he says and jogs back to the ward he just comes out from.

“Khumbelo” she turns and he calls her with his head then she stands and walks with him without asking where they were going. She knows and understands that khumbulo doesn’t like her that much and she was forced down his throat that is why she chose to give him time and space to sort out his life.

She has never spent more than do seconds with him until today.

“I don’t hate you” khumbu says breaking the silence.

“I didn’t say you hate me” she says.

“But...” she cuts him short.

“I understand you have a lot going on for now khumbu, I just want you to figure out yourself what you want and if you really want to be with me. But if you still want to marry me it’s okay” she says and he looks at her.

“What about you? What do you want?” he asks looking at her.

“To be a doctor” she mindlessly answers

“Not marriage?” he asks dumbstruck. He thought she wanted this as well.

“I can only do that if I am married with the permission of my husband of course, other than that females are not allowed to further their studies after matric in my family” she says and that left him speechless.

“Say that again” he says, not even blinking.

“You heard me, I am marrying you for my freedom” she says then chuckles “I am selfish right” she says.

“No you’re not and if I don’t marry you what will happen?”

She shrugs “maybe be tossed to another willing boy.” She says.

“Okay...” okay he says then keeps quiet as they walk out.

INSIDE MRS MODAU’S WARD

“I am sorry, please forgive me” Thendo’s mother says.

“I have forgiven you long time ago” Mrs Modau says holding her sister’s hand with her right hand.

“But you have to tell him the truth, he have to know. And you know that” she says and Mrs Munyai wipes her tears and look at her sister.

She have tried so hard to leave with it, and she have done that very well but now she is told to tell him. How will she do that, how will she look like. And name calling she aren’t ready but she knew that someday the truth will catch up with her.

“I know and I will” she says.

They continue to catch up on what have been happening in their lives for the past years until they were tired.

“Please bury me next to my father” she says to Mrs Munyai as she was about to close the door. She turns and looks at her.

“You’re not dying now” she says “we have just made up after a long time” she says and Mrs Modau smiles weakly.

“Don’t say I didn’t say my goodbye” she says

Mrs Munyai shakes her head in disbelieve.

“I have forgotten how crazy you are” she says then walks out with a light shoulders and her heart at easy.

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Hours later, khumbelo and Mrs Munyai had already went back home, and the brothers are here to see shandu. She is like a family to them and the fact that both khumbu and mbengi have soft spot for her makes rendani to care about her too.

“Hey...” they say walking in to a looking like a mess shandu.

She raises her eyes and tears stream down her checks. She wipes them and mbengi sits beside her.

“It’s okay...shhh, its okay” he says rubbing her hands with his and she shakes her head.

“My baby...my baby” she says as she continues to cry.

CHAPTER 35

“Tendani...tendi” she says after she have calmed down.

The brothers clear their throat and all eyes moves to Mbengi and he scratch his head. Why he is the one who have to do this, it is not easy to inform a person that your fiancé killed your sister then him. Its grace that you survived this, but he have to find a nicer way to say this.

“Mmh, what do you remember” mbengi asks after sometime, he doesn’t know how to break this down. This job is not easy now he wonder how the doctors do it. That is the reason why many faint when the doctors start by regretting being the bearer of news and they know the line how it goes...

She keep quiet like she is trying to think and silence finds a home as well. Pity eyes bore her skin and she..., “no...no” she shakes her head with tears clouding her eyes again.

“We are sorry shandu” he says and the walk closer her as they group hug her.

Her world is falling on her; it is crumbling down right on top of her. Her sister was the only relative she knows, she had and now...she is a thing of a past. How can the universe be so cruel...when did it become cruel. Her heart feels empty...she is empty.

"...but you choose to stay, look at you then me becoming the sacrifice of your love Shandu..." those words ring louder and louder in her head and she screams louder.

"Ma...ma" she says squirming and wailing. "Ma...tendi, ma" is what she keeps saying. She feels like she is being suppressed an air...and she doesn't have what it takes to fight back. Yes, she no longer feels physical wounds but this...what she is feeling is...made her wish it was her laying six feet under or maybe make hers 10 feet under she doesn't deserve this life like her sister did.

"Call the doctor...or nurses do something guys" Mbengi says as tears run down his face as well. It hurts him seeing her in pain and there is nothing much for him to do. This makes angry and wishes if only he could wake that bastard up to kill him again. If he didn't want her then why didn't he leave her? mxm, cowards.

The doctor comes in running after Khumbu and they sedate her. Mbengi walks out leaving everyone behind. He wanted sometime alone, a breather is what he needed. Seeing her crying wakes buried things in him and somehow they have to stay buried for ever for him to be peaceful or hell will be bought in earth just like that. He loves her and there is no denying that.

After sometime his brothers walk out and find him sitting on the bench under the tree not far from where they have park and they stroll to him.

They can see he isn't well so they also didn't say anything they just sit as well. They sit for close to 30 minutes in silence both sailing in their own wave of thought.

"I want to go away for some time" Khumbu says breaking the silence.

"Why" Rendani asks out of curiosity if Khumbu goes away who is going to look after the family business. Mbengi wants nothing to do with it, Rendani himself is not ready for this kind of commitment, he wants freedom and that is not by leading the family. Khumbu was and still is the idle person for the job.

"I want to regroup, find myself and become my own man a lot have happened this year" he says breathing out.

"How about Khumbelo, does she know" Rendani asks again.

"I can't say that I love her, but I can't let her go back to her abusive parents. I don't want what happened to Shandu to happen to any other lady I know. So I will not be marrying her now we firstly have to try the dating thing and see where it leads us" he says.

"Who suggested this" Mbengi asks, he wants to know if this time around his brother is going to be Khumbelo's. Khumbu is too soft hearted and easily manipulated.

"I did, I want to do something I love and dancing is what I love. So first thing first want to regroup, go on vacation be free and live my life without having worries that my uncles have sent me message of how much they want for their family allowance to be increased. How my cousins are not going to school because they don't have money and all other things. I don't want to be an angry person because the world failed to help carry other people's burdens. I want freedom, I want to make my own decisions without consulting anyone, I want..."

"Yoh, enough with what you want, it's like we are back to those grade R days, with all the 'I want'" he says laughing remembering his days back in the day "will mma munyai allow such" he asks after laughing.

"It's not her choice but mine to make and I have already made it" he says and Mbengi claps his hands in disbelief that it's his brother who is saying all that.

“Yoh...my boy is growing up people. He is becoming the man” they start laughing and dissing each other. They haven’t been happy for so long and they deserve this after everything.

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TWO DAYS LATER

Shandu is discharged at the hospital

at the moment she is just waiting for mbengi or khumbu one of them to come and take her home. Emotionally she isn’t ready; she feels...nothing but pain, a wound that fails to heal. Maybe she wants to heal early and fasts but hospitals don’t heal emotional pain so she can’t stay at the hospital forever.

She heard that thendo’s mother was also hospitalised the same day she woke up from coma. She has been dreading on going to see her because of shame. She was warned countless times but she chose love or lust over the truth. That stupid right...right.

“Hey. I see you’re ready to go” mbengi says flashing his Colgate smile walking in.

She nods, playing with her fingers.

“Okay, are everything packed and your prescription?” he asks and she nods again. The doctor comes in give them the realising papers they sign and they get ready to go.

“Can I see thendo...Mrs Modau” she asks and he looks at her like he wants to refuse. But he let her be.

“Okay” he leads the way to her ward in silence then he stands outside before opening the door.

He turns and looks at her.

“Do you want me to be with you or...”he asks. Then she let out a deep breath.

“I will find you at the reception, you have already done a lot for me” she says forcing a smile.

“And I will continue doing so” he says patting her shoulder then opens the door. He has to greet his aunt before giving them space.

“My favourite lady” he says smiling walking in and she smiles too.

Shandu’s hurt breaks at her sight, she is lucky herself to be walking even though she isn’t that much strong but she is lucky. This is also her handiwork.

“Ma” she says and Mrs Modau gives her the warmest smile like before and her eyes light up at her sight.

“Ooh god, when they say you’re okay I thought they were trying to cheer me up” she says with a teary eye.

“Ooh, come here and let, me have a look at you” she says and she hesitantly walks to her and hugs her even though she only hugs her with her right hand only.

“Mmh, ma let me go I will wait for her at the reception” he says and Mrs Modau laughs. Her mood has escalated, she is happy even though inside she is dying. But what there left other than acceptance.

“Okay, my boy” she says and mbengi blew so kisses to her and she smiles more. He is her clown and makes it his mission that she is a happy soul. He has already made plans on how she will be taken care off after she is released.

“How are you feeling nana” she say soon as Mbengi closes the door.

“I don’t know, ma” she says then heave a sigh

“Don’t beat yourself up, over this” she says softly

“I am sorry mama, I am sorry” she says taking her hand into hers and Mrs Modau smiles.

“You don’t have to my child...you don’t have to be sorry. What ever happened was meant to happen. That how it is, you were just a motivation for it to be accomplished my daughter” she says looking at her. Yes she is pain but hate and blaming people has never been her thing and she won’t start now. She lost a part of her; no mother wants her child to die no matter how many times he did wrong. She prayed for him even when she was angry and she always asks God to intervene and in her revelation this was what God’s will was and now...

“Tendi...he should have killed me not her mama. I am the one who he thought was...” she cries more so is Mrs Modau.

“When he told me he finds a woman, I was happy and when he told me it was you, I was happier so much happy. I have always loved you Shandu and admire your strength from an early age. You were not taking nonsense from anyone and I knew my son found a woman who knows how to walk tall and stand her group.” she says then keeps quiet a little gathering strength. Talking isn’t easy in her condition but she always talk. There is the reason why God didn’t freeze her speech as well. “Then he hit you, I was mad I almost whip his ass but I didn’t. But there is something I did, I asked shandu...I pleaded with you to let him go and if he brings you trouble call police for him. I could have slept better knowing my son is in jail paying for his crimes and I would have never hated you. I would have continued to love you shandu like my own. I am not saying all this is your fault but baby in future don’t, don’t insult yourself like this, and don’t settle for pain when you can find love from other but the most important love that matters comes from within. No one will ever love you more than you love yourself. If you love yourself you can set boundaries and you know what you deserve and don’t deserve. I love you shandu...your sister loved you. Did you know how many times she came to my place to ask me to chain my dog” she laughs a little, remembering her. And shandu shakes her head. She knew her sister was savage a little just that she respected her a lot because she raised her.

“I didn’t know...” shandu says

“Because you were focusing on changing a person who never wanted to change for you but wanted to break you. I hope you change from this weekly to a woman who you where before Thendo. Don’t rush to a new relationship, find yourself first embrace your scars and learn to live your chance in life and make it count. A sacrifice was made for these chances don’t let her death be in vain. Fight to better yourself and give yourself all the love in the world then you will see no boy or man will make you feel insecure.” She says and shandu keep wiping her tears.

“There is an envelope in my room on the first drawer. It’s yours. And don’t forget to find cancelling” she says “now you should go and make me a proud mother okay” she says again. She was now struggling to talk but she tries anyway.

“And I will mama, I promise” shandu says and she weakly smiles.

“I trust you, now go. I am tired I want to rest” she says.

Shandu stands up hugs her and kiss her cheeks and then her lips.

“I love you mama” she say “I will come and see you tomorrow” she says and walk out.

****CHAPTER 36****

We all know how annoying that 6am call is like, normal people doesn’t call before the clock strike at least 9 Oclock in the morning.

Mbengi is woken by his phone ringing disturbing him from his dreams; he takes the hand outside the blankets without even attempting to raise his head. He then searches for his phone on the side drawer until he touches it, then he swipe answer with eyes half opened.

“Hello” he whispers

“Can I talk to Mr Munyai?” the British accent welcomes him, butchering the whole munyai name.

“Mmh, speaking” he says and the white accents person sighs before introducing herself.

“I am Dr Mark, from medi 24 clinic and hospital...” she says and that wakes mbengi real quick.

“We are calling in regards to Mrs Modau” she says and particles of sweats gather on, mbengi’s forehead.

He feels the energy change real quick and sadness fills his heart. He blinks real fast then clears his dry throat.

“What...what about her” he stutters.

“We are sorry to inform you that she passed away...” he didn’t hear anything further as his heart cries for her.

“Sir...Sir” the doctor says as he can no longer hear him.

He clears his throat again, and then breathes out trying to control his voice.

“Thanks you for letting us know, we will be in touch” he says, drops the call before the doctor could say anything further.

He sits quietly on his bed then starts to inform people which aren’t, many. It’s just his brothers so they could tell their mother about Mrs Modau’s passing.

It will be awkward if he be the one to do that. Imagine being told by your enemy that your sister passed on it is not good...maybe an enemy is bit steep but still he is Satan’s toe, Satan’s fork, Satan’s magic stick. He is everything that Satan has and is so nope, he isn’t doing that.

“Ooh shot” he says wiping his face remembering the guest...his guest. He couldn’t let shandu to go to her place by herself and stay on her own after everything, so he took her to his place. Not that she didn’t try to urge that but he had to put his foot down and become one stubborn demon. He quickly kicks the blankets off his lower body and walks in a snail pace to the lounge. He can smell eggs from the first stair while she is also singing. She isn’t really happy but at least she is trying not to be closed in by the dark cloud looming around her.

He looks at her makes those dirty moves, trying to shake her ass and all the giggles here and there.

Then she turns to her weirdest night mare.

“Mbengi” she says holding her chest and mbengi tries to soften his face but that becomes impossible. She doesn’t even notice it.

“How long have you been standing there?” she says and he smiles little. He wishes he wasn’t the one to break the last piece of her heart like this. Because yesterday after their back and forth bickering. They talked about almost everything, at least he did get a chance see a glimpse of how broken she is and what went down in her relationship. Not that he didn’t know but it’s always nice to hear things from the horse’s mouth. He doesn’t want to look offish by involving himself in her personal life.

“Long enough to see how rigid, my assets are” he says walking further in the kitchen and she throws him a wet kitchen cloth.

“Violent much madam” he says sitting on the chair and throws back the cloth.

“How far are you?” he asks and she looks at him.

“Almost done” she says and his jaws drop when his sees how much food she has prepared.

“Are we going to eat all that” he says and she shakes her head smiling.

“I will take some for ma” she says and his face fell. And she notice.

“What?” she says with a fearful voice.

He looks at her, then down scratch his head then back at her, then down again. Ooh, voice where are you in times of need.

“I...I ...I, I am sorry shandu” he stutters looking at her, holding a pot filled with oil, she was frying sausages.

“Sorry, for what mbengi?” she say

“Can you please put that aside” he plead. And she shakes her head with tears flowing down.

“Please...” he pleads then she put it down.

“Before coming here, I received a call from the hospital. Thendo’s mother has passed on...that all I heard” he says and she stands still for few minutes as shock engulfs her.

“She can’t die right” she says as her eyes pleads with mbengi to agree but his voice says what different to what she wants to hear.

“Shandu it...”she cuts him short.

“She can’t right” she says faintly and he quickly rushes to her as he catches her before she falls.

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It has been a month since Thendo’s mother burial. She was given a dignified funeral and buried as she wished

next to her father’s grave. The family was saddened by this because they didn’t expect to welcome her back at home by a coffin but it was what it was and nothing could have been done.

As for shandu she has been a walking ghost. She is here physically but psychologically she isn’t here. She is living but not alive mentally. And that made Mbengi to be vigilant and on lookout for her.

She has had her fair share on break downs, crying herself to sleep and not wanting food. He has forced her several times but at times he let her be.

“Phew...”he says letting out breathe before knocking at her door with a breakfast.

But as usual no one answers; he opens a door and finds her hugging her feet, rocking herself on the floor. He immediately puts the tray on the drawer then goes to her.

“Hey” he says sitting down as well with him.

She didn’t even turns her attention to him and that was not something new so he keeps talking.

“Shandu...” he says touching her shoulder then she flinches.

“Sorry” he says taking his hand off her.

“I was thinking that...that, that maybe you could see a specialist to help you. You can’t be living like this” he says then puts his hand inside his trousers searching for a piece of paper. Then comes out with it.

“This people...” his says placing the paper in front of her.

“They can help you...they will help you heal...” he says then breathes. It kills him seeing her like this. He has even lost few kilos and no longer in touch with his reality. His life has stood still so he can fix her but he is failing. She doesn’t want to open up to him. The other days she is cold the other days she is bubbly and sharing jokes. He knows that going to rehabilitation will help her a lot.

“Will they take away pain...will they make dad loves me so that I can feel wholly loved. Could they, could they wake my sister and, make me die for my sins. I killed two human beings mbengi, I am never going to be okay” she says as usual, she blames herself for her sister and Mrs Modau’s death.

“Don’t talks like that shandu, you didn’t kill anyone” he says.

“You just don’t want to hurt me, say it to my face, I am a loser, killer, I choose love countless times over my sister. The same love that killed me. I loved thendo because...because he was the first man to ever loved me. My dad couldn’t love me so...I built walls that he shook them and they collapsed, I guess they weren’t that strong. And now...now who is going to love a broken and toxic person like me. I am selfish” she says with emotionless face, just a broken voice that hurts the ears of the listener.

“I am going to wife you shandu. I love you too much, and as for healing you will heal just allow help. And you’re dad just let him be, you can’t force someone to be part of your life when she don’t want it. Every time he rejects you, you will always go back to square one. You see, I am not a psychologist but I do know that it have to starts from you...healing...starts from you agreeing that you need help. And go find help then you will be okay. What you have been through will always help you to think thoroughly next time but it shouldn’t stop you from pursuing other ventures.”

“I am afraid” she says after sometime.

“Don’t be scared baby girl; I will always hold you down.”

“What if...” he cuts her short.

“Stop the what ifs and tell me you’re going to this place” he says and she picks the paper read it then nods,

“Yes” she says and mbengi smiles.

“Good I have already book for you, you will be going there tomorrow” he says and her eyes widen.

“But...” she says surprised.

“But nothing, come have breakfast” he says standing up. She ate, and then they wash dishes together. They have a wonderful day spending the day together, chilling indoors dancing, cleaning, cooking and everything friends do cheering each other.

****ENDING CHAPTER****

She has never been this better, it has been a week since she has been released from the rehabilitation centre and she has learnt a lot. She even has a hobby now, and its basketball. She has learnt that she doesn’t needs validation from other people that she is lovable. She has learned to love herself with no measures and to forgive herself daily for all the wrongs she have done.

She is still at mbengi’s place; he doesn’t want her to be on her own at that place. The first thing she did coming out was to visit her sister’s grave and also mother and grandmother. She felt a weight have been lifted off her shoulders and ready to conquer the upcoming challenges.

“Shandu, I will leave you if don’t hurry” mbengi says.

Shandu have been titivating herself for close an hour now, she isn’t ready to meet Mbengi’s family but mbengi insisted on going with her. She has been convinced enough for her to agree.

She is even thinking of going back to school with the money Thendo's mother left for to elevate herself. This has been pone hell journey with lots of regret, pain and losses but one thing she doesn't regret is meeting the brother. They have been like her own family and they respect her also helped her find herself and healing. She sees them as her family and ready to starts this new chapter of her life with them.

"Shandu" mbengi screams and she finishes powdering her face she stands up and look at herself for few minutes then she is convinced she is beautiful. She takes her hand bag and walk down the stairs and mbengi jaws drops.

"You're a whole meal my love" he says and she laughs.

"I am the whole cow babe" she says and they share a laugh.

"Let's get going" he says, showing her to lead the way and they walk out, laughing.

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The messages have been sent out to every family member. Mrs Munyai isn't ready for this day day...today it's thee day to her. Where chickens come comes home to roost aka shit hit the fence. I am sorry to say this but it her shit anyway.

She have been sitting in her bedroom, moody the whole day and lucky for Rendani he have been at his brother's place ever since the day his mother found him in the kitchen watching a video of what went down the other day at the party in his absence. It was a very dirty video and since then he haven't seen his mother.

Mrs Munyai takes out the box under her bed that has a picture of his son and his real father. And the paternity tests that she conducted without the knowledge of her husband of course. This just validates the saying that says after God fear a woman; she is one of a dangerous creature.

For sure they were rumours that one of her son wasn't her husband's child and paternity tests where done but they come saying the child was his 99.99% I repeat after God fear a woman. She has to do what she can for her marriage to not crumble. And she regrets it daily, this has been eating her up but and she tried by all means to cover it up but...I guess time does run out.

The knock on her door disturbs her and she quickly puts everything back and shoves the box under the bed, wipes her tears then clears her throat.

"Come in" she says and khumbu walks in smiling. He wants to tell his mother this before he announces it the dinner table.

"Are you okay ma" he says, because her face shows that she have been crying.

"I am okay khumbu" she says avoiding eye contact.

"Then..."she cuts him short.

"What do you want khumbu" she says and he sigh because he knows she won't tell him anything if she don't want to. Ever since her sister's burial she have changed and that is a confusing thing because they really don't know what up with here.

"I have something to tell you before I announce it on the table" he says feeling nervous once again. He has prepared his speech very well but her presence makes him shiver and spine cold.

"Mmh...I, I will be going away ma" he says and his mother looks at him.

"What. Why" she asks stunned.

"That is not all Ma. I also be stepping down as the CEO, I want follow my dreams and my passion ma" he says and his mother keeps quiet.

"I am not really happy ma, I want to chaise my own happiness ma please allow me" he says.

“What else do you want” she asks and khumbu keeps quiet confused.

He raises his eyes brows and looks at her confused as hell.

“Do you want to marry Khumbelo?” she asks and he looks at her.

“I have talked to her and we will be trying this thing out, but we will not be getting married as in now” he says ready for his mother to eat him alive.

But she nods then heaves a sigh.

“If you don’t want to marry her then its fine don’t marry her. Don’t feel pressured to do what your heart doesn’t want you to” she says and that sends khumbu’s jaws to the floor. He couldn’t believe that it is his mother saying that. After everything she has done to make him marry her, the fainting episode the swearing and the promising of being casted out of the family. This...this is not the behaviour that he expected, he wants her to stomp her feet and screams with her squeaky voice for the whole neighbourhood to know that someone have stepped on Mrs Munyai’s toes.

“Don’t look at me like that. I have been doing a self introspection and I have seen how much of a bad person I am and I am trying to change that. You don’t want to run the company then its fine, you don’t want to marry khumbelo its fine. Anything that makes you happy I will be happy for you khumbu. Love is a good thing and one shouldn’t regret being in love, I don’t want you to feel like you’re bound to love her. Marry her and fall in love with her in your own terms at your own time” she says and khumbu is now tongue tide.

“Mma...ma

are you okay” he asks looking at her weirdly. This is the first time in his entire life he is told whatever you want it’s okay. The first time he told his parents about wanting to be a dancer they told him that is a hobby not a career and is done by people who are not well mannered who loves parties and alcohol.

“I am okay, now can you go I want to be on my own” she says and he stands up and slowly walks to the door, turns to look at his mother then opens the door then pauses again look his mother.

“Are you okay ma...do you have cancer? Are you dying ma?” he asks with a panicking voice.

“If you want to die due to heart attack continue to do so but for now close my door and get the hell out of my room” she says losing her patience.

He walks out and drags his feet down the stairs and finds shandu just sitting with the aunties and uncles giving her weird looks.

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Dinner time have finally comes, its 7pm and the table is filled with family beside shandu and khumbelo. But as for khumbelo she is already a family member because khumbu is talking about them dating just to know each other, so it’s just the case of formalities being done only, and they tie the knot that all.

Mrs Munyai hasn’t come down and everyone is anxious. Their nerves have been sky rocketing since morning everyone is wondering why they are being called. They do have family dinners that are monthly planned but this was is the special one with the announcement and I swear no one is ready for this.

The people keep conversing, mbengi and rendani being themselves cracking jokes and everyone laughs until their tummy hurts.

Mrs Munyai makes her way to the table with the brown envelope. Her face shows she has been crying and everyone tensed up. She pulls her chair and sits down.

“Mazwale, are you okay” she one of the family elderly man asks.

She nods her head, I am okay.

“we can start plating” she says and rendani be the first one to take his plate and plate for himself, then mbengi plates for himself and his guest which is shandu. Khumbelo plates for herself and khumbu.

Others just stare at the food and look at Mrs Munyai who is looking at others. She seems not interested, she have no appetite. Her heart breaks looking at her happy sons who are care free.

“Why are we here mazwale?” the man asks again.

“I...I think we should eat first” she says.

“But we can do both...the waiting is nerve wracking” khumbu says and Mrs Munyai nods holding tight the envelope.

“Mmh...The reason I called you here is because I have few announcement to make...the first one is that Khumbu wants to take a break from being the CEO, he wants to follow his dancing passion” she says and one of the uncles chips in.

“He can’t do that, who is going to...” Mrs Munyai cuts him short.

“It’s a family business, we will find someone else. Your kids are busy following their dreams while mine have to carry the burden of taking the company to the bigger heights while all you do is to cash up only. So, no discussion, he is stepping because that is what he wants” she says and no one dares to take her up to argue all that so they keep quiet and mbengi speaks.

“What have you done to my real mother” he says and rendani adds.

“She is catching good vibes.” he says and they laugh.

Shandu is in awe, she hasn’t seen this side of mbengi, she didn’t know he is funny and care free like this.

“Mbengi keep quiet...I am not in the mood for your childish arguments.” She says and mbengi dies with laughter.

“Ooh...sorry madam speaker” he says and the death stare was thrown her way.

“I have been unfaithful to my husband at some point in life and fall pregnant in the process” she says and one of the aunties speaks.

“But that was cleared musi, rendani is ours” the gasps

“Ma...” rendani says.

“I didn’t think I will live to see this day” mbengi says.

“So it’s true ma...” he says and tears in her mother face confirms that. He immediately stands up and runs out of the house and both khumbu and mbengi runs after him. He gets in the car and flies out in distraught.

He wanted to be away from here but to where, he doesn’t know. But who would want the same thing as him. He feels lied to by everyone and his heart is broken. He gets to the main road without checking both sides, and the loud bang is heard as his car collides with a truck.

****THE END****