

Chapter 1 That annoying alarm clock! I switch it off and grace myself with more sleep. Winter mornings are cold as ice, getting out of bed is everyone's nightmare. "Yanga!" Now that's my alarm clock with two legs, she is screaming next to my head. Sadly this one cannot be switched off. Her voice alone drains you out of sleep. She pulls the covers off my head, she has no mercy at all. "Wake up! You have an interview in two hours." Damn! The interview slept off my memory. "What time is it now?" I ask. "It's 6:30 don't panic." Oh no! I was supposed to wake up early and polish my Ndulinde English. Now I'm at high risk of having pronouns and adjectives saying goodbye in the middle of the interview. I pick the notebook where she wrote me the interview questions yesterday and throw it to her. My English is probably still asleep, I need the Shakespeare in me to wake up. "This again Yanga?" She sighs. Yesterday I wasn't the best student, the practice didn't end well. "Please Ntando, I have to pass this interview and get the job. You know how desperate I am," I say. The last few months have been hard. I got fired from my last job, ran out of savings and lost my rental place. If it wasn't for her I'd be staying under the bridge and begging for food by the robots. I'm the eldest in my family, completing high school meant I was on my own. I can't go back home empty handed, my parents are not working, and my brothers are still in school. Everytime I think about asking help from them I remember that I'm their help, all that they have. "Are you ready?" she asks after clearing her throat. "Yep," I say. "Can you tell me more about yourself?" she reads the first question. "My name is Yangomuhle Buthelezi, I'm 23 years old. I love music and hate funerals. I'm from Ndulinde, I attended school there and...what else? I got fired from my last job. Me and my manager....." She flutters her eyelashes rapidly. I pause and look at her. Where did I go wrong now? "You are not introducing yourself to a new netball team. Be professional, describe yourself according to your values and qualities." It's so early in the morning to be talking about 'values and qualities'. By the way what are my values and qualities? On my last job they didn't want all that, they wanted me to serve the tables. "Okay noted, can we go to the next question?" I say suppressing a yawn. She drops her head to the side. She does this a lot when she disapproves of something. "I will be professional Ntando, trust me," I say. I know deep down in me there is a professional person. I just need some bomb-ass English words. "What are your strengths and weaknesses?" she asks. This is an interesting one. I want to speak my truth, I have strengths in different fields of life and my only weakness is putting up with bullshit. I have zero tolerance for something that goes against my liking. I took enough of it in the past. I give her a funny look and ask if I should give a truthful or professional answer. "Professionalism please," she says. I switch to professionalism, explaining using my hands and keeping my head up as I speak. "I'm very flexible, I can work in a team and solo productively. My passion for excellence makes me unbreakable even under pressure." She nods with a pleased smile on her face. "That's a good one. Now your weaknesses?" "Sex and alcohol," I say. She lifts her eyes up, ready to go head to head. I laugh my lungs off, she needs to chill a little bit. "I'm kidding, relax. My weakness would be that I react harshly to bullsh....." Her coughs cut me short, she is doing it on purpose. I'm probably getting unprofessional again. But there is no fancy way I can put this, I have a temper and do react harshly to bullshit. "We are being professional Yanga," she reminds me. How many times am I going to be called out for unprofessionalism? Maybe I should just forget about hunting for jobs and start selling amagwinya by the side of the road. At least there I won't worry about strengths



and weaknesses. It'd be either igwinya & polony or igwinya & cheese. "Pretend as if you're answering MaJali," she says. I take a deep breath and switch to the tone I use when talking to my mother. She is a different story, the one I'd like not to touch. "I don't like being disrespected, that's my weakness," I say more politely. She is pleased with this one, she is nodding her head. "Maybe you should start seeing everyone as your mother." She must hold it right there. "You mean I should start being fake?" I ask. She puts her hand up and looks back at the notebook. "Next question, why should we hire you?" she asks. I let out a chuckle. What a question! I'm a jobseeker so I should suck up and answer useless questions. Who issued posts about vacancies in the first place? "I applied for the job, you are looking for someone to fill the vacancy, hello!" "Yanga!" she exclaims. Her face looks funny, I can't stop myself from laughing. "If I may ask as well, why are you hiring?" I say. She closes the notebook and throws it back to me. Displeasure is written all over her face. "You need to print more CVs," she says and walks out. A minute later she comes back and asks what I'll be eating for breakfast. Food doesn't excite me, for me it's all about sustenance. "I have an interview in few hours, my stomach is in knots, one banana will be enough," I say. "Okay make it snappy, time is going," she says. I take off the 'pyjamas', by that I'm referring to the DA T-shirt and leggings I'm wearing, and march to the bathroom and fill the bathtub. Using a bathtub takes time but showers are only used for emergency situations. You can't just take a shower out of the blue, water is a declining resource in South Africa. On every TV station there is water awareness commercial advising citizens to save water. There are free T-shirts from the municipalities printed with slogans: EVERY LITTLE DROP COUNTS, SAVE WATER. Some people have used this disadvantage as a business opportunity. Those who live in waterless places are the target market. People fill 5litres of water and sell to them. Buying water sounds like first-class modus but it's not. Things are bad, people take natural resources and sell to others. In towns you find women selling umcako. They don't even mould it into beautiful art objects, they just pack it into small packets and sell. You'd think they are selling to artists but buyers are women. They eat clay as a snack. Weird, right? I used to think that they had abortions before and they are trying to build tombstones, but then I learnt that it's iron deficiency that makes them crave for clay. Let's educate ourselves before jumping into conclusions. You could find that sex addicts have salt deficiency as well. The ANC has failed to create job opportunities they promised us before the elections but guess what, we will vote for it again. The ANC is like that drunkard of an uncle who drinks all his salary and promises to buy grocery the following month. You keep feeding him but when the month ends he drinks his money and gives you more empty promises. Now people are creating businesses out of ridiculous things. Indians are cutting off their hair and selling it to black women. Those who had gold-teeth are taking them out. Imagine smiling with R1k worth tooth in an empty stomach! Men are selling Avon and Tupperware products, women are selling their bodies. It's the survival of the fittest. When I come out of the bathroom my black pant and white shirt are ironed and placed on top of my bed. I wonder what time she woke up, it seems like she has done the most. Friends like her are for keeps. "Be fast you have a taxi catch," she yells from the kitchen. Pots and dishes are colliding. You can't tell whether it's a chicken or human being when she is in the kitchen. Almost every week there is a cup or plate that's broken. I dress up and check myself on the mirror. I look like a Clientele lawyer, my neatly combed hair complements



my professional look. If Stanger Hospital nurses didn't steal my amniotic sac when I was born I could've become a lawyer. My blanket of luck! Ntando is standing by the door wearing a proud look on her face. I'd be proud if I was her too, good-looking friends don't drop from the sky. "You look gorgeous babe," she says. "It comes naturally," I boast with a cocky smile. She rolls her eyes and closes the door. I open my little drawer and take my almost-empty perfume and baptize myself with it. These people better hire me, this is my last perfume and they'll be smelling it for free. I don't care about food, some people find this weird. I have an aunt who forces lumps of food down my throat whenever she visits home. Some people have the misconception that slim people don't eat enough. The first question she always asks is when did I last eat and my answer to it never matters, she'd dish a full bowl and waits until I finish it all. God created each family and tossed a dramatic aunt or drunkard uncle in. "Pack some snacks, by the time you get there you'll be hungry," Ntando says. Oh, He tossed a dramatic friend as well. It won't even take me 30 minutes to get to Musgrave Centre. "I'm fine, I will eat when I get back," I say. She gives me a look and packs biscuits inside my bag. She convinces me that I will thank her later. I know what's good for me so I won't argue with her. I fill a glass of water and gulp it down. "Wish me luck," I say. "And you really need it." So much faith! I grab my bag and hug her briefly before making my way out. This is my first interview in a long time, a tense one I sense, and I'm nervous as hell. "Text me when you are done," she calls after me. I rush down the stairway, the lift is going to delay me, I trust my feet more. Sometimes we compete to see who'll get to the first floor first. She always takes the lift and gets there first. Getting a taxi in the morning is not a problem. They keep coming like ants, one after another. Hoots and whistles are deafening. The competition for passengers is high and results in most taxi fights. I have not stood here for more than a minute but the taxi has already stopped next to me. I get a seat next to the window and secretly smile. I love admiring pedestrians and whatever my eyes land on through the window. Everything has changed. The atmosphere, the streets and the buildings. It has all changed. When I first came here Durban was a great city. It was exactly what I pictured it to be, lot of white people, fancy cars and shops everywhere. The view at night was exquisite, it felt like the city was smiling at you. Where I come from we don't have streetlights, the government doesn't provide them to the rural areas. I guess we see through the dark like leopards and urban people don't. Equality really feels good in this country. I used to go out with a glass of wine and watch as the streets grew quiet, the lights brightening up and hungry dogs marching on the empty streets looking for food. Now all that has changed, you cannot walk out after 9pm, especially in the townships. Amaphara would strip you and leave you naked. Westridge is a bit better, crime rate isn't as high as it is in the townships. At Umlazi you lock as soon as you get inside the house. Housebreakings, street robberies and car hijackings are reported everyday. They don't just steal money, jewellery and TVs like old times. They take everything from wigs to cellphones, Identity books and food parcels. Crime is ridiculously high, people are doing whatever they can to survive. Oh, I'm here. "Workshop!" I yell. When the taxi stops, four people get out with me. Were they waiting for me to say it? I feel used. I take another taxi to Musgrave Centre. JC Bakers is a well-known bakery around Durban. I assume it is owned by a wealthy white man. They bake any kind of cake, you just give them a sample of how you want your cake to be done and they bring it to life. I once saw a crocodile-like cake trending on



Facebook. They are always trending for making extraordinary cakes and baking for famous events. Here I am, in front of the big building with glass sliding doors. I can smell baking powder all the way from here. Well not really. JC Bakers is written boldly on top of the building. I make a silent prayer before making my way towards the entrance. I'm not sure what type of floor is this but my R150 black pumps look unfit on it. It's like walking in a complete different world, air-conditioners are cooling even my lungs. There is a black doll at the front desk. She is looking at me, fluttering her long eyelashes. Everything about her is eye-taking, her make-up is perfectly done. "Hello, welcome to JC BAKERS," she says and flashes a beautiful smile.

"Ummm...morning," I say. Can you believe I'm still hovering over the beauty of this place? It's like I've never seen this on TV, SABC 3 would be so disappointed. "Gosh, this place looks so amazing!" I'm ahead as usual. Professional people don't start conversations with compliments. Luckily she doesn't find me weird, she smiles even wider, her eyes spark a twinkle. She is beautiful. "The store is more beautiful," she says. Oh there is a store inside here? That's interesting, I can't wait to start cleaning it. I applied for the cleaning post. I'm wearing black and white to symbolize that I'm a professional in what I do. This place is like a fancy little castle, I'm not exaggerating. Oh snap! "I'm Yangomuhle Buthelezi, I have an interview scheduled for nine o'clock," I say. She prods the computer with her long manicured nails like the keyboard stays inside her head. I wonder how much she is paid. It must be good, she is slaying. "Please take the left passage and enter the first office with Admin sticker on the door," she says, showing me directions with her hand. I look around, still in awe. Hibiri! Wowza! "Good luck Yangomuhle," says her voice behind me. I look back, she is smiling. She is kind, unlike other slay queens I know. I'm blown away, her kindness just boosted my confidence. I nod and smile back. I knock twice before they let me in. There are two black ladies and one mean-looking white guy in the middle and a black guy who looks annoyed by the mere fact that I'm breathing oxygen like him. They are staring at me like I'm the one who killed Michael Jackson. "Good morning everyone," I greet. They all keep quiet. I look at them a bit shocked. It's just a greeting, I'm not hiring myself. Saying 'hello' takes less than 10 seconds. "Yangokuhle Buthelezi right?" the first woman asks after a moment. She didn't greet me back, now she is mispronouncing my name. I don't see this going well. "It's YangoMuhle Buthelezi," I say emphasizing the 'm' in my name. She opens the document in front of her and looks at me again. "Yangomuhle you don't have any qualification?" She is looking at my CV, her eyes are roaming over the spectacles she is wearing. What is she trying to say by saying that I have no qualification? Who made headlines on the newspaper for passing matric back in 2013? Okay maybe not the headlines but my name was on the paper. "I have Umalusi," I say. "What is that?" the white guy asks. I thought white people know everything, they invented computers and HIV. "Umalusi is a matric certificate Sir," I say. He chuckles, his arrogance flies all over the room. "Umalusi is the council, not a certificate." He seriously thinks that I don't know? Wow. "I don't care, the bread will remain R10.50 whether it's the council or certificate," I say. Oh boy, that came out rude. I must pull myself together, Ntando taught me professionalism. "Matric certificate is not considered as a qualification. You are not educated, you just have the basics," says the black queen. She is like me, she should be more understanding of the situation. Not all of us had a chance to go to university, completing matric meant we were educated enough. I can speak to a white person and I call water H2O. What



more do they want? My level of education may be not up to hers but it doesn't mean that I'm illiterate as she implies. The main purpose is to get through the day with a full stomach rather than a piece of paper that measures our intelligence. There are no wide options for people like us. She looks at her fellows, they may not voice it out but I can see them criticizing me in their heads. "Not even a computer certificate?" she asks. Some questions though! If I had a computer certificate I would've applied at retail stores to become a till operator. "You mop floors with computers here?" I ask. I'm dying to know, I didn't know we are that advanced with technology here in South Africa. "No but basic computer knowledge is required in order to work here. You are not just here to mop the floors, circumstances may need you to use a computer." I lean back on the chair, sitting the professional-Ntando posture is hurting my spinal cord. What did she say? "Do you mind breaking it down for me in details? Your post said you needed cleaners, no mentions of the use of computer were made," I say and cock my head to the side. I need to hear this one correctly. "This is not just any bakery, it's JC Bakers, one of the most successful bakeries in South....." Son of Abraham! I cannot listen to the bragging. "I already know that Sir. Yes you are successful, you make beautiful cakes and all. What I want to know is if you make two-jobs-in-one-salary kind of deals?" They all share a look, an unpleasant one. My chances of getting this job are declining. "It's not like that, we believe in producing the best for our customers and that requires everyone to understand what is going on inside the company. We are a family here, we do everything together," she says. I scratch my neck, not sure if my uneducated brain understands what they are saying. "Do you clean?" I ask directing to the white guy. He looks annoyed by the question. "I am the head baker," he says. Great! I can't wait to meet the neck baker. "So you don't know what's going on in the cleaning department?" I ask. "I'm the head baker, I specialise in baking Miss Buthelezi," he says. Bullies! They exploit their workers, making them believe they are being overworked because everyone is family but still receive same salary month-ends. Well I'm not looking for a bakery family, I only need a job. "Which one do you do better between talking and cleaning?" the lady who's been quiet asks. It sounds like she has the answer already made up. This question implies that I talk a lot, and that's very offensive and judgemental. "Cleaning," I say. Nobody seems to believe that, they are looking at me with mocking expressions on their faces. The interview is nothing like what I practiced. Their questions are personal and offensive, my answers lack professionalism. As I walk out of the interview room I know they won't call me back. Not only did they not like me, they made me feel inferior as well. Someone calls my name behind. It's a beautiful receptionist. I completely forgot about her. How ungrateful? I walk back to her desk. "How did it go?" she asks. "Bad, really bad," I say. "It's still early to tell, they might call you back." I don't see that happening. I need to print more CVs like Ntando said earlier. Internet Cafés are damn expensive these days, maybe not to employed people but to me R5 for a single page is too expensive. Wait..... "My CV!" I exclaim. Why am I leaving it behind? They don't need it anymore. "What about it?" she asks. "I'm getting it back. It's useless to them but could still be useful to me," I say putting my bag on her desk. She stops me after a few strides. "I'll make sure they call you back," she says. I turn around with my eyebrows lifted. Is she going to bribe them for me? "Sosha is my friend," she says. "Who is Sosha?" I ask. She has a look on her face, like she is surprised I'm even a real human being for not knowing this Sosha person. "Justin Sosha Cele," she says. There is a silent 'duh' at the end.





"Who is he?" I ask. "The owner of this company." Cele? That means this place is owned by a black man. I want to throw my fist up and shout 'Amandla awethu!' I look around more appreciatively. I'm struck with immediate pride and joy. I get happier when I see a black fellow breaking boundaries. This Sosha man is my role model. Why haven't I heard of him? He must be big on social media. I hope this lady fulfils her promise, I really need a job. I say goodbye and leave. I'm back on the couch with the remote in my hand hopping from channel to channel. Being unemployed makes you watch every crap the TV broadcasts. Phone rings! It's Ntando. I completely forgot to text her after the interview. "Ndaa!" I say picking up. "Are you watching Muvhango?" "Yes, I wish I was interviewed by Ranthumeng, not those mean assholes," I say. Even if I was getting that job at JC Bakers I'd be fired before the day ends. "Did you tell them that they are assholes Yanga?" "No, I wish I did though," I say. "I am glad you didn't." There is a haze of relief in her voice. "What are you doing there?" I ask. "I just came back from tea break. I will send you airtime shortly," she says. She is already doing a lot for me, the last thing I want is to take advantage of her humanity. "No, I don't need airtime," I say. "I will send airtime Yanga, if you call home send my regards." Call ended! She hardly ever takes no for an answer. She is the most stubborn person I know, even Julius Malema got nothing on her. When she sets her mind on something nothing could convince her otherwise. It's not a surprise that she is single, this month we are celebrating nine months of her singleness. She hasn't looked at Menville ever since Vusi dumped her. She is single, packed and stored. I'm also single, however I do take one nightstands now and then. I know how people react to that. When a girl engages in casual, random sex she is labelled as loose. 'She is a bitch! Who is going to marry her?'- they say. But when a guy does the same he is called isoka. A ladies man, how fancy! Aren't we are all human beings with similar needs? It's only our sex organs that make us different. If a guy can crave for sex and pick a random girl for a few rounds and then sends her home with two pieces of KFC, so can girls. We have as much right to do what we like with our bodies. I have several cellphone numbers stored in my phone waiting for me to call. I won't call, I was chowing and passing. Check mate! Relationships are complicated, definitely not my cup of tea. If they only needed sexual attachment maybe I'd be in a relationship as well but they need emotional attachment, that's too much for me. I hardly have a life. How could I possibly manage a relationship? To me life is more than just breathing and waking up in the morning pressed with pee. It's about financial security, peace of mind and freedom. And I have none of that. Phone beeps! R55 airtime has been loaded in my account. I don't know how I will ever repay this girl. I send her a text and call my mother right away. I have missed them, especially my brothers. "MaJali speaking, hello." I know who I'm calling, technology has never loved her. "Ma it's Yangomuhle," I say. She can't read from the cellphone screen nor type a text. She only writes on a piece of paper and her writing skills don't go beyond family members' names and her signature. My father is a bit literate, working in Johannesburg helped him a lot. He always read Isolezwe newspaper in the mornings for my mother. That's the only romantic gesture I have seen him showing to her, other than that they are two boring, married people who live together. "Oh mntanami how are you? How is Durban? Are you getting any job?" she asks. Well, the most important question here is, am I getting any job, and again I'm about to disappoint her. "I'm still looking Ma. Today I went for an interview at the bakery, if they hire me they will call before this



week ends," I say. I hear a sigh. "Mbuso's school jersey is torn, he has a school trip next week," she says. I feel useless right now. My brother is about to experience what I went through as a child whereas I left home to change the situation, to better their lives. "I can't help, I really don't have anything at the moment," I say. "Don't be choosy Yangomuhle, take any job. Go to white people and ask to do their laundry. Knock on their doors, jobs won't come to you." Oh mommy dearest, you are so clueless! This is not 1975, I'll need access card to even get to those white people's doors. "Times have changed, they don't hire from the doorsteps anymore, they use agencies," I explain. "Go knock at those agencies and tell them that you are hungry and desperate," she says. Everything is simple in her world, explaining this to her would be wasting my airtime because she will come up with another simple, yet impossible solution. Looking for a job is stressful on its own, the pressure she is giving me is going to drive me to PMB. I heard crazy people stay there. "Can I speak to uBabawami?" I ask. I hold for a minute before she reaches to him. In my mind I have a picture of that old man sitting on his chair under the tree shade. I haven't seen him in months, he must've grown lot of beard by now. My peers used to tease me about it, calling him ubhebhenene so I committed myself into reminding him to shave everytime his beard grew. He got used to it, he doesn't shave until I tell him to. "Shengee!" he answers. A smile creeps on my face, I can count a number of times he called me by birth name. It rarely happens, he calls me by our clan name. He has a way of pronouncing it that makes it sound like a female name. "Hey Babawami how are you?" I ask. That's how I refer to him, Babawami. It comes with a certain entitlement. I have two siblings, Mbuso who comes after me and the 12-year old Sabatha. I'm 7 years older than Mbuso, I had a period of 7 years as the only child in the family. In those years I gained entitlement of my father. He was my father alone, ubaba wami. "I'm good my baby, I just miss you. Have you eaten today?" he asks. I smile while rolling my eyes. It's almost 1pm, obviously I've eaten. "Yes I have eaten, I live with Ntando remember," I say. "Oh, pass my gratitude and regards to her," he says. "Okay I will tell her. Tell the boys that I love them, my airtime is running out," I say. I always use this line to end calls, these people can hold rank-conversations over the phone. "Okay bye, take care of yourself," he says. \*\*\*\*\* It's been a week and I haven't heard from JC Bakers. Today I'm in town dropping CVs again. The sun is scorching, yellowbones are turning pink. The managers are not so friendly when you're dropping your CV, it's like you are applying for their positions. This other one abruptly told me that he doesn't have space to store unnecessary papers in his office. That's how he referred to my CV, the unnecessary papers. You know what's funny? He was once in my shoes, job hunting and desperate. Now that he is up there my CV is unnecessary papers. This is not just a paper, like Cambridge sales paper, I spent R5 printing each page and R8 taxi fare going to the police station to certify that it is indeed me who owns them. There is nothing to rush back to, Ntando is still at work. I stand with the crowd watching a magician at the Workshop. I'm just passing time, I don't believe in magic. I think it's a skill rather than supernatural powers. A skill that involves a lot of lies. Take this man I'm watching, he is convincing the audience that he can give them five Wednesday lottery numbers. People love easy money, they are just throwing their money to him. R10s for kids' bread are flying onto the thin silver tray placed in the middle. People wearing ANC T-shirts are giving away R20s that could afford them summer tops. I know some don't wear these political T-shirts because they



are supporters but they serve as tops. I'm not trying to shame anyone, the nightwear section in my wardrobe is full of them. The night before my interview I was wearing a DA one, I thought it would improve my English for the next day. If this sweaty, dark man was capable of guessing lottery numbers he wouldn't be here under this hot sun, convincing strangers. It's each for his own rise, he'd be somewhere in Ballito drinking expensive whisky, surrounded by beautiful chicks. I need to avoid peak hour, I don't want to push and fight in order to get inside the taxi. One comes buzzing with music, I let it pass and stop the next one. I'm not in the mood for such noise. "Come sit at the front," the driver says. I look at him, checking him out. Inviting smile, lip biting and eyes all over my legs. No, thank you. I get at the back, I'm not going to be courted by a taxi driver. They chase every skirt and treat their girlfriends with KFC streetwise-two, not to forget that they are arrogant as well. And besides that I'm not front-seat friendly. I'm not good at Maths, I passed it exactly with the minimum pass mark. I don't like showing off, not with Maths. If the rule says the pass mark is 40 what makes you go to 80? It's now 16:45, I should start cooking supper. I will cook pasta and mince, it's Ntando's favourite meal. My phone rings, disturbing me from watching the pot boiling. I don't recognize the number. My Mandeni senses kick in. So much witchcraft is happening, people can cast a spell on you through your voice. You'd be all smiles answering unknown calls thinking it's Cambridge Customer of The Year call and the next thing you're fainting. KZN is like Limpopo's half brother, if we had enough resources we would have opened Broom Flying School long time ago. We are still taking baby steps, just lightning and food poisoning, nothing big. It's wise to answer and keep quiet if you don't know the caller. "Is Yangomuhle there?" the person asks. Her voice sounds familiar, I just can't place it. I call all my ancestors before responding. "Yes," I say. "This is Amanda." Amanda Du Point? Perhaps she saw me watching Skeem Saam and felt sorry for me. "Amanda who?" I ask. "Amanda McKenzie." Oh what a waste of Amanda! "How can I help you Amanda McKenzie?" I'm a little disappointed, hopefully it's not one of those insurance selling people. "I phoned Sosha and told him about you, he wants to offer you something," she says. Oh it's the beautiful receptionist. I didn't get her name on the interview day. "I beg your pardon?" I say. "I talked to Sosha. Can you manage being a sales assistant?" What? I can manage being anything that puts salary into my bank account. "Yes I can," I say almost screaming. My heart is doing a little bhinca dance. "Come tomorrow and see your contract," she says. "I will be there, thank you so much." Look at God! He didn't only turn water into wine, now he is turning Yanga into a sales assistant, whatever that is.

Chapter 2 After breaking the good news to Ntando a bottle of Merlot pops on the table. "Ntando, tomorrow is a working day," I warn. She fills her glass and gulps half of it. She is an alcoholic, I call her the Brutal Fruit Queen. On her real queen days she carries it in a juice bottle to work. One of the most good-looking alcohol addicts I know, the bank assistant manager, Ntandoyenkosi Mthethwa. "TUESDAY IS A WORKING DAY AND MY BITCH IS A WORKER, doesn't it rhyme?" she asks after rapping. It doesn't rhyme but in the USA this could be a hit song. Time for sane music died when the likes of Whitney Houston died. Now all we hear is; I'M RIDING A LAMBORGHINI





WITH MY BITCHES, MONEY DROPPING FROM MY POCKETS and gazillion of FUCKS. The type of music Grammy awards go to. Songs of the year! I only drink one glass, tomorrow is my first day at JC Bakers I can't show up hungover. I have to make good impressions, I don't want them to regret giving me this chance. Okay, she's had enough now. She is about to finish the whole bottle. I grab it and put it away. She rolls her eyes and drinks the drops left in her glass. "It's for your own good, you won't be able to go to work in the morning," I say. She throws her hands up and laughs. The Merlot is taking its course. "Who cares? Mr Supervisor wants to take your girl out for dinner," she beams. I was ready to go to bed but this needs me to get my ass back on the chair. I need to hear it from the very beginning. "Start from the beginning. How did he approach you? What did he say and what was your response?" She pulls the chair and sighs dramatically. "It happened yesterday, we had a little chat while going to the parking area. He then he asked to take me out on Friday. I said I'll see if I'm not busy," she says. Busy with what? She is never busy on Fridays after work. I don't understand this Hard-To-Get game girls like to play. I guess it gives some satisfaction of being wanted and hunted like a buck. With me you don't need to fool yourself and think when I say I don't like you I'm playing hard to get. If I say I don't like you get that into your thick skull. Sadly I haven't liked any guy since the age of 15. I sleep with whoever I want, it's good for memory refreshing. This is great news though, I'm crossing my fingers for Mr Supervisor, maybe he will supervise her stubborn ass. "Clear space in your phone because I want pictures of everything on that date," I tell her. It's either that or I'm going to the date as well. I'm not kidding, I've done that before. My two-legged alarm has already took the covers off me and it's only 5:30 in the morning. She is an early bird and thinks we all hate sleep. "What are you wearing? I was thinking of that peach dress you wore at my mother's birthday party. It's simple, yet elegant," she says. I don't know where she gets so much energy early in the morning. I'm still yawning and chewing my sour morning saliva. "Don't you have hangover?" I ask. "Don't worry about me, get up and go bath." Why didn't my mother use condom? I hate waking up. "Just a few minutes, I'll wake up," I say. She grunts and pulls the pillow under my head. My poor life! "Go do your sales and get people to buy cakes," she says. She is like a buzzing bee, ntrrrrr in my ears. "I don't even know what my job description is," I say taking off to the bathroom as instructed. Maybe I'm going to shout 'R500 chocolate cake' on the streets. I'm tempted to lock the door and take a nap right inside the tub, but that's dangerous. My lunch is packed. I don't know if I'll be starting today or I will sign the contract and start tomorrow. She suffocates me in a tight hug and wishes me luck. "I'm nervous but I'm going to be okay. Please steal pictures of Mr Supervisor I want to see how he looks. You cannot have another Vusi, the ugly tall-ass nothing." "Tall-ass nothing?" she asks, laughing. "Nothing in the brain, like an empty vessel that made lot of noise," I say. We both burst into laughter. This is what I needed to kick start my day, bashing someone and having a good laugh over it. Today I didn't get a seat next to the window. I'm sitting behind a Nazareth man and staring at his bushy black hair. I wonder when was the last time he went to the salon. Their church is very strict, they don't wear shoes nor eat warm food on Saturdays. I heard they also have a no-meat season. One thing I like about them is that their God is a South African. They believe him, they can see him and he helps them. Religion is all about where you put your faith, nothing to fight about. I'm here again and my nerves are all over the place. I don't want to mess this job. I have so many responsibilities



waiting for me. "Yangomuhle!" It's Amanda, the reception lady. "Hey how are you?" I ask standing in front of her desk. I don't know what body spray she uses but it smells like my dream bank balance. "I'm wonderful, you look great. Are you ready for your first day at JC Bakers?" She is smiling brightly. Today she is wearing a stainless super white dress. She almost looks like an angel. I look around, people wearing white overalls with red JC Bakers written on their backs are walking up and down, they are getting ready to start their day. I wonder if I'm going to wear an overall as well. "I'm a bit nervous," I tell her. "Don't worry you will be fine. Do you remember the interview office?" I nod my head. How can I forget that hell-in-a-cell? "Go there you will find Cynthia. She will tell you everything and give you the contract," she says. I thank her and walk to the same office I had my interview in. Cynthia is that educated woman who was dissing my CV, telling me I'm not educated enough to mop the floors. "Good morning," I greet. They are too pretty to return greetings. She is looking at her laptop, no acknowledgment or whatsoever. After two grand minutes she finally lends me her attention. "Ms Buthelezi." "Hello." "JC BAKERS decided to take you as the sales assistant. Do you know what your job description is?" How should I know? I'm not educated, remember. "No," I say shaking my head. She chuckles like it's what she expected. "You will be assisting customers, guiding them and giving descriptions of their cakes." That sounds complicated, I can't even describe a snowball. "I don't know anything about cakes," I say. "For now you will be using this book, give yourself time to learn each cake. The store is not busy, in no time you will be used to the job," she says. I take the book and open it. It has cake pictures, recipes and ingredients. "So it's different sections, like wedding cakes, birthday cakes, casual functions and all?" I ask. She pushes the chair back and stands up. She is big, I don't know how she sits and doesn't break that small chair. "Let's go to the store, take your contract with you." Amanda was right, the store is more beautiful. The cakes are displayed behind shiny glasses. They look absolutely beautiful and tasty. I'm not sure about this one though, it's a brown cake that looks like a couch. Maybe it's for Gomma-gomma workers. "Can you see this one on your book?" she asks pointing at one of the cakes. I look at it and refer to the book. "It's an orange cake," I say. "When you explain to the customer you tell everything. This is the orange cake with mocha icing and pistachio truffles. It's fresh from the oven and one of the best cakes for family gatherings," she says. I nod my head and walk on to the next one and check it on the book. "This one is the vanilla bean cake with strawberry-basil icing and ganache drips. It's chocolate covered, a worthy addition to your dinner dessert," I say. Her mean face melts, she cracks a smile. I didn't know she knows how to smile as well, let me give myself a mental high five. "This is what I'm talking about," she says, patting my shoulder. I'm a fast learner, I should add that to my CV. We walk through all the sections, she is friendly now. This job is not going to be as difficult as I thought it would be. "You know you are the only person who will work here beside the cleaners and packers? That means you will own this whole store." I look at her totally amazed. "There is no cashier?" I ask. "There are two cashiers by the reception area, here you are alone." Oh, I didn't see them. I haven't seen much in this place anyway, not even the owner, my role model. "When must I sign the contract?" I ask. "After you have read everything with understanding. I will be in my office, familiarise yourself with the store. You don't need me around you, you are a fast learner." I spend almost thirty minutes walking around, looking at the cakes and referring to the book for descriptions and names. I only know



Black Forest, I never thought cakes had so many names. The contract is drawn for twelve months. I fill in the date of my starting day and put my signature over the dotted lines. It's official, I'm employed and the pay is good. Everything is smooth, the only boring thing is that I work alone. Cleaners came earlier, they did their job and left. I have a little table and chair by the entrance, I will call it my office. There is no crowd, only three or five customers per hour. Most of them are white, I'm praying that my English doesn't run out before the day ends. My ancestors are probably confused, they can't even communicate with me today. "Girl!" It's Amanda. I secretly wish I was working closer to her. She is friendly, beautiful and light hearted. I wouldn't be miserable and glued to the cakes' book all day. "How are things in your store?" she asks. My store? I feel bossy. "Not as complicated as I thought it would be." "Okay it's tea-time now, let's go for a break." I take my bag and follow her. We take the second passage leading to the back of the building. I feel the heat and realise that we are approaching the kitchen. Everyone is looking at me, I feel like a newcomer in primary school. "Hello everyone," I greet. Unlike their seniors, they return my greeting. "This is the sales assistant, Yangomuhle Buthelezi, she started today," Amanda introduces me. They all introduce themselves, I'm not good with names, I'll probably forget all of them. They are friendly and easy to hang out with. All the ovens are on, it's freaking hot. I'm the only one who is drinking juice, everyone is drinking tea. They have kettles and coffee mugs stored inside the cupboard. I really don't understand, maybe they want to faint. "I can borrow you my cup when I'm done," says the one next to me. I don't remember her name correctly, it's between Funisile and Funani. "I'm good with juice, thank you," I say. Tea break is only fifteen minutes, I put my lunchbox back inside the bag and leave with Amanda. "Have you tasted any cake?" she asks. "No, I don't like cakes," I say. She looks at me a bit surprised. "What do you like?" she asks. "Money," I say. She laughs and shakes her head. We chat until we part ways to our departments. I send Ntando a short text reminding her to take pictures of Mr Supervisor. I want to judge him, it's a sisterhood tradition. Oh, I have a customer. I put my bag on the table and walk to him, Mr Smartypants. His skin tone is not dark nor light, but his head is big, no negotiations. He is smartly dressed in a mustard blazer and white shirt and slim fit black pant. I bet he is one of those model C black guys who speak English 24hours a day. "Good morning Sir, welcome to JC Bakers. Are you finding what you are looking for?" I ask with a smile plastered on my face. Smiling is one of the rules, by the time I get home my cheeks will be aching. "I don't need any help," he says without even looking up. Arrogance smells all over the store. He is busy on his smartphone. He is tweeting, I guess. "Are you looking for any specific cake?" I ask. Helping customers is what I'm hired to do, even arrogant customers must be tolerated. He looks up, he is annoyed, it's evident on his face. "I said I don't need any help," he says harshly. I feel roughed around my good girl edges. There are two ladies standing behind him, they are trying to look at the cakes in front of him. I doubt his back is the most interesting thing to look at. "Well then move your ass somewhere else Mr Smartypants. I have customers to help and you are blocking their view. This is not a tweeting section," I say. He looks at me like he is shocked I just said that to the 'whole' him. He doesn't scare me at all, he needs to move his ass somewhere and that's it. I hold his stare until the stupid look on his face disappears. He looks at the ladies behind him and steps aside. Good for him! My friendly smile returns. Now back to what I'm hired to do. "Ladies welcome to JC Bakers, are you finding what you're looking



for?" I ask. They look undecided and lost. "We are looking for a triple-layer cake," one says. "The chocolate one," the other one adds. "What are you celebrating?" I ask. "It is our niece's baby shower." Peggies, I wonder how far she is, maybe it's one of those unplanned pregnancies where the father disappears. And now her aunts are trying to comfort her by throwing a baby shower. I wonder how old she is. "Why did you choose chocolate triple-layer cake? Yes young girls like top things but I can assure you that a chocolate triple-layer cake is not one of them. I have a confetti cake with chocolate filling and vanilla buttercream, I think you should come and have a look at it," I say. They follow me and take a look at the cake. Luckily they fall in love with it and choose it over the other one. "You made this easier, we would've probably taken the whole triple-layer cake," the other one says. "I'm here to help ladies, enjoy your day and good luck to Peggy." Did I just call their niece Peggy? Someone needs to zip her mouth. I return to my table and carry on with the book. I don't like reading but since I'm getting paid for it I'm going to do it with passion. "Girl!" Okay this is her opening line. I close the book and look at her. "Sosha wants to see you," she says. That's the boss if I'm not mistaken. "Did I do something wrong?" I ask nervously. "He didn't say anything, just that he needs you in his office," she says. If I didn't do anything wrong why am I called into his office? The Celes that I know are not nice people. "Oh Jehovah! What kind of a person is he?" I ask. "Relax, he is not going to fire you," she says laughing. I really hope she is right. She walks me to the office and leaves me outside the door. God let him like me, I silently pray. I knock and wait for the permission to enter. "Come in!" His voice doesn't sound friendly at all. Okay, I'm imagining things. I push the door and step inside. WTH! No ways! This cannot be my boss. This is the guy I scolded out of the store and called Mr Smartypants. His office is beautiful but right now I don't have time to digest walls and cute desks, I'm holding a silent prayer and calling all my ancestors. I can lose this job before the day even ends. I've been sitting on this expensive guest couch for almost five minutes now. He is on his phone, barely feeling my presence. Eventually he clears his throat and looks up. He is too young to be owning this successful place. God's favourite children! "Beloved MaShenge, I was not tweeting," he says. Why is he explaining himself to me? I shift uncomfortably, hopefully my voice is not going to vibrate when I open my mouth. "That's alright Sir, you don't have to explain yourself to me," I say. He raises his right eyebrow, there is a smirk on his face. I said he has a big head, right? Well it's not only the head, his browridge is protruding and big. There is a deep scar that almost looks like a dimple on his chin. "Just to be safe, in case this is not a tweeting section." He is mocking me, he wants to embarrass me before I go back to the job-hunting world. "I would like to apologise for treating you that way, speaking like that to people is not who I am. You showed arrogance, I mean you could have told me nicely that you don't need help. There was no need for you to dismiss me like an irritating mosquito. But it's your company so I understand," I say. He rubs his protruding browridge and slightly frowns. "I showed arrogance?" he asks. I just added another reason for him to fire me, I'm so stupid. Who am I to tell my boss that he is arrogant? I'm judging him and I barely even know him. "Sometimes I imagine things Sir, forgive me," I say. "I see MaShenge," he says, penetrating me with his eyes. I guess we didn't do the introductions properly. "It's Yangomuhle Buthelezi Sir," I tell him. His lip curls up, the smirk reaches up to his eyes. "Oh, not MaShenge?" he asks. I can't miss the travesty in his voice. "It is MaShenge but not to you," I say. I'm MaShenge to my father and uncles, they have the right to



address me like that. He doesn't know me, he can't just call me MaShenge like I'm some woman selling vetkoeks and doughnuts in his neighbourhood. But obviously this whole situation is funny to him. "I will give myself that privilege, you called me Smartypants and I will call you MaShenge," he says. I take a deep breath, not sure of what to make of his decision. It's not like I will ever call him Smartypants again, he is my boss. I only called him that once, why is he insisting on calling me MaShenge? "Okay, am I fired?" I ask. "You want to take me to CCMA?" Will that even be possible? I just signed the contract today. Even if it was possible I wouldn't waste my time running to courts, I'd look for another job right away. "No Sir, I won't take you to CCMA, I will look for another job," I say. I can't control how sad my voice sounds. Job-hunting is not a game when jobs are scarce like this. "I didn't call you here to fire you, I called you to give you this," he says handing me a piece of paper. JC BAKERIES Rules & Regulations They numbered each rule from one to twenty, I run my eyes to the last one. No.20- Romantic relationship between JC Bakers employees cannot be prohibited, however romantic acts inside the company are not allowed. Well this is funny, whoever made this rule was salty and miserable. "What is a romantic act?" I ask. "Sex, kissing..." I laugh before he even finishes. "Those are romantic acts?" I ask. "Ummm yes....." He sounds puzzled. I cross my legs and lean back on the couch. I'm not fired so relief has dawned. "What if I'm not kissing romantically, just doing it with no romance involved?" I ask. Awe transforms his face, it looks like I just confused the hell out of him. "Sex and kissing are romantic acts, whoever does them any other way has lost the roots of life." Roots of life? He is good, I didn't even know this thing called life had roots. I give him a lopsided grin. "Loud and clear Sir," I say. I wonder why Cynthia wasn't the one to give me these twenty commandments, she seems to be in charge of everything here. "Do you have any objections?" he asks. I do have them but I shake my head. "That's all, thanks for your time MaShenge," he says. I have to make peace with how he calls me. I fold the paper and gather myself up. God is good, I'm still employed. Before I go through the door, I turn and look at him. He has his forehead furrowed, looking eager to hear whatever I'm about to say. "I'm proud of you," I say. I don't know why I felt the need to tell him, now I don't understand his reaction. His lips are set into a thin, hard line. He has no smile, his jaw muscles are tightened together. "When a black person is winning, we are all winning. I'm proud of you, as a black sister," I explain. He gives me a faint smile before every expression drains out of his face. The corners of his eyes crinkle as he bites on his thumb nail. I don't know him very well but this is not the Sosha I was chatting to a few minutes ago. "Thank you," he utters almost inaudible. I nod my head and walk out before I go off the line again. \*\*\*\*\* I'm enjoying my job, I only suffer from boredom. But maybe it's for the best, the less people I interact with is the less I'm likely to offend anyone. I talk too much, people have been telling me this all my life. Yesterday was an eye-opener, had it been someone else I would've got fired. I'm the eldest and the only girl in the family. Being the eldest is like being a deputy parent. I do half my mother's job in raising my brothers. Mbuso is a good boy, he always listens and follows the rules, but Sabatha is another story. Even Aunt July fails to discipline him, he is doing his 'last-born' duties very well. July is my one and only dramatic aunt, she is not the one to be messed with. She once pinched my ear inside the police station, in front of the constables and captains. She doesn't care what the government says about children's rights. Beating a child is illegal in South Africa, but not at the Buthelezi premises. You either live





by their rules and eat at the Buthelezis or live by the South African rules and wait for the parliament to send you food. Lunch is at 2:30pm, Amanda is already here with her bag to fetch me. Looking beautiful is one of her priorities. I haven't seen her dresses in any store, they are designed just for her body. "I'm going to miss this one, I'm not hungry plus I'm still studying these cakes," I say. She snaps her brows together. I sense drama coming. "You are not hungry since tea-time where you ate two slices?" she asks. People and food! "I'll eat when I get home," I say. "Mmm I see, you don't want to gain weight," she says. Well the only weight I care about is the one of maize meal and rice. I don't know what she is talking about. "I don't care whether I gain weight or not. Beauty doesn't lie on the weight. Just bath, comb your hair and dress up nicely. Woops you are thee girl!" I say. She is staring at me weirdly, somehow it feels uncomfortable. "What?" I ask. She snaps out and smiles. "Can I be your friend?" Is this primary school? I remember saying this to another girl in primary school, three days later I wrote her a letter calling the friendship off. "Why are you laughing?" she asks. "You are so old school, who still does this?" She also breaks into laughter. I don't know about pairing her with Ntando. Being friends with me means she will be friends with Ntando as well, we are inseparable. "Call me Yanga, that's how Ntando calls me," I say. "I like you complete, Yangomuhle, I'll call you babe." She doesn't make sense, but it's okay we can call each other babe. "Do you drink?" I ask. This determines whether she is fit to join the squad or not. We cannot have a juice-drinking friend, she'd be so out of place. "Occasionally, and you?" "Whenever I get access to the bottles." My father would faint if he hears this. My mother would die and rise to beat me and die again. Her biggest fear in life is being ashamed and having an imperfect daughter. They don't know that I drink, I've never drank in their presence. I'm not like my cousin Kanyo, Aunt July's daughter, she can drink in front of the pastors and bishops. She has lost jobs, money and good boyfriends because of alcohol. We always tell her that alcohol is her biggest enemy, of which she responds by quoting the Bible- "Love your enemies." Amanda leaves without me. I return back to the book and study my cakes and their icing. I wonder who designs them, maybe it's that white dude from the interview panel. Someone clears the throat next to me. I look up, it's the boss. Today he is wearing a dark grey suit and white shirt. He is undeniably a boss. "Sir?" I say getting off the chair. He balances his hand on the table, giving me the full view of his silver wristwatch. It's those fancy ones written in Chinese, I can't tell you what time it is. "Can you call me Sosha?" he asks. He doesn't wait for an answer he goes on and asks why I didn't take lunch break. "I'm not hungry," I say. "It's lunch-break, you eat and take a break, you can do both or one of them," he says. He is back at being Smartypants, who said I don't know what a lunch break is? "Am I breaking one of the rules by being here?" "No." "Thank you," I say and shift my gaze back to the book. "Have you tasted any cake?" he asks. Everyone is asking me this question like I should eat any cake I want without permission. "No Sir I haven't," I reply without shifting my eyes from the book. Can he leave already? He is disturbing me. "Which one would you like to taste?" "None." "Do you know how to bake?" Son of Abraham! "I can't bake Sir, I mean Sosha. Can I read this?" Geez! I'm snapping at my boss. "Of course MaShenge," he says. I expect him to leave but he doesn't. His strong cologne is disturbing me, I can't focus. "Why are you here? Is it not lunch break?" I ask quoting 'lunch break' with my fingers. "I come here during the workers' break, it is my store. You are the one who is invading my space," he says. Wow! I'm too forward, aren't I? I



found him here after my tea break yesterday, he is here again on lunch break. Indeed I'm invading his space, I shouldn't be here. I should use this time to call Ntando, we haven't talked since morning. "I didn't say go," he says. Didn't he say I'm invading his space? "It's okay, I need to call Ntando anyway," I say. He gives me the once-over, it leaves me feeling uncomfortable. "Boyfriend?" He is asking personal questions now. "Yes," I say and make my way out. My whole week has been great. I love my job and enjoy every moment of it. Amanda and I spend most break times together. I haven't stayed in the store during breaks since the day I was told I'm invading and haven't seen the boss ever since. I heard he owns a gym as well. He divides his attention, money calls him left and right. It's Friday, Ntando is going out with Mr Supervisor. She couldn't take pictures of him but we were able to look for him on Facebook. His name is Sanele Hlophe, and like all the Saneles I know he is a nerd. "He plaits his hair?" I asked Ntando when I first saw his picture. "Yes but he is still handsome," she said. It took everything in me not to tell her the truth, men who plait hair are not handsome in my books. Jub-jub may have gotten away with it during his Ndikhokhele Bawo days but that doesn't mean every men will look like him. I refuse to share my Isoplus hair spray with a man. She has changed the dress again! "What was wrong with the black one?" I ask. "Too dull, how is this one?" She turns around, giving me her fat behind. "It's too tight, your ass is all out," I say. She is what the society now labels as sexy. Slim waist, big ass, round boobs and full lips. She has never done any surgery, this is naturally how God created her. "That's the point, I want him to see what he could have on his dessert menu." WTF! I laugh out loud. "You are calling your body a dessert?" I ask. "Yes it's chocolate dessert baby," she says. You go Mr Supervisor, chocolate dessert is about to drop to your menu. She is not done, she disappears to her room again. I pour chopped vegetables in the pot and add water. I don't know what is it that I'm cooking, maybe vegetable soup served with bread. I'm not in the kitchen mood. There is someone at the door, it's probably Sanele. I yell for Ntando to come out. "Open for him," she yells back. I walk to the door and open. Indeed it's him. He is slim and tall. If it was any other day I would've thought he is a Jehovah witness. It's Friday evening, most people have locked their ties inside the drawers, but not Mr Supervisor here. He has his black tie on like he is attending a formal meeting. "Sanele, right?" I ask, flashing a smile. "Yes, Ms Yangomuhle?" I throw my head backwards and laugh. He sounds so formal. "No ways, please call me Yanga. Come in, your girlfriend is still editing herself," I say. He is holding a bunch of flowers. Ntando is blessed, I've never had someone buying me flowers in my life. "Are those for Ntando?" I ask. "Yes," he says with a smile. The lady of the moment walks out, she is sizzling hot. But we didn't agree on these shoes. We agreed on sandals but now she is wearing black pencil heels. Sanele stands up and gives her the flowers. They share a brief hug and stare at each other. "Gorgeous, how are you?" he asks. Ntando blushes for a moment and whispers her response. She lifts the flowers to her nose like those white women on *The Bold & The Beautiful*. "I will bring her back before 10pm," Sanele says directing to me. He is crazy. "10pm???" I ask. "Yes Yanga 10pm," Ntando jumps in. I roll my eyes at her, she can't start now the guy only gave her flowers, what's going to happen when they start dating? "Fine, I won't be here though. I'm going out and coming back in the morning," I say. She drops her head to the side, she didn't anticipate this. She wanted me to miserably wait for her. "Come on, I will bring you something nice," she says. We always argue about going out, neither of us want to be alone at night. I usually go out and leave her but



today the tables are turned. I don't even know what I'm going to do all these hours alone "I will bring you something nice as well," I say. Our arguments are always petty and we can drag them for hours. "Fine, take care of yourself," she says. They make their way out, leaving me miserable with my boiling vegetables. I lied I'm not going anywhere, I don't have money to waste and I'm freakin' tired. Phone beeps! It's a text from my mother, Mbuso surely typed for her. It's another long list of what I must buy when I get paid. Clearly half of my salary is going home. I miss them, next month I must buy Mbuso a smartphone so that I can be able to video-call them. Hearing their voices is not enough, I miss seeing their smiles and Sabatha's cheesy face. The call follows, I cover the pot and pick it up. It's Amanda this time. We just parted a few hours ago at work. "Miss me already?" I ask. She laughs, her background is blazing with car hoots. "Yes I miss you. Where are you?" "I'm in Westridge obviously," I say. "Great, I'm coming to take you out." God! I make a loud sigh. "Amanda I'm tired," I say. "I'm not taking you to work. I'm taking you to my cousin's house party," she says. I don't want to go anywhere tonight but I can't disappoint her. This will be our first night out together. "Okay I will send you the location," I say. I dish my meal and eat like a hunter. My All-Star takkies are clean, thank God! I take a shower, this is an emergency. Five minutes later I'm out and combing my hair. Now I see the importance of wigs, styling natural hair is difficult and painful. I'm not deep into make-up, I only use lipstick and face powder. I like drawn eyebrows though, unfortunately I can't even draw a cartoon. I tried drawing them twice and they looked like two different fruits. Banana on the left and sugarcane on the right. Sugarcane is a fruit right? I grew up stealing it from trucks. We would lurk by the road with some neighbour kids and wait for the sugarcane truck to pass then climb on its back and drop sugarcane to the side of the road. It was lot of fun until the day when the truck driver caught us. He fined our parents R20s. The only reason I didn't get a good hiding that day is because my father was home. Amanda calls when she is outside the building. I take my bag and lock the doors. I was not lying to Ntando after all. I'm going out, check mates! I quickly text her reminding her about the pictures. She must take tons of them, I want to see everything. Amanda is in a black car with tinted windows. "Girl!" She opens the door, smiling. I hug her and look at the man driving. He has the looks but why is he not attending the gym? "This is Sphelele," she says. I give her a look, she needs to explain. "He is my fiancée," she says, secretly rolling her eyes. She has never mentioned the fiancée to me, not even once had I seen her wearing a ring. I greet the guy and get at the back. "Whose car is this?" I ask. "It's Sphelele's," she says. Now I'm wondering what job this Sphelele does, he must be rich. "Amanda I told you that my things are your things. Why can't you say it's our car?" Sphelele blows up. He is seriously angry because she said it's his car? Wow. "It doesn't make any difference. Why do you have to criticize everything I say?" She also sounds angry. They have nice life arguments. "If you didn't say inappropriate things every time I wouldn't be criticising anything," Sphelele says. Oh yes, I cross my legs and lean on the seat comfortably. I should've brought popcorn, it's going down. "Sphelele I'm tired of arguing over stupid things!" "Stupid Amanda???" She doesn't say anything, the car falls into silence. I wanted them to keep it going, listening to verbal fights is better than watching a cricket match. Looking at this matter with my Sis' Dolly's eye I'd say their relationship is not healthy. If they fight like this now what's going to happen after marriage? And why Amanda never wears the ring? Maybe he didn't go down on one knee, he sent lobola straight to



the McKenzies. I break the silence, I hate awkwardness. "Where are we going?" I ask. "Glenwood," Amanda replies. Rich neighbourhood, I hope we'll have fun. "Why didn't you tell me at work?" I ask. "I wasn't sure about going, Sosha persuaded me." Sosha? How is he related to Amanda's cousin, the party guy? "Our boss?" I ask. "Yes the one and only Sosha," she says. Why am I not comfortable with this? "Why did you invite him?" I ask. "It's our cousin's house party." Phone beeps! It's Ntando's WhatsApp message. I think she is sending the pictures, I will check them later. "You and Sosha share the same cousin?" I ask. "Yes, our mothers were siblings," she says. She told me that Sosha is her friend, now he is her cousin? "You said he is your friend mos," I say. "He is, we were friends before we found out our mothers had the same parents." There are loopholes in this story, why didn't they know each other? Did the other sister elope and bore children out of the country? Her and Sphelele don't utter another word to each other until we arrive in Glenwood and park outside a double-storey house.

Chapter 3 There are about five cars parked outside. There is a lot of noise coming from the house. "Is this the house?" I ask foolishly. "Yes, let's go drink this miserable life away." They don't even say goodbye to each other. He reverses the car and drives away. "Fiancée?" I ask. She sighs and straightens her weave. "I don't want to talk about him, don't ask." She is secretive, I'm not used to such friends. "Just one question. Do you love him?" I ask. Her body language answers me first, she doesn't love him. "I'm not sure, we've been together for two years," she says. I want to ask why they are together but I only asked to ask one question. I will reserve this one for another day. The inside of the house is stunning. Crispy white walls, soft grey upholstery and pale wooden furniture. I can't believe Amanda brought me here. This is not a party but a fashion show. All the girls are wearing stilettos and dresses. The guys are wearing expensive shirts and glittering wristwatches. I'm the only one wearing All-Star takkies and skinny jean. A Khanyi Mbau appears out of nowhere and hugs Amanda. I stand aside like an outcast...Oh yes I am an outcast, I don't look like anyone here. "OMG! Mntase where did you buy these shoes?" "If I tell you I'll have to kill you," Amanda says. I don't think I want to be here anymore. I'm out of place and have a feeling that I'm going to clash with someone. "This is my friend Yangomuhle, she works at the bakery," Amanda introduces me. The girl looks at my feet then up at my face. She is thinking what I'm thinking, I'm out of place. "You have a beautiful name," she says. I do have a beautiful name but right now it's the introduction time. Maybe she thinks my name is the only beautiful thing I have, well I have beautiful spin kicks too. "I know sweetie," I say and take a few steps away from them. Amanda should've given me the heads-up, I would've worn my peach dress and a wedge. I have long ears, I can hear that girl talking about me behind my back. "Where did you get her?" she asks. Amanda keeps her voice low, I can't hear her response. "Amanda do you have to befriend every trash you work with?" she asks. It's time I take my trashy self back to them. She ends the conversation when she realises that I'm getting closer. It's too late, I heard everything. "Who did you say you were?" I ask staring at her. "It's my older sister, Mbali," Amanda answers for her. "Look Mbali, I may be low from your league and not as smartly



dressed as you are but girl look at these takkies..." I lift one foot up and show it to her. She looks at it with her arms folded. "They will rearrange your face. I will grab you with that horse tail on your head and mop the floors with you. Don't talk shit about me," I say. Amanda asks her to go, she does with no hesitation. I wanted her to say one more word then I would've practiced what I preach. Amanda looks at me with an apologetic face. "I'm so sorry babe," she says. "I'm not mad Amanda. I know how to handle my business and if she keeps going like this I will handle her," I say. The living room has a fire place, beverage centre and under-counter refrigerator. There is a sound system but the music is kept soft. They are playing Deep House music, it speaks to the heart. There is a beautiful custom table that expands to almost twelve seats. Fancy people are sitting around it with drinks in their hands. "Amanda!" One guy calls, his eyes are not on Amanda though, they are on me. "Beautiful people, this is my colleague and friend, Yangomuhle Buthelezi," Amanda says. Now all eyes are on me. They are looking at me the same way Mbali looked at me. I repeat, I shouldn't have came here. The girl sitting opposite us compliments my name. It's not the only nice thing about me, they are going to piss me off. "Food?" Amanda asks. I shake my head. I have boiled vegetables and bread in my tummy. It was the worst meal ever, I pray not to drink too much and end up vomiting. I'm on my second Castle Lite. Amanda is sitting on another guy's lap, they seem to be cosy with each other. This makes me question her whoreness grade. Sphelele drove her here, now she is on another man's lap? Which febaring level is this? It seems like most girls are here with their men. I had a short chat with one of them, her name is Noxy. She is not bad, just nosy. I don't like talking about my life to strangers. "Are you okay?" It's the guy who's been breaking his back dancing to every song. Now he is standing next to me being friendly. "Yeah I'm okay," I say. His eyes land on my lips, then he bites his. I hate what he is doing. "I'm Sabelo Zwane." He places his hand on my shoulder. I had a feeling that I might clash with someone, here he is. "You have a nice name," I say what everyone in this house has been saying. He smiles and brushes my arm. "Can I get you anything Yangomuhle?" "Yes, you can get your hands off me." The whole room breaks into laughter. I can't believe they've been eavesdropping. He complies and removes his hand then clicks his tongue. "I was just being nice, you are not even the type that makes my dick hard," he says. This is such a low blow, and it's blowing to the wrong person. "And you're not the type that can get me anything, don't even go to dicks," I say. He gives me the world's nastiest look. Oh, I'm shaking. "You have a type, yet you are wearing R50 jeans," he says. Amanda gets off her man's lap, she wants to come to my defence. I give her a look, she must chill, I can handle this. "And you are wearing R2k shirt but still you don't have 'that thing', you are a waste," I shoot back. The thing about 'that thing' is that nobody knows what it is but every girl can tell if a guy doesn't have it. "Sabelo you will not talk like that to her," Amanda says glaring at him deadly. "This bitch is full of herself, who does she think she is?" Now he is calling me a bitch but he has never fucked me. My blood is starting to boil. "Sabelo!" The voice comes from the door, it sounds familiar. Oh well, it's my boss, Sosha. He is wearing casual black T-shirt, navy short and Adidas sneakers. He is not walking alone, there is a short yellowbone next to him. She doesn't look happy, her face is puffed up like she's been crying. Sabelo takes his beer and walks out angrily. I roll my eyes and take my phone out. Amanda takes her drink and moves to the chair next to me. "He is a jerk by nature," she says. I've moved on from that stupid fight. I'm curious about her side nigga. "I don't





care about that asshole, who is that guy?" She follows my eyes, her lips curve into a smile when she realises that I'm asking about her guy. "My best orgasm," she says in a low voice. It's confirmed, her whoriness comes with a master's degree. I suppress laughter by taking a sip on the drink. "You are a whore, do you know that?" I ask. She keeps sipping on her cocktail, trying hard not to laugh. "I know, my Maths told me," she says. "What about Sphelele whore?" I ask. "No orgasm there." No ways! I look at her in shock. Never judge a book by its cover. He drives a Mercedes what-what but can't drive his woman to orgasm? "Lord have mercy!" I exclaim softly. Naakmusiq song starts playing. Girls get off their seats and sway their hips. I'm recording a video for Ntando. I need to take pictures for Facebook as well, I can't let my presence in this fancy house go to waste. An extra face appears on my selfie camera. I turn my head and look at him. "Boss what are you doing?" I ask. "I'm Sosha, not Boss," he says. I press the Home button, lock my phone and push it inside my bag. "Am I too ugly?" he asks. "You are cute, but not to be in my phone," I say. Amanda has joined the dancers, he steals her seat next to me. "It's nice to have you here, I hope Sabelo didn't spoil your night," he says. "No I'm over it," I say. "How do you find my customers? Do they treat you right?" Is he really bringing up work in a party? I can't think about customers while drinking Castle Lite. "I'm tipsy Sosha," I say. His eyes dart towards his girlfriend at the end of the room, he chuckles and rests his elbow on the table. "I don't want any trouble," I say. His girlfriend is looking at me like I'm a lioness lurking for her man. "Where is Ntando?" he asks. "My Ntando?" I'm shocked. How does he know Ntando? There is a look on his face, I can't figure it out. "Yes," he says. Wow! This is a small world. "She went out," I say. A line appears between his brows, he looks confused. "She???" he asks. Did he think Ntando was a guy? "Yes, my Ntando is a girl," I say. He mumbles a curse and folds his fist over his mouth. "So you are a lesbian?" he asks, clearly confused. On my first day at the bakery I told him that Ntando is my boyfriend. I can't believe he still remembers her name. "Yes I'm a lesbian," I say with a straight face. Flush creeps up on his face, he looks pale for a second. My phone rings inside the bag, I take it out and glance at the screen. BUTHELEZI CALLING.... My heartbeat escalates, the Castle Lite drains off my system instantly. Ngqengelele is calling. Do you know who that is? I jump off the chair and run to the radio system. I don't know where to switch it off so I unplug everything. "What's the fuck?" "We are dancing!" "Why are you turning the music off?" They are all scowling at me, they don't understand. My father thinks I'm on bed at this time. I didn't come to Durban to party. If he hears the noise in here he will catch the first taxi in the morning and drag me back home. My mother will call izangoma to cast the 'partying' spell away. I can't risk that. I shush them like chickens and answer the call. All eyes are on me, the girls are giggling behind their hands. "Shengee how are you?" he asks. At times like this I become grateful that my parents don't know anything about video-calling. "I'm fine, how are you?" I say conveying the 'shut up' message with my eyes across the room. "We are also fine, Vodacom gave me 60 free minutes." Fuck Vodacom! I don't have 60 minutes to be on the call, this crowd will skin me alive. "Really? Ummm... That's great, Vodacom is kind." What the hell am I saying? "How is work?" he asks. "It's good but I'm always tired. Right now I can barely keep my eyes open," I say faking drowsiness with my voice. Satan is rocking on his chair with a big smile on his face. I'm representing his kingdom very well. "This thing expires today but let me not deprive you sleep, you work hard. Mbuso and Sabatha are saying hello." Gosh I miss those two monkeys.



"I'll see them soon," I say. "Okay goodnight my baby. I love you, take care of yourself," he says. I sigh in relief as he ends the call. That was close. Music restarts, the vibe returns to normal. I finish my can and take another one. Free alcohol tastes better. "Who was that?" He is still sitting where I left him. How is my call any of his business? He is my boss, not a friend. But I tell him it was my father, I don't want to chit chat. I turn to the girl opposite me and ask where the bathroom is. "Take this passage, there is a bathroom on your left," she says. I take my bag and follow the passage. I push the door on my left and enter. I don't know which one is the owner of this house, there are many people, but his neatness is on another level. This house defines his individual character and classic taste. There is no single spot of dirt either on his walls or floors. There is a mirror on the wall. I glance at my reflection, my lipstick has faded. That's what you get for buying R10 lipstick from China shops. I do my business and wash my hands. I need to powder my face and reapply the lipstick. When I get paid I need to buy real cosmetics and do something about this hair. The bathroom door opens. I turn and look with my heart pounding. It's Sosha, WTF! "Boss?" I say with my eyebrows snapped. "My name is Sosha, not Boss," he says. I don't care about his name, why is he following me? "What are you doing here? I'm still busy," I say. He rubs his head and says he is sorry. I wait, expecting him to walk out, but he doesn't. "I love being around you," he says. Oh, even inside the bathroom? "How so?" I ask. He nibbles on his bottom lip and stares at me. Naturally he is an average looking guy, but his bank balance has upgraded him to handsome. He doesn't dress up to cover his nakedness, he dresses to turn heads. "I'm still wondering what sex and kissing without romance is," he says. Is there anything I said that he has forgotten? I find his memory interesting, he remembers even the silliest detail of our conversation. I zip my bag and clutch it under my arm and stop next to him. The devil is whispering in my ears. "It's a kiss that doesn't mean anything. Kissing for the sake of kissing or arousal," I say. A twinkle gleams in his eyes, his chest moves as he consumes a deep breath. "You are confusing me MaShenge," he says. I pull his face to me, my fingers touch the scar on his chin. I ignore the strange feeling striking my subconscious and fill the gap between our faces. His lips are quivering, he is staring deep in my eyes. I smoothly brush his lower lip and suck it slowly. He has soft smooth lips, I'm tempted to push him against the wall and go deeper. His hand grabs my waist. I break the kiss and step two feet away. "Please don't stop," he whispers pulling me back. "Boss I'm just setting an example, I'm not being romantic with you," I say. A muscle in his jaw twitches, I give him a lopsided grin and open the door and walk out. Today is Monday, I have to go to work. My nerves are all over the place, I'm not sure about facing Sosha in a sober mode. Maybe he hates me, I turned him down and we all know guys who has it all don't take rejection well. He was convinced I was going to be his snack after the party, he tried everything to get me in his car. I do casual sex but not with my bosses. I regret kissing him. What was I thinking? The government must ban alcohol in South Africa. "Are you ready?" Ntando asks walking through the door. She offered to drive me to work, her day starts at 8:30, mine starts at 07:30. "I'm ready," I say looking around to see if I'm not leaving anything behind. "You look stressed," she says. She knows me like the back of her hand. Sometimes it irritates me, there is no hiding anything from her. "What if Sosha fires me? Maybe he feels like I played him. I kissed him Ntando, he may have..." She breaks into laughter. She undermines this critical situation. "He can't fire you for denying him your pussy. It's life, you get



some and lose some," she says. She takes her lunchbox on the kitchen counter and packs it inside her bag. "I shouldn't have kissed him. I hate Castle Lite," I say following her to the door. She inserts the key and locks. She is still laughing at me. "You would've kissed him even if you weren't tipsy. You like teasing and playing guys," she says. Well, that's true. I would have kissed him, Castle Lite or not. I have teased many guys but I've never felt guilty. This is the first time I'm having regrets. The whole journey Ntando is gushing over Sanele, how romantic and funny he is. Yesterday she was talking about the same thing. I had the Sanele talk for breakfast, lunch and dinner. "He is a good father to his son, he supports him and knows every single detail of his life even though they are not living together." Sighs! We are almost there, thank God. "When are you telling him that you are his girlfriend?" I ask. "Maybe after two weeks," she says. What if he dies tomorrow? I don't understand this delay, Sanele has proved himself more than enough now. "But you like him, you're wasting time," I say. "He needs to beg and fight to win me over." Girls will be girls! She pulls at the side of the road, opposite JC Bakers. "Which one is Sosha?" she asks looking at three men I've never seen in my life. "He is not there," I say. "I'm going to fetch you after work. Make sure he is with you," she says. Sosha is not my friend, how am I going to make sure he is with me? "The person you will see is Amanda," I say opening the door. She grunts through her teeth. I'm not sure if she will like Amanda, she can be uptight at times. "Enjoy your day munchie," I say. The day has started, the bakers are making noise in the kitchen, Amanda is on the call on her desk and the cleaners are mopping the reception area. I could have been one of them but God's grace happened. It's too cold in the mornings to be touching water. "Morning," I greet the cashiers. "Hey Yanga, Cynthia was looking for you." Her name is Asih, we are not close but in her head we are buddies. "Why?" I ask. "Go to her office, I don't know." My heart starts racing. Did Sosha tell her to fire me? I make my way to her office. I don't even knock, I let myself inside. "Good morning Cynthia," I say. She is drinking coffee, her desk has papers scattered all over. I bet she left it like this yesterday. "Yangomuhle take a seat," she says. I sit on the chair and make a silent prayer. "Did I do something wrong?" I ask. "Not at all, I just wanted to inform you that Mr Cele will be monitoring you today." What??? "Why?" I ask. "I think he just wants to observe how you work and treat his customers." This is going to be the worst Monday ever. How am I supposed to work while my boss, whom I kissed, is watching me? "Okay, thanks for letting me know," I say taking a deep breath. It looks like I'm not going to enjoy working here. I have spoiled things for myself. I shouldn't have teased my boss, now he is going to make my life horrible. "Girl!" Amanda calls. I wave at her and make my way to the store. One table, two chairs. The other chair is already occupied. He is wearing white T-shirt and red blazer, he looks handsome as always. I collect my nerves and take a deep breath. "Good morning Sosha," I greet. He looks up and smiles. "Morning MaShenge, thanks for coming to work," he says. I put my bag on the table and pull my chair to the far end. This is going to be a long day. One of the bakers walks and gives me a pamphlet with addition of new cakes and leaves. This gives me an opportunity to leave the table and go wander through the aisles. A couple of customers come, I help them and remain between the aisles. Sosha has been sitting on the chair by the entrance for almost an hour. He is busy on his phone. Maybe he is addicted to social networks, if not chatting with his shortie. "MaShenge!" I hear him calling me from the other side of the store. I thought he'd shut up two more hours. I find him standing in the BIRTHDAY section. He pushes



the phone inside his jean pocket and looks at me. He is tall, so am I. We are standing face to face. "MaShenge I didn't want to sleep with you. I wanted to drive you home so that I can see where you live," he says. He did mention going to his house, I guess he has forgotten. "That's fine, can we work in peace?" He doesn't say anything, he is just penetrating through me with his eyes. Why is he doing this here? I want to work in peace. "I heard you wanted to deal with Mbali physically," he says. Is that how he calls it? Fancy. "I wanted to kick her ass, she was talking nasty about me to Amanda," I say. My explanation doesn't change the look in his eyes. "I also heard about your interview, your attitude to be precise," he says. I don't know where this is going. The word 'attitude' doesn't sit well with me though. "Was I arrogant to you on the first day? If I remember correctly I only said I don't need your help." What is he beating around the bush for? "Sosha if you want to fire me because of what happened Friday night just say so," I say. "I'm not doing that," he says. "Why are we talking about this then?" I almost shout. I need to calm down, this is my boss. "You talk too much, defend yourself more than necessary and see 'red' in everything. You can't even take a compliment, you strike." Okay, he is sent to test me. I don't appreciate people who analyse my life like they know where I come from. "I don't take judgement very well Mr Cele," I say. He takes a step closer, his eyes are glued to me like magnet. "I'm not judging you," he says. I nod and shut my mouth. I don't want to say things I might regret later. "Why are you so angry?" he asks. I blink a couple of times, in great disbelief. Now I'm angry? "Who said I'm angry?" I ask. "The only reason a person would behave like you is if she is angry. The only reason a person would defend herself so much is if she didn't have enough defence before. The only reason someone would talk so much is if her voice wasn't heard." Breathe Yanga, breathe! "Can I continue with my work?" I ask. He wants to hold my hand, but stops himself. He is not letting a single blink takes his eyes off me. "What is your pain?" he asks. I throw the book on the floor and leave. I'm trying so hard to fight back tears. Who the fuck does he think he is? How dare he judges me like that? He doesn't even know me! Ten minutes later I walk out of the bathroom and find him helping a customer. I don't think I'm going to make it to one month in this company. My book is on top of the table, he picked it for me. Maybe I do have 5% stinking attitude. Tell me why did I throw the book on the floor? "I'm doing your job now MaShenge, you are going to return the favour," he says. So he is not angry about the little tantrum? I expected him to send me home. "I'm sorry about the book. I just didn't like how you talked to me," I say. He pulls the chair and sits. He looks young, 28years maybe. I wonder how he reached this level at such young age, his age mates are still trying to put it together. "I want you to tell me about your life," he says. I did say this is going to be my worst Monday. He keeps spoiling it from every angle. "There is nothing to tell," I say and open the book. We'd work better in silence but he is not the one to keep shut. "You said you don't want to end up feeling like a victim after sex," he says. I don't remember saying that. Alcohol should really be banned. Why did I tell him that? I wonder if I didn't say more than that. His sudden interest in my life raises my eyebrows. "Can we discuss this? The cakes, because that's the only thing connecting us. I'm sure you don't act like this with all your employees." "You're right, I don't," he says with no hesitation. I don't know what his problem is. His eyes are undressing me, leaving me naked. He is uncovering me without permission. "I'm doing my job correctly. I do everything the company asked me to do. What do you want from me?" My previous boss was better than this. He never



bothered me, he was not nosy and never dug his claws into my life. He never cared. "I want to listen and hear your unheard cries," he says. I want to leave but I need money. You know what? I will zip my mouth and only talk to the customers. I remember everything. My black skirt and white and pink panty. The skirt made it easy for him. I still wonder if someone would've come earlier if I was wearing a trouser. It would've taken him time to pull it down. Within two minutes my skirt was up, he was pounding on me. Three hours later I was surrounded by my mother, MaJali, and his mother. -"What were you doing in his room?" -"Yangomuhle is this the school you went to?" Each question was accompanied by a slap. My mother doesn't tolerate lies. She didn't give birth to untruthful children. It was my first time visiting a boy and it turned into a nightmare. I was only 15years, and he was 24years. "Yangomuhle uyajola!" she cried. She couldn't believe it. I had ashamed her and damage control had to be done. So the agreement was made, I had to shut up. "Don't utter a word to anyone. You will disgrace me." So I didn't, only Ntando knows. From that day I vowed to never become a victim of uncontested sex again. I will sleep with who I want, not the other way around. I've been poking the chicken thigh for more than five minutes. My appetite vanished in the store. "Is everything alright?" Amanda asks. I look at her, she has stopped eating too. She looks worried. "I'm working under the supervision of your cousin and I hate it," I say. "Is that all?" she asks. I nod my head. I pray an emergency call comes through his phone. I've seen enough of his face the last seven hours. It's the longest two hours of my life. His presence is unsettling, even with his eyes turned down it still feels like he is staring at me. When I glance at the time my heart does a little dance, the day is over. "Can I take you home?" he asks after two hours of total silence. He knows that I'm going to say no, he can lift other employees, not me. Amanda walks in as I'm about to walk out, she glances at my face briefly and looks at him. My face is evident of the anger brewing inside me. "Is everything alright here?" she asks. "Yes, did The Diamonds send for their cake?"-Sosha. "They are fetching it in the morning. Musa will come early to finish it off." She takes a few strides towards the first aisle. "We need space to store it over the night. Maybe we should remove these two because it's big," she says. He follows behind her with his hands tucked inside the pockets. "You think it will fit here?" he asks. "Yes, I will ask the guys to remove glass this side." It's 17: 06, Ntando must be outside waiting. I'm not going to do unassigned overtime. "Yangomuhle you're leaving already?" Amanda asks as I'm about to exit. "Yes, my time is up," I say. "Oh I thought you could help us for a few minutes." Help? I can't work overtime and be told that I'm helping. I didn't come here to help, I'm here to work and every unit of my work needs to be paid. "I can't, I have to go," I say. "Okay I will call you later." Ntando is waiting, not inside the car. She is standing outside looking at everyone passing in front of her. Later she will be asking me who they are. "And then?" she asks when I walk past her. I sigh and open the car door. She gets inside right after me and stares at me. "Don't look at me like that," I say. "What's up with the long face?" "Drive, I will tell you later," I say. She doesn't drive, she is still watching people walking out of the bakery. "Sosha is not going to come out anytime soon," I say. "Did you fuck him to sleep?" Really now? She is unbelievable. "Ntando I'm not a whore," I say. "Office sex doesn't mean you are a whore.... Wait, is that him?" She points at the dark guy walking out of the bakery. I think he is one of the cleaners. "I told you that he is not going to come out anytime soon," I say. She taps her fingers on the steering wheel, her eyes are fixed at the bakery. Another man emerges, she asks if it's





him. I don't even know why she is so interested in seeing Sosha, he is just my boss, nothing more. I connect the cable to my phone and turn up Westlife. Good music of all times. I don't know why they stopped singing. I also listen to One Direction and the Jonas Brothers, but I don't connect to them as much. I go straight to my room when we arrive. Music and anger drugged me to sleep. Something breaks in the kitchen and wakes me up. Urgh! It's only Ntando, she is cooking. I sigh and sit on the chair and watch her. "What's wrong?" she asks. "It's Sosha," I say. She closes the pot and sits opposite me. "First of all he doesn't know me, but he has the guts to judge me and tell me that I've been weak in my life. That I talk too much because I want to be heard and all that shit," I say. "You're angry for what?" She is confused as I am. I shrug my shoulders, fighting back tears. She exhales and stares at me with pity. "There is nothing I said to that guy Ntando. He just judged me, he doesn't even know my second name." Talking about this makes me angrier. I get off the chair and go lie down in my room again. God knows what my remedy is, I fall asleep again. I always feel better after sleeping. "Yangomuhle wake up, water won't fetch itself!" My mom! She gave birth to me, there is no way I could hate her. She is a strict mother, growing up I was scared of her more than I was scared of my father. She set so many rules, mostly for me. As a girl growing up in the Zulu rural areas I had a set of rules to follow and perfection to reflect. -"A girl does this, like this," -"You are a girl you can't do this," -"Yangomuhle you can't sleep till 6o'clock," She'd roar at 5am. I love my sleep, it's the most peaceful state my life can ever be at. "Mbuso is still sleeping too," I'd defend myself. That's talking back to a parent if you don't know. Pure disrespect! Ignoring and not talk back is also disrespect, you can never win. "Mbuso is a boy, you are a girl," she'd pull the blankets off and sprinkle cold water on my face. She didn't understand how much sleep meant to me. I needed it more than I liked it. Some days I wished to be in a coma. I don't want to die and leave my brothers, but at times I long for two weeks or one month of peaceful, undisturbed sleep. She didn't understand, not even when I tried to talk to her. "I feel violated Mama. Kwenza abused me, I get nightmares," I'd say. She'd put her hands on the waist with a furious look on her face. "Yangomuhle what did I say to you? You want people to laugh at us. Get yourself together, you went to the Mdletshes willingly." I didn't know agreeing to be a girlfriend was agreeing to sex. I wasn't ready, but they convinced me it's what I had signed up for. After two years of fighting internal battles I decided to take charge of my life, sex life to be precisely, and set my own rules. I've been okay, or so I'd like to believe.

Chapter 4 "Yanga!" I force my eyes to open while mumbling curses. "You have to wake up babe," she says. Do I need to move to Mars to have peace in my life? "Give me five minutes I'll go bath," I say and yawn. She bursts into loud laughter. My ears are going to crack open. "It's still Monday silly," she says. What? I look at the window, it's dark outside. "How long did I sleep?" I ask. She throws her phone to me. I check the time, it's 19:10. My stomach growls. I was angry during lunch break, I hardly touched my food. "Did you cook?" I ask. "I'm still on it," she says. When she cooks it's a storm, she gives the pots all her heart and energy. She doesn't use Rajah and soups like me. She uses herbs and creates her own aroma. Our cooking skills are different, without



Knorrox soup I'm nothing, there is no Yanga in the kitchen. She clears her throat and looks at me with a huge grin. Something is up. "What is it?" I ask. "You have a visitor," she says. I don't have anyone in mind. My visitor used to be her when I still lived at Umlazi. I barely know anyone around this place. There is a way she is looking at me, I know that a bomb is coming. "Well I called Amanda using your phone and asked for Sosha's number," she says. Oh hell no! "I was angry," she says, defensively. I let out a sigh. I know how dramatic my friend can be, this has escalated to unnecessary heights. "Did you call him?" I ask. "Yes I did." Lord have mercy! "And what did you say to him?" I ask. "I told him which highway to take when he goes to hell." I laugh out loud. Who raised her? "And he is here," she adds. What? I stop laughing immediately. Her face is serious as witchcraft in Nigeria. "He is here?" I ask, my eyes are all out. "He forced me to give him my address. He said he wants to see if you are okay and apologise." And she gave him the address just like that? He is my boss for crying out loud! I only want to see his face at the bakery. She grabs my hand, excitement is written all over her face. "You didn't tell me he was this hot. I say hot Yanga, H-O-T," she says. I roll my eyes. He is not that hot, I know Lunga Shabalala and Duduzani Zuma. "It's a yes from me and it's a yes from you. He has two yeses," she says beaming with joy. She is crazy, we are not on Idols and it's not a yes from me. "Who said it's a yes from me?" I ask lifting my eyebrow. "I said it, Ntando said it." She throws her hands up and dances her way out. Queen of drama! Now that I'm calm I think I may have exaggerated the whole situation and wrongly interpreted it. There is a knock. I'm still changing my clothes. I doubt Sosha would come knock in my room. Maybe it's Ntando, but that one never knocks. "MaShenge," No ways! Not in my room. "Don't come in!" I shout. He is already in and he doesn't look like someone who intends to walk out anytime soon. I sigh and sit on bed. How did my day get here? "Your friend Ntando called me," he says. He has changed to a stretchpant and red T-shirt. Everything he puts on his body stuns. I've never seen a red T-shirt looking so cute before. "Look, I exaggerated the whole thing to her and overreacted. I'm the one who owes you an apology," I say. I can't read the expression on his face. I wish we can do this quickly so that he can leave. "Are you okay though?" he asks. "Yeah I'm good," I say nodding my head. He looks around the room for a second then sits on MY BED. I don't know how he was raised but where I come from you only sit when you are told you're welcome to have a seat. "Why are you sitting?" I ask. "I want to talk to you." He is staring at me again. "To talk about what?" I ask. "About what happened earlier," he says. "I said it's okay, I'm the one who overreacted." He pulls a pillow and pushes it under his elbow. He is making himself comfortable in my room. "I don't enjoy your presence, do you know that?" I ask. He looks at me with a wide smile on his face. I don't know which part of my statement tickles him. The door swings open. Ntando stands in the middle of the doorway and looks at us with admiration. "Dinner will be served in five minutes. Do you want juice or cold drink Mr Cele?" Excuse me, he is going to eat dinner with us? Are we in Durban Playhouse? Is this 99% Zulu comedy? Is she TallAssMo, making boring jokes? "Juice please," he replies. Five minutes later we are all on the table. There is so much awkwardness between Sosha and I. "Who are you besides being a young, successful businessman?" Ntando asks. I shoot a look at her. Can't we have this horrible dinner in silence? "I'm a brother of three siblings and an uncle of one princess," he says. His 'Myself' is shorter than Sabatha's. Is that all he can say? "Any wife or husband?" Ntando asks. She has no chill, not even a bit of it. He looks at me



briefly before answering. "No, I'm single," he says. Since when he is single? Maybe according to Home Affairs. "Lies! You have a yellow shortie," I say. Ntando puts her hand up dismissing what I just said. "If a guy says he is single it really means he is single." Okay, I'll focus on my food. She is not giving him any time to breath, she is asking question after question and he is answering all of them gladly. "Dinner was nice Ntando, thee boyfriend," he says diverting his eyes to me. I look away. Can't he leave already? "It's a pleasure dear, let me go make a call." She takes her cellphone and disappears to her room. She is leaving me with him? Unbelievable! "Please walk me out MaShenge," he says. This is simple, Yangomuhle don't overreact. "After you sir," I say getting off the chair. There is a little frown on his face, he didn't expect me to agree so easily. "Ladies first," he says. I stop and fix a look on him. "I'm walking you out, not the other way around." He takes in the sight of my face for a second then leads the way out. "Okay bye now," I say, stopping after the door. He doesn't look satisfied. Did he think I'd walk him all the way to his car? "Thank you," he says. I nod and turn to walk back inside, but his hand grabs my arm. "MaShenge..." I look at him with my jaws grounded. "I will listen, anytime you need me to," he says. I want to say something but words are stuck on my throat. I swallow them back and nod my head. "Don't be alone, you don't have to. I'm here, whenever you need someone to talk to." He puts his hand on mine as if he is passing me some strength and lets go of my arm and leaves. I take a huge breath before I walk back inside. Ntando is Sosha's new fan. She started following him on every social platforms and I get to hear about every detail of his social updates. -"Your Sosha went out with his brother, you should see how handsome they looked." He has become my Sosha. I don't know how I got ownership of a full grown man with protruding browridge and big head. Arguing with her is like wasting my precious breath. She is the great Makhosi who spent three years under the water with snakes and hippos. She is spiritual gifted and ancestral connected. She sees the unseen and unfolds the future. "You guys will be together, he is the one for you," she said after connecting with her ancestors. Sosha is just my boss, whom I enjoy his absence at the bakery so much. I haven't seen him in the last two weeks. Amanda said he is busy with other projects. I don't know what those projects are but may God please delay their process Amen. When he is not around I feel like I can breathe. I don't have anyone penetrating and uncovering me with his eyes. Today I received my first salary from JC Bakers. Do you remember when I signed the contract and bragged about how good my salary is going to be? Well I didn't even get a new jean out of that good salary. I sent R1000 home for the grocery and R500 for my brothers new school uniform and pocket money. Mbuso no longer eat lunch served at his school. If he doesn't have pocket money he goes the whole day hungry. Apparently he is too old to hold queues for soup and rice but he is only 16years old. I had to pay half of the rent and contribute towards the grocery. Ntando has done a lot for me, I should meet her halfway now. I'm left with less than R1000. I have to buy cosmetics, do my hair and save for the taxi fare. Damn, I was supposed to buy Amanda something. A little gift to thank her for getting me the job. She is the one who put in a good word for me, Cynthia and her fellows weren't even going to consider me. It's the end of the month, people are smiling from ear to ear, except me. I have a pounding headache. I'm applying all Maths strategies and sequences trying to balance my expenses and account balance. Nothing balances, I need more money. I go to Spar and buy Ferrero Rocher chocolate for Amanda. I'm sweating as I give the cashier a whole



R100 for a lousy chocolate. That's 10kg rice and 2kg sugar. When I get back Ntando is already dressed up. She is going home for the weekend. "You should learn how to drive, if you had licence I would've left the car for you," she says. This is the third time she is telling me about learning to drive. I thought when I get the job I'd register at the driving school but I don't see that happening anymore. "I don't have anywhere to go, so it's fine," I say. "Come on, get Amanda or Sosha to take you to their fancy parties," she says. "No thank you. I don't wish to meet that Sabelo guy again." Her phone beeps! She reads the message with a wide smile on her face. "Sanele is something else," she says shaking her head. Just in case you are wondering, they are still not dating. The poor guy is still writing sweet messages, promising her earth, rivers, valleys and dams. "What is he saying?" I ask. "It's a long poem." Wow! A poem, that's wonderful right? Supervisor slash poet. I help her with the bags and walk her to the car. It's sad seeing her leave. I wish I was going home too, I miss them but the time is not right. I'm alone, watching TV with a packet of Lays on my chest. I'm not going to cook, I will eat bread and sleep. My phone rings somewhere on the couch, I can be careless at times. I find it when the caller is about to drop. It's my mother. "Hello mama," I answer. "Halo Yangomuhle how are you?" I spoke to her two hours ago and told her I'm doing fine. She is something else. "I'm fine Ma," I say. "Eyy mntanami I bought so many things for the house and forgot to buy electricity. It's 0.00 here, I don't even know how I'm going to cook." Just when I thought I did enough for them! "Okay give Mbuso the phone, I will send R50 electricity," I say. I have to cancel my hair, it's not that important, I can just wash with Ntando's shampoo. "Yoh thank you baby, I don't know what I would have done. Your father bought cement and blocks with his grant." "It is fine Mama, I will send it now," I say. "If you can send R10 MTN too, I want to call your aunt." I also don't have airtime, but I can't say no to her. After the call I send R50 electricity and her airtime. Sometimes I wonder how it would be like if I had a sibling older than me. Being the eldest is not easy when your parents are not financial stable. How would my life be if I didn't have the responsibilities that I have? Maybe I'd be in varsity, if not working to save money for it. Growing up I wanted to be a nurse. There was a time when I researched about the profession. I had a list of available colleges and fees quotations. My mother nearly fainted when I told her how much was needed in order for me to study. "Fifteen dozen rand???" Not dozens, she meant thousands. "Yes Mama R15 000," I said. "So much money! Yangomuhle you know our situation." She was right, I knew no matter how much my father had saved it still wouldn't be enough. He renovated our home with his retirement package and added his cows. You know Zulu men and cows. Buthelezi loves his cows. He was sad, he wanted to sell some of them but I told him it was alright. I wasn't the first to finish matric and look for the job afterwards. I accepted my life and made a vow. Mbuso is going to be the first Buthelezi to get a degree. He will go to university, no matter how tough things get I will fulfil that promise. Now it's 7de Laan, I take my phone and log on Facebook. Trust me I have nothing against white people, their soapie is nice. My Afrikaans doesn't go beyond boerwors, vat'n sit and vetkoek. Oh, how can I forget the National Anthem Afrikaans verses? I'm not that bad after all. I'm scrolling down the newsfeed liking and commenting for those who do the same for me. Facebook is like a stokvel you like my posts I like yours back. There is nothing for mahala in South Africa, not even Facebook reactions. It only happens to celebrities. There is this girl who shared a post of Kwenza Mdletshe. Apparently he sent



umembeso to his fiancé's. His timeline is flooded with pictures of them wearing matching outfits, smiling. He is happy, everything is okay. He doesn't have a past he cares about. Life is good, he forgot. My hands are trembling, my armpits are itching, I want to comment under the pictures but I don't know what to say. He is also in the comment section replying to the comments. My phone has been ringing for almost ten minutes. My hands are frozen, I can't reach to it. I hate every moment of my life. "Yanga it doesn't mean you are weak," I hear Ntando's voice in my head. Am I not weak? It's been eight years since it happened. If I was strong I would've forgotten about it and moved on. I would be happy, like he is. "Why are you so angry?" he asks again. This time he is not standing between the cakes' aisles, he is on my mind, his thick eyebrows are arched over his protruding browridge. His voice is hunted, doleful and pleading with me. -I'm angry because my voice has been shut. -I'm angry because I cried for help but help didn't cry for me. -I'm angry because he doesn't care about what he did. -I'm angry because I took the blame. -I'm angry at my mother, but mostly I'm angry at the rules that deprive me the right to be angry at her. She should've fought for me. She should've took my side and told my father. My father would've fought for me, he would've stood up for me. "You want your father to divorce me?" she asked. I still don't understand how my situation would've led to divorce, however I didn't want that for my brothers. "Is there anyone inside?" screams the voice outside. I don't know when the person started knocking. I've been staring at nothing, totally absent minded. I open and find two security guards standing at the door. "Hello," I greet in a low, unsteady voice. They greet me back and ask if everything is okay. Ntando sent them, I guess she is the one who's been calling my phone. They don't want to leave, I have to let them in and show them I'm just watching TV. I call Ntando back. She is angry, I apologise and tell her everything is fine. She is not satisfied, she drops the call and makes a video call. I can lie to anyone but not her, I tell her about Kwenza's umembeso pictures. "Go to my room, inside my closet and take a bottle of wine," she says. WTF! "Are you serious?" I'm shocked. "Yes there is a bottle of wine I bought last week," she says. "I'm not asking if you're sure it's there, I'm asking if you seriously hid a bottle of wine from me. Ntando since when we don't share?" I say. She laughs uncontrollably. I keep my face as straight as possible. Unbelievable! "Really Hazel?" I say. Hazel is her second name, her means of deregistering it failed. "Fuck that name, I'm giving you my baby and you're calling me that?" A baby, really? I find myself laughing, if there is one thing she does effortlessly it is making me smile. She is my sister, friend and smile keeper. I don't enjoy drinking alone but tonight I'll do it. Getting drunk will drive me to sleep, which I desperately need right now. When I wake up in the morning there is an empty bottle of wine next to me. If this doesn't make me a drunkard I don't know what will. Who sleeps with a bottle on bed? Cuddling alcohol bottles, really Yanga? I take a long, warm bath and wear my tracksuit. I comb and tie my hair into a knot at the back. I have no idea what I'm going to do the whole day alone. I make hot chutney and eat with toasted slices of bread and black tea. My head is pounding, hangover is killing me. I call Buthelezi, I didn't speak to him yesterday, they said he is gone to the river with his cows. I don't know who he loves more between us, his kids and Jamlude. When Jamlude is sick he also gets sick, that's how connected he is to his cows. "UDangadanga unenxeba elibi kabi," he says right in the middle of our conversation. I don't even know which cow is Dangadanga. I only know Jamlude because she is the eldest family cow. I was thirteen





years when she was born. "Oh that's bad," I say faking sympathy. "I have to clean it before it affects his whole leg." Now this is boring. It's just a cow, the wound will heal itself. "Oh my word, the pan is burning!" I scream. "Shengee???" "My pot! I'll call you later," I say. "Okay mntanami, don't burn yourself there." I can't talk about cows the whole day, they don't talk about me either...Okay that's stupid, but the point is I don't want to talk about cows. Ntando's phone call is no better than my father's. She is also telling me about Sanele. I like him, he bought me a necklace last week. But I can't have him for breakfast, lunch and supper. They are not even dating yet. I log on Facebook hoping for juicy stories. The girl has posted again. This time she tagged Kwenza Mdletshe and wrote: City View things #ShopTillYouDrop. I don't know who this girl is but she is a Mdletshe, I guess she is a relative. I log out and quickly call Ntando. A flame of anger just woke inside me. "Miss me already?" she asks when she answers. The phone is balanced on my shoulder, I'm tying shoe laces with my hands. "This dog is in City View shopping with his relatives." "What are you talking about?" she asks. "Kwenza Mdletshe is parading the shops with all his teeth out, having a good time. It's nice, life is nice to him." I grab my purse and take R50 for taxi fare. Why haven't I bought a gun? I really need it. "Yanga what are you doing there?" She is still on the phone? "I'm going to the motherfucker. I want him to remember what he did, if he doesn't remember on his own I'm going to help him." "Yanga don't do anything stupid," she begs. It's not something stupid, he needs to remember. "Yangomuhle!" she yells. I drop the call and walk out. I need to know their exact location. I comment under the post asking the girl where they are. She starts by reacting with love on the comment and then replies. That's how careless people are on social networks, she doesn't even know me but she is giving me her location. It's been almost six years since I last saw him but when my eyes land on his face I know it's him. He is smiling with the cashier. "Hello," I greet. They look at me. There is a little confusion in his eyes. "I'm here to see you," I say. He frowns. "And you are?" After that question I'm not sure what happened. I wanted to answer him but anger dried my voice. The only thing I was able to do was to pick the items on the counter and smash them on his face. "Call the police!" I hear someone yelling. There are two security guards holding me. The store manager is talking to him, they are helping him. I'm the crazy one. The bad one, as always. They lead me to the backroom and grill me with questions. I have nothing to say to them. "Let her be Moyana, the police will make her talk," one says. The other one assumes that I'm the crazy ex-girlfriend, they are laughing and diagnosing me with mental illnesses. I let them talk and not disturb them. When the door opens I'm ready to be cuffed and kicked by police's boots. But it's not the police. "Mr Cele!" They know him, the other one has taken off his hat to respect his presence. "I'm here to take her," he says. They stand still, staring at him. He signals for me to get off the chair, then looks at them. "I have spoken to your manager, she is going home." He takes my hand and leads me out. Everyone's eyes are on the crazy girl who attacked his ex-boyfriend. The awkward silence in the car drives me to sleep. I open my eyes when the car stops moving. I don't recognise where I am. I look at the person next to me then everything dawns back. I went to City View and attacked Kwenza Mdletshe inside the store. I nearly got arrested, he came out of nowhere and saved me. "Why did you save me?" I ask. "Ntando called me, she asked me to go fetch you." I should've known it was Ntando. "Why did you come?" I ask. He has a vacant look on his face. I glare at him waiting for an answer. "Why did you save me?" I repeat in an etched voice.



It takes him almost two minutes to reply. "Ntando asked me to," he says. I straighten myself up and fold my arms. "You listen to Ntando? She is your coach?" I ask. He gives me direct eye contact with minimal blinking. Why are you so angry?- That's what he must be asking without voicing out. We are in Morningside, parked outside a certain house. I give a rictus grin and stare outside the window. "Let's go inside," he says. I look at him, infrequently blinking my eyes. "I don't live here, take me to Ntando's place," I say. "I need to sort some stuff regarding the store drama." Store drama? Was it like the South African parliament where the EFF members punch the ANC members? I give him an icy stare, my lips are trembling. "You said drama?" I ask. "I have to contact the store and see what can be done." He is withdrawing from his original statement. "Why are you saving me?" I ask for the second time. "Because I need you at the bakery on Monday," he says. Good boss, hey. He is taking care of his employees even on weekends. "Can we go inside the house MaShenge?" he asks. I save my breath and get out of the car. We are in front of a gigantic, double-storey house. The African child's dream house, the one we pointed out from magazines as kids and screamed- 'This Is My House'. We were not warned that the only time we would be inside those kind of houses is when we mop the floors and making coffee for madam. We were young, uninformed and sold with dreams. He clears his throat behind me. I take my eyes off the house and look at him embarrassed. Poor rural girl staring at the house like it's a little heaven. "Let's go inside," he says. I don't know if this soft brown rug laid on the doorstep accommodates my cheap shoes. He leads me to what I think is the living room of the house. It's bigger than my brothers' room and mine combined. The floors are gleaming with spotless silence. There is a fresh, sweet scent from the flowers tucked inside the vase on top of a glass coffee-table. "Can I get you anything?" he asks. I could do with a glass of icy juice, but I don't want to accept more than what he has offered. I don't want to be comfortable, I want him to do what he wants to do and take me home. We will meet again Monday, as a boss and employee. "Nothing, thank you," I say. I hear his footsteps descending and relax my back on the couch. It's a big leather couch that could fit my whole family. There is a flat screen on the wall. At the far end there is a bookcase, neatly stocked with documents. There are pictures on the wall, family pictures I assume. After a while I hear footsteps coming nearer and turn my head. It's him with a glass of juice and slice of cake on a saucer. He puts it on top of the coffee-table. "I said I don't want anything," I say. "Surely you need a drink after...." Fuck him, again and again! Why he has to tell me what I need? Yes I need a drink, but why he predicted that for me? "Sosha you think you know everything. Maybe you know cakes and expensive shoes but you don't know me. You don't know what I need. You can't save me, you can't listen to me. You cannot do a thing for me. You don't even know my second name, you don't know where I come from. You don't know anything, except this fancy life of yours. STOP TELLING ME WHAT I NEED!" He doesn't look shaken up, he is looking at me the same way he did at the bakery. I should've shouted louder. "Yes I don't know you but sometimes strangers are the ones who listen and understand. I don't have to be your family or friend, I can just be your shoulder to cry on." This guy is too forward for my liking, he is worse than Somizi. "Who said I need a shoulder to cry on?" I ask. "Said the brokenness and anger in your voice, the hopelessness in your eyes," he says. This is it, I'm leaving. "MaShenge!" He is following me behind. "Don't call me MaShenge, I don't knit your mother's petticoats," I snap at him. His hand



grabs my waist. Did he put his hand on me? I look where he is holding me with my eyes narrowed. He removes his hand immediately. "You need help," he says. I frown, tears are about to escape. Who is he? "I'm listening," he adds. "Who said I need you to listen?" I ask. "Close your eyes," he says. Close my eyes? He wants to drug me. Have you seen the movies or read African diaries? Human trafficking is real and I refuse to be kidnapped with my eyes closed. "MaShenge close your eyes," he says in a different tone. I exhale and close them. He better not try anything funny. "Take a deep breath, a deep one from the depths of your soul," he instructs. I draw some air in and exhale as deep as my lungs can allow me. He doesn't tell me when to open them, I just do and look at him. "Why are you so angry?" he asks. His thick eyebrows are arched over his protruding browridge. His voice is hunted, doleful and pleading. "Why do you care?" I ask. He rubs his forehead with a finger, his eyes are running all over the walls. "If you answer that, I will tell you why I'm angry," I say. He takes a minute processing his reply. "I'm interested in you," he says. I lift my eyebrow up, he needs to break this 'interest' he has in details. "I'm listening," I say. He exhales and rubs his hands together. Now this is funny, he looks uncomfortable and shaken up. I'm scaring the whole Sosha Cele. "Look, I love being around you. I want to get to know you better and maybe prove to you that I'm not arrogant," he says. I don't understand how he loves being around me, I've been snapping at him every time he comes near me. I don't remember a single day that I was 100% nice to him. "I felt it when you said you're proud of me. You are the first to ever...You're a good person MaShenge," he says. Oh, I thought he was not pleased. And what did he want to say, I'm the first to ever do what? "Do you realise that it's not always going to be family or close friends who make a difference in your life? If you have words that can build a person speak those words. If you have ears to listen lend those ears to someone," he says. I see him over the anger bottled down in my heart. He is not a bad person that I painted him to be. I walk back and sit on the couch. He follows me and stands next to me. "For me it's different, I don't want a stranger to listen. I want my mother to listen and hear that it wasn't my fault," I say. "Make her listen then." He makes it sound so easy. "She won't and I must make peace with it. But I'm stubborn and not too strong to forgive the situation." He exhales and takes a seat. A minute of silence passes, we are both wrapped in thoughts. "Can I ask you a favour?" I don't do favours. "No," I say. "It's not a big favour trust me," he says. "No!" I shake my head. He sighs in defeat. "Fine, drink your juice." I don't fight him this time, I reach for a glass and take a sip. It's an icy orange juice, just what I needed. "You are beautiful," he says randomly. I choke on the juice and laugh. Is he trying to score some points? "Where is your yellow shortie?" I ask. He massages his forehead with a finger. "I don't own a yellow shortie," he says. Really now? I'm not stupid, he has a yellow shortie. "Is she going to be happy if she finds me here?" I ask. He gives a minimal eye contact and takes a saucer on the coffee-table and puts it on my lap. "This is my house MaShenge. Please have a piece, this is my favourite cake," he says. I take a fork and dig a small piece. We don't have the same taste, I prefer Spar doughnuts over this. After tolerating the second piece I put the fork down. "You said we are coming here so that you can sort the store drama," I remind him. It seems like he has forgotten, this is turning into a visit. "I have sorted it out," he says. Oh, that was fast. I put the glass and saucer back on the coffee-table. It's not how I was raised but I don't know where the kitchen of this house is. "We should go," I say standing up. He looks at me and remains on the couch. "Sosha!" I call. "Let's hang out, you will go later,"



he says. Now he is being Smartypants. "No I want to leave," I say. He mumbles something before standing up. I know my way to the main door so I take lead. "The door is locked," he says behind me. His arm goes over my shoulder to the door handle. I'm holding my breath, his cologne is filling my lungs. I feel a little bit dizzy like I'm going to faint. He unlocks the door but instead of pulling it he pulls me and turns me to face him. "Give me your words, I will give you my ears. Let us be strangers who strengthen each other," he says. His eyes are penetrating right through me and they are carrying the meaning of each word he utters. "MaShenge please get to know me a little better, I'm not a bad person," he begs. I clear my throat, I don't trust my voice. "I never said you are a bad person," I say. "Are there any Celes in Ndulinde?" he asks. My eyes widen, how does he know Ndulinde? "I saw your CV," he says before I could ask. Oh silly me! "There are a few, maybe three or two," I say. He nods and bites his lip. I still remember how his lips tasted like but have pushed that memory aside, he is my boss. I reach for the door and turn the handle. I need to get out of here. He doesn't stop me, he locks the house and follows me to the car. He keeps stealing glances at me. I feel uncomfortable, I don't know if it's him or the songs he is playing. Why is he not playing Drake like other guys? I like Adele, but this moment I feel like the message is directed to me: YOU NEVER KNOW IF YOU NEVER TRY, TO FORGIVE YOUR PAST AND SIMPLY BE MINE. I DARE YOU TO LET ME BE YOUR, YOUR ONE AND ONLY. Can he drive a bit faster? The atmosphere in this car is suffocating me. He starts humming and dancing with his head. I don't want to be an ass judge like Randall from SA Idols, always criticising people's talent, so I'm only going to clear my throat at this dancing and zip my mouth. He decides to make things worse and sings along with the iconic Adele. Fine I will be Randall, just this once. "Sosha let Vusi Nova represents you and focus on the cakes," I say. He breaks into laughter. I'm not sure I've seen him laugh this much before. "How old are you?" I ask when he finally stop laughing. He grins and lowers the music volume. "I'm 6 years older than you," he says. I do my Maths, he is 29years. I don't want to ask how he knows my age, he has my documents. "How old were you when you finished school?" I ask. "I didn't finish school." His eyes are focused on the road. I have cocked my head to the side, I'm staring at the side of his face. It doesn't show that he is kidding. How come he is so successful but didn't finish school? Maybe I'm also interested in knowing him better. "What do you mean you didn't finish school?" "I dropped out at grade eleven," he says. His voice is kept genuine and almost believably. "Nice one," I say, showing disbelief. He lets out a short chuckle. "I don't have matric MaShenge." He is serious, my tiny eyes are all popped out. "Why?" I ask. "MaShenge I just told you that I dropped out at grade eleven," he says. I can't believe I'm more educated than him. Cynthia and her crew dissed my qualification-less CV whereas the person paying their salaries doesn't even have a matric. "Then how did you become successful like this?" I ask. Maybe I can steal a few tips and open my own bakery as well. "After dropping out of school my father sent me to my grandmother's house. She was gifted with brains, she had no academic qualifications but she was doing better than a lot of people. She was a baker, she baked scones, birthday cakes, breads and many other things. When I got there she told me that ayikho inkomo yobuthongo. Every morning, winter or summer, we would wake up at 3am and start baking. She was a no-nonsense taker, she didn't mind whooping my ass." He is smiling as he narrates the story. I can hear how much he adored his grandmother. Even the ass-whooping part amuses him. Unlike me,



sometimes I get emotional when I think about the beating I got as a child. I cannot count, it was almost every day. "I thought she didn't like me until I realised how useful she made me feel. She didn't care about my Maths and Physics. She died when I was eighteen. I started working in different bakeries between eighteen and twenty-one." "Where were your parents?" I ask. "They lived in Richard's Bay with my siblings, we didn't get along. I was rebellious and dumb at school." He is not smiling anymore. This makes me question his relationship with his parents. "Bayede helped me with the capital when he started working. I bought the equipment and started baking for myself. It was not easy, especially for me as a guy, I looked stupid to many people. My breakthrough came when I was 26years, Bayede got me a building deal. I bought it and named it Justin Cele Bakers, the rest is history." Wow! I thought he had it easy. He has come too far, he worked hard to be where he is today. He drives with one hand. Guess what he is doing to the other hand? He is biting his nails, a whole 29year old biting nails. His face is puffed up. He is no longer the Sosha I'm used to, the persistent nosy one. We arrive in Westridge in total silence, each is absorbed into own misery. I thank him and get out of the car. I walk inside the building without taking a single glance back. The earlier episode of Kwenza Mdletshe is no longer in my mind, in fact I don't care whether he is sent umembeso or not. Something else is troubling me, I just can't point it out. Ntando has left me several voice messages. I send her a short text letting her know that I'm okay. I'll call her when I'm ready to talk, right now I'm confused. I pour water in a glass and gulp it down. I'm restless. I can't sit down, I feel like pacing up and down. This jacket is hot, I take it off and tie it around my waist. No, I can't fight this anymore. I make my way to the window and look down at the parking area. His car is still there. Deep down in my heart I expected him not to leave, I didn't want him to. I hold my neck and groan out loud. I want to be there with him. Amanda's chocolate! Remember I paid arm and leg for a chocolate gift. Why don't I give it to him and ask him to deliver it to Amanda? Music is playing softly inside the car. I knock on the window, the door opens, I get inside and close it. It's awkward, we are just staring at each other. "Can you take this to Amanda for me?" I ask after a moment. He takes it and puts it on the dashboard. My eyes are on his turned face, I'm trying to read his expression. "Are you okay?" he asks, still not looking at me. "I don't know. Are you okay?" He turns his wan face to me, I fail to look at him in the eyes. "I'm not okay MaShenge," he says. "Is it because of your past?" I ask. He moistens his lips with his tongue, I look away before my intestines freeze. His hand lifts up my fingers. I turn my eyes to him, he is staring at me. He has taken full ownership of my hand. I'm not comfortable, I can't breathe properly. "I'm not okay because of you," he says. I didn't expect this answer. I don't want him to explain further, I just want to get out of this car. "It didn't take me a second to know that I have feelings for you. I'm confessing, I have feelings for you. Ngiyakuthanda MaShenge." I pull my hand away and shut my eyes. No he can't love me. I don't want him to. I can feel his eyes piercing through my skin. "Being without you is not an option," he says. I open my eyes and look at him. What is that supposed to mean? "You have to be a Cele," he says. Have to? I've been given the 'have to' duties all my life. I refuse to let a guy I've known for a month to tell me what I have to do. "Don't ever tell me what I have to do, okay?" I say with my eyes narrowed. He shakes his head and holds my hand again. "I'm not making demands, I'm pleading." It didn't sound like a plea though, he was demanding. I take a deep breath, I need to tell him this in a calm manner. "I'm not going to date you Sosha. Firstly you are my boss,





secondly I don't have feelings for you." He gives me a long stare, he is barely blinking. "Why did you come back?" he asks. The question throws me off guard, I look at him slack-jawed. "MaShenge why did you come back?" he asks again. I clear the dust off my throat, I need a bottle of wine. "For Amanda's chocolate," I say. There is a look on his face, I can't describe it. "Well I'm not a liar, I stayed because I was hoping you'd come back, and you did," he says. The first line doesn't sit well with me. I'm not lying, part of the reason I came back was to bring Amanda's chocolate. Telling half of the truth is not lying. Maybe it's time for me to say goodbye "Thank you for everything you did for me today, I appreciate it. See you Monday." "MaShenge we are still talking," he says. I open the door and climb out of the car. "Bye Sosha," I say. "Fuck you!" He reverses the car and speeds off like a maniac. I hold my breath for a minute. God please protects this fool.

Chapter 5 I lie on bed and send Ntando a text. She calls immediately. "Ntombi kaDingiswayo guess what just happened?" I hear her taking a deep sigh like a frustrated person. "Sosha texted me, I know you assaulted Kwenza inside the store," she says. Urgh! That dog deserved more than that but I'm not talking about that right now. "Did he text you again to tell you he just insulted me?" I ask. "What?" She is shocked. I thought they were BFFs. "Yep, he gave me a 'fuck you' and sped off like a maniac. I wouldn't be surprised to hear that he is involved in a car accident somewhere." "What did you do to him?" she asks. Oh I'm the one who did something to him, I'm always the bad guy. "I only said goodbye Sosha," I say. Thinking about it makes me laugh. He looked so angry, he was not breathing fire, fire was breathing him. "Yanga do you realise that you are hurting him?" Auntie Ntando though! "By saying goodbye Sosha?" I ask laughing. "He loves you and you can see that too," she says. "No babe I don't see anything. I just see my boss who is too friendly," I say. "He is not too friendly, he is in love with you. When I called he dropped everything and drove to City View. This guy is rich Yanga, he is actually stooping down to our level by being friendly. He should be somewhere with other rich people, mingling with levels. But he loves MaShenge and you are playing with his feelings." I sit up, this phone call is taking another direction. "How am I playing with his feelings? I told him I don't have feelings for him. I've never given him any misleading thought." "You don't have feelings for him?" she asks. I sense a big argument coming with her question. "No, I don't," I say. My voice isn't too bold, what is wrong with me? "Why are you uncomfortable around him? I mean he won't bite you, he is always nice. Why would you be uncomfortable around him if you're not hiding anything?" Did I tell you that she has a big forehead? She failed Afrikaans at school as well. "Ntando you are boring," I say. She bursts into laughter. I'm so annoyed. "I want to die, I'm going to pray for God to take us tonight," I say, teasing her. "Whoah, who is us?" she asks. It's funny how she fears death. If God was the ANC member she would have bribed him long time ago and asked for life extension. "Me and you," I say. My voice is half buried with laughter. "You're nuts. I'm only going to die when I'm 90 years old, in my sleep." Wow, nice choice of death. I wonder what's Aids going to do if everyone wants to die in their sleep. People will be people, always looking for the



easy way out. "Did you cook...Hold on my man is calling!" She puts my call on hold, this is the first time it's happening. Who is her man again? Yesterday when I last checked Sanele was still begging. I don't enjoy listening to this Vodacom woman telling me that my call has been put on hold repeatedly, I end the call. I will call her later and hear this one out. My phone rings after a while. It's not her, I don't recognize this number. You know how I roll with unknown numbers. I answer and keep quiet. "MaShenge," Oh hell no! "Are you there?" I swallow nothingness and clear my throat. Why am I nervous? Nobody scares me, I come from Ndulinde, I drank water with the bulls. "Yes," I say. "I'm sorry about earlier," he says. I keep quiet...I'm still hurt hao. "I took things left-handedly. I didn't mean to say that to you, I'm sorry," he says. It was the first time he said something bad to me, not even an hour has passed and he is already apologising. I've been horrible to him almost every time he got around me. "I'm not mad Sosha," I say. He is not on the road, it's quiet where he is. I don't think he is in his house already, not even a plane can travel this fast. "May I have a chance to speak with you?" he asks. Ntando is right, this person is stooping down to my level. He can have any girl that he wants. Why is he after me? Maybe I should finish what I started at the party, he will get what he wants and back off. "Make sure you bring condoms," I say. "What???" He sounds appalled. "Hopefully after this we will get back to normal. It will be sex without romance," I say. "Fuck it Yangomuhle! I don't want meaningless sex. I don't even want to sleep with you. Why are you not giving yourself a chance to know who I am?" He is angry again. There is so much rage carried in his voice. "My life is too complicated, don't do this," I say. "It doesn't have to be complicated. Please allow yourself to know me, I'm not a bad person." His voice has softened, he is now begging. "Sosha you are my boss," I say softly. Why am I making this lame excuse? I said I don't have feelings for him. "I'm not just a boss, I'm a human being with feelings and no control on who I fall in love with," he says. This phone call is going to make me dizzy. I can't think straight nor breathe properly. "No Sosha," I say in a low, defeated voice. I sound weak than a dying patient saying his last words. "I'm coming to fetch you, put warm clothes on," he says and ends the call. I take a pillow and slam it against the wall. My mind is racing; -"Why didn't you say no?" -"Flowing like a liquid, who are you?" -"He just controlled you Yanga," Damn you Sosha Cele! What am I going to wear? I rush to the bathroom and take a shower. Warm clothes? Is my white poloneck warm? I hiss pacing around the room with the phone against my ear, Ntando is not picking up, when days are dark friends are few. "Hey babe," Oh finally! "I need help ASAP. What can I put on as warm clothes?" She knows everything in my wardrobe from underwears to dresses. We come from the same village, even though they relocated to Groutville after she finished high school. We grew up together, we were neighbours. Her mother was my primary school teacher, her Dad is a farmer. Even today when we buy clothes we still fit and model in front of the mirror. "What are you dressing up for?" Answering with a question, pheew! "Sosha said he is coming to fetch me," I say making a silent prayer, begging Lord to have mercy. She is going to dig the whole story before helping. "Say what? Oh my word, you are going for a sleepover?" Gosh, she is something else. "No, we are not dating Ntando," I say. She starts laughing. Time is ticking, Sosha will be here anytime. "Ntando what must I wear?" I ask out of patience. "Your matching panty and bra and that black dress with opened back." Sighs! "Warm clothes Ntando, warm!" I say. "He will bring his warm cloth," she says. The dirtiness in her voice, Lord forgives! I say goodbye and end



the call because she is useless and overjoyed. Black pant, poloneck and black boots. I've never been so unsatisfied with my look before. I'm even having second thoughts. I should've put my foot down when he said he was coming. It's too late, he is already here. I walk to the car, in my mind I can see his eyes staring at me through window. The thought of his coffee-brown eyes set on me make my knees kiss each other. Maybe he has his stellar smile on, rubbing between his thick arched eyebrows. No man, I need to stick to my word. I don't want a relationship, he is my boss. Taking me to cold places mustn't change that. He walks to the other side and opens the door for me. "I've been waiting," he says. His voice carries so much ego...Okay I'm being paranoid. I get inside the car and sit like a madam. I'm getting used to his car. "Are you okay?" he asks before starting the car. "100% okay Mr Cele," I say. He chuckles in a mocking manner. "Too much confidence Michelle," he says. Oh hell no! He is laughing. He is proud of himself, he just proved my all-game line wrong; you don't even know my second name. He knows my second name. Now I'm wondering how he knows it because it's not written on my ID. My first suspect is Ntando, she has a runny mouth that one. Not only do I hate that he just ended my all-game line, I also hate that he called me Michelle. How old am I? I'm only twenty-three years old for Michelle's sake. I don't know where Aunt July heard the name. She used to work for white women in Ballito, maybe that's where she heard it. Funny she can't even pronounce it properly yet she named me. The Zulu warriors stand on her tongue and fight the damn English tooth and nail. She ends up calling me Misheli. "Got nothing to say?" he asks with a coy smile. Only if he drove without separating those lips and filling my tummy with his deep alluring voice. "No Justin, I have nothing to say," I say. He smiles, he doesn't have a problem with his second name. Thank God he is quiet the next few minutes. "Do you listen to Jazz?" Silence gone! "Only on Sundays," I say. He nods and reaches for the button. Zonke Dikana fills the car. I rest my head back on the seat, Jazz music makes me emotional. When I get emotional I become vulnerable. I haven't asked where he is taking me. I don't know why I trust him so much, my knowledge about him can't fill a single page. What if he is not what I think he is? Caring, friendly and honest. His hand comes in contact with my knee. "I'm not going to hurt you," he says and removes it immediately. I don't know how he is always able to read what's on my mind. Maybe my body is not as secretive, it just give away my inner thoughts. "Where are you taking me?" I ask. My voice almost breaks. Suddenly I'm overwhelmed with fear. People we know are more dangerous than strangers. They gain our trust and plot against us with a closer look. I don't think I can survive if he does something to me. One incident was enough to destroy my whole life. I'm still trying to pick up the pieces and mould them back into a happy, confident Yangomuhle I was before 15years. He pulls at the side of the road unexpectedly and takes my right hand and squeezes it. "What's going on?" he asks. I try not to look like the fear inside me. "Where are you taking me?" I ask. "I'm taking you to where I started. I'm not going to hurt you, I just want to show you so that you can understand me from A to Z." I wipe the beads of sweat on my face and nod. "Please trust me," he begs. I give him my trust and allow him to take me to his beginnings. We take Inanda Highway, curiosity overcomes fear, I start asking questions about anything we pass by. He is listening and answering all my questions with divine contentment. Okay where are we now? I can see Bridge City, it's only few metres away from here. It's been a long drive, I've been focused on asking nonsensical questions and didn't pay attention to the road. "We are here," he



says parking in front of a cranky, orphaned white-painted house with broken windows. "Was this your home?" I ask. "My bakery." Oh..... He is smiling, excitement is written all over his face. I think he is proud of what he has achieved. The weather has changed out of the blue. The wind is blowing mercilessly. I pray this house doesn't collapse on us. He inserts the key on the wooden door and opens. When he pushes the door a rat comes out and passes through my legs. He looks at me with his jaws on the ground. "What?" I ask. "You're not scared of rats?" Is this guy being serious? It's just a rat, not a lion. "I've never heard of a rat that killed a human being before," I say. I grew up in Ndulinde, some seasons we shared home with rats. They are actually friendly, they don't just bite you and leave. They bite and blow on the wound so that you don't feel much pain, unlike bloody mosquitos. I only hate them for one thing, eating clothes. They don't eat your favourite shirt under the arms, they eat it at the back where everyone can see. "Neither have I but I'm scared of them," he says. A grown 29year old man is scared of rats? Maybe I would've understood if it was an Alexandra one. I heard those are bigger than chickens. Kanyo said if they walk in your house and don't find any food inside the pots they open the cupboards and start cooking for themselves. Yes she said they walk in, not sneak. I should've caught that rat and kept it in my hands just for control. There is nothing attractive inside the house except for the steel table and white buckets. On the wall there are pictures of him. He is posing with cakes in most of them. No doubts, he was struggling. "I lived here, this side was my bedroom." He points at the side with four blocks laid on the floor. "I baked on this table. I woke up at 3am, just like my granny had taught me and baked till 6am. I'd fill these buckets with cakes and go sell to the shop owners and street-vendors." I nod, scanning the whole house with my eyes. I wonder why he is not renewing it and making something profitable out of it. He could even rent it, there are people living in this area. "You've made a huge progress, I mean from this to JC Bakers. You should be proud of yourself," I say. He stands against the table with his hands pushed inside the pockets. "You can also make progress, emotionally," he says. I turn my back on him and open the buckets. We are not talking about emotional journey here. I'm secretly hoping for the rat to come out and jump to his face. "What skills do you have?" Skills??? "I can knit," I say. Well, I can't knit. I don't know what my skills are. "You can open your own clothing factory one day." He dreams big, he doesn't even weigh options and possibilities. He dreams straight to the top. "You can do it MaShenge, I did too," he says. I turn and face him. His eyes are boring through my skin. This person can stare! "We are different Sosha, we come from different backgrounds. You lived for yourself, every cent you got was for your own pocket. I have a family to look after. Living standards are high these days, I can't even save R10 for myself. You can't compare us, your siblings were taken care of by your parents. You had a choice, I don't." I hate explaining myself to people who think life is a 1-2-3 process. What worked for Zuma won't work for Ramaphosa, we all have different destinies. "I can help you," he says. "I don't need your help Sosha. I'm okay with how things are. All I want now is my brothers to have a brighter future," I say. "Why are you so stubborn? Not only to me, you are even stubborn to yourself. Being stubborn doesn't mean you are strong," says the expert of my life. I firmly press my lips together, if I spit one word he will change his perspective from stubborn to crazy. He walks to the door and inserts the key and locks. "What are you doing?" I ask. "I'm closing the door." Now he is being rude, I can be worse. "What is your problem MaShenge?" "It's you!" I say. "Me?" My hand is



itching to iron the frown on his face. "Yes you are my problem. Open the damn door, I want to leave," I say. "No!" He catches the flying fist I aimed at his jaws and lifts me up and pins me against the wall. I put on a good fight, but he is stronger than me, getting him off is like trying to move a rock. I spit on his face, he lets me go immediately. "MaShenge!" He is in disbelief. I don't care how much anger his voice carries, I have no regrets. I hate him with everything in me. I pick a bucket, he charges to me and holds my arm before I can throw it at him. "Let me go," I say. "Eyy voetsek!!!" He said what? I bang it on his forehead. He will open the door and let me out whether he likes it or not. I'm not going through this again. "Stop being crazy," he says ducking a flying bucket. He hasn't seen crazy. Buckets are flying all over the room, it's quite a scene. Eventually I get tired of throwing buckets and sink on the floor and cry. "Do you still think you don't have a problem?" he asks. His words, 'problem' to be precise, sting to my heart. "What made you so angry Yangomuhle?" he asks. For the first time I feel like lying is not an option. Like being honest with him is going to set me free and it's the only option. "My mother," I say. I don't know if my voice is loud enough, I can hardly hear it myself. "What did she do to you?" he asks. I swallow and hold back tears and wipe my nose. Although my voice isn't steady enough it is able to generate every word that I need to narrate what happened eight years ago. He is sitting on the dirty floor beside me. He has my fingers entwined in his, he is listening. I look at him occupied with thoughts. "I'm weak, isn't?" I ask. "MaShenge....." "Some people have been through worse, right? Some didn't make it alive, they were raped and killed. And some were gang raped, but they are okay," I say. He inhales sharply and tightens his fingers around my hand. "I understand why you are angry, if there is one thing I can say is that you are a real strong girl. I'm so proud of you," he says. I look at him and shake my head dismissively. He is just comforting me, I'm not strong. "You've made it to this day, if you were not strong you would've ended your life. It's not easy being alone, especially after being through what you went through," he says. He cups my face and turns me to him. His eyes are bloody red, maybe he feels my pain. "You need to get professional counselling and talk about everything," he says. "But I am talking about everything," I say. Veins are pulsing visibly on his temple, his forehead is getting wet with sweat. "I mean talk to someone professional," he says. A shrink! I don't understand them, did they really go to school to listen to people's problems? "You promised to listen, now I want you to listen. I don't want to talk to a professional, I want to talk to you," I say. He pulls me to his chest and covers me with his strong arms. He is breathing over my head, it's awkward yet comfortable. "Okay MaShenge, you will talk to me. I will listen, even at midnight don't hesitate to call me," he says. His heart is beating next to my ear. He is my oxygen, I'm breathing him in and out. His cologne smells expensive, mine was blown by wind an hour ago. "MaShenge," His voice is too deep and too close. Coldness flushes through tummy. What is he doing to me? "I love you, please give me a chance," he says. I don't know why I'm crying again. I can tell him no, he is not forcing me. "You are my boss Sosha," I say. "So are you. You are the boss of my heart." I open my mouth to speak but end up gasping for air. He is taking my breath away. "I've been dreaming of having a girl who won't bow down to my feet, but the one who will stand next to me and hold my hand," he says. I clear my throat, not trusting my own voice. "That could be any....." "That's you MaShenge," he says. My mouth is hanging open, words are failing me. "I...I...I don't know," I say. He tightens his arm around me, it feels homely. "I do know, you are mine," he says. I allow him to lean too close





to my face and hold his stare. I swear he can see right through my racing heart. His lips meet mine, he gives me a light peck on the lips and plants one on my nose. "Mine!" he emphasises. I want to argue but his stare dries my throat. I can't get the words out. What words by the way? What is it that I want to argue? I want to be here, it feels right. He has his one hand on my thigh while driving. He keeps stealing glances at me. I'm his girlfriend, he told me. I'm flowing like a liquid to everything he says, I don't say no. "Babe we are going to my house, I will bring you back later," he says. Yeap, I'm babe now and I'm going to his house as he says. I told you I'm a liquid, I flow. I have fears about this thing we have started. I'm not an emotional stable person, I don't know how long he is going to put up with me. What if I hurt him? I don't trust myself.

Relationships need compromises. Will I be able to consider his feelings when taking personal decisions? I'm not certain about this, I'm putting my job on the line. If this romantic relationship doesn't end well our work relationship will be affected. Finding the job is not a child's play. Mixing business with pleasure has been warned against for ages. I'm scared of losing my job, but not as much as I'm scared of hurting him. I'm just a bag of mixed emotions. We are here again. I still can't get over the beauty of his house. Its size is ridiculous for someone who lives alone. I'm sure he doesn't use all the rooms in here. He opens the car door for me, I'm still not used to it. The only experience I have is of the taxi, where the taxi conductor opens the door and tells you to jump off fast. They are nice when they want you to ride in. They even call you fancy names; Let's go mamazi. But when it's time to get off you change to what you are wearing; Sisi we-wig sheshisa. He holds me, his hand is warmer than a wool glove. The wind is still blowing, my hair is a mess. I should've tied it, people will probably think I escaped from a psychiatry hospital. "Let's go this way." He leads me to another open room. It's large as the living room I was in earlier. There is a black couch in the middle and giant TV screen. On the wall there is a painting of an African woman. She has a baby on her arm, she is wearing ubuhlalu around her neck and inhloko on her head. This is how some women back home are. African queens who raise their children with love. "Do you love art?" His voice nearly sends me jumping. I've been gazing at the picture for a while. My phone is beeping, I know it's Ntando. She wants to know what's going on. It's annoying but this is exactly what I would've done to her as well. "No, I just love African mothers," I say taking a seat. I'm feeling warm now, there is a fireplace by the wall. This reminds me back home, in the kitchen around fire during winter nights. The only difference is that his fireplace doesn't generate smoke. "Do you like being a mother?" he asks. What a question! I didn't expect the conversation to go from art to motherhood. "I would love to be a mother one day," I say turning to him. Did he look at something else except me this whole time? "Do you have children?" I ask. "No but I would love to have them one day, with the right woman." Right woman? I'm curious. "What kind of a woman is the right one to you?" I ask. "The one who won't leave my children," he says. There is depressed outraged strain in his voice. His answer comes from deep within, there might be a story behind it. I nod and direct my eyes to the screen on the wall that just came live. "I'm coming back," he says. I'm glad to see the back of him. He has a way of making my lungs dilate for more than enough oxygen. I don't know the name of the movie I'm watching. The way this screen is huge it makes it feels like I'm sitting in the cinema. I can see even the ants inside the actress' bedroom. I bet Sabatha wouldn't leave the house if this was our home. He loves wrestling and Kung Foo movies. He is already violent like Brock Lesnar,



he beats other kids in school. Which is why I'm hesitant about installing DSTV for them, he will watch wrestling five hours a day and practice it at school. I feel him walking in, the atmosphere just changes. I'm holding my breath again. I don't know why he took his jacket off, now I'm staring at his arms. On his right arm there is a tattoo. I don't like tattoos, I was told they symbolise Satanism. I'm not a religious person, but I'm on Jesus' side. Whatever they say belongs to Satan I'm against it. But I'm not against fit, masculine strong arms in front of me. I even like his tattoo. Fire to that! He puts an old school basket on the soft carpet in the middle and walks out. He comes back with a full-bodied red wine. Whatever it is that he is setting up here I'm in. "Do you eat Italian food?" he asks taking out two plates from the basket. My Ndulindeness is being put in a test. I've never eaten any Italian food in my life. I don't even know how it looks like. I know Indian food only because I've worked in an Indian restaurant. Why do we have to copy food eaten by people who live 100 000 miles away from us? Can't we just stick to dumplings and Usu? "Yes I eat it," I say in the most convincing voice. I'm becoming professional in this lying business. He looks at me and chuckles. I raise my eyebrow, what's funny? "I know you are lying," he says. I sigh and rest my back on the couch. I'm glad he thought about feeding me, I'm famished. But I'm not sure if the Buthlezi intestines will welcome Italiano sorridere...I'm not sure what that means but it's an Italian thing. He is dishing, everything looks weird. "This is antipasto platter," he says. I just nod my head, wondering who cooked for him. The door was not locked when we came. Maybe he has a chef who cooks for him. "Here we have rolled salami, pepperoni and prosciutto." You should see my face right now, I've never heard of food called prosciutto before. He takes out a glass bowl filled with bread chunks and places it in front of me. I know olives and shrimp but the question is, who is going to eat them? "You will love zabaglione even more, it's coming from the dessert," he says. "Zaba- what?" I ask in my Zulu accent. "You are so clueless. Italian food is simple, you can learn and love it." Oh, he failed school and studied Italian food! "Do you know iskhintshane?" I ask. "Huh?" "Iskhintshane," I say. "No. Is it food?" This is astonishing coming from the antipasto platter Chef. "Zulu food is simple, you are clueless," I say. He shakes his head and laughs. He should be ashamed of himself, he knows Italian's curries and desserts, yet he doesn't know food from his own tribe. He pours wine into the glasses and doesn't fill them. I want to say something, what he is doing is illegal, but I was taught about the guest's behaviour. If you are a guest you follow the house rules without complaining. "Can I make a toast?" he asks. I shrug my shoulders. All I want to do is gulp this drop of wine and eat the antipasto platter once and for all. "I would love to make a toast to you," he smiles and raises his glass up. "To the strength and light, the success and power of the beloved MaShenge," he says. I smile and click my glass on his. He takes one small sip and puts his glass down. I feel like Nomahелеle as I put my empty glass next to his. He was right, I'm enjoying his food. I'm not even using his sticks, I'm eating with my hands. "I swear this is the happiest day of my life," he says. I want to tell him it's my happiest day too but my heart doesn't allow me to. "Are you okay?" he asks. I nod my head. His eyes go to my empty glass, "You want your man to pour for you?" he asks. I don't know what to say, I need a refill but I don't want to look like a drunkard. He sees through me and takes my glass and pours the wine. He stops halfway and looks at me with a lifted eyebrow. "More?" he asks. Not more, I want the whole bottle. "I'm not a drunkard Sosha," I say taking a sigh. He laughs and fills it up. I seriously



can't live without him. "Why you are not comfortable around me?" he asks. "It's not that I'm not comfortable, I'm scared," I say. He stares at me, awestruck. I gulp down the wine and hold his stare. "I'm not sure about this. I'm not an emotional stable person," I say. He relaxes and takes a bread chunk and passes it to me. "That's why I suggested professional counselling. It will help you deal with things," he says. I exhale, impassioned. I can't stand the thought of talking to a complete stranger who won't be listening because she cares, but listening to earn salary. "There must be something you can do," I say. He runs the tip of his tongue over his lower lip. I hate it when he does this. Correction, I hate my dirty mind. I can do unimaginable things to those wet lips. "I can hold you throughout the night, listen without judging and show love to you," he says and slightly narrows his eyes with a distracting smile on his face. "I can also help you let out some steam," he says. I gulp down the wine, I'll need more in a minute. "Do you want to let it out?" he asks. He is doing this on purpose, my reaction amuses him. "No Sosha, I'm fine," I say taking a loud breath. He laughs and stands up. I make a silent prayer, he must leave for a few minutes, I want to breathe properly. Well, he is not leaving. He is switching the radio on. Luther Vandross- A House Is Not A Home plays softly. "Do you know the lyrics?" he asks. I shake my head. There are songs I can sing without knowing the lyrics, like Beyoncé's Halo. I always sing along with her but I don't know half of the song's lyrics. He stops the song halfway and puts the remote away. He takes my hand and starts singing: "Pretty little darling have a heart Don't let one mistake keep us apart I'm not meant to live alone Turn this house into a home When I climb the stairs, and turn the key Oh please be there, still in love I said still in love Still in love with me, yeah." He is not a great singer, but he sings every single word to my heart. I squeeze his hand, even though I don't have the right words to say to him my feelings for him stem from the depths of my heart. I don't want to hurt him. I want him to be always happy, like this. "Where can I get counselling?" I ask. He is surprised, not so long ago I was against the counselling idea. "I can organise it for you babe," he says. "How much does it cost?" I ask. "I will organise everything, don't worry about the costs." I see where this is going, unfortunately I'm not looking for a blesser in him. "I can pay for my expenses," I say. "Your medical expenses are to be covered by the company until the end of your contract. Did you read it properly?" he asks. There was nothing like that on the contract but I'll let the sleeping dogs lie. He puts the plates away and looks at me with a quaint smile. "You are beautiful with your hair." He brushes it with his hand, his fingers are running on my scalp. It's so soothing, I close my eyes and relax. "It's crazy how I've fallen deeply in love with you. I can't start off like normal people, I want to speed things up and give you my whole heart. I want you next to me." He is getting deep and this is exactly what I feared. "Where is your yellow shortie?" I ask. He chuckles and denies having her. I remove his hands from me and glare at him. "Is this how we start?" I ask. He exhales loudly. "I will talk to her today," he says. This is what I hated about relationships. They are complicated. Now I'm going to be the reason another girl cries? So much for imbokodo! "Can I go now?" I ask. He can see that the mood has changed. I'm no longer smiling. There is a pang of fear in his eyes. "It's not like we are in a relationship, we just share a past and those on and off moments," he says. I don't believe him, he came with her to the party. They are in a relationship, why is he lying to me? "Okay Sosha, it's getting late, I have to go," I say. "You will go, please sit on my lap," he says, pulling me back. I look at him weirdly. He sneaks his arm around my waist and asks me to move



up. There is something hard between his legs. How is this even possible? This is the part where I give myself a mental high five. I didn't even touch his ear, he felt me from the distance. "Can I kiss you?" he asks. My eyes give him the answer, he comes closer. Our lips fit like two puzzle pieces, he is sucking my tongue like it's the last chance. I break away when his hard shaft starts poking me. "Why are you stopping?" he asks, breathing heavily. I tap his nose with my finger and smile. "It's time I leave Sosha lami," I say. He chuckles and pokes me purposely. Well good things come to those who wait Mr Cele. "Until MaShenge wants to," I tell him. A smirk grows on his face. "So you are MaShenge?" he asks. Oh he got me and he is proud. "Yes Mr Smartypants," I say. He laughs and gives my thigh a little squeeze. His phone rings. He looks at the screen and smiles. "What?" That's how he answers. The person must be a friend, he is laughing the whole time. Seemingly this is going to be a long call. I pack the cutlery back inside the basket while he is at it. "No you don't know her," he tells the caller. His eyes are on me. He signals for me to come closer. "Come say hello," he says. This is our day one and I'm already saying hello to his people. I sigh and take the phone. "Sosha says I must say hello," I say. The person laughs. I look at Sosha with a frown. "Listen MaShenge, dump that fool as in now. He is not good for you, if you want a man contact me and I'll get you a hunk," the person says. I really don't know what to say. Sosha can hear him, he is laughing along with him. "Tell me which type do you like, tall or short?" What's the heck? Sosha is still laughing. "Can I ask who you are?" I ask. "I'm your agent," he says. I'm not sure what to say, I'm looking at Sosha. He takes the phone back. "Go to hell Bayede," he says and ends the call. "Who is Bayede?" I ask. "The stupid doctor that is my brother." He said he has three siblings, I guess his relationship with them is great. He mentioned Bayede helping him with the bakery. I wonder where his parents live now. My phone also rings. He tightens his arms around me. He doesn't want me to answer it, yet he answered his. "It could be my father," I say. "You will call him back babe. Please look at me, I love your Chinese eyes," he says. Lord, I should be going now but he is clinging on me like a monkey on the branch. I don't know how I'm going to narrate all this to Ntando. My face is cupped in his hands, he is kissing me like he is trying to win a battle. I want to pull away before I lose myself but I can't bring myself to. He is my source of oxygen, I want to breathe him. Eventually he breaks the kiss and wipes my lip with his thumb. "MaShenge you are the incarnation of everything I have ever looked for in a woman, thank you for seeing a worthy man in me." Eight years later I've fallen in love again. It's deep and scary. I never thought I'd be here, he is changing everything.

Chapter 6 Yesterday I came home around 9 o'clock. If it wasn't for this hot head of mine Sosha would've got me on his bed. He was persuasive and begging me to sleep over. It's amazing how my manner of approach has changed towards him. I was actually begging him to let me go, if it was any other day I would have put my river skills on motion. I was the champion of the river fights. By the river, in the afternoons, is where older girls laid a challenge for younger girls to fight against each other. It was fun, until you faced Mnto. I would call her the female version of Mike Tyson of Ndulinde, she kicked everyone's ass. I heard she got married last year, I wonder if she is not beating her husband. She feared nobody. "You are a hypocrite," Ntando says throwing



popcorn inside her mouth. We are lying on our stomachs on her bed. She is still in disbelief. She went away for two days only and when she comes back I'm someone's girlfriend. I know what I said but everyone gets unexpected turns in life. I'm also surprised by the endless calls and texts. I have to remind myself every now and then that I'm in a relationship. "I didn't sleep with him, we just kissed," I defend myself. "It doesn't make any difference, you love the guy. How was his kiss? Rate him out of 10 percent," she says. Pheew! This question awakens funny feelings inside me. "Yanga?" she calls. I snap out and contemplate my answer. "Ummm...8 out of 10," I say. She gives me a snide look and laughs. I know she is laughing at the 2% left. Sosha is a great kisser but he sucked my tongue more than he sucked my lips. I'm more into lip-kiss. Phone beeps! Ntando reaches to it first and reads the message. She doesn't know anything about privacy. "Bayede thinks you gave me a love portion, I can't stop thinking about you. I love you MaShenge."- she reads. "You met his brother?" she asks. "No, he only made us talk over the phone." She exclaims, to her this means Sosha and I are getting married. She is an exaggerator like that. Luckily she is not scrolling down for more messages. I don't want her to read my previous replies. "He wanted me so badly last night," I say. "Don't give him the cookie yet. He must cry and beg first." What? That's crazy, I want to get laid. I want to hear more of those little moans I heard yesterday when we were kissing. "Don't tell me you already want to open your legs for him," she says. It's not always about opening legs, sometimes you get on your knees like you are praying. And you do pray in tongues, just not to God. "I felt his hard shaft and I can't help but wonder how good he can move it," I say. She sighs and ties her braids on top of her head. "You know what? Let's make a deal," she says She is now sitting, I'm looking at her in great anticipation. She never meets the end of our deals. "I'm not giving Sanele any cookie until we finish a month together. The same goes to you and Sosha." They are in a relationship now and it's official. They are already putting each other on WhatsApp statuses. I don't know if I will ever reach that level. I don't see myself ever going public with my relationship with my boss. I don't want people to think that I slept with him in exchange for the job. "One month is 30 days, I can do that," I say. This is easy, I can always help myself privately. It's not like sexual pleasure only comes in a dick form. God blessed us with fingers. There are even artificial dicks and vibrators. Who needs a man? We seal the deal. Sanele and Sosha are facing a month of no touching, no sex. \*\*\*\* This new life I've started needs me to stay professional. At JC Bakers I'm an employee. I'm Yangomuhle, the sales assistant, not MaShenge. "Girl it's tea time," says Amanda striding in. I last saw her in the morning when I clocked in. She is gorgeous as usual. I wonder if she knows about me and Sosha. I pray she doesn't, the less people know the better. "I'm sorry about sending only a box of chocolate. My budget was tight this month, I just wanted to appreciate you for getting me the job," I tell her. She sips her bottle of water and looks at me with confused eyes. It's not my kind of water, it has cucumber and lemon slices inside. You can never win with rich people. They eat cucumber, drink it and put it on their eyes like sunglasses. As a good Buthelezi woman I never waste food, I was taught better. It's either you eat food or pass it to someone who needs it. You don't take food and put it on your eyes and then throw it away. She looks lost and asks what I'm talking about. I tell her about the expensive chocolate I bought for her and gave Sosha to deliver. It seems like news to her. "Sosha didn't give me any chocolate, he didn't even mention it." What??? "I asked him Saturday to deliver it," I say. She





shrugs her shoulders and denies hearing anything about it. I want to go to his office and confront him right now but I remember that here he is my boss. I can't act like he is my errand boy. "Don't stress about it. I didn't expect anything in return, girls look out for each other," she says. I'm not stressed about the chocolate, I'm stressed about the money I spent on it. The rock of money that could've bought me 10kg of rice. He doesn't reply to my texts. I heard that he will be in his office all day today, clearly he is ignoring me on purpose. Cynthia walks in followed by Dennis, the head baker. Do you remember him? That white guy who thought calling matric certificate Umalusi depletes the ozone layer. They greet and go through the aisles checking whatever it is. This is the most relaxing job I've ever had. Half of the day I'm sitting on the chair, there is no crowd at all. I've started uploading cake pictures on my Facebook timeline to get more customers. "Yangomuhle," Cynthia calls. I close the book and lend her my attention. She is telling me about Saturday. It's Sosha's birthday, they are planning a surprise party for him. All his employees should be there. She is emphasizing on bringing gifts. I love parties but this one baffles me. Where am I going to get money to buy a gift? They do sell cheap gift cards and chocolates at Shoprite, but this is Sosha Cele. People will bring expensive gifts, we just got paid three days ago. No, I'm not going. Something urgent will come up or I'll just fall sick. I keep hoping to see him and sort out my 'expensive chocolate' issue but it seems like he is busy. Maybe he ate it. That would make me mad, buying expensive chocolates for rich people is not my hobby. I only bought Amanda because she fought for me to get the job. He must not raise my BP. When Asih, the cashier, starts laughing like a hyena I know it's time to go home. I wait a few minutes to see if I don't have any heavy-footed customer. No I don't. I throw my book and cellphone inside the bag and make my way out. "Yangomuhle!" Amanda calls, tapping her fingers. She is smiling. I wonder if she ever get wrong days like the rest of us. Maybe whoring is the best therapy. "You are still sitting here?" I ask. "I have to wrap a few things up," she says and takes a small white envelope on top of her desk and passes it to me. "Sosha asked me to give you this," she says. I tear it open and find a piece of paper inside. I HELPED YOU IN THE STORE THE OTHER DAY. TODAY I'M SWAPPED, IT'S TIME TO RETURN THE FAVOUR- it's handwritten. Is this a joke? I didn't ask him to help me, he did it willingly. "Please tell him I said I can't work overtime, I have other things to do," I pass the message to Amanda. She grins, her eyes are tuned on someone behind me. I welcome a familiar cologne and hold my breath. "Tell him yourself, he is right behind you," she says. Damn! I fight to keep my throat moistened. "Amanda please get us something to eat and coffee, we will be in the office," he says. He is so pompous! Amanda winks and takes her purse and leaves. Workers are still trailing out. I should be walking with them, why am I standing? I turn to him with a stilted face, putting a blanket over the effect he has drastically caused to my body. "Thanks for replying to my messages today. Have a wonderful evening," I say. Luckily my voice comes out assertive and pragmatic. "We will have a wonderful evening," he says frankly. Words fail me. His eyes are fixed on me, he is not even blinking. Maybe I have magnet in my eyes. "Sosha the hours I signed to work for are over," I say. "You owe me a favour, let's go before I kiss you right here." There goes my long legs behind him! I wish Mnto can come and beat me one more time, for being a weakling this time. I could've put a fight, it's not like I was going to get fired for not returning a stupid favour. We get inside his office, he closes the door behind us. Where is the air in this place? I sit on the couch and put my



bag on my lap. He stands behind me, breathing behind my neck and wraps his arms around my shoulders and squeezes me in a tight hug. "I have missed you," he says. He walks around and gently lifts my face up and smashes his lips on me. I have missed him too. If Ntando was to see the scandal happening inside my panty she'd be so disappointed. He breaks the kiss and smiles. "Go sit on my chair," he says. I put my hands on the cheeks and keep quiet. I'm not going to sit on his chair. "Where can I help?" I ask. His desk is cleared. There is a laptop bag and stacked papers at the side. It's neat, the only smell I inhale is of his cologne and the scent of polished furniture and the raw smell of printed papers. He is a neat freak, but I'm not worried I heard only the most creative people keep their space messy. "We need to eat first, we cannot work on empty stomachs," he says. Smartypants! "I'm not hungry," I say. He lowers his eyes and nibbles on his lip. I fold my palms tightly and calm my escalating breaths. "I'm hungry," he says. He is not referring to the hunger I was talking about. He is referring to the hunger my ungodly body is crying about. His eyes are full of mischief and lust. I'm happy to hear Amanda's voice filling the room. It was an awkward moment. "I got you sandwiches. I hope you are not allergic to ham Yangomuhle," she says. Back home there are rare cases of allergies. There is no time to be allergic when you have no money. You eat what's on the table and take care of the effects with stamina. So let me use this opportunity to be allergic. I sit up straight and lift my right leg over my left knee. "Actually I'm allergic to it," I say. "Yoh! Must I get you a piece of cake?" "No I'm fine, I will have my coffee with a piece of arrogance," I say and shift my eyes. Mr Arrogant lifts his eyebrows. I keep my poker face on. Amanda excuses herself saying she needs to wrap things up and go. He is staring at me. I take one cup of coffee and tear sugar sachets. Wait...I was mad at him! "Sosha what happened to Amanda's gift that I gave to you?" I ask. "Oh I threw it out of the car window." I put the cup back on the desk, he did what? "I beg your pardon?" I say. He is opening his sandwich like World war III is not about to start, he should be cocking his guns. "I was angry you left me in the car while we were still talking," he says. Whoah! I put my hand up. His anger had nothing to do with the chocolate. "Can we not talk about you? Let's talk about the fortune-costing chocolate I bought for Amanda and asked you to deliver it for me," I say. "It was just a Ferrero Rocher, I will replace it." It was just? Hey that chocolate has never been tasted by half of Ndulinde girls, they only see it on TV. Me included, I never wake up feeling like spending fortunes on a mere chocolate. "I planned to replace it but it slipped my mind," he says. He could've replied to my messages or replaced it in the morning when I first texted him. This was done on purpose. "Why did you throw it in the first place? It may have been just a Ferrero Rocher to you but to me it was a cut from my salary. I could have done my hair, bought my brother a pair of sandals or legging for myself. You should have brought it back to me, it was my money." I get off the chair and storm to the door. His hand grabs my arm before I reach to it. I can't even look at him in the eyes, what kind of disrespect is this? Maybe a woonga junkie got that chocolate lying by the road and sold it for R5. "I will replace it MaShenge," he says. I exhale and ask him to let me go. He doesn't, instead he holds both my hands. "Let's not fight today. I had a great day and I want to end it with you. I will make up for my mistakes, don't leave," he says. His voice changes when he begs. Something always stabs through my heart, I find myself asking if I'm not too harsh or overreacting. "Okay, but I want it first thing in the morning on her desk," I say. He smiles, his eyes glitter with hope. I make my way back to the couch. My coffee is probably



cold now. I didn't update Ntando about my overtime, she is going to send the Russian army. I open the bag and take out my cellphone and send her a short text. She replies immediately: NO SEX YANGA! Well..... "What's amusing you?" he asks. I take first sip of my cold coffee and smile. "Is it the Sosha effect?" he asks. Sosha effects? He is so full of himself. "You have no effect, stop fooling yourself," I say. He chuckles and bites his bottom lip. Can he not do this while I'm trying to be hot-headed? Lord! "I love you, that should be effective. And I'm going to give you the nipplegasm before you go, just to tone you down a bit," he says. I choke on the coffee. This life is not my ride. What the heck is nipplegasm? My nipples are getting hard from the word. "I spoke to Craig, he is a psychotherapist and life coach. He can help you, he is highly recommended," he says. I really appreciate his efforts and I can't wait to meet Chris...what is nipplegasm and when is he finishing that sandwich? He eats half of it and drinks coffee. I'm watching him, putting a pattern in the way his jaws move when he chews. I like how he frequently licks his lips. He likes his own taste, but I can do it better. My hands are itching to run over that trimmed chin and trace his jawline with my fingers. I can do things to that earlobe. I'm glad he has no earring on. I've already forgiven him for having a tattoo, I can't forgive him twice. "You look like you want to devour me," he says. I quickly move my eyes away, nobody likes being caught staring. It's creepy. "That's quite an observation Mr Cele," I say. He turns on his chair like a principal. His tongue is sweeping over his teeth. I sit a bit closer to the desk, he cannot see my shaky knees. I have my thighs tightly pressed together. "Relax, I will take you out of your misery," he says. "What misery?" I say, faking confusion. "Is it going to affect you if I kiss you?" Now I'm in a real misery, but I heard 'if I kiss you' which led my eyes to his lips. "Huh?" Gosh, I sound dumb! "The ham," he says. Oh my allergy! "No," I say. A smirk covers his face. He has me wrapped around his finger. He pulls a document at the side of the desk and opens it. My heart sinks to the floor, we can do this after the 'nipplegasm'. I take a huge, deep breath. He lifts his eyes from the file and looks at me with a tight-lipped smile. "Are you okay?" he asks. No, fuck you. "Yep I'm okay," I say. He gets off his chair and comes to me and puts his hands on my shoulders. I start breathing Sosha Cele, he becomes my oxygen. There are drumbeats inside my chest. I force my head up and meet his gaze. "Why are you so stubborn?" he asks, lowering his face inch by inch closer to mine. "I'm not stubborn." My reply comes out as a whisper. His fingers come to a halt on my arm. I feel the effect of his touch and swallow. "I want you to want me, you said I will have you only when you wants me," he says. I don't know how he is able to record every single thing I say. It's like his big head is a CD. "I want you," I blurt out. His hand ventures up my arm. He is drawing air through his teeth, his lips are slightly opened. Not even a blink can take his eyes off me. Love is plainly written in the sockets of his eyes. It can be heard through his shallow breathe and felt on his skimming hands. I can't do this anymore. I give in and smash my lips on him. Rule number 20 has been broken. But he is the boss, there will be no consequences. Power is everything. He sends his hand under my shirt. He ignores the buttons and forces it inside. He is going to bursts my buttons and I can't risk that, not only for taxi decency, but how will I explain it to Ntando? I made a deal. "Unbutton me Sosha," I say. He complies and starts unbuttoning my shirt. By the grace of my ancestors I'm not wearing my 2year old black bra. I always make a mental note to get rid of old underwears but when it's laundry time I sympathise with them and give them another chance. He puts his knee between



my thighs and takes my bra off. My boobs are exposed like Zodwa Wodumo's vagina. Oh my bad, it's Zodwa Wabantu. I can't keep up with these 20th century celebrity names. My breath picks a new pattern. He starts breathing next to my collar bone. I don't know how someone's breathing can make me so wet. I'm tempted, I will break the deal first. He moves up to my tendon, just breathing against my skin. And goes up to my ear, I feel the tip of his tongue touching inside the lobe tenderly. I whisper something I can't make sense of. His knee is pressed against my panty, my clit is throbbing against it. He trails my neck down with soft kisses. "I like your boobs, can I taste them?" he asks and takes one nipple in between his fingers and rolls it. He puts more pressure on my mound with his knee and tugs my hair behind the ear. "I'm waiting for a go-ahead MaShenge," he says, staring deeply in my eyes. "Taste them Sosha," I say. My voice is husky and filled with lust. "I'm going to bring you to the brink of nipplegasm just like you bring me to the brink of love." What's the fuck is the brink of nipplegasm? He said he is going to give me a full nipplegasm, what has changed? I don't even know what he means by saying I bring him to the brink of love. Do I not show him love? Okay maybe not, but I do care about him. At the drop of a hat my nipple is fully inside his mouth. I let out a deep moan. I wish his knee was still pressed between my thighs. He lets out a low growl and lifts his eyes to my face. I close mine and arch my back, pushing my boobs to him. He teases my nipple with his teeth, it sends my legs further apart. He cups them in his hands and swipes his thumbs over the nipples. I let out another moan and open my eyes. "Oh MaShenge," he whispers. His leg ventures through my legs again and presses on my mound. I move my hips up and grind against his knee. He lets out another growl. I see stars alignment and dig my nails on his waist. I want him, even if it's just his fingers. He kisses me before I can voice my words out, I moan inside his mouth. He gives my nipple a tighter tweak. "MaShenge what do you want?" he asks pulling the knee that I've held so tightly with my thighs. "I want you Sosha please," I say. I can't believe I'm begging him to fuck me. I'm going against my morals, I don't beg a man. He smashes his lips on me and sends his hand under my skirt and sneaks one finger at the side of my panty. I wait for him to insert it inside but he doesn't, instead he plays with the panty's lace, lifting it and slamming it against my wet flesh. "I want your love MaShenge. Show me that you care, don't fight me, just love me," he says and lean over my boobs and sucks one nipple. "Sosha please finger me at least," I whisper. He moans and teases the nipple in a cycling pattern. I cry out, my body can't handle this anymore. "Not too loud, the door is not closed, Dennis is still here." WTF! I open my eyes and look at him. "Close your eyes and fuck my knee. I will help you," he says. Is that the best he can give me? The knee, not even fingers or tongue? He grabs my boobs again and squeezes them. His thumb is rubbing my nipples softly. It sends electric sensation throughout my veins. I start bucking my hips and grinding myself against his knee again. "I've been hard from the frantic kissing MaShenge. I want to fuck you so badly but I want you to be on my bed," he says and pulls my nipple into his mouth again. The warmth of his tongue spreads rays of tingling sensation. They shoot down to my toes, making them twirl. He presses his knee harder and folds my other nipple. "You can feel me MaShenge," he says. I don't know if he is asking or telling me, but I can feel the electricity his touch sends to my body. I grind faster against his knee. He helps me, his hand roams the expanse of my upper back, the other one is on my nipple. I feel a wave washing over my body, it rushes down to my toes. My body is stiff for a while



before the cloud wears off. I open my eyes and look at him. He is staring at me with his lips slightly parted. "You are beautiful," he says. I'm still collecting my breath, I let off some heavy steam there. He kisses my lips and stands up. My eyes land on the front of his pant, there is a baby arm poking out. Why can't he give me that? "How are you getting home soaked in wet underwear?" He is not romantic, he should be buttoning my shirt and wiping me, not asking silly questions. "Get me a wipe," I say. "Stand up, I will wipe you." I stand and look at him, expecting him to bring a wipe or towel. He lifts my skirt up and pulls the panty down. I get excited thinking he changed his mind, I'm dying to know if he can fit inside me. Boom! He is only wiping me with my panty. "Sosha what am I going to wear?" I ask. Veins are pulsing visibly on his face, his jaws are clenched. He sneaks my panty inside his pocket and pulls me to his chest. I get lost on his lips for a moment, but when he breaks the kiss my hand goes inside his pocket searching for my panty. He blocks it and smiles. "I'm keeping it baby." He can't be serious! Well he is, he walks to his desk and sits on his chair. "Sosha bring back my underwear," I say. He rubs his red eyes with one hand, the other one is under the desk. Maybe he is trying to cool down his giant. "MaShenge I said I'm keeping it," he says in a husky voice. Why is he keeping my dirty underwear? I lean to his desk, silently wondering how good he might be. He wants me, his eyes give it away. Desire begins to prickle through my erogenous zones. "When are you going to visit me?" he asks. "We can go even now," I say. His eyes gleam, he smiles and cocks his head to the side. "That's tempting but there is no rush," he says. I bury my forehead on my hands and sigh. He is such a piece of work. "Do you love me MaShenge?" he asks. I remove the hands and look up at him. He is staring at me, not even blinking. I didn't expect this question, he knows where we stand. "We are doing this thing Sosha, aren't we?" I say. "Yes, and I love you. Do you love me?" Why is he doing this now? He is waiting.....I have to say it. "I love you Sosha." There, I've said it and I'm still breathing. We spend the next hour talking, about his family mostly. Bayede is his old brother, he is a medical doctor and has a daughter named Maya, he speaks highly of her. Obviously that daughter is a spoilt brat. There is another brother, Mlando, he has two degrees and is still studying further. He is two years younger than Sosha and has girlfriends all over Durban. Then there is a sister, the centre of the universe, she lives in Cape Town. Her name is Tshitshi, she is 21years old. A smile creeps on his face every time he speaks about them, but not so much when he speaks about his parents. It's 19:45 when we leave the bakery, I have no underwear on and he is taking that to his advantage. He keeps sending his other hand under my skirt and brushing my thighs. "Saturday is my birthday, I'm official turning 29years." My heart sinks when I remember I'm not going to be there at his surprise party. I would've loved to see his shocked face. "Wow, happy birthday in advance," I say. "Can I be with you Saturday night?" he asks. I look at him, it looks like he is holding his breath. "Is it about sex?" I ask. "No it's about us, I want to be with the girl I love." I put my hand at the side of his face and peck his cheek. I feel honoured, my feelings for him keep on growing. It's never the right time to say goodbye, we kiss and part ways. I have my bag clutched under my arm. My hands are pressing the skirt at the sides. I have no underwear on, somehow it feels like I've broken the deal. I cannot let Ntando know what happened in the office. What happens behind office doors stays behind office doors. "Finally!" She is already in pyjamas, holding a bowl of cereal in her hands. "Babe how are you?" I ask. She scrutinizes me with her eyes like I'm some heist suspect. She can look all she wants, her eyes





won't penetrate under my skirt. "I'm good, how was the office session?" she asks. She is trying to fish information. I put my bag on the couch and put the most honest-looking expression on my face. "I was actually helping him with paperwork," I say. She sweeps her tongue over her teeth, her pupils are dilating with amusement. "Oh, which type of paperwork does he like the most?" Unqualified investigators! Breathe Yanga, breathe! "Ntando I'm tired, my fingers are aching from typing," I say walking away with my head hung backwards. "We are having cereal and coffee for supper!" she yells. Oh what a great meal! "Thank you for being useful," I say and get inside my bedroom and close the door. Pheeww! That was close. \*\*\*\* I can't wait for Saturday, this week seems to be going slow. I decided to take R100 from my transport money and buy Sosha a tie for his birthday. He is genuinely trying to be a good boyfriend, the best I could do is to meet him halfway and show him some love too. Ntando's lifts will save me since my money will be short. I haven't seen much of him at the bakery this week. He is busy at the gym, he said there are renovations taking place. His mission is to make people fat by giving them cakes and sign them to his gym to lose weight. He is so business intelligent. "See you tomorrow Yangomuhle," says Asih. I wave my hand at her and flash my staged smile. She is suddenly too friendly to me, I don't know what she is playing at. I don't trust girls with dyed, short hair. They drink too much and wet mouthed. Her questions always circle around Sosha. It's a pity that he has to pass in front of her everytime he comes to the store. If there is anything I pray hard for, it's not having people know that I'm dating my boss. I pray for that more than I pray for the rain in Mpumalanga. I find Ntando standing in the middle of the lounge with two dresses. "Babe which one?" she asks. I'm too tired. All I want to do is eat, bath and sleep. I'm not a stylist. "I don't know Ntando, where are you going?" I ask sliding on the couch. "Movies honey," she beams. Is my calendar behind? It says today is Thursday, don't people watch movies on Friday nights? Tomorrow is Friday, a working day. "Okay I'm going with my purple baby," she says. Her face is brighter than Rihanna's diamonds. "So Sanele doesn't know which days are right to go out?" I ask. "Every day is the right day to go out, that's if you are with the right person," she says. She was this crazy about Vusi too. I hope this one is really 'the right person'. She is beaming with joy. "Well my man has a lot on his plate. He is not just supervising the bakery, he owns it," I brag. This is the first time I'm bragging about something that is not mine. Love really changes people. "Do you know that there is a book called The Y in yOur Man Is Silent?" she asks. I can't believe someone wrote a book like that. I'm not much of a reader but I have to see this one. I believe the author was not talking about Sosha though. The 'Y' in my Sosha is not silent. He told me that I'm the only person he is going to give his heart to. I put a star on that text and saved it as important message and took a screenshot of it. Sanele comes and takes his girlfriend. I sit my never-spoiled ass on the couch and watch the late night movie. I have a packet of peanuts as my popcorn. Saturday the tables will turn, I will leave her miserable too. It's Friday today, we are busy at the bakery. Even though I'm not coming to the party I stay and help with the preparations. We finish around 19:30, Amanda is the one to drive me home. I find Ntando warming up chicken pieces, she says Sanele brought us food for dinner. Isn't this guy the best in the world? "Are you setting alarm for 12am?" she asks. I frown, what's happening at 12am? She looks at me like I'm dumb, like I should've automatically known whatever it is from birth. "You said it's Sosha's birthday mos," she says. I still don't see how midnight and his



birthday relate. She explains that I have to wake up at midnight and be the first person to wish Sosha a happy birthday. Do people do that in real life? The only time I wake up at midnight is on New Year's eve. "I will call him when I wake up in the morning," I say. "Geez Yanga! Relationships need sacrifices. Just set the message to automatically go at 12am." Thanks to advanced technology. I don't even know what I'm going to write in this message, maybe I should ask Mr Google or send those WhatsApp ones with pictures. It's Saturday morning, I will sleep until the sun penetrates through my ass. That's how my mother describes sleeping until the sun goes up. "Michelle you gara see this!" Oh I wish! Room-mate is bursting inside my room rolling in English. It's only 6:13, did she swallow a dictionary? She jumps on my bed and pulls the covers off my head. "I know you're not sleeping," she says. I open my eyes and yawn. She is scrolling her phone, her eyes keep widening. "Morning Ntando. What is it?" I say. She doesn't respond, instead she gives me her phone. I rub my eyes and look at the screen. Wow! This is a beautiful car. "It's beautiful," I say. She grabs the phone and scrolls down again. "Do you know this girl?" she asks pushing the screen on my face. I look at this familiar yellow face. My memory can be slow at times... Oh I remember her from the Glenwood house party. "It's Sosha's yellow shortie," I say. I'm shocked by her profile; Dr Mpume Mahlangu. Yeses! I undermined her, thinking she is one of those light skinned gold diggers. Hold on right there... She tagged Sosha??? "Can you believe it? A whole Audi Q7!" Ntando says. My fingers are trembling, it's like I'm losing my mind. Sosha said they are not together, why is she buying him a car on his birthday? My phone rings. I look at the screen, it's him. I reject it and switch my phone off. "Answer it Yanga," Ntando says. I shake my head, I'm not up for this. The last thing I want is to compete with a doctor for a man. She bought him a car, I bought him a lousy tie. I'm done.

Chapter 7 I hate that my heart is broken over a guy. This is why I hated relationships, they bring pain more than joy. I shouldn't have fallen for him. The higher the expectations the higher the chances of getting hurt. Ntando walks in with a cup of coffee and biscuits. I've been on bed since morning. I haven't eaten nor bathed. I'm such a bad loser. "I can't believe this is you," she says. I take the coffee and sip. It's tasteless, I need something stronger. I stuff a biscuit inside my mouth and ask if she has any miraculously dropped-inside-the-wardrobe bottle of wine. "You have to get an explanation from him. Avoiding him and drinking won't help you, at least get closure," she says. What is he going to explain? I asked him about her, he said it was nothing serious and promised to end it. If he wanted me to be a sidechick or booty-call he should've said so. We are too old for this shit. When I switch my phone on his messages come flooding. In most of them he is asking if I'm okay, others are about tonight. He is good at pretending. Amanda also left a message telling me about the time of the party. Mpume will probably be there with another expensive gift. I'd be a fool to show my face there. I don't want to end up causing unnecessary scenes. Ntando goes out and comes back with pizza and bottle of Hennessy. She cancelled her date with Sanele to stay with me. I'm grateful to have someone like her by my side. "Oh Amanda called," she says like it just dawned back on her mind. "She



wanted to know if I'm coming to the party?" I ask. "Yep and I told her you are only coming to the bakery on Monday to work." I know she was sassy about it. She opens the bottle and pours into the glasses. One minute she is warning me against alcohol, the next she is the one popping bottles. We grill some red meat and wors and make chakalaka. Yep, we are celebrating my broken heart. "I still think you should talk to him, right now he doesn't even know what's wrong," she says. She is getting drunk, her mouth is losing stoppers. "Whatever it is I don't want to hear it. Did you see the comments on the post? People were congratulating him, saying what a good woman he has," I say. She drops her head and yawns. I fill up another glass and gulp it down. "Since when are you like this? Take your man and leave her with her PhD. Make it worse and hold the front seat in the car she bought and take pictures," she says. I can do that to spite the doctor, but my emotional wellbeing is more important. I don't need unnecessary drama, my life has too many problems. It's been a long day, we got wasted and made noise until our neighbours complained. Now we are sober and getting ready for bed. There is someone at the door. I leave Ntando attending to it and go to my bedroom. I take my dress off and put a T-shirt on. I don't know what's more heavier between my head and heart. I drag myself to bed. Who said sleeping without taking a bath is a sin? You will be going to hell with your Dettol-washed body. "Yanga," she calls and pushes the door open. I lift my head up and look at her. She has a stupid grin on her face. "Is Sanele here?" I ask. "No, Sosha is." What is he doing here? I'm ignoring him on purpose. Reading between the lines is really a skill. "Should I let him in?" she asks. Is she crazy? Why would she let him in? "Ntando I don't want to see him," I say. She sighs and walks out. Sosha is a fool to think that I will be sleeping with him knowing very well that 'his doctor' bought him a car. She is now his doctor, not the yellow shortie. The door opens again. "Is he gone?" I ask. "No, I'm here," says the devil himself. He let himself in my bedroom? WTF! I turn red and sit up instantly, "Sosha what are you doing here?" I ask. He is wearing a navy T-shirt, Denim short and dead expression on his face. My eyes land on his left hand, he is wearing a new watch, not his usual. This one looks more expensive, its design is unique. "I'm here to fetch you," he says, so maliciously. "I'm not going anywhere, as you can see I'm already on bed. Please close the door on your way out." He walks closer and stands next to the dressing table. Today his presence is not affecting me at all. "MaShenge you blocked my number. What is going on?" Is he really asking that? I did say reading between lines is a skill, only if he finished school! "Sosha go to your girlfriend. What's her name...I don't want to call her the yellow shortie, I have respect for doctors," I say. He exhales audibly and rubs between his brows with a finger. I don't know why I always notice when he does this. "MaShenge I don't understand, what kind of love is this? Why are you not letting me explain? I understand why you are angry but you should talk to me." Sigh! I was hoping for a peaceful night. "Sosha I asked you to be honest with me. Trust me I'm not mad at you because I love you too much, I'm mad because you lied to me," I say. He stares at me for a good minute, he is not even blinking. His expression is a compilation of hurt and anger. "I didn't lie, I will explain when we get to the house." Get to which house? He is dumb. "I'm not going anywhere with you," I say. "What you saw on social networks was a misunderstanding. I love you," he says. I don't get how a brand new car can be a misunderstanding. Didn't she buy it for him and tagged him? I was not drunk in the morning. "Didn't she buy you a car?" I ask. He pushes his hands inside the pockets and sighs. "She did,



but we are not together. I ended things with her," he says. Well my very own personal investigator, Officer Ntando Mthethwa, investigated. The day before we spent the evening in his office he was with her. "You're not together yet you go out to dinners and take pictures?" I ask. "She is a business colleague MaShenge," he says. "Can I spend the night with my business colleague too, Mr Bed?" I ask. He chuckles and pulls my arm. He thinks that I'm joking. "Sosha I'm not going to your house. This shit is over, I have too many problems in my life," I say. "MaShenge you said you love me....." His tone is descending, he sounds hurt. I lie down and pull up the covers. "Not anymore, please leave," I say. There is a moment of silence. "MaShenge must I leave?" he asks. I didn't speak French, that's what I said, I don't repeat myself. "I can sleep here if you don't want to come to my house." Hhayi-bo! This is a single bed, it was made for only one person to sleep on it. "Sosha go and spend the last hours of your birthday with people who love and afford you," I say. He stares at me, I give nothing away, I mean it. He must go to his doctor and have the PHD pussy. "Mfethu come on," he says in almost whisper. He has never called me 'mfethu'. I may be not Miss Universe in terms of beauty but surely I don't look like a man. I'm not his 'mfethu'. "Leave Sosha," I say. He sighs and walks out with his head downturned. My heart sinks at the last sight of his back. I'm fooling myself, my heart is still bleeding love. Ntando was waiting for him to leave, she storms in after two and half seconds. "The soldier looks defeated, what happened?" she asks. "I told him to go spend his birthday with the doctor." "No you didn't!" Her eyes are bulging out. "It's over Ntando, I'm done with him," I say. Every piece of my heart is crushing. I don't know how I'm going to face him at work. This is why they say don't mix business with pleasure, now my working life is going to be like hell. We haven't communicated since Saturday night, I blocked him everywhere. I'm at work answering why I didn't come to the party. Asih is the most annoying, it's like she senses that the stupid fling ended. "He is dating a doctor, did you see it on Twitter? She also came to the party, you should see how beautiful she is." She is dishing all this in my working space. "Don't you have work to do Asih?" I ask. She apologizes and walks away smiling. I have to stay calm, my job requires me to be friendly. I can't let out all these emotions bottled inside me. I will pretend as if it doesn't hurt and get through the day as usual. Someone hisses my name from the entrance. Lord can you send your lightning to this girl? "Yes," I say in a stolid voice. "Come, hurry!" I sigh and follow her out. Her eyes direct me to the reception desk. Sosha is writing something on the paper, Mpume is waiting next to him, wearing her expensive weave and high heels. "That's her," she says. I swallow the lump that has formed in my throat and nod my head. He lifts his head up and looks at our direction like something just poked him. Our eyes meet, I hold his stare for a few seconds and then walk back inside the store. They say what doesn't kill you makes you stronger but this isn't making me strong. I want to hide and cry my lungs out. "Shengee," I scrolled down my phone and my fingers stopped at his number. He is the only person I'd like to talk to at the moment, his voice will heal me. "Babawami how are you?" I ask. "I'm fine my baby. Are you not at work?" "I'm at work, I just wanted to hear your voice," I say. My voice is almost breaking but I'm controlling it. "Is everything alright Shengee?" he asks. I take a deep breath and tell him everything is okay. I try to sound convincing, I don't want to stress him. "I'm happy to hear that. Your brother fought with another boy at school, I'm coming from the meeting as we speak. The boy got hurt badly, I have to cover the medical expenses," he says. He is talking



about the one and only Sabatha. That child is problematic. "I don't know what I'm going to do, I'm penniless. Can they wait till the month ends?" I ask. "No Shengee I will sort it out. I've been meaning to sell some goats, they are crowding the kraal." Oh wow! Jesus must be around the corner. He is going to sell HIS GOATS? His children? "Okay buy me something nice when you get the money, maybe a dress," I say. "What can I say? I brought you on this earth." This man! I don't bother him that much. "I love the responsible father that you are," I say. We both laugh. This is exactly what I needed, for a moment I've forgotten about the Cele son with a big head and protruding browridge. "Jamlude is limping, your brothers are bringing my cows home by dark." Lord, not my hard-earned airtime for Jamlude's endless health crisis! "Eish! My boss is coming, I will call you later," I say. "Okay my baby work well and tell that man I will break him with a knobkerrie if he breaks your heart," he says. I end the call with a huge frown on my face. We don't have a history of zangomas at home, what was that? He is adding to my frustrations. For some reasons I'm avoiding Amanda. Sosha went out with his girlfriend so it's safe to spend my lunch break inside the store. My heart is broken, so is my appetite. I spend the break listening to Luther Vandross. I don't know how playing his favourite songs is going to help me forget him. Thirty minutes after lunch I'm wandering through the aisles appreciating the cakes. Sitting on the chair was driving me crazy. I see Amanda making her way towards the store. I want to hide behind the cakes but she knows that I'm here. "Girl!" She is cheerful as always. "Hey Amanda," I say flatly. "How are you doing?" She is looking at me with glazed eyes, I guess she knows. "I'm fine," I say. I've only known her for only a month and few weeks. I don't know how long she has known Mpume nor how deep their relationship goes. I'm not sure about our friendship anymore. "Your day ends now, Craig is here," she says. I look at her with confusion painted on my face. Who is Craig now? "I'm lost," I say. "Didn't you see your new schedule? On Mondays and Wednesday your day ends at 3pm." What the hell is going on? I thought this was the most successful bakery in Durban, how are they having short-times so early in the year? "If I may ask, why?" I say. "He says he was told to come fetch you," she says. I collect my belongings and make my way to the reception area after her. There is a coloured guy on the chair. He is looking at me, I guess he is Craig. "MaShenge," he says. Wait how does he know me? My memory crawls back, he is the psychotherapist. I clear my throat and return the greeting. Asih's neck is stretched longer than the giraffe's. She should've done journalism, she'd make hot gossip articles. "Time has fled, we should get going," he says. I lean by Amanda's desk and stare at him. "Where are we going?" I ask. He takes out his business card and gives it to Amanda. If she doesn't get me on the phone she will take it to the police. Only then I agree to go with him. This is Durban, you have to be cautious. We get in his car and fasten our seatbelts. He smells like a million rands. Every feature of his body was moulded in no hurry. God took his time, he is the compensation for all the ugly Roberts and Bhekis on earth. He looks at me and smiles. Maybe I have to smile back, I shouldn't be looking like what I'm going through. "My name is Craig Cowlings, your psychotherapist," he says. Let's call him Craig Nkomo, shall we? Forget '-lings', this is umfo kaNkundlane. I nod my head and ask where we are heading. He says it's a road trip. I've never been to a road trip before. Where does it end? Do you drive until you can't drive anymore and return back home? I don't think it's clever given the fact that petrol prices are rising everyday. "Are you not a professional?" I ask. "My degrees in the field says I am." "So why are we





taking road trips? Shouldn't we be in your fancy office, digging on my past, with you telling me what to do?" I ask. He just smiles and tarts the car. I stare at him waiting for an answer. "You don't have any professionalism reputation yourself," he says. Oh I'm curious. "What do you mean?" I ask. "A little bird told me that you are not a professional person," he says. That little bird is Sosha Cele, right? I'm shocked by the fact that he goes around talking about me. "I also heard about this," he adds. "What is THIS?" I ask. "The attitude." Oh wow! A little bird couldn't talk that much, it's indeed a big head-headed baker. "What else did you hear about me Mr Nkomo?" I ask. He furrows his forehead, confusion is rising in his eyes. "Mr what?" he asks. I didn't mean to say that loud, my mind tricked my mouth. "Never mind," I say laughing. "My surname is not Cow, it's Cowlings," he says, also laughing. "I chose to ignore 'lings'. Craig Nkomo, welcome to my tribe," I say. "Oh God!" He is dead with laughter. I have rolled down the window, I'm too comfortable in his car. I've never done this in Sosha's car, I'm always a professional passenger. "I also heard that you are beautiful and taken," he says. I have forgotten that I asked him a question, I'm busy looking at this health magazine I found here. "Yes I'm beautiful but I'm not taken," I say. "Are you not Sosha's girlfriend?" he asks. I sigh and flip through the magazine pages. He is the one I wish I can forget, but I'm failing to. The heart is the dumbest human organ ever. It wants what it wants. "No I'm not," I say. "Well in his dreams you are, he loves you." I lift my eyes and look at him again. His skin is flawless, he'd make a good PONDS face. "He is with the doctor. I know my level Craig," I say. His pupils dilate, he seems amused by what I said. "You have levels?" he asks. "Whatever! But I'm not going to fight a doctor for a man, I have cakes to sell," I say. He is laughing, this whole thing is funny to him. "I took the minister's girlfriend and made her my fiancé. What levels are you talking about?" he says. I'm not surprised, he does look like a snatcher. His smile is dangerous, girls might be trolling in his inbox. "You have money to maintain the relationship, I don't have anything," I say. He rubs his chin with one hand, his eyes are fixed on the road. "It's not about money, confidence is the weapon," he says. I can't fight for Sosha with confidence while Mpume fights with expensive cars. Next year she could buy him a private jet. I've never owned a mere bicycle, I can't even afford a car for myself. "I'm confident but not for this," I say. "There is fine line between confidence and intolerance." My English was 76%, of course I know confidence and intolerance are two different things. "Tell me something I don't know," I say. "MaShenge doesn't have confidence, she just lacks tolerance in challenging situations," he says. Firstly, I hate that he is referring to me as the third person. Secondly he is calling me MaShenge, that's Sosha's language. Thirdly he is making stupid opinions about me. "That's absurd and judgemental," I say, keeping my voice as calm as possible. "Avoid that by telling me about yourself," he says. I take a moment putting together 'myself'. He takes out Stimorol box and throws one piece in his mouth and passes it to me. You can't offer people air-refreshing gums, it's an insult. "I'm addicted to gum, my mother taught me to always share, no matter how small the thing is," he explains before I can say anything. I shake my head and take one piece. I will throw it out as soon as the sugar finishes. "I'm listening," he says. "Oh well I'm Yangomuhle Buthelezi. I'm a sister of two handsome brothers. I work at the bakery and love fishing," I say. "You love fishing?" he asks. He should've ignored that part. "No, I said that to make my introduction drags longer." He laughs and starts telling me about his fishing experience. I didn't even know there was something



called illegal fishing. Back home boys take their fishing nets and go to the rivers and fish. No permit or whatsoever. And who gave fishes rights? This country is hilarious, even Jesus himself killed fishes like it's nobody's business. Remember when he fed five thousand people two giant fishes in Nineveh. Did he consider those fishes' rights or our government thinks he knows better than Him? "Tell me about your background. Where do you come from? Not only geographically, emotionally as well. What is your journey?" he asks. I tell him about my journey from Mandeni to Umlazi, and from Umlazi to Westridge. That has been a long journey, but my emotional journey has been longer. Even though I've walked miles but there is no progress. I can't point at anything and say this is my work payoff. But a smile creeps on my face when I tell him about the man God chose as my father. He is laughing his lungs out when I tell him about my 'other' siblings. "I'm telling you Craig, he cares about Jamlude more than he cares for us. There is another one, I forget her name, she is black and white on the face." Kanyo once called that cow Nkawana, my father was breathing fire. He didn't want his cow to be compared to a monkey. "I respect Zulu men and their cows," he says. That makes the two of us. "And your mother?" he asks. I keep quiet and throw the gum out of the window. "I want to hear stories about her too," he says. Oh, now I'm a storyteller. "She shouts, give orders and controls life," I say after taking a deep breath. "Sounds like my mother, it's their nature," he says. Only if he knew MaJali, she doesn't sound like any mother, she is something different. "Do you get along with her?" he asks. Get along? That's a rich dream. "She is my mother and I'm her daughter," I say. 'My mom is my best friend' doesn't apply to some of us. Our mothers are our seniors. They are our Gods on earth. You just take orders and do what they say, if not you are a disrespectful disgrace. Your opinions don't matter, even to the things that concern your whole existence. Boys have it better. Them speaking out portrays their leader qualities. Boys are future leaders and men are leaders. They have their voices from birth. "I'm happy to meet you MaShenge," he says after some silence. "Do you mind calling me Yanga?" I ask. "Not at all, I'm happy to meet you Yanga." "Likewise," I say smiling. We've been on the road for quite a while now. I glance out the window and see that we are leaving the city behind. Now it's the time I ask the destination of this road trip. "Are we leaving the country?" I ask. He is taking King Cetshwayo highway, maybe we are going to his place. "You know your man would kill me if I took you out of the country without his permission," he says. I keep my peace, he is saying that on purpose. I told him Sosha is not my man. We pass construction workers working at the side of the road. He stops just a distance away from them. It looks like we are somewhere in Cowies Hill. The place is quiet and full of nature. It's been a while since I last breathed fresh air and listened to birds' sweet melodies. "Are you planning to murder me?" I ask. He laughs so cutely. I didn't expect him to be like this, I had a different picture of a therapist, someone old with a tense face. Not this young handsome man. "Your man would cremate me alive," he says. He is not stopping this 'your man' thing. I don't have a man, I have two fingers. He opens the door at his side and comes to my side and opens for me. I guess this is the end of our trip. We are parked next to a small hill and by the look of things we are about to climb it. He is leading the way, fortunately I grew up in the rural areas, climbing hills is a cup of tea to me. You can take the girl out of Ndulinde but you cannot take the Ndulinde out of her. I'm seeing good firewoods, the type that burn for hours. We don't have much of them back home, amathanga ahlanzela abangenamabhodwe. "You are an athlete," he says, catching



his breath with his hands on the knees. I'm appreciating the view of nature. All I ever see is maze of vehicles and crowds of impatient people. I haven't had fresh air that is not diluted with baking powders and expensive colognes in a long time. Singing birds, buzzing insects and fragrance of fallen leaves remind me home. He passes a piece of folded paper and pen to me. It's just blank, I look at him expecting an explanation. "You are not just Yangomuhle, a sister of two brothers and sales assistant. If you can't voice it out, write it down. Who are you?" he says. I stand for a good while staring at the blank piece of paper. The definition of who I am covers everything that I've been through. This paper won't be enough. When I lift my eyes up he is a few feet away, wandering around and grabbing tree branches. I find space on the grass and sit. At first I'm blank as the paper in my hand. I close my eyes and draw in some fresh air blown by the trees. There is more to me than what's written on my CV. I'm not just a Ndulinde girl, I'm a thousand words to be told. Now I understand why authors need a quiet environment in order to write, the pen is just flowing on the paper. Within minutes I have no space left to write on. Yeah ne! I still can't voice words out. A piece of paper has limited me, just like the society has. I break the pen and squash the stupid piece of paper and throw it away. Fuck you life! I lie on my back and watch the sky. Only the sky is a limit, so they say. But some of us can't even reach the roof top, happiness isn't meant for everyone. "Are you done?" I'm startled by his voice. I've forgotten that I came with a fake coloured guy. I mean he has a complete set of teeth, no tattoo and speaks pure Zulu. "Where is the paper?" he asks. I sit up and stretch myself. "I threw it. It didn't have enough space to write on," I say. He walks to where I threw it and picks it up and briefly runs his eyes on the writing then looks at me. "It's not confidence, it's intolerance," he says. I shrug my shoulders. He wins. I have nothing to say. We walk to the car in silence. I'm worked up over a piece of paper. Maybe I do have anger issues that I need to deal with. If someone was to start me right now I'd probably kill that person with my bare hands. "How are you feeling?" he asks after closing the car door. "Like a bomb waiting to explode," I say. The sun has set, people are coming back from work. Cars are chasing after one another on the freeway. "Is it okay to feel like that?" he asks. I take a deep breath and shake my head. For the first time I admit having a problem. I'm not normal and I need help. "I can help you, if you allow me to. This is my profession, my way of making a living, but I'm not just doing it for money. I want to be a pair of ears to those who haven't been listened to, hold their hands and help them rebuild what has been broken," he says. I'm ready to start this journey. I've had draining eight years of my life. I'm not forgiving people who didn't ask for forgiveness. The person I want to forgive is Yangomuhle herself, it wasn't her fault. I want to be at peace. "Can I eat in your car?" I ask. "Yes but not pie," he says. I roll my eyes, he sounds like Ntando. Can't these car owners chill and let us eat pies in their cars? It's not like pie crust will dent the car, they can always wipe the seats. Fortunately I'm just eating my cold chicken and slices of bread. His phone rings, it's connected to a Bluetooth speaker. "Dr Craig my man." It's Sosha. My mood drops to 0.02%. They sound so informal with each other, I wasn't aware that they are friends. Craig: I didn't kidnap her. Sosha: Your ancestors are working overtime. Are you still on the road? Craig: Yeah, I'm driving MaShenge home. Oh he switches to MaShenge when he speaks with him. Sosha: How is she? Craig has a stupid grin on his face. He glances at me and directs the question to me. I'm not talking to Sosha unless it's something concerning the bakery. And I'm still busy crushing chicken bones. I always get funny



looks when I do this in public eating places. Craig: She is fine, just busy chewing the bones of her chicken. Sosha: Chewing bones??? Shame, he sounds shocked. I'm only following tradition, my grandfather would turn in his grave if I threw bones without crushing them. Craig: Chewing and swallowing them. I shoot a look at him. I'm not swallowing them, he is lying. I'm only making finer pieces out of them. Sosha: Bra make sure my lady is not dying there. Craig: Trust me, she is the expert bone-crusher. Okay I need to end this call, they are making fun of me. "Why are you ending the call?" Craig asks. "Because I've turned into the joke of the year," I say. He hasn't stopped laughing. I'm not even feeling the road, he is easy to be around with. I guess his friendly personality is what makes him the highly recommended psychotherapist. It doesn't feel like I'm talking to a professional, it's like I'm talking to an old friend. I can't wait to see how our second session will go. "Was that Sosha.....?" I have a friend who peeks through the windows and registers every car that's dropping me off. "Hello to you too Ntando," I say. Today she is walking around the house in underwears. It's not that hot, maybe she should consider being a stripper since she enjoys being naked. "Did you guys talk?" She is leading the way to my bedroom. I'm subjected into watching her ass jiggling up and down. This is bad luck, I need to bath with sea water. "No that was Craig, the psychotherapist Sosha talked about," I say. "Oh great, did you talk to Sosha though?" I ignore her question and throw my bag on bed and take my shoes off. She clicks her fingers and repeats the question. "Ntando I'm ignoring you," I say. "Since you're not telling me I'm going to hear it straight from the horse's mouth," she says scrolling down her phone. This is one annoying human being! I stop her, she can't talk to him. "We didn't talk Ntando stop it. He was parading with his girlfriend at the bakery," I say. Her eyes pop out. She doesn't believe it, neither do I. "You lie!" she exclaims. "I'm done with men, he can go to hell." She chuckles and shakes her head in denial. "No babe, we are calling him. He is coming here to explain himself," she says while dialing. I charge towards her, trying to snatch the phone away. She cannot call him, I don't want any explanation. She runs out the door with the phone pressed on her ear. I've been climbing hills and mountains, I don't have time to run after a half-naked idiot. I soak myself in a warm bath and run my soapy hands on every reachable part of my body. I grew up in the rural areas collecting firewood from the forests and running after Buthelezi's goats. I should have damaged skin, living conditions put me in the pickle, but my skin is peaches and cream. It's flawless, except for the scar at the back of my neck where MaJali pinned a frying pan. We were in the kitchen cooking supper, she said something about me cooking slowly, I talked back and got the pan pinned above my shoulders. I was 14years, and somehow by then I should've known how to do all domestic activities. I get out of the water and apply the lotion and put my dress on. I'm at a point where I don't know what to do with my hair. A wig is a must, I should budget wisely this month. Ntando has dressed up. She is impatiently waiting for Sosha, she called him over. I will be in my room during their meeting, I want to hear no explanations. I drink a glass of water and go to my room. Most Mthethwa people are stubborn and rude. Ntando is no different, she has decided to hold her stupid meeting in my room. Sosha is dragging a chair, he puts it beside my bed and sits. "Babe come on, just let him explain," Ntando says. My keep-calm vein is dominant these days, I keep my face composed and zip my lips. "Sosha why did you say you are single?" she asks looking at him. "I was single, but now I'm not," he says. His eyes are fixed on me. I don't want to show him



any emotions. "What about Yanga? You are going to cast her off the side just like that? She is a human, you cannot toy with her feelings!" Ntando bursts. I sigh and turn and face the wall. This is the last thing I wanted in my life, the chaos. "MaShenge is my girlfriend Ntando. What happened was a misunderstanding, I didn't accept the car. I love her and Mpume knows that," he says. She knows, yet she bought him a gift. Who buys her ex-boyfriend a car? Ntando is on his neck, she is not giving him any time to breath. "Who is she to you?" she asks. "We were together but it was never stable. I broke things with her when I met MaShenge," he says. Oh I'm the reason they broke up, I'm a wrecker. "But you are taking her out for lunch and dinners. Which one must we believe?" Ntando asks. I'm all ears, dying to hear his response. "It's pure business," he says. Mixing business with pleasure is his thing neh? "You are not for the faint-hearted yoh!" She claps her hands and exclaims. It sounds like she is leaving. I turn my head and glare at her. She has to take her guest with her. "Sort it out guys, for the sake of your working relationship," she says and walks out. As soon as she disappears I turn and face the wall again. I hear him taking a loud breath behind me. My body is reacting to his presence again. "Dennis will handle everything that concerns the bakery and the Mahlangu Events. I apologise for giving you wrong impressions and breaking your heart if it's broken," he says. I wonder who he is talking to. The walls, maybe. The door closes. He is locking...Fuck this tendency of his! I sit up immediately and look at him. "What are you doing?" I ask. He walks back and stands in front of me. "I love you MaShenge, you know I do." Breathe Yanga, breathe! "Sosha please leave," I say. "It wasn't a romantic lunch, it was purely business. I didn't accept the car, I wouldn't accept such gift from a woman." My eyes are warming up. I keep blinking, I don't want to cry for something so stupid. "You were not honest with me Sosha," I say. "I know and I'm sorry. Please give us a chance, I will draw every line that you want me to draw," he says. I lean back on bed and take a deep breath. His eyes are pleading with me, so is my heart. "No Sosha....." It's the last kick of a dying horse. "It can't be that the girl I love is not in love with me whereas," he pauses and sighs. He is running out of words, frustration is indisputable on his face. "Don't do this to me. I'm begging you Sondiya, don't leave me." My heart is doing the Maasai dance. I am the Sondiya princess and he must beg for forgiveness. "MaShenge?" Well..... "No," I say. My lips are pressed into a straight line. Nobody told me it was this nice being begged by a man. Some of us are not used to this. The only time a guy begs us is when the trolley-service guys want to push our grocery to the rank. He sits next to me and plays with his hands. We stay silent for almost five minutes. This Mpume situation is a bit challenging. She is clearly not accepting that their relationship is over but I'm happy he didn't accept the car. And where does this Mpume think I'm going to find a man? Men don't grow on trees. "Must I forget about you?" There are horizontal wrinkles between his eyebrows. My wandering eyes have landed on his lips. My subconscious whispers- 'not all that dripping is juice.' I ignore the stupid little whisper, my subconscious is always stupid anyway. I pull his face to me and taste his yummy lips. I have missed them so much. "No don't forget about me," I say breaking the kiss. His lip curls up, his eyes are gleaming with joy. He takes my hand and stares at me. Why is forgiving him is so easy? My heart is a nest of grudges and hatred, I hardly forgive people, but with him it's different. "When Amanda told me about you I couldn't wait to see you. And then Cynthia described you for me, she was amazed by your personality. You are not like anybody I've met, you are bold and beautiful. Exactly how I pictured





you to be before I set my eyes on you," he says. I let my smile crack as wide as the joy in my heart spreads. "But you didn't see me, you were busy tweeting," I say. "I saw you when you came in the morning wearing a peach dress and black boots, I decided that moment that I was going to take my chance with you." Oh, so that store incident was a trap? "I missed you, come here," he says. I move and sit on his lap, he wraps his arms around my waist and asks how I find Craig. Honestly I feel like Craig made me discover things I didn't know about myself. He didn't even try that hard, he knows his job. I'm embarking on a new, positive journey. I also just discovered that I like being begged by a man, just those heartfelt 'please' and deep eye stares. He pulls me for a kiss. He has my neck tucked between his hands, he is kissing me like the world is coming to an end. He turns and pins me down on the pillows. He is breathing heavily, his shaft is hard and poking me. Every part of my body is screaming his name. My hands are skimming all over his back. His eyes are getting smaller, veins are pulsing out on his muscular arms. God forgive me but I want that thing inside his boxers. His hand has sneaked inside my bra, he is tweaking my nipples. Am I getting my second experience of nipplegasm? It seems like I'm going to enjoy being his girlfriend. Wait...Ntando!!! "What is it babe?" he asks. "I cannot do this," I say. He gives me a light peck on the lips and looks in my eyes. He is horny, the colour of his eyes has changed. "Two minutes only, please," he says in a begging tone. That's an old trick, he knows that he won't go for two minutes once he is in, unless if he is like Amanda's fiancée, Sphelele. "I made a deal with Ntando, we must not have sex for a month," I say. He is confused for a moment, then he gets it and laughs. "What is going to happen if you break the deal?" he asks, pressing his hard shaft on me. How am I supposed to talk? His hand slides through the side of my panty and rubs my clit. I mumble his name, he stops and smiles. "She doesn't have to know," he says. I'm not a sneaky person, he is changing me. He gets off bed and walks to the wardrobe. He stands and looks inside for more than two minutes. "Don't you have a scarf?" he asks. What is he going to do with it? "I do have one," I say. He has something in his hands, the gift bag with the tie I bought for his birthday. "You wear ties?" he asks. Dumbass, he can see that it was bought as a gift. "I bought it for you but you got a car," I say. He brings up to his lips and looks at me. He looks emotional for a minute, like he is going to cry over a tie. He is coming back with it, he is no longer emotional, he is excited about something. He is weird. "Belated happy birthday sthandwa sami," I say. He kisses my forehead and pulls me into a tight hug. I melt like ice and drown in his sophisticated cologne. "This tie is very useful right now," he says. He is confusing me, he can't wear the tie on a T-shirt. "How so?" I ask. "It will keep you shut." What? Is this some kind of Fifty Shades of Grey shit? "Do you have protection?" he asks. He is dead serious, he walks to the door and confirms the lock. He looks excited, I don't know if it's sex or the fact that I'm about to break a deal for him. Not so long ago he was denying me this legendary party saying I should be on his bed first. Am I on his bed now? I take my bag, the one I use daily and take out a packet of condoms. I'm always armed, just in case the known happens. He is looking at me like I'm a freaky sex thug. "Are you ready?" I ask. He sighs, he still has the same look on his face. It's like this packet of condoms just turned him off. "We can leave it," I say. "What? No Come here." He pulls me to his chest and smashes his lips on me. The TV is still playing in the lounge, this means Ntando is not on bed yet. Sosha should make this snappy. "MaShenge I love you, this is not our first day together. It never happened, we will have our glorious day on my bed," he says



pulling down his boxers. He is not speaking Portuguese, it's my language. Yes this right here is not happening. He tapes my mouth with a tie. I'm getting wet from the mere contact of his fingers on my skin. He hooks the dress off my shoulders and plant kisses. I like his lips on my flesh, but we have only ten minutes or so to kill this. I watch as he puts the condom on. We are both DTF, he kisses me and mumbles curses while pushing himself in. He is trying not to be hasty, it's romantic and nice but we don't have time for slow strokes. I move my hips up, he fits in and groans. I pinch his butt, Ntando will hear him. He pulls out and thrusts in again, inching deeper. I arch my back and moan silently as his shaft rubs against sensitive tissues no man has ever touched. He is not the first one but I've never connected to sex this much. I'm connecting to every thrust, it's not just my body embraced to his, our souls are tied together. He is giving me long powerful strokes, his relentless rhythm brings me to the breakpoint earlier. It's amazing how he has learned my body within a few minutes. I explode and lock him between my legs, his ability to move is severely restricted but he keeps thrusting in through what feels like a series of climaxes. He starts confessing his love aloud, Ntando's presence doesn't matter anymore. His grip tightens on my leg. He is clenching his teeth, rolling his eyes and groaning like a dying bull. Orgasm always bring us the chimpanzees out of our handsome men. He looks damn ugly. He unties me and smashes his lips on me. I'm getting addicted to them but today the place is wrong, we need to destroy evidence as soon as possible. "You are the chosen one, I love you MaShenge," he says. I pull him for another kiss, he is still breathing heavily. "I love you too, now let's clean up," I say. The condom foil is wrapped with a serviette paper and hidden under the mattress. I will get rid of it when the coast is clear. We are both laughing as we clear traces of evidence. "Open that window," I say and get my perfume and spray it all over the room. Now it doesn't look like anyone had sex here, does it? "Can I have a glass of water?" Oh no! How am I going to explain his thirst to Ntando? Luckily she is busy on her phone. I try to pass quietly as a cat but she is Ntando, she looks up and asks what I'm doing. "Just getting a glass of water," I say, keeping a straight face. She sits up straight and casts her eyes to my legs. My breath is held up. "Are you forgiving him?" she asks. "Not yet," I say and leave her with a disappointed face. Sosha gulps water at one go and puts the glass away. I bet he needs another glass, sadly there is nothing I can do, inkanyamba is sitting in the lounge. He is all smiles, his hands are not leaving me. We spend the next five minutes arguing about going to his house. In Zulu this situation is called ukuntshontshela uhlanya. He makes a deep sigh before standing up. I get my jacket and walk him out. He didn't leave his tie, he is carrying it with its bag. Ntando stands up when she sees us. She wants an update, her eyes are moving from me to Sosha, her arms are folded. "Yanga must I hate him or love him?" she asks. She can't hate my boyfriend, she will only hate him when I hate him too. "Love him," I say. "Halala! You guys look good together." I expected this from her, she has been subtly grounding for Sosha all along. "It's actually a princess and the frog," I say rolling my eyes. I get soft pinch on my butt, fortunately Ntando doesn't notice. She is still gushing over my new flame. "Honesty is very important in a relationship. If you are honest with each other this relationship is going to last. Also respect and trust each other," she says. I didn't know she was a relationship expert, she should open her Sis' Ntando blogs. "Yeah, thanks for the advice," Sosha says She smiles so modestly and turns to look at me. "Don't forget we are 'banting' for four weeks." What? I'm eating whatever I want.



"Banting since when?" I ask. She blinks rapidly and does a thing with her fingers. Oh yes now I remember, we are banting "Banting all the way sis," I say and wink at her. I wonder if I will be able to fake it all these weeks, I like rating good services. "Banting, really?" Sosha asks outside the door. We both break into laughter. Ntando would probably kill me if she finds out. He doesn't want to leave. He is clingy but I like it, he is my little monkey. "Today was a great day," he says. There are pronounced lines on his face. All of a sudden he looks worried. "Are you going to leave every time something happens? Leave without getting any explanation, without any hesitation?" he asks. I've planted a seed of doubt in his mind. I'm new in this relationship thing, still finding my way around writing goodnight messages and all. "I will try to do things rationally. It's not what I'm used to but I'm willing to learn," I say. He nods his head but the look is still there. I hold his hands and stare at his doubtful face. "Sosha I'm crazy but I love you. I know that I'm stubborn, especially when I'm angry, but don't let me go. When I leave, for no particular sane reason, please stand on my way and remind me who you are to me. And that is uyisosha lami," I say. I have found the one I love, he is my unicorn, isosha lami and I'm ready to submit to my subconscious' desires and deepest fears.

Chapter 8 I have attended seven sessions with Craig, they all went well. He made a request to come with me to Ndulinde this coming month. He wants to see my parents, more especially my mother. I'm not sure it's a good idea, but he is insisting on it. He is not the only person I've been having sessions with, Sosha also gave me mind blowing sessions. I'm slowly turning into a Sosha-addict. We've been turning his car into our bedroom and clearing evidence afterwards. I didn't know I was this secretive, all along I thought the horse had kicked my chest. On the record, Ntando and I are approaching our last week of sex abstention and we are rewarding ourselves with a girls' trip for honouring the deal. Amanda is coming, as well as Ntando's colleague, Lihle. We are going to Le Paradis Lodge, Amanda is the one who booked, she knows all of the fancy places. I didn't even know there was such place here in KZN. I walk to Ntando's bedroom and find her packing. Three sets of swimwear? We are only going for two days. "We are not permanently moving to Widenham," I say. "Pictures babe! Some clothes are for taking pictures." Now that she has mentioned it I think I need to pack more clothes as well. Ladies trip is 20% about taking pictures, 30% of gossips and 50% of drinking and talking about boys. I have to drink responsibly, the more drunk I get is the more wet mouthed I become. I don't want to blow the gaff about my little secret. I don't know if Sosha is done sulking about me leaving. In his mind I'm going to Mars and never coming back. I call him, he drops the call and calls back. He always does this, I don't know what it means, I can afford airtime as well. "Hello Sosha," I answer. "For a moment I thought it was my sister on the phone." Is my number not saved in his phone? "You are kidding, right?" I say. "No, learn to sound like my girlfriend. I'm sthandwa to you," he says. There is something about him, it's like there is a shrouded part of him kept in a cavity. "Okay, hello sthandwa," I say. "Hey sweetheart, how are you?" He is back at his sweet self, his voice has softened "I'm okay babe, I just miss you," I say. "Tell your friends that you will join them next time and come to me." We talked about this, I'm not going to cancel my first girls' trip. Not after seeing those bottles Ntando packed in the car. I haven't drunk in a long time, it's starting to affect the country's climate. "You know I can't do that, this trip means a lot to



Ntando," I say. He is silent for a few seconds, then he asks what time we are coming back tomorrow. We will come back around 4pm, but I tell him we will come back late. When we come back I'll be tired, I won't be able to go to his house. If I take over women-on-top position, I'm not just representing Ndulinde, I'm representing all women of South Africa. I have to bring my A-game, and I can't do that after scuba diving. I heard Amanda saying we will go scuba diving. I'm certain I won't be joining. I will stay behind, maybe in the pool with a glass of wine. His extended sigh is audible through the phone's speaker. "This is torture, I miss you," he says. It's just one night away, I'm not leaving forever. "Borrow me some tampons," Ntando's voice breaks in the room. She never knocks, I shoot a look at her. She realises that I'm on the call and laughs behind her hands. "Babe can I call you back? I want to dress up," I say to Sosha. "Okay, I love you," he says. Now I don't beat around the bush, I hold nothing back, I profess my feelings fearlessly. "I love you too," I say. Ntando is staring at me, she can't believe the new woman I'm becoming. I'm coming out of the nutshell. The drive from Durban to Widenham is only 40 minutes, but we've been on the road for almost one and half hour. Lihle is the one driving, I don't know if she is slow by nature or she just can't drive. "Lihle your driving is infuriating me more than Sphelele," Amanda says. It's her first time meeting Lihle and Ntando but you wouldn't tell, her outgoing personality squeezes her in any crowd. "A car accident would be more infuriating," Lihle says. Her gogo-driving gets us to Widenham after two hours. The place is damn cold, the beach is just 200m away, nevertheless Ntando has taken her clothes off and wore a bikini. She is going to the swimming pool. "You know this is the self-catering unit, we have to make food, right?" Amanda asks her. She rolls her eyes and wraps a towel around her waist. She doesn't care about food. There is a bottle of Viognier on the table, she has already drunk two glasses. Did you know that real drunkards love white wine? We let her go, sometimes talking to her is like talking to a rock. She leaves with a glass of wine and her cellphone, along with its selfie-stick. Maybe she will eat selfies for dinner. Lihle is the braai-master, she is doing everything on her own, grilling the meat and making salads. She is dishing out all details of her life while at it. Now we know she last had sex on March with her Pedi boyfriend. I don't think she is over him, she still refers to him as the best man she has ever had. I don't blame her, I've heard girls complimenting Pedi guys. They are said to be romantic and good at treating women. The only exhausting thing about them is that they don't finish a sentence without quoting from their mothers. It's mother this, mother that. "Mma o re ke thabela kofi," I say, inadvertently loud. Amanda bursts out laughing. Lihle is not getting the joke, she is rolling her eyes. "There is nothing wrong with them loving their mothers," she defends. She should let us laugh, the guy left her, he is talking about his mother somewhere else now. "Enough about my Pedi prince, how does it feel dating Sosha Cele?" Ntando! I can't believe she told her. She had no right to spread my private life like that...Okay, I also told Amanda that she is dating her supervisor, but the point is she shouldn't have told Lihle. Amanda is looking at me. There is a hidden smile on her face. "What is the difference between fortified and unfortified wine?" I ask, refilling my glass. Silence. I take a huge gulp. Their eyes are penetrating me. This is a mess, I didn't want Amanda to know. She is not just a friend, she is also my colleague, a receptionist for that matter. Her job comes with news-dishing talent. "I know you even when you have your back turned," she says. "What do you mean?" I ask. "I knew that Instagram picture he posted was you." There was an Instagram picture? "When did that



happen?" I ask. She mustn't give me that look, she knows that I don't have Instagram, that thing chows data. "On his birthday, it was captioned as the best birthday gift from God," she says. My thirty seconds of anger vanishes, this warms my heart. I was his best gift and I dumped him on that day. How I wish I can turn back the clock and correct my mistakes. They are still looking at me, waiting. "He is everything I thought I would never have. He is humble and patient," I say. "He really loves you, I mean he chose you over the doctor. I want to know how he is on boyfriend mode, especially on bed," Lihle says. I thought Ntando was the nosiest person on earth, but it seems like her colleague is worse. First of all I haven't slept with Sosha, I'm banting. Secondly I only kiss and tell Ntando, not everyone. "We haven't slept together," I say. They both exclaim. "What are you waiting for? What if you die tomorrow?" Amanda asks. Pastor Mboro needs to intervene. This girl needs to repent, even the hell is not ready for her. "Ntando and I decided to wait a period of one month before having sex with our new partners," I say. Amanda picks a slice of cucumber from the bowl and throws it inside her mouth. "What are you getting in reward?" she asks. "Nothing, not everything is about reward," I say. They look at each other and laugh. Ntando walks in dripping with water. She is quivering. What did she think swimming in this cold evening? "I think I'm having pneumonia," she says. Pneumonia is no child's game, she is dramatic. "Just put warm clothes on and drink wine," I say. Lihle made a feast. That Pedi guy lost treasure, she would've made a good wife. Amanda wipes her mouth with a serviette and makes annoying teeth-gritting sound. "I need a man, the wine went straight to nana" she says. "Borrow Ntando's dildo," I say. "What? I don't own a dildo, she must call her man." Amanda rolls her eyes and gulps down her wine. "His penis doesn't have my g-spot on its GPS," she says. Lihle asks her to explain further, she wants all the details. Amanda being who she is dishes out everything. They are gobsmacked. "Guys don't worry, I have a side guy. He knows exactly where to go, he doesn't swim around like a fish in the pool," she says. Lihle and Ntando bump their fists on hers. I can't believe they are promoting cheating. Amanda is cheating on her fiancée for goodness' sake! This matter could be solved with one-hour sex talk between Sphelele and her. She refills her glass and sips. I sense more dirty laundry coming, alcohol is not good for her. "He becomes worse if I drank tartaric, he reaches orgasm within two minutes," she says. She drinks tartaric? We are all looking at each other. "Why do you drink tartaric?" Ntando asks. She bursts out laughing. She thinks we are acting dumb. "You guys are serious? Don't you know brown sugar and tartaric acid mixture?" she asks. "Noooo!" we say. "Oh great, at least now I know a few people who are going to heaven. You guys will send my regards to my father," she says. Well I'm not going to heaven, not with these secrets, excessive drinking and countless sex encounters before marriage. She must just tell us. "Sing little bird," I say. "I don't want Sosha to kill me, homemade bedroom-enhancing mixtures are not scientific proven." She wants us to beg. It's not like tartaric acid and sugar kills, I grew up eating it with porridge. "If it's those Facebook created ones I will pass and stick to plain yoghurt and kiwi," Lihle says. I think I'm the only one who is clueless about these things. Ntando is also recommending eating pineapples. I'm just lost in the jungle. "Guys where do you learn these things?" I ask. "Let Amanda teach us, it seems like she knows everything," Ntando says. I look at Amanda, she must name the price if she wants us to pay for the tips. "Okay I don't want you to humiliate us when you finally give up the nanas next week. Drink med-lemon and black halls. Their balls must fit in your mouth, pretend to





be choking even if you are not. It's the strategy of getting the bank pin and car keys. If you do that next month you could be inviting us to join you on your all-costs covered New York trip." Clap once, clap twice! What is her surname again? McKenzie...They are not related to the Mkhizes, are they? I wonder if Mrs McKenzie is aware of the sex teacher she gave birth to. She is the kind of friend every girl needs in her squad. A girl every mother warns her daughter against. She is not only about sex talk, she also knows what a girl's body needs after a long journey. We are surprised by four masseurs. They are white with muscular arms and thick solid chests. I want the massage but I'm not sure about being massaged by a strange white man. She could have booked female ones. "Ma'am please lie on your stomach," the one standing next to me requests. Ntando turns and looks at me. She knows the story. She flutters her eyes rapidly before resting her head down again. I don't like the sadness I see dawning on her face. I take a deep breath and lie on my stomach and ask the guy to focus only on my upper body. His hands start doing their magic. I block the nonsense that keeps coming to my head and let my body loose. The fact that he is white makes it more exciting. Apartheid really ended, this guy gave up his sleep because my black body needed a massage. I'm his source of income, indirectly paying his bills. Shout out to Nelson Mandela in heaven! In the morning they serve us breakfast. The girls are going to scuba diving, I'm the only one staying behind. I try, as much as possible, to distance myself from death. Luckily there is a white lady who is keeping me company. She wants us to play table tennis. I've never played that, the only tennis game I know is igqomu. She teaches me the basics, deep down I feel like Serena Williams, the tennis queen. Ntando brought the whole bottle store. I take a bottle of Roussanne and make my way to the pool. I'm wearing a bikini. It's time for pictures! I pose for a few and upload them on Facebook. People must know that I'm in Le Paradis, the little paradise. A few minutes later my phone rings. He must've seen the pictures. "Sthandwa sami," I pick up. "I've been waiting all morning for your pictures." Did I promise him pictures? It must've slipped my mind. "Aw really?" I ask. "I thought I'd be the first one to see your half naked pictures, but I was wrong." There is an emphasis he puts on 'half naked pictures'. "You can download them from Facebook," I say and sip on the wine. "They are not meant for me Yanga, you would've sent them to me if they were." Did he just call me Yanga? That's not appropriate, I'm MaShenge to him. "Why are you calling me Yanga?" I ask. "That's your name. Didn't you say you are not MaShenge?" I roll my eyes till they touch my brain. I won't allow a sulky man to spoil my good morning. "How is your day looking like Dubandlela?" I ask in a softer tone. "Awu MaShenge wami, I have nothing planned." Oh I'm MaShenge again? Men and clan names! "They want to meet you," he says. "They?" I ask, alarmed. "My brothers and Myalo." No ways! It's too soon. What am I going to say to them? I don't even have fancy clothes to wear. "I'm not ready," I say. "They are not going to bite you, they just want to see the girl who has stolen my heart," he says. "No babe, I don't want to meet them," I say. He can show them my pictures. I really don't want to find myself on the table surrounded by his educated brothers. I know they think I'm with Sosha for the financial benefits and job security reasons. I'm not ready for all that. The lodge has been unruffled and harmonious with just me and my fellow white guests. Now that the black scuba divers are back the walls are shaking. They are talking like they are miles away from each other. "How was scuba diving?" I ask. "We didn't do it, we went fishing with a white grandpa." Oh what a change of plans! "Where are the fishes?" I ask. The only



response I get is the camera's shuttering sound. They didn't catch a single fish. Fishes are not stupid and they have rights. This has been the best weekend ever. I had the best time of my life with the most amazing company a girl could ask for. It was a breath of fresh air. The only disruption was Sosha's constant calls. He wanted to be updated on everything I was doing, not to mention that I had to send dozens of pictures. At first I was a bit worried about Ntando and Amanda. Ntando can be a nutcase, but they got along like steak and kidney. Amanda was our Mzansi Bioskop, we heard the strangest stories, half of them were hardly believable. She has kissed so many frogs before finding Sphelele, her prince charming. Is he even a prince though? Maybe he is just another frog that put a ring on her. We have to go back to Durban the clock is on Caster Semenya's speed. One minute we are enjoying our last bottle of wine, the next we are packing and loading the car boot, two minutes later we are on the road back to Durban. "I feel like God fast forwarded time," Lihle says. At least I'm not the only one who feels like that. This weekend has been unbelievably short. Tomorrow is a working day already. "I have to see Sphelele tonight. God has to intervene, I will start at Sam's house," Amanda says. She never ceases to amaze me. "All in the name of orgasm?" I ask. "Orgasm is life," she says. She is something else, I feel sorry for Sphelele. "He'll know you slept with someone else," Lihle says. She is on the wheel again. She should buy a taxi once and for all, she loves driving. "I will bath with icy water," she says. Is she a real person? We are all dumbstruck. "Ouch!!" She is scrolling her phone with her eyes widened. "What is it?" Ntando asks. "I uploaded a picture and Sosha has seen it. He knows that we are on our way back." What? How can she be so careless? I told Sosha we are coming back late. He is calling me. Great Amanda! "Hey love," I answer. "I'll come fetch you, I know that you're on your way back," he says. All because of Twitter updates tonight I'm going to Sosha's house. My body feels like a bag of cement. I was looking forward to my bed, last night we hardly got any sleep with Amanda's stories. He will be fetching me in two hours, I need ten Red Bull cans "And?" Ntando asks. I sigh and tell them that Sosha is fetching me in two hours. "Thanks to you Amanda McKenzie." I say taking a loud breath. "As long as you don't give him any cookie," Ntando says. Oh that...Of course I won't, we are banting mos. Gosh is that his car outside the building? He is something else. He said he is fetching me in two hours, that's 18:00 onwards. Ntando is the happiest when we see him. He is not just my boyfriend, he is hers as well. Lihle is frozen on her seat. I poke her arm before getting out, this is my boyfriend, there is no need to freeze when she sees him. Ntando is already standing next to his car. "Come guys, there is Nandos here," she yells. I bet that Nandos was bought for me, but what can I say? They are already rushing to his car. When our eyes meet his smile widens. I can't help but smile back. I have missed this human being. "How are you?" he asks. They are eating Nandos chicken pieces with their eyes glued to us. I'm suddenly shy, these bitches are not making it easy. They should be giving us some space. "I'm fine," I say. "Come here," he says. Ntando moves, making a way for me to get in. He pulls me for a hug and kisses my lips for a few seconds. My childish friends are watching and giggling. "Are we leaving now?" Now as in this moment? He is crazy. "I still have to bath," I say. "MaShenge you had a bath where you come from." He doesn't understand, I'm wearing black bra and white panty, I don't want to look like a zebra on his bed. "I need to get my clothes as well, unless if you are bringing me back later," I say. "What? No, go get your clothes, I'll wait." I thought as much! Amanda appears and looks at both of us. "You know



he never replaced my chocolate, right?" What? This must be a joke. I look at Sosha, he is looking at her with his eyes narrowed. "I never replaced it?" he asks. "Nope!" Amanda says, shaking her head. He can't do me like that. I bought that chocolate for a significant reason, I can't be begging for it to be replaced. "Is it true?" I ask. "Babe she is lying, I replaced it the next day like you requested," he says. Oh, I see what's happening here. "Lies MaShenge, he didn't," Amanda says. He exhales and pulls his wallet and gives her R100. She'll probably buy tartaric and brown sugar with it. "That's my cousin!" she says, kissing the note repeatedly. I can't believe she just robbed my man. "Hello," Lihle greets in a reserved tone. Is it not late for greetings? "Hello sisi how are you?" Sosha says. Her smile reaches her ears, she must not get any ideas, I'm Operation Gudluz' udokotela. "I'm great, thanks for asking," she says. I feel like rolling my eyes, Ntando has the same look as mine. I pack my overnight bag and take a quick shower. I brought clothes with me to the bathroom because there is no possible explanation I could give to Ntando about matching underwear. She is waiting for me in my bedroom with my bag on her lap. What is she up to now? "And then?" I ask. She lifts a packet of condoms. "Just in case," she says. "Nothing will happen but thank you." Thirty minutes later I walk out with my bag. He is playing Luther Vandross softly, he switches it off when I get inside the car. "Come on the wheel, I will guide you," he says. I can't drive and I don't want to attempt to. "Next time," I say. He pulls me for a passionate kiss before starting the car. My conversation is filling up the car. I'm dishing out everything about Widenham. I don't feel the journey, we are chatting like old lovers. He gets my jokes, I get his, we are Popayi and Spinach. We are now entering his driveway. There are two cars parked outside. I know they are not his, not even once had I seen him driving either of them. "Eish! They didn't leave," he says bumping his fist on his forehead. I have a huge frown on my face. Who didn't leave? Whose cars are these? "I told them to leave my house long time ago," he says. It looks like he is having a conversation with himself. "What's up?" I ask. "It's Myalo and Mlando." It's a joke! He said I'm coming to visit him. Him alone. "Are you kidding me?" I ask. He parks the car and scratches his head. I narrow my eyes and glare at him. "Are you driving me back or what?" I ask. "I can't drive you back babe, I want to be with you tonight," he says. He takes my hand and looks in my eyes. "Let's go in, you will go straight to our bedroom, they won't see you," he says. I have shares in his bedroom? Wow! "Or wait here, I will go tell them to leave," he says. Oh now I'm going to be the mean girlfriend who chases his brother and friend out of his house? He wants them to hate me. "It's fine, we will sneak in," I say. I feel like a teenager as I follow behind him stepping softly on the floor. "And then this one?" The voice comes behind us. This is a fucked up situation. I turn my head slowly and look at the person. Urgh! What is Sabelo doing here? He is already pissing me off with that look on his face. Sosha gives him a look and pulls my hand. If I knew this asshole was going to be here I wouldn't have come. He takes the stairway and leads me to a huge bedroom with soft grey toned walls. There is a huge well-made bed with pure white covers and flat screen TV on the wall. I expected his bedroom to be like this. There is a space between everything, he is well organised. "Let me put your bag inside the closet," he says. I hand it to him and ask him not to unpack anything. I'm not at ease, I feel like his brother will walk in anytime. And that Sabelo guy! The day I bring my Ndulinde persona he will wish he was never born. He walks back and stands mindlessly in the middle of the room. He looks stressed out. "Must I get you anything?" "No," I say. He rubs his hands together and sits on



the bed. "I thought you'd come tomorrow and didn't cook." Oh is that what stressing him? "I'm not hungry Sosha," I say. "I'm hungry, can I drive to the restaurant fast and get something?" he asks. Now he wants to leave me alone with those people making noise downstairs. What if they come here while he is gone? What will I say to them? "I will be fast," he says I shrug my shoulders, my say won't matter he says he is hungry. He kisses my cheek and leaves in a hurry. I'm left alone in a gigantic bedroom and I'm tempted to inspect around. What's inside his drawers? Maybe I'll find Mpume's underwears. Curiosity is killing me. I hear loud voices coming closer to the bedroom. "She is here." It's Sabelo's voice. He is bringing them here. I really don't know why this guy dislikes me so much. I lift my eyes up, they meet Sabelo's and I cannot help myself, I roll my eyes. "Hello, sawubona, molo, dumela," he says flashing a perfect set of white teeth. I have never met him nor seen pictures of him but this is Mlando Cele. He is taller than Sosha but you can see that he is younger. Which language must I respond to his greeting with? "Finally we meet the beloved MaShenge," says the second one. Clearly he is Myalo, he has a beard and black afro. I suspect that he is a Nazareth. He comes for a handshake, I don't hesitate to shake his hand. He has that 'respect me' thing around him, he speaks in a deep voice. The playboy positions himself on bed next to me. He has a fade cut and his whole left arm covered in ink. "Why do you hate us?" he asks. Myalo is staring at me, it's so uncomfortable. "I don't hate anyone," I say. "Even me?" Sabelo asks. He knows that we are enemies. "Not you," I say. He laughs out loud. I'm not going to waste my breath on him. "She doesn't hate us, Myalo take a seat," Mlando says. I notice that he is an open person, we'd probably get along. I can't say the same about Myalo, he is still staring at me like I'm a creature from Mars. "So MaShenge how many cows does your father wants for your beauty?" It's Myalo, he didn't sit down, he is standing by the window staring at me. Honestly I don't know how to answer his question. "One calf," Sabelo replies. Is he MaShenge as well? "Did we introduce ourselves gents?" Mlando asks. He is sneaky and naughty with everything he does. His eyes roam all over the place within seconds. He has the same bushy eyebrows as Sosha but he is dark in skin tone. "Eish Pardon us ntokazi, my name is Myalezo Mchunu." He looks very humble, I heard that he can't live without samp. "And I'm Raymond Cele, your boyfriend's brother. He got some looks from me even though I look more handsome than him." Oh he is Raymond, that's fancy! I thought he was Mlando. I also introduce myself even though they already know who I am. "You have a long name and surname. You need to change one of them," Myalo says. I don't know what he means, I like my name and surname like this. I'm not going to change either of them. He looks at the two and suggests that they give me some space. Mlando is the only one who refuses to leave. He waits until they disappear and looks at me. "I hope you know that Sabelo is mentally disturbed." Damn I should've known, the signs were there. "You should see your face," he says buried in laughter. He has time for games, but Sabelo does look mentally disturbed for real. "So why are you driving my brother crazy?" Crazy? I look at him with my eyebrows lifted. "I drive him crazy?" I ask. "Yes, dumping him on his birthday and taking him back and refusing to send him your pictures." Did Sosha really report those nonsensical things to his brothers? A whole 29year old! "Well...I...I'm trying to do better," I say. He nods and keeps his eyes directly on mine. "Do you love him MaShenge?" he asks. I did say this relationship will be questioned. "Yes I love him," I say. "He is not as strong as he looks, please take care of him. If you need any kind of help don't



hesitate to let us know," he says. There is something genuine in his voice. I want to ask questions, there is more to that statement, but I let it go and nod my head. His phone rings. Fright transforms his face as he glances at the screen. "Oh fuck it...MaShenge I will see you," he walks out talking to whoever it is. I release a long held breath. It wasn't bad as I thought. I feel free now that I've done this and got over with it. I'm yet to meet the old brother, Bayede, and the universe's apple, Tshitshi. I hope they are nice too.

Chapter 9 He is driving me to YMCA. He's been quiet half of the journey. He doesn't want me to leave. There is a function he is attending tomorrow night and he wanted me to be there with him. I haven't gone home in four months, I miss my family. I also got paid, there is no reason for me not to go home. I'm only going for two days. Sunday afternoon I'm coming back, and I will spend the night with him. "Do you know amahlala?" I ask. "No." I thought as much. "I will bring you two on Sunday," I say. "I don't want them, I want you." Father Lord! He hasn't stopped sulking. "I'm coming back, you can have me as Sunday dessert or snack," I say. That gets him smiling. He can be a big baby sometimes. We haven't had any inside-the-car scenes this week. I'm still catching my breath. Our Sunday night was epic. I got on my knees for the first time and followed Amanda's instructions. I choked on his balls and sucked his shaft like my future depended on it. He was pulling my hair and groaning like a dying bull, but I didn't get any bank pin or car keys. I only got a ride to work. What works for Amanda won't work for Yanga. It's the end of the month, my hostel homeboys are going home, the taxi is full within minutes. I tuck earphones inside my ears and let Toni Braxton unbreaks my journey. Long distance travelling is good with one thing, you can sleep without worrying about missing your stop. I wake up when we pass the Total garage. The atmosphere has changed. I see the smoke from Sappi dancing up to the sky and feel at home. I never realised how much I missed Mandeni until now. I do a little shopping for umngendlini at Spar and rush to the rank. "Yanga!" And the greet-greet begins! This is Plaza, you greet everyone you know. It doesn't matter whether you don't get along back in the village, when you bump into each other here you talk and spank each other's hand when you laugh. I turn around and look at the person calling my name. It's Thenjiwe, we went to school together, she is making her way towards me. By the way we don't hug here, no matter how long we haven't seen each other. We just stand face to face and say whatever we are saying. "I heard you got another job," she says. I'm still a few feet away from her. "A better one," I say. "Congratulations, now you have to get connections for us. They say getting the job is easy when you know someone inside the company." Yeah, she is right. Amanda also got me the job. Basically you need connection for everything in this country. Even at the funerals, if you don't know Aunt Jabu you end up not getting food. "So you still don't have a baby?" she asks. There is a little baby strapped on her back with a towel. I'm pretty sure this is not the same baby I saw on her back two years ago. I guess each year there is 'giving birth' in her bucket list. "Am I not supposed to get a husband first?" I ask. She laughs like I just told her the biggest joke. "Where are you going to get husband these days?" Oh, I didn't know there was an extinction of husbands. I must get in the car before this gets more personal. We are living in the era where being





childless at 23 is raising eyebrows. People start to question your fertility and throw abortion accusations. Amongst passengers of this car is a fat goat. It's right next to my legs and the owner is focused on eating fried chips paying no attention to how it's pushing my leg with its forehead. My passengers' rights are being violated, there is a fat lady next to me who is pressing me to the corner with her hips. This is some kind of demotion, from BMW X3 with air-cons to the van with loud chatters and angry fat goat. It's a bit dark when we arrive in Ndulinde. Sabatha is waiting for me next to the road. I actually wanted to have a private conversation with him regarding his behaviour. He almost looks like Mbuso, he's grown up. "Hey John Cena," I say. He looks down and says a low hello. He knows that we have unfinished business. "I heard that you're beating other kids at school. The other one ended up in hospital and our father had to take care of his expenses," I say. "He is the one who started me," he says. I expected him to defend himself, he never start anyone, they always start him. "You have teachers to report them to. Do you know that there is a prison for children?" I ask. "No." His eyes are bulging out. He looks frightened. "Well there is, keep beating other children and I will come visit you with a loaf of brown bread and tin fish." He is silent all the way home. It looks like I managed to scare him a bit, there will be some peace at his school. My father is in the kraal shushing his cows to sleep. I know he can leave that kraal when they're all asleep so I won't bother him, I'll see him when he's finished. My mother is ironing her dress in the kitchen. "How was your journey?" she asks. "It was alright," I say. She puts it on the hanger and wipes her black pumps. "I will go shopping tomorrow, we are out of everything here, the cupboards are empty," she says. I withdrew the grocery money and kept it separately. I take it out and hand it to her. She folds it and pushes it inside her bra. "I have to go to bed early, please prepare food for your father and brothers," she says. "Is it okay if I make tea and bread?" "Did you buy milk?" she asks. My father doesn't drink tea with no milk, there is no way I could have left it. "Yes," I say. "Okay you can make it." I have to buy electricity first, there are only 2 units in the meter box. Thanks to the banks and their technology, I can buy electricity via the phone. My father eats ten slices of bread, Mbuso is behind his footsteps, he eats eight. I should learn a thing or two about baking, these people don't play with bread. Speaking of Mbuso, where is he? I haven't seen him. It's not like him not to come and greet me. Sabatha is sitting by the door lost in his thoughts. I know he is thinking about jail. "Sabatha!" I call. "Hhe?" Did he...? "Are you saying that to me?" I ask, shocked. "Sorry, I meant Sisi," he says. He is lying, he might've forgotten his manners at the fighting scene. You don't say 'Hhe' when an elder calls you, it's disrespectful. "Where is Mbuso?" I ask. I don't get any response, his eyes are running everywhere but not to me. "Sabatha?" I say almost yelling. "He went to his girlfriend." Girl-what? WTF! "His what?" I ask. He squints his little eyes and gives me a huge grin. Urgh! Sometimes I forget that he is a kid. "Take your chips and chocolate inside the shopping bag, I'm coming back," I say. How can my mother 'go to bed early' without knowing where her son is? I make my way to her rondavel and wait for the permission to get in. "Come in," she yells from inside. I push the door and walk in. Ukhozi FM is playing on top of the table. It's the only station people listen to here in Ndulinde. They even go as far as calling the whole radio as Ukhozi. "Mama where is Mbuso?" I ask. She is busy applying Gentle Magic on her face in front of the mirror. I think she started using this facial cream 20years ago but till this day I haven't seen the magic it does, she still looks the same. "How am I supposed to know



Yangomuhle? You know how boys are, he is probably somewhere with his friends," she says. There is zero care in her voice. Mbuso is only 16 years, he is still a child. "Or somewhere with someone's daughter," I say. "You can say that again, the Buthelezis are charming." Oh wow! "So you are not worried?" "No Mbuso is a boy." Oh, I forget how special boys are. "Don't forget me in your tea," she calls as I make my way out. Nothing has changed, she is the MaJali I've always known. Oh, the boyfriend is back. He is sitting on a small wooden bench next to the kitchen table pretending to read a book. Sabatha looks frightened, he thinks I will sell him out. "Where are you coming from?" I ask. He looks up, his eyes divert from Sabatha to me. Whatever he is about to say is a fat lie. "I was playing soccer with the boys," he says. He is always humble, he is the one who took after Buthelezi. Me and Sabatha....well. "You play wearing jeans and white sneakers?" I ask. He rubs his head and shoots another look at Sabatha. "I...I changed after playing, the coach told us to." He thinks that I'm stupid. Why would he change to Adidas sneakers? I have no idea how I'm going to confront him, I don't want to sell Sabatha out but it has to happen before I go back to Durban. I serve them tea and give them their goodies. "It's going to rain cats," says the voice from the door. He is done telling his cows bedtime stories. He takes off his covered-in-dung boots at the door and walks in. I did say he doesn't shave until I tell him to, he looks like Sjava. First thing he'll do tomorrow is removing that bush. "Mountains are moving already, the queen is back," I say. He shakes my hand and sits on his wooden chair. "The Buthelezis have done a good job protecting you from accidents and sicknesses. We thank them to have you back home alive and healthy," he says. He checks me out carefully and then chuckles. "Durban treated you good, there is a bump of a hip bakithi," he says. Sometimes I forget how he is. Mbuso is laughing along with him. "Oh you're making fun of me. Must I give you your tea now?" I ask. "Let's start at your elders, I will eat when I come back." We leave the boys and go to the ancestor's rondavel. He burns the impepho and talks to the ancestors, informing them that I'm home and thanking them for providing me with a job. He brings the lid with burning impepho closer to my face. I'm a fancy daughter from Westridge, my boyfriend lives in Morningside and he owns a bakery, so I cough. "Hey wena inhale, impepho doesn't kill," he says. He is such a traditional father, by the time we walk out I'm in need of a glass of Malbec, my chest is dry. The boys finish eating and go to their room. I stay with him getting all the latest updates about Jamlude and her siblings. Their stories never end. "Mdletshe is slaughtering a cow tomorrow," he says. That surname makes my body cringe. "Are you going?" I ask. "No." Is he saying no to free meat? This man can eat a goat alone. "Why?" I ask. "I don't like the Mdletshe, something about them sets me off." I nod and start cleaning MaJali's kitchen. I wonder how he would react if he finds out the truth. I doubt he'd judge me. He wouldn't care that I dated at 15, the matter would be his daughter being sexually violated. He has never turned his back on me, not even once. But will he turn it on my mother if the truth comes out? "I must go rest now," he says, stretching his arms. "Yes you should, it's late now," I say. I wrap a few things up and plug the kettle for my bathwater. We do have a bathroom but it's outside the yard. I can't go there now, I'll bump into ghosts. Holy Shepard! I didn't call Ntando and Sosha. I open my bag and search for my phone. I remember pushing it inside after getting off the car. And then..... What in the whole Ndulinde is this? I unwrap a piece of white cloth I never packed and find a stack of money folded inside. I never misplace money. I count the notes, it's R2500. I call



Ntando first, I want to know if she didn't put her money in my bag by mistake. "Hey babe, did you..." I don't finish what I'm saying she is biting my head off. "Babe my foot! Why did you ignore my calls? Do you know how worried Sosha is?" she asks. "I will call him just now, my phone was inside the bag. Did you put your money inside my bag?" "No," she says. "There is R2500 in my bag, I don't know how it got inside my bag." "Oh now I remember, it's mine," she says. I laugh out loud, she scams worse than MMM. "I know you thief. Was it R100 notes or R200s?" I ask. "You are boring, by the way chow that money. I'm sure Sosha sneaked it inside your bag because you are a crazy bitch who wouldn't have accepted his money." He wouldn't do that, I mean he just paid my salary. I call him, he drops me and call back. I've made peace with this tendency of his. "Yanga!" Oh my word, he is angry. "I'm sorry, my phone was inside the bag. When I arrived here I became busy, I was not ignoring you, I just saw your calls now," I explain. "You could've sent a text. Only a text!" I sigh and apologize one more time. "I really don't like what you did. I've been stressed out not knowing if something happened to you," he says. "I'm fine Magaye. You know I just found R2500 inside my bag, I don't know who put it inside," I say. "Oh....." Is that all he is going to say? "You carried my bag to the car, did you put it?" I ask. "Maybe I did put it," he says. Ntando was right, he thinks I'm a crazy bitch. Let me surprise him with calmness. "Thank you Ndosi, I really appreciate it. I won't be short of anything this month," I say. "Were you short last month?" His tone has changed, I take a deep sigh because I know how he is about to get. "Yeah but I survived," I say. "Why don't you cry to me then? Are we not partners? Don't you love me?" Oh and get labelled as a gold-digger? No thanks, I'm a hustler. "Babe if I need your help I will tell you. What are you doing there?" I ask, changing the subject. "I'm trying to sleep, the house is empty and lonely. I wish you were here, to chat with me and hold my hand to sleep," he says. I don't like his tone, I feel like something has terribly gone wrong. "Where are your brothers?" I ask. I expected him to be with them since it's Friday. "They went home," he says in a subtly pained voice. "Why didn't you go with them," I ask. "I'm fine here in my house, I just miss you." The tone of his voice says otherwise. Maybe I should've stayed and came here next week as he wanted. Now everyone close to him is with their families and he is not. The sadness in his voice breaks my heart, I wish I can fly to Durban just to give him a hug. "What happened Sosha? Why don't you want to go home?" I ask. "Because nothing has changed, I'm still not welcomed there," he says. "You're not welcomed?" I ask. There is a deep sigh. "My stepmother undermines my success, she loves Mlando only because he is doing nothing with his life, just studying and getting degrees for decoration. And well Bayede can end their lives," he says. Another deep sigh. "I'm grown now MaShenge, I know the truth," he says. "What truth?" I ask. "Our mother left when Mlando was only 3years old. She left and never looked back. We only got a call from her sister, Amanda's mother, when she died. We didn't attend her funeral because we were angry. Now I know that India made her leave and turned our father against us," he says. I remember the day I went to his house and asked if he want to have children and he said he wants to have them with the right woman who won't leave them. This explains his fear, he was left by his mother. I know no sane father who would completely disown his son because he failed school. Yes he had to be angry as a parent but seeing him picking up his pieces and making something out of his life should've granted him forgiveness. It really doesn't make sense. "I'm really sorry babe," I say. "I'm fine sthandwa sami. I just regret not attending my mother's funeral, it haunts me." He is not



fine, not at all. "Are they okay at home?" He is changing the subject. I wish he could open up more about his past. "Yeah they are fine," I say. "And Jamlude?" I laugh, Jam is becoming famous, even Craig never forgets to ask about her. "She is fine, I haven't seen her though, she sleeps early." "She must be bored, she needs some mates," he says. What mates? I've never heard of a bored cow. "I don't know, maybe," I say. "She will get them soon, I don't want her to be bored." This is getting out of hand, Jamlude is always in the middle of my phone calls. I sleep with a broken heart. I have a mother but I can say that I know the pain of not having a mother. I can relate to his pain. I wonder what he meant when he said Bayede can end his parent's lives. Did he mean he can kill them? He is a doctor, he heals lives, he doesn't end them. The first thing I do when I wake up is to call him. As usual my call is dropped. He calls back. "MaShenge," Why does it sound like he is on the road? It's only 5:10am. "My love, did I disturb you?" I ask. "Not really, why are you up so early?" To fetch water, cook breakfast, feed the chickens and clean the yard. The list is endless, I just tell him I ran out of sleep. Right now I'm in Ndulinde, my day starts at 5am. "Where are you?" I ask. "I am driving to...going to help Dennis at the bakery. We have crazy orders this week," he says in a foreign, stuttering voice. He didn't mention it yesterday, the strangeness in his voice doesn't give me peace but I have to trust him. He hasn't given me any reason not to. "Okay work well baby, I love you," I say. Silence. Aybo! He needs to say he loves me. "Sosha???" "I love you too," he says. "Why did it take you a minute to say that?" I don't know when did I become this annoying. I have these nonsensical little demands that I make. He usually laughs and honours them, but today he is not laughing. "I don't know if there will be a day when you'd want to take your words back," he says. It's weird how he gets insecure for no reason, just out of the blue. "They are not just words. I'm verbally painting a picture of how I feel about you. I'm in love with you and I have no doubts," I say. "I wish we can stay like this no matter what happens." With no second thought I tell him we will never change. His love has affected me like a drug, being without him haven't crossed my mind since the night of stolen sex. Yesterday he opened up to me about his family, that added to the already-deep love I have for him. I never thought I could love someone like this. I never tried to find out, I just gave up without trying. I thought sex was nice, but I just discovered how mind-blowing it is when you do it with someone you have deep feelings for. Nothing can compare to his deep moans, hair grabbing and husky love confessing. I splash cold water on my face and get started with my girly duties. My father is in his kraal, it's his daily morning routine. He greets his cows before he greets us. Mbuso is with him, running after the calves. MaJali calls me in her rondavel, I find her dressing up to go and sit on the chair. "Sawubona," I greet. We haven't bumped into each other since we woke up. "I want you to iron this dress for me. I will wear it later at the Mdletshes." She is going to the Mdletshes? She is still mingling with my rapist's family? "You should also come, your peers will be there, they haven't seen you in a long time," she says. I can't believe...No this is her, she's been always like this. She has never cared about my feelings. "No thanks," I say. She wraps the scarf around her neck and inserts the pin on her doek. She uses it to scratch her scalp when it gets itchy, we call it ihlokoloza. "Their son is getting married soon, it could've been you." For a moment I'm speechless. Am I supposed to feel unfortunate because Kwenza is marrying someone else? Is she okay upstairs? "I wouldn't have married a rapist," I say. She turns around swiftly. "What?" Her brows are raised. By asking this she is giving me a chance to



change my initial statement. I look at her and say nothing, what I said stands. "Yangomuhle don't you dare insult Mdletshe's son. Do you hear me? He didn't force you to come to his room. Didn't you say you love him?" This is the question standing in my way of justice. I said I loved him, it excuses what he did. "You youngsters don't listen to your elders. Amaqhikiza are there to guide you when you get on the stage of dating. But no, you do things behind everyone's back." I feel my eyes heating up and gather myself up before I break down. Big girls don't cry. "I don't even know why we are talking about this, I said get over it. Don't try to jeopardise that boy's marriage, you took your mother's golden platter to him willingly." I swallow my emotions and walk out a strong girl. I make breakfast and call my brothers to the kitchen. On sunny days my father eats his breakfast under the tree in the middle of the yard. After a while she walks in and stands by the door. "Is there anything you need in town?" She is looking at me. "No," I say. She looks at Mbuso, he shakes his head. Sabatha counts endless goodies. I know he won't get anything he counted, she will come back crying high prices. "When are we coming to visit you in Durban Sisi?" It's Sabatha. He has forgotten about jail, he is back at his cheerful, ass-beating self. "When are your next school holidays?" I ask. "On September, we will close for 3 weeks," he says. "If you haven't fought with anyone until then I will come fetch you," I say. I don't know who he took after. We are not a family of violent people. Yes 'we', I included myself. He leaves after finishing his breakfast. Finally I'm alone with Mbuso, thee boyfriend. "Who is the girl?" I ask. His eyes flush with fright. "Which girl?" Oh we are playing dumb now. "Your girlfriend," I say. "I don't have a girlfriend." He is not looking at me, I know that he is lying. "Okay leave it. I was thinking of buying you a Samsung phone next month but since you don't have a girlfriend I will cancel," I say. "A Samsung smartphone?" I shrug my shoulders and sip my tea. I can be that dramatic sister. "Please sisi, I want to have a smartphone. I know how to use it and all my friends owns..." "Mbonge uJehova mphefumlo wami mmmm," I start singing. "Okay her name is Thando, her family is new in the area, we are doing the same grade." There we go. Why was that so hard? "And she is your girlfriend?" I ask. "We are....It's something like that." Can he even kiss? Kids of today, at 16years I was still....he shouldn't be dating, that's the point. "Mbuso you know you have to finish school first, right?" "I know," he says. "How are you balancing being a boyfriend and school work?" I ask. He doesn't have an answer. He knows the two can't be balanced, he can only excel in one. "Go fetch your school bag," I say. I don't know how long it takes to take a bag from the next room. It's been 4minutes and 3 and half seconds since he went there. Eventually he comes back with his backpack. I check his books, luckily he is still on top of his game. Later I should check the troublemaker's. "See I'm not failing, am I going to get the phone?" he asks staring at me. "Yes monkey, tomorrow you will come with me and buy condoms and morning after pills in town," I say. His eyes pop out, he didn't think that far. That's how careless these kids are. "I'm not ready to be an aunt," I say. Being an aunt comes with lot of responsibilities, don't ask me what they are, I'm just not ready. "Is there something like that?" Buthelezi asks walking through the door. I have an eavesdropping father. I hope he didn't hear the whole conversation. He puts his plate and cup inside the plastic dish that serves as our sink and sits on his chair. "I hope you heard your sister, she is not ready to be an aunt. Look at the situation here, Shengee has become our breadwinner, I don't work anymore. You cannot add to our troubles, take care of yourself," he says looking at Mbuso. Clearly he heard everything. "Yebo





baba...I have to check the goats," he says scratching his head. When he leaves the room Buthelezi's eyes are on me. "How do you know all that? Condoms and pills?" What? I'm 23years, soon to be 24. "They taught us at school and it's general information even at clinics," I say. He pulls his beard and stares at me. I fail to hold myself and laugh out loud. "Do you mind sharing a joke?" he asks. He needs to leave, Jamlude is coughing outside. "I'm thinking of an old joke," I say. "It won't not be an old joke when my sjambok runs over a big headed man's back." What is it with this big headed man thing? It doesn't settle well because I am dating Sosha and his head is big. I unplug my phone and wave my hand at him and walk to my room leaving him shaking his head. By the way I miss my man, I wonder how Buthelezi guessed his head size. This is weird and funny at the same time. I try calling him a number of times but his phone is off. This is strange, he can't be busy to the point where he switches his phone off. Ntando is also not answering my calls, maybe she is with Sanele and stealing sex. I try Amanda, luckily she is reachable. "My only lover," I say. "How I wish! Are you okay?" "I just miss y'all," I say. She lets out a chuckle. "You mean you miss Sosha?" "Him too but his phone is off. I guess the bakery is keeping him busy," I say. "The bakery?" She sounds shocked. She is the receptionist everything in the bakery passes by her. "He said he is working with Dennis," I say. "Aw! I thought he went home to attend Mpume and her crazy family." Oh hell no! "They were in his home?" I ask. "Oh my word, you didn't know? Wait for him to tell you, it's not my place." My heart sinks. I didn't expect him to lie, I thought we ironed that part out, no matter how sweet or bitter the truth is we said we'll always be truthful to each other. He is not at work, he went home to attend Mpume and her family and didn't see it fit to let me know. I have swept the yard, rearranged the kitchen, filled water drums and wiped even shadows of dust on the tables. I need anything that can take my mind off things. I don't know where the boys went. Buthelezi shaved and went to the river with his cows. I have an opportunity to cry, but what am I crying for? I should have a backbone. Nobody said this relationship thing was easy. My phone rings. It's him. "MaShenge." I really need to calm down. I'm no longer the crazy Yanga. Craig told me to always take a deep breath and process my thoughts for a minute before voicing them out. "Hey how was work?" I ask. "It was productive even though my phone ran out of battery and I had no charger with me. Are you angry?" Breathe Yanga, breathe! "It's fine," I say. "I miss you sthandwa sami." I want to scream 'FUCK YOU!' "Look I'm a bit busy right now, can you call later?" I say. "Okay baby I love you, don't forget that." Whatever! I go around the yard, rectifying every little mistake there is, picking up the papers and stones and throwing outside the yard My mother adds to my anger by calling me and asking me to come with the wheelbarrow to the road. I'm a celebrity on Facebook, what are my fans going to say when they see me pushing a wheelbarrow? I need to win Lotto and buy a car. When we get home she changes into her sishweshwe and leaves for the Mdletshe function. I have to pack the grocery inside the cupboards and start cooking supper. Ntando finally decides to call me back. "She finally remembers that she has a friend," I say. She starts singing Banomoya by Busiswa. I'm not in the mood for her singing, she can't even carry a note in the bucket. "Did Sanele propose?" I ask. "Yes he proposed that we go dine at The Royal Hotel. Does it ring a bell? I will be eating like a royal queen that I am." God why are you frying us in a small pan so early in the morning? "That's nice, I'm happy for..." She cuts me with her singing, I sigh and wait for her to finish. "Congrats babe, enjoy yourself," I say. "No sweetie the real word is



congratulations, not congrats." Has she never heard of abbreviations before? "Congratulations Ntandoyenkosi, you're so lucky," I say. "No sweetie I'm not lucky, I'm blessed. Anyway what's up with you?" I'm not sure what's stressing me more between Sosha and my mother's attendance at the Mdletshes. "Sosha lied to me, he said he was going to the bakery whereas he went home to Mpume and her family," I say. "I'm so sorry babe, maybe he wants to tell you whatever it is face to face," she says. Even if that was the case he shouldn't have lied to me. Mbuso walks in and stands by the table and stares at me. I'm still on the call with Ntando but his face scares me. I drop the call and look at him. "Why was mother shouting at you earlier? What was it about?" he asks. How did he hear that and how much of it did he hear? His eyes are steaming anger and they're piercing through me. "It was a really stupid argument Mbuso. Why do you look so angry?" "Nothing," he says and storms out and bangs the door. He never disrespects me, the look on his face scares me. What did he hear? I don't want any more drama, things are okay the way they are. I take my phone and log on Facebook. I need to keep my mind busy with something before I get a heart attack. I scroll down my newsfeeds. Smiling at funny posts and silently crying at the sad ones Boom! Justin Sosha Cele is tagged by Dr Mpume Mahlangu. Today they just killed me. My heart is broken into pieces. They are having a baby. Why do I have to find out about everything on social networks? "Sisi are you fine?" Where is this one coming from? I hope he wasn't fighting somewhere. "I'm fine Sabatha," I say. My heart is bleeding. He is having a baby, his little family. I leave Sabatha helping himself in the cupboards and go to my room and call Ntando. She is angry and disappointed. I ask her not to pick his calls and then switch my phone off. He could've told me, he promised me honesty. I put on a brave face and carry on with the pots. Today I will ignore the rules and dish for everyone despite their absence. I don't know how I fell asleep. I remember coming to my room and lying on bed. I'm snapped out of dreamland when my mother's voice breaks inside the room. "Why are you sleeping so early?" she asks. I sit up and rub my eyes. There is noise coming from the kitchen, it must be around dinner time. "I was bored," I say. "You are leaving us tomorrow, please come and sit with us in the kitchen." My father is telling his Joburg stories all over again. Everyone is happy, except me. I hate Sosha for stealing this moment from me. If he didn't break my heart I would be enjoying this time with my family. "Tomorrow Mbuso will accompany me to Plaza," I tell them. "What about me?" Sabatha asks. "You are staying behind, who is going to look after the goats?" Buthelezi says. He must give him a break, he always fulfil his duties. "They will come back early. Mother can take the goats out for him," I say. Only then he agrees, Sabatha is over the moon. Life here is different, you go to town once or twice a month. It's unlike Durban where people go to town to buy a bar of soap. We go to bed around 9pm. I haven't switched my phone on and I'm not planning to. I know I promised to wait for his explanation before taking decisions but he chose to lie to me. How am I ever going to trust him again? At 9:30am I get ready to leave. Sabatha dressed up two hours ago, he is sitting on the table looking impatient and pissed off. I have to start in the ancestor's rondavel. My father strongly believes in them. Sometimes he slaughters a goat just to thank them for dying. On Sundays our transport is scarce, I'm crossing my fingers that the car comes before my lipstick fades away. There is a boy running towards us. Sabatha shouts his name when the boy is few feet away from us, he must be one of his friends. He stops in front of us and looks at me. "Sis Yanga there is a person who wants you in the car, he said I must call



you," he says. "Who is he?" I ask. "I don't know him." I don't have any friend who owns a car around here. Who could it be? "What's that in your hand?" Sabatha asks looking at the boy's folded hand. "He gave me R20 to buy chips." He is beaming with joy, he says that and runs past us. I'm dying to see the person. I pick my pace around the corner and cast my eyes across the road. My eyes must be deceiving me, it can't be him. I mean how did he find it here? "Who is it Sisi?" Mbuso asks. I'm still grounded on the same spot like I'm electric shocked. Why did he come here? Does he know that people here can kill him for parking his car like that? They will accuse him of lurking to steal their goats and cows. "Sisi who is that?" Mbuso asks again. I snap out and look at him. He is staring at me. "Ummm...that's my boss Mbuso," I say. I breathe out and walk towards the car, my brothers follow behind. When we get nearer the front door opens. He steps out and leans by the car door. There is no joy lost in his eyes. He is glaring at me, chewing on his lower lip.

Chapter 10 I turn to the boys and ask them to go wait for me on the other side of the road. Sabatha goes but Mbuso remains standing. I lift my eyebrows, he doesn't budge, his eyes are fixed on Sosha. "Sanibona," Sosha greets. I'm the only one who returns the greeting. He looks at Mbuso who has stepped in front me like he wants a fight. "Can I speak to your sister?" he asks politely. Mbuso turns and looks at me. He wants to know if it's okay. "It's okay, he is not going to do anything," I say. He looks at Sosha briefly before walking away. For a moment I thought he wanted to punch his face. I didn't expect this reaction from him. I turn and look at Sosha. "What are you doing here?" "Why is your phone off?" I take a deep breath and one minute to process my thoughts. "I didn't want any calls," I say. "I know the reason and I'm here to explain." Oh now he wants to explain? "What are you here to explain? Your doctor's pregnancy or why you lied?" I ask. "It wasn't my intention, I didn't know where to start. I got a call from my father at 4am telling me the Mahlangus are in his house to report pregnancy." Deep breath Yanga! "Is there anything else?" I ask. "Bayede will be her doctor, I have to know if she is telling the truth," he says. "That's nice, I have to go," I say. "MaShenge don't do this, get in the car," he says grabbing my arm. I trip and nearly fall on the ground. I have no idea how Mbuso and Sabatha got to us so fast. He lets go of my arm and looks at them a bit alarmed. They look ready for war. I'm not surprised by Sabatha fighting is a hobby to him, but Mbuso is the ever-so humble, soft spoken one. "I'm not hurting her, I'm her friend. Please get inside the car, I will give you a lift," he says. Mbuso looks at me for consent. I have no choice but to take the lift. The car is filled with palpable silence. Mbuso and Sabatha are sitting at the back and I can tell that they are watching Sosha like hawks. I only open my mouth when I ask him drive through Mandeni Plaza. "Where are you going?" he asks. "We have to buy a few things." "I will wait for you," he says. We go through clothing stores and then to McDonald's. I didn't ask anyone to wait for me, so I'm taking my time. An hour later we have bought everything we need. I give Mbuso their taxi fare and pocket money and walk them to the rank. I find him eating KFC chicken pieces. There are other boxes of streetwise-two and 2L of Fanta. I get inside the car and close the door. "Where are your brothers?" he asks. "They are going back home," I say. "I...I bought food, for you and them." "I'm



not hungry Sosha," I say. Disappointment flushes over his eyes. "Maybe they are hungry. Is the taxi still here?" He is the chairperson of Annoying Movement SA. I take two boxes of KFC and cross the road to Ndulinde rank. He could've bought one box, this makes me look like a millionaire in our rank. I don't tell them who it came from, I just give them and bid goodbye for the second time. Mbuso is looking at me weirdly, he suspects that it was bought by Sosha and the Zulu brother in him is patronized. He is done eating, he is now drinking a bottle of water like a donkey that he is. I get inside and close the door. And now? He should start the car. "Let's go," I say. Silence. "Hhayi bo bhuti!" He sighs and looks at me. "I can't go another hour without speaking to you MaShenge. I needed time to figure things out. I really didn't know how I was going to tell you over the phone. I didn't lie because I was hiding things from you, I lied because I was scared." "So you are having a baby Sosha?" I ask. "I'm not denying anything but I have doubts. She was sleeping with me, she should've told me first, not run to my father like she lost my address. Knowing her the way I do I think she is pulling a stunt, but she will curse the minute she put her thought to it," he says. Now I'm no longer mad about his lies, I'm worried about the future. "If the baby is yours what are you going to do?" I ask. "I will father the baby," he says. "And the mother?" I ask. "We will find a way to co-parent and create a warm home for the baby," he says. This is the beginning of my nightmare. Am I even ready to take on this third leg journey? I doubt. I feel his hand running over my arm. "Nothing is going to change between us. I love you and everyone knows that. Mpume knows that, my family and the world knows. It's not a secret that I love you." I'm baffled by the 'world' part. "What do you mean by saying the world knows?" I ask. "I published a public statement. I don't care what anyone thinks, you are my girlfriend who is also my employee. I love you and I'm fucking you." Who is this guy? He just said the last part in isiZulu. Do you know how nasty "I'm fucking you" sounds in isiZulu? He needs Jesus. He takes the KFC box and puts it on my lap. I start eating fried chips. KFC must be buying izambane likapondo the way they are stingy with them. "I know where I went wrong and I'm aware of the damage I have done. But I'm not a liar MaShenge, there are times when I run out of the right words to say. I don't know my tomorrows and my biggest fear is to chase you away. You make me happy, I don't want you to ever leave me," he says. "If it gets too much for me are you going to let me go?" I ask. "No," he says doubtlessly. I narrow my eyes, expecting him to change his answer. "I will make it less too much but I won't let you go," he says. Is he trying to tell me that I'm stuck with his big head for life? "So it means I will have to cheat?" I ask. He raises his eyebrows. "I beg your pardon?" he says. "I beg yours too," I say. He chuckles and shakes his head. "I'm not just a soldier MaShenge, I'm an army and I'm watching all the borders of my state," he says. I look at him, he gives a lopsided grin and starts the car. I'm eating his chicken now, I've forgiven him. Over two pieces of KFC I have forgiven a man? We are in Durban and we are heading to his house without my consent. "Who said take me to your house?" I ask. He just smiles and keeps driving. I'm not bothered, I'm just wondering if I will be sleeping over. It's funny how I've walked through this door more than once nevertheless my breath is still taken away by the interior design and spotlessness of it. I've never been inside his kitchen though, today is my first day. There are three gigantic stoves excellently coordinated by the wall. I know he can afford the triple-stoves lifestyle but I find it very weird. "Sometimes I bake here," he explains before I can ask. Now it makes sense. "You have to learn some skills or go to university." Urgh!



Not this again. "We talked about that Sosha," I say. He opens the refrigerator and takes out a bottle of water. Bethuna! There is a sink and glasses here there is no need to act like the Morokas on Generations. He got in Ndulinde at 7am and got lost around the area for almost an hour. It's not complex, the mountains and empty roads make it impossible for strangers to find their destinations. "Please feel at home, this is your kitchen, I'm going to take a shower," he says. I'm alone now and I have no idea what to do. Maybe he wants me to fix something for him to eat when he comes back. I don't even know what he likes, I should have asked. My phone rings. It's Ntando. "Babe," I answer. "Oh thank God you answered. I was thinking of how we are going to make Sosha pay for lying to you." Holy Shepard! I didn't update her. The last time we talked we were angry at Sosha, and now I've forgiven him and didn't tell her to stop hating him. "About that friend...I'm in Sosha's house," I say. "Bitch what?" She is beyond shocked. I feel like a hypocrite. "We just arrived, he is the one who fetched me from Ndulinde. I'll tell you everything tomorrow," I say. "So you guys are good now?" she asks. I smile looking at the walls of 'my' kitchen. "He actually bought me street-wise two, that's why I forgave him," I say. I'm telling her this on purpose, I know she will be mad. "What's the fuck? Yanga are you that poor? Do we not eat chicken here?" "But it was KFC streetwise-two and Fanta," I say. "What's the...Okay you need help, you're not okay upstairs, Craig needs to run some tests on your brain." I can't stop laughing at her tone, she is infuriated. "So what will happen the day he buys you full chicken?" "I will probably marry him," I say. We both end up laughing, I also can't believe I forgave a man because of fried chicken. He walks back dazzling in sleeveless vintage T-shirt and Denim short. I stare for a moment, my very own soldier! I warm the chicken pieces we left earlier in the car and serve them with bread rolls and icy juice. Ramsey Gordon would be so proud of me, this looks yummy. "Thank you," he says after a moment. I expect him to start eating but he takes out his phone and takes a picture. "What are you doing?" I ask. "I'm storing memories MaShenge." Memories? I wonder where my panty is. When I leave this house I need to take something for memories too. Monday morning I'm at work getting eyes from everyone. Arriving in his car adds to the little whispers circulating around the bakery. The big question is am I doing this to keep the job? Asih didn't beat around the bush she asked me straight up. It's so unnatural of me to struggle with the right words to get someone off my back, but with her I'm always left shaking my head. The girl can die for news, she sniffs them with her big nose like it's nobody's business. I just told her to punch the till and stop worrying about me and my vagina. Speaking of that organ, it's on fire. This time I must've followed Amanda's instructions to the dot. I got rewarded with R200 for lunch and house spare keys. I don't know what I'm going to do with the spare keys, it's not like I will ever go to his house while he is not there. "Girl it's lunch?" Amanda says walking in. "I didn't bring food, I will eat out," I say. "We can share," she says. She doesn't understand, I have R200 just to spend on today's lunch. I can't let this opportunity of lunching in a restaurant like Cynthia goes to waste. "No it's fine, I'm craving fish and chips anyway," I say. "Are you pregnant?" she asks. She overanalyse things, my middle name is 'put a condom'. Sosha knows that, I don't care how horny he is, he needs to get a condom even if it's in the next room and I always make sure it is worn correctly. "No I'm spoiling myself," I say. Fish & Chips is a few minutes away from the bakery. I eat while chatting to Ntando. Today she is going to sleep at Sanele's house. Remember today is our official sex day, she wants to put Amanda's remedies





into action. Such hypocrisy! She is the one who was saying they are dangerous and ungodly. My lunch is almost over I should get going. I don't know if I'm being paranoid but I feel like people are looking at me. I pick my pace and turn to the bakery. There is a car pulling up. It looks exactly like the one Sosha got as his birthday present. I go straight to the store and get on my chair. It's a bit quiet today, most Mondays are like this. I hardly use the book now, I know every cake there is inside this store. Only the additional ones need me to refer to the book. "Hello," says the voice next to me. I didn't hear any footsteps, maybe I was too focused on the phone. It's none other than Dr Mahlangu. I keep my face composed, she could be here for cakes. "Hello can I help you?" I ask getting off the chair. "I'm looking for a cake, I have a baby shower coming up," she says. My eyes land on her stomach immediately. She is flat as I am. And when are baby showers hosted? I thought when the mother starts walking like a penguin, from six months upwards. I didn't know people do baby showers for fertilized eggs. "We have different cakes, you can choose from girly decorated ones to boyish ones," I say. "I'm expecting a boy," she says. Are we sure she is a doctor? It sounds like she needs a doctor herself, a psychologist to be precise. I lead her to the right aisle and describe the cakes for her. She is staring at me the whole time. "So which one do you like?" I ask. "You look like a good girl." Okay..... "I don't think you understand how long I've been with Justin. I've loved him through thick and thin. We have fought, laughed, created memories and shared our lives together. I'm not a crazy doctor as your online friends label me. I'm just fighting for the love of my life." It sounds like the introduction of a prepared speech. I haven't been online in days so I don't know what she is talking about. "I don't get your point," I say. "Why would you destroy something I've worked so hard to build?" She sounds bruised, like she could break down any minute. "What did I destroy? And how exactly did I destroy it?" I ask. "You knew Sosha was with me, you saw us at the party," she says. "I knew but I didn't care. The person you should be dealing with is the person you gave your heart to. Destroying and building your relationship was between the two of you. I don't understand how your failed relationship is my fault, I only fell in love with a man who said he loves me," I say. She chuckles and looks around the store. She is no longer the broken hearted girl she was seconds ago, there is rage pumping from her eyes. "I'm trying to be civil with you. I don't think you know who I am." Lord of South African doctors! Is she really doing this? "Trust me I don't know half people in this place and I have no wish to. Are we done here?" I ask. "No we are still talking farm girl," she says. Now she is challenging my well-reasoning angel. I don't come from any farm, I come from the rural areas. As a genius who spent seven years in university she should be able to differentiate between rural areas and a farm. She is insulting me, white people took all our farms, how am I the farm girl? "You know I can drag you with your hair until you show me which farm I own?" I ask. "Your height doesn't scare me, I'm not Mbali," she says. I think I need to walk away before I do something I'm going regret. I'm meeting Craig later, he wants to see the progress I've made and dealing with her is going to delay my progress. "You will find me on the table when you've decided on your cake," I say taking steps away. Then she makes the biggest mistake of her life. Nobody grabs me like that. Nobody! I don't know where Amanda was hiding, she flies out of nowhere and pulls me away. She deserved more than two slaps. I don't know what she is wailing for because I didn't do anything to her. I was yet to start farming on her face as a farmer. "Did anyone see what happened?" Cynthia asks. Everyone is crowded on the



reception area looking at her. I make my way back to the store, if anyone needs me they will find me here, Mpume found me here as well. Minutes later Amanda walks in and tells me Cynthia needs me in her office urgently. I don't know how much trouble I'm in but I'm ready for anything. "Yangomuhle sit down," she says. I was going to sit anyway, I sit and look at her. "Why did you attack a customer?" she asks. I take a deep breath and process my words. "I didn't like what she was saying to me so I walked away. But she went on and grabbed me so I slapped her," I say. She shakes her head. "Do you know who she is?" "Whoever she is she wasn't supposed to talk to me that way nor grab me like that," I say. "Dating Mr Cele doesn't mean this is your bakery. Go home, we will call you for the hearing. You broke the rules, they were written clearly on the contract you signed" I nod my head and get off the chair and leave. I take my bag from the store and leave their bakery. I don't know how I feel. A part of me isn't surprised that much but there is a pang of sadness in my heart. I need this job, for me and my family. Craig has been calling, he doesn't understand that our sessions were covered by JC Bakers. I don't have money to pay him out of my own pocket. I take a long warm bath. I keep asking myself how my day ended like this. Ntando will be disappointed. I wonder if I'll need a lawyer for the hearing, if so I will be my own lawyer because I can't afford one. When I walk out of the bathroom my phone is ringing. It's Amanda. "Girl guess what has happened," she says. I don't have time for guessing. I just sigh and ask her what's going on. "Your slap caused a miscarriage, a whole baby gone because of a slap," she says. "That's crazy, how is that even possible?" "I don't know but prepare yourself for the worst," she says. When Ntando arrives I'm lying on the floor lost in my thoughts. Why did I get involved with Sosha Cele? "I heard what happened," she says. Oh! Amanda told her already. "Yeah, it's a mess," I say. "Where was Sosha?" she asks. "I think he was out," I say. She sits on the couch and sighs. "What are we going to do? This is a huge mess." "I guess I'll wait for the hearing," I say. "I'm talking about Mpume's situation, the miscarriage story," she says. I shrug my shoulders. I know the bitch is lying but she will get away with it because she has all the resources to support her lie, she is a doctor. "She can get you arrested, I think we need to call Nyambose," she says. "What is he going to do Ntando?" I ask. "He will make a plan, he always does," she says. We call her father and explain what has happened. He starts by shouting and for a moment I regret even calling him, but eventually he promises to come and sort it out. He never comes here, we only see him in town. You know what this means, right? Spring cleaning. "Are there any dildos somewhere?" I ask. "Really now? I don't do plastic," she says. We clean the kitchen and the lounge then go to her room. Wine bottles? What's the heck? "You are unbelievable you know," I say hardly believing my eyes. "I drank this when you were away, I was bored." She is lying. There are more than two bottles, hiding alcohol is a sin. We change her bed and go to my room. We are being dramatic, her father probably won't even enter our rooms. I rearrange my wardrobe, hiding Sosha's shirt behind my dresses. I stole his shirt, for memories. It smells like him, I block his picture from my mind instantly. I don't want to think about him. He could be hating me, I don't know how far Mpume has gone with her lies. "Bitch!" What now? I turn and look at her. Oh hell no! Where are my ancestors? "How...I mean what is that thing?" I stutter as I fake confusion. "You see it's a condom foil bitch," she says. I try to hold myself but fail and burst into laughter. "When and how? And for how long?" she asks. I have no choice but to speak the truth. Her jaws are on the floor. "I'm sorry babe," I say. "Sorry doesn't fix anything."



You broke the deal, this whole week you are cooking and washing dishes." A whole week? That is unfair. "Ntando I'm not even sure you've been abstaining, why are you being so hard on me?" I say. "Did you find condoms in my room? Nope, so I've been abstaining." I let out a long sigh. I can't believe I was that careless. "Anyway how was it? How big is it? And how long did he last?" She has her arms folded as she throws her endless questions. "I will tell you when I'm emotionally okay but the conclusion is Ray J got nothing on him," I say. "Shut the front door!" She exclaims, hoping for more details. I laugh and carry on cleaning. I also need to cook as per my punishment. Not just any food, I need to cook proper food because Nyambose is coming. I've been expecting police all day, I assaulted a pregnant woman but they don't come. Nyambose arrives. He is the rank manager type, you'd swear he swallowed a baby, his belly is a like a balloon. He is shouting from the door, I thought he was done shouting when he shouted over the phone. My ears are going to burst. "I don't know which language I must talk to you in. You two never listen!" I like how he is shouting at both of us. He doesn't care that Ntando didn't do anything, she is dying for my sins, my own Jesus Christ. "Does Buthelezi know?" he asks. My eyes are going to pop on the floor. Buthelezi doesn't know and he can't. "Who started first?" he asks. Again, I explain how everything happened. "What exactly were you fighting for? It can't be the word-farm girl." Silence. "You were fighting for a boy?" Silence. "This is his mess, give me his name," he says. I don't have a choice, I tell him it was about Sosha Cele. I don't know how this is his mess though, he didn't send Mpume nor motivate me to slap her. He is going to hunt down Sosha after eating. You won't believe how much this man eats, he eats for the whole South Africa. I used the biggest jug we have to make him juice and he has already poured three glasses. "I need to see the doctor's report of that girl, then we will find a way forward with that boy," he says. If Mpume really miscarried, which I highly doubt, my relationship with Sosha won't survive. "No Dad you need to have your doctor checking her. I don't trust her and her doctors, they could lie," Ntando says. The knock disturbs us. Someone is at the wrong place at the wrong time. Nyambose has already seen him there is no warning him to run out. "Who is this boy?" He is glaring at me. Sosha is standing by the door with his eyes bulging out. "It's Sosha Cele," I say. "The one you were fighting for?" I want to die and rise after three days like Jesus. "Baba I wasn't fighting for him, the girl called me a farm girl and grabbed me," I say. He doesn't care, he orders Sosha to sit down. Sosha looks like he is ready to die, his face is puffed up. I'm sure he thinks Nyambose is my father. "How did your girlfriend enter Yangomuhle's workplace and attack her?" Nyambose asks. "I wasn't there when it happened so I don't know what really happened," he says. "What kind of a man are you? You can't control your polygamy. Tell me what's going to happen now that your other girlfriend is claiming that Yangomuhle caused her miscarriage?" I'm stuck on 'polygamy'. I'm not in any polygamous relationship, if there is anything like that. I also don't like how he is referring to Mpume as the other 'girlfriend', I'm the only girlfriend. "She can't provide proof so I will take it as a lie," Sosha says. I feel a wave of relief washing all over me. "So when are you paying lobola?" What lobola? Ntando is laughing behind her hands. "I will pay it soon," Sosha says after clearing his throat. My eyes turn to him, I hope is just covering up. "Go dish for your husband-to-be and stop beating people." Can he talk without raising his voice? He should've married MaJali, they would've complemented each other. Two Maponozas in one room Before leaving he threatens Sosha. No scratch that, he is not threatening him, he is



promising him. "I dare you to fire her, we will sue your bakery. Next time that girl is going to send hitmen to kill her right inside the store, your security system is crap," he says. Now that he has mentioned it I realise how unsafe I am. Mpume's words start ringing in my ears, she threatened me. Ntando walks him out. I'm left alone with Sosha, he is staring at me. "What happened Yanga?" he asks. I will ignore that he called me by my name. "She came to me inside the store and accused me of taking you away from her. I tried to explain but she called me a farm girl and grabbed me when I attempted to leave," I say. "And you hit her. What if she was really pregnant?" Is he seriously going to take her side and grinds me with questions? "My emotions wouldn't be numb just because she is pregnant. Being pregnant doesn't give anyone the right to downgrade people and grab them. I'm not a farm girl, I don't own any farm. Even you cannot show me any farm that is on my name. Doctor or not, pregnant or not, nobody talks to me like that," I say. He stares at me for a good while. I hold his stare, not even a blink takes my eyes away. His eye won't scare me, I swallowed a bull's eye. "Then you cancelled your session with Craig?" He has all the details mos, why is he still asking? "Why Yanga?" he asks. It sounds wrong when he calls me by name, I'm MaShenge to him. "You know I'm currently suspended, I can't pay Craig out of my pocket," I say. He only ate few spoons on his plate, I guess I didn't impress his Italian appetite. He gets on his feet and push his hands inside the pockets. "Go pack your bag, we are leaving." He is ordering me now and he knows how much I hate that. "I'm not going to your house," I say. "Don't piss me off Yangomuhle." Oh really? I put my feet on the coffee-table and fold my arms. He can be pissed off until he is pissed on again. I don't give a damn. "Please let's go to my house. I don't know what Mpume is thinking where she is, I don't want you to be away from me," he says in a different tone. That's how I want to be addressed. I go and pack my bag again and get ready to leave. Ntando is also on her way out. Two hours later I'm in his house alone. He is nowhere to be found. I don't know why he is doing this, maybe he wants me to boil and explode. He fetched me from Westridge so that I can watch the walls of his house? I stay up until 23:00 hoping he will come home. Even his phone is off, I have no other choice but to close my eyelids and force myself to sleep. I wake up in the morning hoping to find him next to me but he is still not home. This is the greatest insult of them all. If he needed time with Mpume he shouldn't have made me come to his house. I'm not his housekeeper, but let me make my housekeeping worthy. I start off by taking a long warm shower and then find my way to the kitchen. There are construction workers by the road, I bet they are hungry. He has 4 trays of boerwors, I throw it all inside the oven. Some people don't like boerwors, they like chicken. I find 2kg of frozen chicken and slam it against the wall. That's how black people defrost, we have so much anger that we kill the chicken even when it's dead. Remember I'm making breakfast so I need eggs and bread. I put a pan on the stove and start frying eggs. I have cooked for the whole South Africa. I dish on the new set of plates and take drinks from his bar fridge. "Good morning guys, I made breakfast for you. Can I bring it here?" They can't believe it. They whistle for others to come closer. I leave them looking for a shade to sit under. I make two back and forth trips then finish serving all of them. "You guys can keep the plates," I tell them. "These plates are expensive, are you sure?" "Yes, keep them," I say, smiling. There is a car pulling up in front of the house. It's not Sosha's. A strange man climbs out, I hope it's not Mpume's hitman. He is wearing smart to be a hitman though. Oh! Mr Baker is with him. He is wearing different clothes now.



They stand and look at me as I make my way towards them. I greet and walk past. The kitchen is dirty I should start cleaning up. I wipe the counter and throw dirty dishes inside the sink. My stomach is growling, I'm also hungry and the bread is finished. What am I going to eat now? He walks in after a while and stands by the counter and stares at me. I'm gazing inside the fridge contemplating on what I can eat. I don't like anything in here. I want the boerwors I gave those people. I should've saved some for myself. What happened to 'take a deep breath and process your thoughts'? "MaShenge." Oh I'm not Yanga anymore. "Hello Justin how are you?" I say. "I'm good, and you?" he says. It's too early for that relief in his voice, hell is going to break loose. "I'm good too," I say very calmly. He is trying to observe my expression. My emotions are kept in the can, my face is calm as Sphelele's sex. Amanda said he does it calmly, his dick is very humble. You know it's crazy how every girl wants a humble guy yet nobody wants a humble dick. The guy must not be stubborn but his dick must be stubborn. Someone once said girls are the most confusing species on earth. Well I disagree, we are not that complicated. We just want everything in round squares with triangle corners. "I slept at my brother's place. I didn't want to fight with you. You were on fight mode yesterday," he says. I let out a contemptuous chuckle, he thinks that I'm stupid. "I didn't ask where you slept, but thanks for the information," I say. "Can I hug you? I miss you." I lift my eyebrows up, he is testing me. He disappeared all night, there is no way I'd want a hug from him. I don't know where his arms have been. "I think I have stayed enough in your house," I say. "What do you mean MaShenge?" he asks. Is he that dumb? "I want to leave," I say. He grabs me when I attempt to walk away. It takes everything in me not to react harshly. He pulls me closer to his face and glares at me. "Why can't we fix things like adults?" he asks. That's rich coming from him, was he an adult when he disappeared all night? "I want to go please," I say. My 'please' is not begging, it's a sweet cup of warning. I don't do warnings, I do action. "You are not going anywhere MaShenge," he says like he is my husband. Where are his cows? The ring? Somebody must've sang; Isencane Le Ngane. I pull my hand, he tightens his grip, my blood starts boiling. "What's happening here?" The voice comes from the doorway. I thought the man left already, he is walking towards us. "Sosha let go of her hand," he orders. He lets it go immediately, he looks a bit frightened. I take a deep breath and turn to leave but the man stops me. He calls me MaShenge, I recognise his voice immediately and spot the resemblance. "He slept in my house," he says. He is too old to lie, he must be 35 years or nearer. I nod my head and walk away. I can't disappear fast enough. It feels like his eyes are glued on my back. I didn't want the first time we meet to be like this. It has undoubtedly painted another picture of me, I'm a crazy girlfriend. Sosha walks in the bedroom after a while and finds me sitting on bed with my bag next to me. I'm no longer sure leaving is what I want, we need to talk like adults. "What must I eat?" he asks staring at me. I didn't know that I was his chef and what he eats is my business. He stares at me for a good while then takes my bag and walks out with it. I don't say anything because I'm a good girl. When he comes back he closes the door behind him and locks it. "Mpume was not pregnant," he says. Delayed news! I'm no longer interested. "I'm sorry for the drama, I sorted it out," he says. Oh no scratch that, I am interested. "What do you mean you sorted it out?" I ask. "She will never trouble you again," he says. I will only believe that if I don't see her posts in the next three months, for now I'm going to sleep with one eye open. He puts his arm around my shoulder and turns my face to him. He keeps licking his dry





lips, he must be really hungry. Why didn't he eat at Bayede's house? I feel like Satan's right-hand woman. "Your appointment with Craig is scheduled for 2:30pm today, don't worry about anything," he says. If there is anyone I'm dying to see it's Craig, I need to offload. A lot has happened since our last session. "We are going to be okay MaShenge," he says and gives me a light peck. My heart melts like ice, I'm happy to be MaShenge again. He pulls me closer and locks his lips on mine and pushes me down on the pillows. He leans over me and stares deep into my eyes. His eyes don't have the usual glint, I don't know if it's hunger or lack of sleep but he looks weak. "You jilted me all night Sosha." I'm suddenly overwhelmed with sadness. He is the one who preaches about staying and talking things through when there are problems, yet he is the one who left me the whole night. I don't even know why because I gave him my side of the story. "I'm sorry sthandwa sami," he says but he doesn't look sorry, he is smiling. "It's not funny, you broke my heart," I say. He lets out a chuckle and bites my earlobe. I grunt angrily and push him away. "Do you know how much I love you MaShenge?" I feel his hand going up my thighs. "I love you more than I love myself," he says. Why am I smiling? He shuts my smile with a kiss and locks his fingers on my hand. There is a baby arm sliding in between my thighs. When I look at him he smiles and swipes his thumb over my lip. "Did you call home today?" he asks. He never forgets to ask me this question. One day I should activate my gold-digging skills and tell him I don't have airtime. I've lost my roots as a black South African girl, how can I date a guy for more than a month and not even once have I asked him for airtime? One thing people should understand is that South Africa is not America. Yes we like flowers and chocolates, but not before airtime and data. I mean if you buy me flowers without buying me airtime how the hell am I going to upload my flowers on Instagram? "No, I last called them yesterday morning," I say. "Your brothers will kill me one day, I saw how Mbuso looked at me, he wanted to punch me on the face." I'm glad he got the message. He must watch Sabatha, that child is capable of killing. He is already punching other kids at...Oh shit! He is moaning on top of me, his shaft is completely inside me, my nipple is latched inside his mouth. He is sucking, moaning and thrusting mercilessly. Sensations are pulling me to all directions, I can barely keep up with where they are travelling next. My wave builds up and breaks into thousand colourful stars. His voice disturbs my cloud of happiness. "I'm sorry MaShenge," he says and thrusts deeper. I wrap my arms around his waist and call out his name, he responds with a deep cry. He is getting closer to the breaking point. "BABY PLEASE HOLD ME!" He is screaming. I don't know which 'hold me' he is referring to because I'm holding him. I tighten my arms around him and move my waist up to meet his thrusts, his hand grips on my shoulder as he slams harder inside me. I've watched many scary movies but I haven't come across a face that matches his at the moment. He rolls off and collapses next to me. Wait.....The condom! My heart is not beating normal. There is a little kick in my stomach, I can feel a little head at the side. "Sosha," I whisper. "Mmm..." Don't tell me he is still out of his senses. You fuckin' spread your seeds inside me, hello! "You didn't use the condom," I say louder than intended. He opens his eyes and looks at me. "I'm hungry MaShenge," he says. I sigh heavily. This is torture, there is no bread in this house to begin with. Can't he bake it or something?



Chapter 11 I leave him lying on bed and go to the bathroom. I need a quick shower then I will see what I can do in the kitchen. Come to think about it, I have never done the girlfriend tradition correctly. I need to put his t-shirt on and drag his sleepers. That's what girlfriends do when they think they've made it in a relationship. Somewhere in the house the TV is playing. Did Sosha leave it playing? He needs to stop wasting electricity, we are almost on stage 10 of load shedding. Oops! The big brother is still here, he is sitting on the kitchen chair. I need at least Eshowe's Jesus to save me. I heard there is Jesus who lives there. It must be nice, you can marry and get Jesus himself to pronounce you wife and husband. I wonder if that one can turn water into wine, if so then our next girl's trip must be at Eshowe. I can't appear like this, what am I wearing? No scratch that, how did I end up dressed like this? It's too late for me to run, he has already seen me. I don't even know where to look, I hope he didn't hear all those 'baby hold me' screams. "MaShenge." He is acknowledging me, I guess. I walk on with a stupid look on my face, I'm scared of him. He is a big brother and he can end his stepmother and father's lives. Yes I heard that correctly, this man is capable of ending lives. "I'm sorry to invade your kitchen, I needed something to eat," he says. I would love to give myself a hard slap right now. "Did you find anything?" I ask. "Yes, fruits." I'm the worst brother's girlfriend on earth. He ate fruits because I gave his brother's bread away. I make my way to fridge and take out frozen pies. I don't even know how much they eat. There is a huge difference between rural men and urban men. In the rural areas there is no time for dieting, there is free meat and dumplings every weekend. But these urban ones diet and eat limited food. I don't know what to do while waiting for the pies to cook. I'm standing next to the oven like a lost person. "How are they KwaSqumbe?" he asks. His voice can be mistaken with Myalo's. It is confined with maturity and authority but friendly at the same time. "They are okay," I say. Squmbe is Mandeni's Spar. Only our Spar got a nickname. Most people, like him, confuse the whole Mandeni town as Squmbe. "When are we going to see them?" he asks. His question is a bit confusing. Who is them? The whole Mandeni? He chuckles at my silence response and asks me to sit with him on the table. "His clothes suit you," he says. He is pulling my leg, I know I look like a fancy hobo. A moment of silence passes. It's like he is contemplating on how to start whatever it is that he wants to say. Eventually he looks up and clears his throat. "Do you really love him MaShenge?" he asks. Mlando asked me the very same question, now it feels like they doubt my feelings for their brother. "I'm not with him for any other reason," I say. "Thank you, that's all he needs, true love," he says. I think the pies are ready. The empty space at the side of the cupboard is ridiculous. I shouldn't have given his plates away. Craig is going to call his own therapist as soon as I leave his office. I'm not normal, whoever counsels me needs to be counselled too. I serve Bayede and put my plate and Sosha's on the tray. "You are going to eat in your bedroom?" he asks with his eyebrow raised. "Ummm yes..." I say hesitantly. "I'm a guest, where is your hospitality people?" Oh Lord, I did say I'm the worse brother's girlfriend, here is the proof. "Okay I will call him down," I say. "I'm kidding, go eat your man," he says flashing a smile. Eat your man or eat with your man? Let's say his tongue slipped. "Next time you are angry at him please give away his watches and make sure I'm around before you do it." Wow! So I'm the crazy girlfriend who gives things away? This motivates me to never let anger get better of me again. When I walk in he has his eyes closed, for a moment I think he is asleep, but he opens them as soon as I sit next to him. "Must I



feed you?" I ask. "Next time babe," he says taking his food and digging in. Within minutes he has finished both pies. He was really hungry. "Do you want more?" I ask. "No babe eat," he says. I know one pie will satisfy me, I put the other one on his plate. He finishes it again! This is way above me now, I'm done sharing. I take the plates back to the kitchen. Bayede is still here, maybe he is moving in. When I come back to the bedroom Sosha is asleep, for real this time. His phone is next to the pillow. I feel the devil's long finger poking my shoulder; Go for it Yanga. Password? Geez! His hand grabs the phone from my hands. I nearly get a heart attack, he was snoring seconds ago! "What do you want?" he asks. This is embarrassing, I'm a sneaky girlfriend. "Time," I say after clearing my throat. He unlocks it and pushes it back in my hands. The time is 12:17, he has lot of notifications though. "You still don't see time?" he asks after a moment. I ignore him and scroll down to his inbox. "MaShenge don't do that. I'm not hiding anything but I still have stuff to delete," he says. There is a text: I miss your dick so badly. I go blind and deaf at the same time. WTF! His hands grab the phone away. He is wide awake now. I didn't check the date of the text but I feel like I'm having a stroke. He inhales sharply and shifts closer to me. I can't even look at him. "Can we not fight this week?" I give him a silence response. "Can I have a look at your phone too?" What? No he can't. "I have no battery," I say. "Don't worry I will charge it." I shouldn't have touched his phone, I've dug my own grave. I'm not hiding anything deep, just porn videos and gossips that could land me in jail. "I want you to charge me," I say, biting my lip seductively. I need to distract him, he can't touch my phone. I throw my leg over him and brush his chest. "So are you charging the phone or me?" I ask. "You baby," he says. There you go soldier boy! Wait... "Where is the condom?" I ask. "Not today, please." He has to be kidding me! "Dude are you trying to get me pregnant?" I ask. "No, I just love feeling your flesh," he says. Flesh produces flesh that breathes and cries for no reason, he is crazy. "It's condom or no sex, you decide," I say. "No sex." What? No! "You don't mean that," I say in shock. This devil is serious, he is not even smiling. Unbelievable! "Then take me back to Westridge," I say. "But you are not here for sex, you are visiting me." He keeps shocking me, now I'm not here for sex? "Who told you that?" I ask. He laughs and buries his face on my chest. We end up going raw, his word is final, I flow with it. I'm late for my appointment. Almost thirty minutes late, Sosha is the one to blame for it. He should've done it like Sphelele and let me go. Craig doesn't work with me only, when I get to his office he is busy. I wait an hour before he attends to me. "How are you?" he asks. "I'm fabulous," I say. He lifts up his eyebrow and rubs his chin. "I'm not lying, I'm good Craig," I say. "Oh, so what was the fight about?" I wish we can forget about it. Who is feeding him news anyway? "The girl wanted me to slap her so I did," I say. "You played right in her hands. What if she was really pregnant?" he asks. I shrug my shoulders. He passes me a small booklet about self-control and confidence. "Do you know what a serious offence assault is in South Africa, especially on a pregnant woman?" he asks. Nobody has been arrested for slapping someone in Ndulinde. We slap each other like it's nobody's business. If someone talks shit to you and you don't have time to argue you just slap that person and life moves on. I remember bumping into my neighbour coming from school with a group of boy and she slapped the living hell out of me. I wonder if she knows what a serious offence assault is in South Africa. "You are bigger than that Yanga. You're bigger than everything that has happened in your life. Now that you've exposed your weakness to everyone people are going to use it against you. Your anger will be



your downfall." I chew on each word he said, he always makes sense. Clearly I have a long journey ahead of me. "Do you remember how defensive you were in the beginning, denying having any issue?" he asks. How can I forget that mad girl? I nod my head. "I want that spirit back in a different form," he says. I look at him attentively. If there is anything I want it's self-control. "Go against the girl challenges make you to be. If situations lead you to anger tell yourself 'I'm not angry, I'm bigger than that'. Take a different direction, don't let situations determine where you should go. Deny being who life wants you to be, life must be what you wants it to be. Keep a stiff upper lip Yanga, don't bow down to challenges." He always shed new light and makes me feel like I can do better, he is my pillar of strength more than he is my therapist. In him I always find myself again. I got a call from Amanda saying my hearing is on next Wednesday. I don't understand why this is taking so long. Not knowing what the future holds is driving me crazy. I expected Sosha to give the heads up since it's his company, but he is quiet about it. He is only keeping me in his house. I've been here since Monday, he bullied me into it. My stay has been nothing but a joy to behold. I've been eating food I've never tasted in my life, the kind of food I watch on Cooking With Chef so and so. He is the best, each minute we spend together deepens my love for him. He is caring and sweet and understanding. I'm Beyoncé, so dangerously in love. I miss Ntando though. We call each other three or four times a day. Lately she calls me Phashasha. I can't explain how much that annoys me. Phashasha is a woman in Ndulinde, she doesn't have a home, she lives with whichever man she is sleeping with. She is like a queen of vaat'n sit. By the way I'm cooking isikhintshane. He said this is my kitchen, so I will cook what I like. It's my first time cooking dinner in this house, when he comes back he will have the surprise of his life. I'm sitting in front of the stove, making sure my pot doesn't burn. I keep checking the time, it's 6:30 now. I'm getting irritated, he said he is only going to sign a few documents and comes back. "My love." Oh he is back! His ancestors really work, I was about to send an essay. He kisses my lips and asks if I'm okay. Well I'm okay now that he is here. "There was a woman who came looking for you at the bakery," he says. "A woman?" I ask. "Yeah she was dark and tall. She left her number and asked that you to contact her as soon as possible." I don't know any dark tall woman who might look for me in my workplace. I take her number and save it. I will decide later if I want to call her or not. "Do you want to go out?" he asks. "What? No!" I say. "People know about us. How long are we going to hide MaShenge?" he asks. I haven't thought about it. It's not something I'm planning to do anytime soon. I ignore the question and change the subject. "I cooked today," I say. His pupils dilate with excitement. "Really? What did you cook?" "Isikhintshane," I say. The frown on his face! Today I'm bringing back Mthaniya's world. No Zulu person must be clueless about his traditional food. King Shaka worked hard to build this tribe, we can't let pizzas destroy it. "What is that?" he asks. "It's a mixture of beans and maize meal," I say. "Oh that's nice." When I put the plate in front of him his face goes pale, it's no longer so nice. He looks exactly like me on the Italian dinner night, clueless AF. "We are just eating it like this?" he asks. "No boo-boo there is juice," I say putting a glass in front of him. He still looks confused. There is no fork and knife, who told the Zulus to stab food before eating? Mocking how our king died, huh! "Eat with your hand," I say. Lord, he frowns and eats with his fingers. "Use your whole hand and squeeze it," I say. I could give him a spoon but that would be an insult to isikhintshane and our ancestors. "Down it with juice," I say. He gulps the juice and



eats with his fingers again. I sigh and show him how to do it, he starts laughing. "What's funny? You shouldn't mock our traditional food, you will anger the ancestors," I say. "So you shape it into a shrewd penis and eat?" The fool is still laughing, he is unbelievable. This is food he can't compare it to such disgusting organ...Not really disgusting but you get my point. "That's inappropriate to say about food," I say. "Roll the penis for me baby, I'm hungry," he says. He is turning this into a huge stupid joke. "I like spinach and pap," he says. I think he is indirectly asking me to cook it one day. I'm not good with spinach he must get his chef to cook it. "Thanks babe, I enjoyed the meal," he says unwrapping a chocolate slab. Why does he need a wash-down if he really enjoyed it? He offers to clean the kitchen for me. I know he is just spoiling me, in a few months to come he will be acting like Muvhango's king. Five minutes later he is done and talking to someone over the phone and blocking my ears with his laughter. I can't hear the TV anymore. "Talk to her, she is here," he tells the person. He always makes me speak with his friends, I don't even like some of their voices. They just rumble with their advanced English, asking me silly questions and laughing. They involve me in their silly arguments and expect me to pick sides. I have my own crazy friends. One is an alcoholic, she keeps alcohol inside her wardrobe and the other one is a sex addict. Do I have a choice though? I take the phone and put it on my ear. "MaShenge," For a second I'm not sure whether it's Myalo or Bayede. "Are you okay there?" he asks. I lift my eyes to Sosha, he is listening attentively. "Yes," I say. "Can I steal your man for an hour or so?" It's Myalo, his voice is deeper. I don't know how he plans to steal a 29year old man, either way I'm not staying in this house alone. "Can I say no?" I ask. "You don't understand, I need that cake otherwise I'm dead," he says. Now I'm confused. "He forgot his sister's birthday and she is coming to his house in the morning," Sosha explains. Now that makes sense....No it doesn't. "Guys what's going on?" I ask loud for both of them to hear. "He wants me to go bake his cake in the kitchen," Sosha says. That's his version of stealing him from me? He should've became a poet, his art of words is on another level. "That's fine, I will help him too," I say. Sosha grunts angrily. "Are you crazy?" Why is he whispering? We are baking the cake. "I'm not crazy, we will bake the cake," I say loud. "MaShenge I can't live without you," Myalo says buried in laughter. Sosha is glaring at me like I'm the one who made his head big. I wink at him and say goodbye to Myalo. We go to the kitchen and get ready to bake. He looks super sexy with that baking apron on, I stand for a minute just staring at him. There is nothing sexier than a man in the kitchen. "You said you will help," he says. Hhayi bo! Who got the butter out of the fridge? The saucepan? "What's the name of the cake you're making?" I ask. "German chocolate cake," he says. Do you know the patience and passion I put as I wait to see the German chocolate cake? I drink two cups of coffee just so I can stay awake. He is done with the cake, I was expecting to see a German flag or anything that shows that the cake is a German one but there is nothing, it's just a cake like any other cake. He puts it inside the refrigerator and takes his apron off. "No!" I scream. Why is he taking it off? I'm still looking at him. He turns and looks at me confused. "Don't take it off, I love the baker you. Why didn't you wear the hat?" "It's called a toque blanche," he says laughing. He loves complicating things, the thing is worn on the head so it's a hat, there is no need for French words. He is still cleaning his mess in the kitchen. There is a blotter I always see and ignore inside his shelf, but today I can't help myself I open it. The first page is handwritten with the heading: Dear Sir. It looks like a collection of poems or





short stories. I feel his presence and lift my eyes up. He doesn't look pleased, maybe this is a confidential thing. "I only read the title," I say putting it back in its place. He doesn't say anything, he takes his watch off and leaves the phone on bed and walks to the bathroom. I'm curious. What is that and why is he angry that I opened it? He walks back after a while and unwraps the towel around his waist and gets on bed. He was teaching me how to sleep naked the past few days, we sleep like Adam and Eve. "Are you okay?" he asks. You'd think I'm lying if I say he was angry ten minutes ago, now he is giving me adorable eyes and smiling nonstop. "I'm not okay, what's in that blotter?" I ask. "It's nothing, just my poems," he says. He bakes poems too? Wow! "Can I have a look?" I ask. He nods his head. I take it and lie on his arms and read silently. These words are not him, however the writing style is his. He must've written this when he was young, the paper is worn out. "You wrote this?" I ask. "Yes...I just...Yeah I wrote it." He has his hand over his forehead, he looks uncomfortable. "Can you read it for me?" I ask. "Ah baby no!" I kiss his lips and look at him with a puppy face. "Handsome please," I beg. He sighs and sits up. I get between his legs and rest my back on his chest. He wraps his arms around me and balance the blotter on our entwined hands. I can feel his heart beating against his chest, he keeps swallowing, his hands are trembling on me. "Dear Sir, again I cannot come forward, Not because I don't take your classes fervently, But because I will need more time and more ears. Your time is limited, my time needs timelessness. I, myself, could never be presented on designed couple of minutes. I won't bother myself and waste your limited time Save time for others and put zero for me. I'm not trying to be rude, Dear Sir I'm needy than the rest. I don't have a favourite song that's in your category, My favourite song is the pattern of rain drops, Falling on the corrugated roof of my father's aloof house, the pattern of my heartbeat against my chest , As I lurk behind the door, waiting for anything to happen. The pattern of my Toughees thwacking on the tiled floor, As I dash from one room to another, blood dripping from my skin. I heard about their favourite places, they chose so well, That's why I clapped my hands louder than anyone. Dear Sir let me clarify, I do have something to say. Sir listen I, too, have favourite food It's a meal that I swallow with no words, With no salads of reminders of what failure I am, It's food that fills my tummy as well as my heart. I, Myself, is a young boy looking for answers So if I return your answer sheet blank Or not raise my hand like others. Know that I'm not trying to be rude, I cannot answer your questions Before mine have been answered. The book drops on my thighs. His hands reach up to my shoulder. I'm carrying my heart on my hands and it's heavy like a bag of cement. My mind just raced back to the picture of him in his school uniform that is in his study room. He has his school tie wrapped around his wrist, the collar of his shirt is pulled up. There is no care on his face, he wasn't interested, not even to the cameraman who took the picture. "How old were you when you wrote this?" I ask. "12 years," he says. Wow! At 12 years I was writing Rihanna's Umbrella lyrics, I never created anything. "Did you call the woman?" he asks. I completely forgot about that, I have too much going on in my life. "I will call her tomorrow," I say. He gives my lips a smacker and throws the blotter away. He is wearing a mask on his face, he sighs and lie down on the pillows. "It sounds like you had a rough time growing," I say testing the water. He doesn't open up easily. "It's not something I like talking about, but yes. Bayede was sent to boarding school, Mlando had a nanny and I was that 'go play outside' kind of a child," he says. I get that he doesn't like talking about it but curiosity killed mangobe. I ask him



to elaborate the 'go play outside' child part for me, I've never heard anything like that in my life. "It's a story of another day," he says. "Did they beat you Sosha?" I ask. "They did, mostly my father." His voice is suppressing sadness and pain. He doesn't have the smile he had retaliating on his grandmother's beating. His hand goes down inside my boobs. I've concluded that they are his favourite part of my body, his hands usually stay in them even when we are watching TV. "Mashenge," he says after taking a deep breath. I look at him, there is something strange in his eyes. It's not sadness or anger, it's like fear and hesitation. "What is it babe?" I ask. "MaShenge I have IED." I can fake everything but I can't fake knowledge. What is IED? A political party maybe, if so I'm behind him all the way. "What is that?" I ask. "It's Intermittent Explosive Disorder. I can be very, very angry and irrational." The word 'disorder' scares me. His hand grabs mine like he is stopping me from going, he is swallowing nothingness and staring at me. Is it that serious? "Are you sick Sosha?" I ask. "I have recurring outbursts, when they occur I become aggressive and violent and..." "Violent???" I ask. He swallows again. "I will never hurt you, I work on it everyday. I take antidepressants and mood stabilizers. Once in a month I attend cognitive behavioural therapy." There is behavioural therapy involved? This is deeper than I thought. "Please don't leave me, I can see the fear in your eyes. I direct my anger to the gym and walls, I'd never hurt you MaShenge," he says. He is right, what he just said scares me. "What makes you angry?" I ask. "It can be absolutely nothing," he says. What? Who get angry over nothing? He is a madman. "I'm not lost when I'm with you. You make me happy and that's what I always focus on," he says. I take a long breath and nod my head as if it makes sense. "Okay I hear you," I say. Disappointment flushes over his eyes, at this moment I can't even look at him straight in the eyes, I'm shocked. "My grandmother taught me how to pray, let's pray," he says. He is up and putting his gown on. Maybe we are not allowed to pray while naked, I put mine on as well. I don't know how to pray, I just ask and ask and ask. He is good at it, he knows all God's nicknames. I only listen and contribute Amen at the end. He is not normal, IED is not the only disorder he suffers from, he says there is more but he is dealing with it and taking treatments. I'm on the call with Ntando, I just told her about last night and she is blowing things out of proportion and making up crazy stories about what Sosha might do to me. She has concluded that he is a psychopath. "Ntando do you even know what the IED is?" I ask. "You said it's a mental disability," she says. God! How do I make her un-hear this? I shouldn't have ran my mouth knowing what a drama queen she is. This is a confidential matter, Sosha told me only because he trusts me. "Alright please do me a favour, don't tell anyone," I say. "Why? Do you think his cables will disconnect if he finds out that you've told me?" I'm...I can't deal with her. I run my fingers on the frame of his photo hanging on the wall and sighs. It's crazy how I went from uncomfortable around him to a complete sucker of his presence. I always want to be around him, if he leaves the house for a few hours I get miserable and angry. "I love him Ntando, with his disorder and all. He is a good man and I'm afraid I might not be giving him the same support that he gives me," I say. "You are there Yanga, even after he told you about his madness you didn't leave." Can she stop with this madness thing? She is irritating. "It's not madness, stop saying that," I say. "Okay I'm sorry but you are there, you love him and give him your cookie seven days a week. That's supportive enough," she says. I hear a little voice screaming outside the door. I thought the neighbours don't bother each other here, they don't even know each other's names. It's not like



in Ndulinde where you know a woman behind the mountain and her kids and who she is sleeping with. Here people don't even greet each other. "I don't give him seven days a week, last night we only cuddled and slept. Stop imagining things, do you hear bitch?" I say. She bursts into laughter, I drop the call and make my way to the door. I find a pair of eyes staring up. It's a little girl wearing a white dress and fluffy white hat. I don't get enough time to digest on her familiar looks, she has ran past me and got inside the house. What's up with this kid? I look around to see if she is with anyone. Durban is dangerous, even kids can rob you. Oh, Bayede's car is here. "MaShenge!" The little voice screams somewhere inside the house. This child calls me MaShenge? She appears and stands in front of me. I see myself in her, the little girl I was before everything happened. "I want croquet monsieur," she says. The frown on my face! "What?" I ask. Bayede walks in smiling, I want to return the smile but what the fuck is his daughter saying? Crook-what? "Good morning MaShenge," he says and sends a message to Maya by lifting his eyebrows. She giggles and greets me too. If she can say jump to Bayede he'd ask how high, I can see the way he looks at her that she is his world. "Daddy I want a croquet monsieur," she says. Oh it's croquet, not crook. It must be a toy in her bedroom, maybe a little plastic crocodile. "Your uncle is not here," Bayede says. She turns her eyes to me and clasp her hands together. Oh she is so adorable. "MaShenge pleeeeeease," she pleads. I can't even google the thing as they are looking at me. I have no choice but to display my ignorance to the big brother. "What is that?" I ask. "It's ham and cheese sandwich." WTF! Why such big words for bread, ham and cheese? What's the drama for? It's a sandwich or kota. This is South Africa not France. "Why couldn't she just say that?" I ask. He laughs and kisses her cheeks. "She is my French princess," he says. She jumps off her father and grabs my hand. I'm not good with children, there is no value in their conversations, they find topic on everything. I prefer adults, they talk about things that matters. Men, sex and liquor prices. "Can I have my ham fried?" she asks, tapping her hand on my arm. I look at Bayede in complete awe. She has never met me, she doesn't know whether I like her or not, but she wants me to make her food. "She can be too much, don't worry about her she is not even hungry," he says. "It's okay I will make it for her," I say. Thirty minutes later we are watching cartoons, oranges talking to one another and driving cars. I don't like cartoons but her smile is too beautiful, it's hard to say no to her. "Maya it's time to go," Bayede says walking in. He's been outside talking to someone on the phone. Maya is absorbed on the cartoons, I doubt she heard him. He calls her again and pulls her arm. World War III begins. She doesn't want to go before the thing on TV finishes and Bayede has somewhere to rush to. "Can't you fetch her later?" I ask. "She will trouble you," he says. "I'm sure I can handle her." Well I regret that as soon as her cartoons end, she is running around the house taking everything. My head is spinning. "Maya sit down," I say for the tenth time. She jumps on the couch and throws her legs on the coffee-table. I switch the cartoons on thinking she will be interested but this time she is not, she is interested in me. "MaShenge where is your room?" she asks. "I don't have a room here," I say. The frown! She is confused. "Where do you sleep?" she asks. "I sleep with your uncle," I say. Oh that sounded inappropriate, what kind of an adult am I? "Uncle Sosha broke the window and the bathroom door," she says. I frown. "When?" "Saturday, Daddy told uncle Mla," she says. Uncle Mla must be Mlando. Why would Sosha break doors? He said he has everything under control



Chapter 12 I go through every room looking for a broken window or bathroom door. Everything seems to be okay, maybe he fixed it. Now that I know about his disorder I understand why he thought it was okay to throw Amanda's chocolate away. I remember how he cursed me and drove off that day. He has his unpredictable moments. Arms sneak around my waist. I nearly jump, I didn't hear the door opening. It's him, I exhale in relief. "Are you okay?" he asks. "Yes I'm okay," I say. He turns me around and plants a kiss on my lips. I want to forget about the window and bathroom door but my eyes have landed on his left hand. There is a little scar I haven't noticed, it looks recent. "I'm sorry babe," he says. I frown, what is he apologising for now? "For what?" I ask. "I didn't plan to stay this long, Myalo kept me." Urgh that! "I'm not mad, it's okay. Maya is here," I say. His eyes widen in excitement. This child has everyone around her little finger. "You've met her? I hope she liked you, she can be a diva sometimes," he says. I wouldn't care if she didn't like me, she likes her dolls more than people. When we walk in the living room Maya sees us and hides behind the couch. Sosha calls out her name, she doesn't answer. He starts walking around pretending to look for her. "Babe help me look for Maya, I don't know where to find her," he says. He needs to get serious, we saw her hiding behind the couch. I played real hide & seek where we hid in the bushes and under the cows, not this weak couch one. I walk around the couch and pretend not to see her. She jumps and cracks a loud laugh. Did she really think we didn't see her? Later Bayede fetches her, he is carrying a bunch of flowers. I wonder who he is dating and why he is not marrying her. The clock is ticking, he should settle down now. "Daddy whose flowers are these?" Maya asks. "They are aunt MaShenge's," he says. I remove myself from Sosha's arm and get on my feet. Did he say the flowers are mine? "Thanks for looking after her, I don't know what you like but I know girls like flowers," he says. Oh my goodness! I just got flowers for the first time in my life. This is not Isidingo I'm not acting, I'm getting flowers for real. "Do you like them?" he asks. Like? I don't know that word. "Are you kidding me? This is my first time getting flowers, I loveee them." My phone! Where is it? I need to take pictures and upload on all social network platforms and make calls as well. "Is he single?" Ntando asks on the phone. "I don't know but you are not single," I say. "Says who? Go confirm at Home Affairs, I AM SINGLE!" Sanele buy her flowers, she is greedy. I feel someone's presence behind me. I tell her I will call her later and cut the call and end the call. He doesn't look happy. I push my phone inside the pocket and turn to him. "Is everything alright?" I ask. "Yeah," he says flatly. I sit on the chair and put my flowers on my lap. "Ntando is suddenly single, your brother needs to watch out," I say. Silence. "Are you sure that you're okay?" I ask. "Yes, your flowers are beautiful." He bites his lip and stares at me. Now I see what is wrong, he is jealous of my flowers. "Jealousy doesn't suit you," I say. "Things have been hectic, I spend most of the time working and dealing with things. I want to make you happy, but we fight a lot and I'm always trying to make amends. Some things slip my mind, I don't...." "Where is this going Sosha?" I cut him short. "It sucks that my brother had to be the first person to buy you flowers, it should've been me," he says. "You cannot be the only person who makes me happy on earth. I'm happy, that's all that matters," I say. He can sulk all he wants, I need pictures. Today I'm breaking the internet, people must know that I'm the florist...No, what's the name of the person who has



flowers? I'm that person. Finally I know how it's like being Bonang, I can start a reality show too. I'm not Phashasha sooner or later I was going to leave his house. I don't understand what makes him so sad. We are not married, eventually I was going to leave. I have packed all that is mine and some of his things and my flowers of course. Empty pots are waiting for me at Ntando's place, she didn't forget about the broken deal and punishment. "Love I'm ready to go," I say. He opens his eyes and looks at me, he is sad. As much as I want to be with him I cannot live with a man, that's not how I was raised. I'm not Phashasha. "You are really leaving me MaShenge?" I want to sigh loud and heavily. "We talked about this Sosha," I say. "But how am I supposed to live alone in this big ass house?" He has the best jokes, we can call him Trevor Noah. He bought this 'big ass house' way before I came to his life, but he is asking me how he is supposed to live in it alone. How should I know? I wasn't there when he bought it. "Ntando wants pasta, I need to go," I say. "I want to go to Ndulinde MaShenge." He doesn't have a home in Ndulinde, why would he want to go there? "Where in Ndulinde?" I ask. "I want to go to your home and give Jamlude her mates." He is not saying what I think he is saying. It can't be! "What are you trying to say?" I ask. "I want to go next month, I've fallen in love with their daughter and..." He pauses and pulls my hand. "I want us to be lawfully together. This house needs you MaShenge, I believe you are the woman I've been looking for. It's warm when you're here with me. I want to have that feeling for the rest of my life," he says. There is no trace of doubt in his eyes. It's way too soon, why is he doing this? "Sosha we just met about two months ago," I say. "Yes and there hasn't been an hour that passes by when I don't think of you. You've been nobody but yourself. I want you, but we can wait if you still have doubts about me," he says. Do I have doubts about him? I'm not sure. I've never imagined myself getting married. We both have different battles to fight. How is it going to work? Two broken souls tied together. "Have you decided?" Ntando asks again. I don't know why she expects me to decide so soon. Well, it's been three days actually and Sosha is waiting for an answer. Today I cancelled lunch with him and ate with Amanda. I didn't know what more excuses to bring for my indecisiveness. Yes I'm back at work. My hearing went well, Dennis was on my side. I was shocked, I thought he didn't like the fact that I breathe oxygen like him. "I haven't decided Ntando," I say. "Then let him lobola the doctor." She mustn't bore me I will go back to Morningside. "He wants to lobola MaShenge or maybe the crazy doctor is also MaShenge?" I ask. My phone rings. It's Buthelezi. "Shengee how are you?" I'm not fine, a man wants to pay lobola for me and I'm undecided. "I'm good, how is everyone?" I say. "We are all good. Can I speak to you?" He is speaking to me right now, for him to ask like this scares me. "Is there something wrong?" I ask. "Yes," he says. I look at Ntando with my eyes widened. She signals for me to put the call on loudspeaker. "What did Kwenza Mdletshe do to you?" Oh hell no! "What do you mean? I don't understand," I say. "It's me who doesn't understand. You and your mother have to make me understand." Damn you Mbuso! I suspected he heard everything but never paid attention to it. "He did nothing," I say. Ntando gives me a look. I know she wants me to tell him. It's what she wanted from the start. "Who are you protecting Shengee? Yourself or people who don't care about you?" The question stabs to my heart. I'm protecting my mother and her image. She doesn't want to be known as the mother of a girl who lost her virginity at the age of 15. It would paint her as a bad mother. Girls represent their mothers. "I'm not protecting anyone," I say. "I want you home tomorrow," he says. Ntando covers her mouth in disbelief. "But





I'm working tomorrow," I say. "It's an emergency, they will understand." I can't believe Mbuso did this to me. Why did he run his mouth? I'm in a bigger mess now, Buthelezi will choke the truth out of me. Where will that leave my mother? Travelling from Durban to Mandeni usually take two hours but today it feels like it only took 45minutes. I'm not ready to arrive but I'm here already. I cannot go home empty-handed, luckily I have money. I buy a small grocery and head to the rank. The car is full within 30 minutes. It's like the universe has something against me. Since when do Ndulinde cars get full so fast? God is good, Mbuso is the one waiting for me at the stop. He has a lot to answer. I pay the driver and put my sunglasses on. In the rural areas taxi drivers are chilled, you pay when you arrive at your destination. You can run if you want to, but these people don't just drive cars, they drive souls to heaven as well. He greets and takes the shopping bags. "Is the bag not heavy?" No, your balls are heavy. "Why did you tell Buthelezi?" I ask glaring at him. "I'm sorry," he says plainly. It's too early for apologies, I want explanation. "Do you understand the mess you've put me in?" I ask. He shrugs his shoulders and walks on, he doesn't look bothered at all. "I did this for you and Sabatha, the truth will break our parents apart and it will be all on you," I say. "I don't care Yanga!" What did he just say? "Repeat that Mbuso," I say. "The truth has been breaking you for years, it's time it breaks someone else. You deserve a break." He says and walks on like he did nothing wrong. I'm dumbstruck, when did he learn to speak like this? He is a quiet child, if it was Sabatha I would've understood. My mother is in the kitchen, by the look on her face she is waiting for me. She is a thunder waiting to explode. I look around hoping to see a man who called me here, he is nowhere in sight. "You are finally here," she says getting off the chair. I drop my bag on the table and stand by the fridge. I don't know what's on her mind, the last time I checked she was Becky Lynch. I have a man, I can't have swollen cheeks. She glances at Mbuso, her eyes emits fire. "Go outside," she orders him. Mbuso grabs a chair and sits. She repeats herself, but Mbuso doesn't budge. "I see what you're trying to do, you want me to die. Open the drawers and take the knives, both of you!" she roars. This is her backup strategy. She accuses us of attempted murder so that she can have her way. I hate Mbuso but I'm grateful he is here, I don't trust this woman. I thought I've grown these last couple of months. I've been hustling and providing for my family, I felt like an independent young woman. But standing here, against the fridge, with my fists folded as if they can squeeze my wild emotions into place, makes me realise how my personal growth and efforts go unrecognised. I will never be addressed as an adult, I'm just a child who will always follow orders. "What do you know?" she asks Mbuso. "I know everything," Mbuso says. I frown as she frowns. He knows everything? "What did you tell him?" She is glaring at me. "Nothing," I say. The confrontational moment is broken by Buthelezi walking in like he just murdered someone. I give Mbuso a look, he birthed this moment. He looks at me. It feels like his eyes are penetrating to the depths of my soul, uncovering the truth and old wounds. "Shengee is there something wrong with your butt?" he asks glaring at me. I pull the chair and sit my ass down. All of a sudden everyone's eyes are on me. I feel twice a victim. "What did I do?" I ask. "Mbuso heard you and your mother arguing. I would like to know, what did Kwenza Mdletshe do to you?" I look at my mother, she has this indescribable look on her face. Something just ticks off. The Yanga I've always been emerges. "Is this woman my mother?" I ask. "How can you ask a question like that Yangomuhle?" She is shocked and angry, if Buthelezi and Mbuso weren't here she would've



punched my face. "Why are you not there for me? Why do you shut my feelings? Do you know how sad it is to have a complete stranger understanding your pain when people close to you shut you down?" I ask. She gets up on her feet. She has never been questioned by a child in her life. Not her. The contents of the argument don't matter in her world, age does. She is a mother I don't wish to be, and I'm a daughter I don't wish to have. She points her trembling finger at me. I don't know when Mbuso got off his chair and came next to me. "This Shengee of yours is the one who went to the Mdletshes. At 15years I didn't even look at the boys' direction. What were you hoping for visiting a boy? Didn't you have seniors to ask advice from? Kwenza did what all boys do, you should've known what love is. It means compromises and sacrifices," she says. I'm a mad girl. My madness has built up for years, she doesn't know me like she thinks she does. "Excuse me madam, don't call my body a compromise," I say getting off the chair and standing face to face with her. "Don't you dare speak to me like that!" she says aiming her hand to my cheek. I block her slap and hold her arm. I can slap her face until it bleeds Gentle Magic, but she is my mother. She starts wailing like a widow who got excluded from the will, claiming that I'm hitting her. "Why did you keep quiet Shengee?" Buthelezi asks. He doesn't care about his soaked -in-tears wife, he is looking at me with emotional clouded eyes. "She told me it was my fault, I had to keep quiet. It was haunting me day and night. Yes I was wrong for visiting Kwenza instead of going to school but it doesn't justify the pain he put me through. I bled, cried and told him to stop. He didn't stop, he went from begging to violent. I will never forget that day, nobody deserves to be violated like that," I say. Mbuso shakes his head and looks at his mother. She has stopped crying. "Mother do you know what rape is?" His question carries tons of anger. I've never seen this side of him. "I know rape my cousin was a victim. Rape is when someone forces himself on a woman, that someone can never be a lover. Yangomuhle had sex with her lover whilst she was not ready. She didn't follow the right path, she should have sent ucu to the Mdletshes. Had she done that iqhikiza would have warned her and told her what to expect," she says. I sigh and sit down. She is not faking it, she is ignorant and dumb. The blame is still on me, she still doesn't understand what she has done. Buthelezi orders her to sit. It's about time we engage on this matter as a family. I really appreciate Mbuso for being here. He is next to me, holding my hand. The tears in my eyes are not tears of being a rape victim, but they are tears of being a survivor. "Have I ever touched you after you've said no? Have I MaJali?" Buthelezi asks. Mbuso starts coughing. He didn't think they retired from the sex industry, did he? I will laugh about it tomorrow. "No," MaJali says. "Your voice matters, so is Shengee's. No one has a right to touch her if she says no. I don't care if that person is her lover or what. You have destroyed our daughter as well as our sons. They will go around with the same sick mentality. And they won't be so lucky, they will force themselves on women and spend their lives in jail." He is right, Kwenza is lucky. He did it and got away with it. It makes me wonder how many Yangas he has created out there. They say the leopard never changes its spots. "Do you even see your fault in this Ma?" I ask. "I do. Do you see yours?" Oh wow!! "Do you really care that much about dating traditions? You are so angry that you are even pushing aside what really matters. Your daughter was raped and you shut her down. You are the only one at fault here," Mbuso says. Again I will ask, when did he learn to speak like this? "Pack your bags MaJali, you will come back here when you're ready to mother my children." Oh hell no! This is exactly what I was scared of. They



cannot separate, for the sake of Sabatha at least. "Babawami that's not the solution, I think we need some education as a family, there is someone I know and he would like to talk to you guys," I say. "Who is that someone?" he asks. "My therapist, Craig Nkomo," I say. "You have a therapist???" They are all shocked. We don't use therapists here, we tell induna our problems and solve them under the tree. "He is covered by Sosha, I mean by the bakery I work for," I say. Buthelezi gives me a look that sends shivers down my spine. I didn't lie though, Craig is paid by the bakery, I just shouldn't have mentioned Sosha. The meeting is adjourned and my parents are not talking to each other. I stay behind and call Craig, he's been wanting this for a while now. Maybe he will speak some difference into my mother's head. I'm angry but I've grasped a realisation that plenty old school women don't understand what rape is. During their time a man would fight the girl for her virginity and the girl would defend herself until she couldn't fight no more. Her tiredness granted a man the opportunity to sleep with her. It wasn't rape, it was a game. However the idea of it has affected the mentality of many elderly women. Some girls did share stories of how their virginity had been broken when we were at the river. While other girls got pampered with flowers and strawberries before they were deflowered, some fought to escape the dark room where iqhikiza had locked them with their lovers. This is what my mother went through, and it's what she thinks I went through. Yes Kwenza was my lover, he fought me and forced me to lie on bed, but it wasn't some sort of ukulalana thing. He raped me. The troublemaker is home. Is the school out or he bunked? "Why are you home early?" I ask. "The school is out, I'm hungry," he says. I already cooked the stew and added some salads. I'm the sister from Durban, my boyfriend owns a bakery, the house should smell different when I'm home. "Give me a few minutes, food is almost ready," I say. He opens the cupboard and looks inside. "There is bread here," he says. "It's for breakfast," I say. "I won't eat breakfast." Kids and bread! He is stuffing it in his mouth and downing it with cold drink. Within minutes he is done, he is a Buthelezi after all. He looks at me with a smile on his face. "What's up?" I ask. "I think I might have a girlfriend." Lord! I bursts into laughter. How long is his penis? 2cm maybe. "How do you know?" I ask. "She always sits next to me during free periods and let me touch her," he says. My laughter is short-lived, my father's words replay in my head; They will go around with the same sick mentality. And they won't be so lucky, they will force themselves on women and go spend their lives in jail. "Sabatha do you know that touching a girl inappropriately without her consent is harassment?" I ask. There is a frown on his face. It's like I just spoke to him in French. They are not told about these things. I think the whole family needs some knowledge. Maybe the whole community, there is a mentality that needs to be destroyed. A couple days ago Sosha asked me what I want to be, I think my nursing dream has been substituted. I want to help people understand the importance of their voices. Maybe it's time we move the focus from girls to boys. There are a lot of things that young boys need to be taught about. "How are you going to do that without a degree MaShenge?" he asks. We are on the phone, my family disappeared, his call is keeping me company. "I don't think I need to have a certificate in order to talk to people. I will just talk to them and ask them to talk to me," I say. "Let me talk to Craig and see what I can come up with." I manage to smile, he always comes through for me. "This is why I love you. You are an angel sent from above," I say. "The angel is still waiting for your answer," he says. I'm not in a good space, I can't make decisions now. "Urgh! We will talk later," I say. "I'm



proud of you sthandwa sami," he says. "What did I do?" I ask. "For being fine and calm in this whole situation, you have grown and matured and I'm so proud of you." He is making me blush, my foot is drawing Lesotho map on the floor. "Thank you Dubandlela, I'm happy to hear you say that," I say. "I can't wait to come home and see your beautiful face every night. I just hope you will give me a chance to be who I want to be to you," he says. I'm disturbed by a loud voice yelling outside. I know this voice, the devil just sent his advocate, she will turn this house into a living hell. "Babe I have to go," I say walking to the door. "Yangomuhle you are home? You look white." Shade or compliment? You'd never know, this is July Buthelezi. "Thanks aunty. How are you?" I say. "I'm okay baby. What did you bring from Durban?" I'm about to answer when a chicken runs past us. "MaJali doesn't feed these chickens. I've never seen a chicken so thin!" she exclaims. The chickens are okay and I've never heard of a thin or chubby chicken. Looking at the size of her bag I think she is sleeping over, meaning I'm sharing a room with her tonight. I'm doubtlessly not looking forward to it. I don't know where her brother is, my mother is lying on bed looking depressed. This is what Mbuso wanted, the tables to turn. Speaking of that one, where is he? Everyone has eaten except him and Buthelezi. "You should get your cousin a job," she says mouthfully. I don't know how many spoons of mayonnaise she has put on her plate. Her mission is to leave the bottle empty. "It's not my company aunty," I say. "You have connections, you know managers and owners. I'm sure you can cook something for her." Lord! She just doesn't get it. "Sadly I can't, I also sent my CV and went for an interview to get a job," I say. It's getting dark but still there are no signs of Mbuso and Buthelezi. I'm getting worried, they were not okay when they left. "What is happening here Yangomuhle?" Aunt July asks. She is realising that something is wrong. I don't know how to tell her, she is a drama queen. "Mom and Dad fought," I say. She raises her eyebrow. "What are they fighting about?" "Me," I say. "You?" I let out a heavy sigh. "Maybe your brother will tell you better than me, that's if he comes back," I say. Two hours later I'm still waiting, now I'm waiting for my mother and Aunt July too. They went to look for Mbuso and Buthelezi and never came back. Sabatha doesn't care, he is singing and washing the dishes. No wonder people are missing, the Mighty One is washing dishes and nobody asked him to. "Your phone is ringing," he says, pointing at it. It's right in front of me but I don't even know when it started ringing. I don't recognise the number so I answer and keep quiet. "Am I speaking to Yangomuhle?" The caller asks. "Yes, and who are you?" I say. "My name is Fezile, I came to your workplace last week but you weren't there," she says. I'm trying to track this Fezile down my memory lane. It doesn't ring a bell, the only Fezile I know acts on Isibaya. "How can I help you Fezile?" I ask. "Can we meet up some day? There are things I would like to discuss with you regarding my fiancée." "Who is your fiancée?" I ask. "Kwenza Mdletshe." Shut the front door! Did he send her to call me? "What exactly do you want to discuss?" I ask. "Your past with him," she says. She sounds nice over the phone but being nice doesn't mean you are a good person. Why can't her fiancée discuss his past with her? "I'm sorry sisi, I can't," I say. "Please, I have a daughter I need to be sure she is safe before I tie my life to this man." I take a huge sigh, she sounds really worried. "Okay I will get back to you," I say. "Thank you so much." She sounds relieved. I need to talk to Sosha first, he will advise me on what to make of the situation. Time reads 21:12, these people are still not home. Sabatha has gone to sleep, I'm in the kitchen alone, pacing up and down. Their phones are all on voicemail. Kanyo! Why haven't I



thought of her? I can be slow at times. She answers when I'm about to drop. I get right to point, there is no time to waste with greetings. "Our parents are missing," I say. "Which parents? I'm here with Ankela and Mbuso." Oh thank goodness! "They've been gone since 2pm. What are they doing there?" I ask. "We are burning Kwenza Mdletshe's house." WTF! She just said that like it's a normal thing to do. "Are you serious?" I ask knowing very well that she is serious. She loves trouble, everywhere she goes it follows her. I'm sure she is the one who came up with the idea. I don't even want to know how she got to the Mdletshe's with Buthelezi and Mbuso. "Yes I'm serious, the police are coming," she says with little excitement in her voice. They are going to jail? I feel my arms getting sweaty. I walk out and look at the Mdletshe's direction, there is smoke going up to the sky. This is not good at all. I want to go check what is happening but I cannot leave Sabatha alone. It's dark when I see my mother's figure walking towards the kitchen. I've been standing outside for the whole past hour. "Mama where is Mbuso?" I ask. "The police took them, all of them." I let the tears I've been holding flow freely. "What do you mean all of them?" I ask. "Your aunt, Mbuso, Kanyo, your uncles and your father. They've been arrested, all of them," she says. My whole family! I can't believe this is happening, Mbuso needs to go to school tomorrow. "MaShenge are you okay?" He keeps asking. I don't know why I called him while crying. I can't even explain what's happening. My heart is bleeding for Mbuso. How is he going to sleep on the cold floors in a holding cell? He didn't even eat before leaving I'm sure he is hungry where he is. "Babe should I come?" he asks. "Yes please," I say. The fact that I fell asleep last night shocks me. I remember rocking the pillow, crying in ascending pattern. When I've cried for too long I end up crying in a pattern and cry harder when I lose that pattern. The sun is up, I should get off bed and get ready to go to the police station. My mother walks in with a cup of hot tea. "You are up?" she asks. No, I'm still asleep. "Yeah," I say. "Drink this and wash your face, your boss is here." My boss? I have a boss? "Jestini Cele, your boss," she says. No ways! I jump off bed and almost spill the tea. We have no fancy chair to sit on. The goats shit all over the yard at night, it smells like pee every morning. He is sitting on a reedmat on the floor. MaJali took the responsibility of making him breakfast, Oros juice and buttered bread. This man eats croquet monsieurs and drinks 100%fruits juice. "I have told him everything," she says. Everything? She narrows her eyes, sending the message only me, Mbuso and Sabatha knows. I greet Sosha formally, bowing my knees a little. He frowns, he doesn't know the good girl I am at home. We get in the car and head to the police station. Good grace my mother stayed behind with Sabatha who refused to go to school, I'm getting all the support I need. Kisses, hugs and thigh squeezes. Someone is entering the gate as our car stops outside the police station. I can recognise him even from a distance. A wave of fury crashes through my veins. "He is here Sosha," I say, furiously. He holds my hand and begs me to calm down. The last time I saw this guy I nearly got arrested, I don't know why we have to bump into each other. He stares at me while squeezing my hands. "Do you want justice?" he asks. "No, I only want my family and peace of mind." He disapproves, I can see it in his eyes. I know he wants justice for me but I'm done with Kwenza Mdletshe, I just want peace. "Okay stay in the car, I will get your family," he says. I stay two good hours inside the car with no single update of what's going on. I didn't eat breakfast, my stomach is growling, my head feels too light, like I could faint any minute. Kanyo's loud voice forces me to open my eyes. They are all coming towards the car. Both my uncles are here, I don't know how





they got to the Mdletshes. Are they going to fit in this car? Well they are black, of course they fit. "Did you see the ghost around 2am?" Kanyo asks. "Stop lying Kanyo, it was a light." They are all laughing like nothing wrong happened, except Buthelezi. He is looking outside the window with his jaws clenched, he is darker than usual. Kanyo is holding the front seat with us. "Khazi is this brand new phone yours?" Kanyo asks. I look at her confused, which phone is she talking about? She makes a sign with her eyes. Oh the phone is Sosha. "Oh yes it is," I say. "You go girl, it's a whole Apple iPhone. Make sure you don't lose it." Can we not have this conversation in front of the elders? Aunt July is a fast learner, she will figure this iPhone thing out quickly. Now everything is out, everyone knows. They are willing to fight the Mdletshes but no one has addressed the issue with me. My uncles can't even look at me in the eyes. "Are you not getting inside son?" Buthelezi asks looking at Sosha. "No Baba I have to rush back to Durban," he says. I stay inside the car and watch until they disappear inside the premises. "Are you okay?" he asks. "I'm worried about my father," I say. "Talk to him and tell him that he didn't fail you. He had no control over another person's sick personality. It's not his fault at all." He is right, I just hope Buthelezi will listen and not take the blame. He is a good father, not God, he can't control everything. "I'm also worried about the decision I have to make. I just...I don't know what to think," I say. "You don't have to worry," he says. I look at him in awe. Is he giving up? "I don't have to worry?" I ask. "I can wait, years or decades, as long as you love me. I just wanted to do things the right way and honour your parents. But if you are not ready it's okay, you are young and handling a lot on your plate. The moment you say yes I will come, your voice will always direct me. The thing is..." He pauses and squeezes my hand. His face is packed with lot of emotions. "Ever since I met you I'm scared of being without you. It's the world I don't want to live in, but I can't let my fears be the core of our union. I want you to be sure I'm what you want. I just hope you don't change your mind. I hope your feelings don't change while we are waiting." My hands grab his neck and bring his face closer. I've never loved before, but I do now. Every square inch of my body dissolves as he professes his love. Our kiss is soul-gripping. I'm certain that he loves me, I can't let the past to control my future. "He needs some time to cool down, maybe a few weeks or so then I will tell him," I say. He looks confused, he doesn't get where this is going. "My father," I say narrowing my eyes. Now he gets it, the smile on his face is priceless. "Ngizozifaka zonke esibayeni MaShenge," he says and plants a kiss on my cheek. Well I just accepted a wedding proposal, life is unpredictable.

Chapter 13 My uncles are avoiding me, nobody has asked how I have been holding up or anything. But I'm still grateful they are here, they fought for me and made me feel like my existence and voice matters for once. When the sun sets everyone leaves except Kanyo. Aunt July gave me money, for the third time in her life, she said it's pocket money. R20 is big coming from her. "Khaaaazi," Kanyo screams right in front of me. It's after the sour dinner, I'm washing the dishes. She is not even lifting a finger to help, she is chatting on her phone, making thousand voice notes. We all know Kanyo is loud, she talks like she is falling from a tree, but



guess how she talks on these voice notes? Sweet, soft and sexy. She is spicing Zulu with bits of English, throwing unnecessary 'meantime's & hences'. "We have to discuss that guy. Where did you meet? How long have you been together? And most of all, does he give you money?" Can she focus on that phone a bit longer? My mother is just outside the door she could hear all this. "Khazi I don't want to deceive you, his looks contribute zero value to the relationship if he doesn't give you money. Relationship is about good sex, money and money," she says. She should've let me answer first. "You counted money twice," I say. She takes out a cigarette and lights it. If anything like cancer happens to me we all know who my killer is. "I know, it's good sex, money and money," she says. I doubt she can even explain the word 'relationship' to me. Who is she to give advices? "Do you have a boyfriend Kanyo?" I ask. She should have one, all this expertise can't go to waste. "I have boyfriends, not boyfriend," she says rolling her eyes. The thing is sometimes we think we are in relationships with people only to find that we are alone, the person is in a relationship with someone else. I don't think my cousin is aware of such. Buthelezi is another story. The news changed him, he is no longer the father I know. Yesterday I talked to him, I don't know if anything I said changed his mindset. Sadly I cannot ask my mother how he is with her, that would be total disrespectful. She is not that kind of a mother, I can't even tell her about Kegel balls' sale. There is a meeting tomorrow at Induna's homestead. It's about the Mdletshe house, the elders will sort it out, I don't need more headache. The Mdletshe have no case against us, their son can tell them. Most rapists are behind bars facing years of imprisonment and he got away with it. The burden that was on my shoulders has been lifted off, now I'm looking forward to the future. Justice or not, it's well with my soul. I have gone to the ancestors' rondavel and inhaled impepho and officially said goodbye to the parents. I enter in the boys' room to say goodbye. I don't know whose sneakers are on top of the study table, their clothes are scattered all over. The windows are not opened, it's freakin' hot inside. The roommates are lying on bed, listening to the radio. "Really guys?" I say looking around in awe. They look at me confused, nothing looks wrong to them. "It's 11am and your room is not cleaned, seriously guys!" I say. "It's your turn," Mbuso says looking at Sabatha. "No it's not, I cleaned yesterday." I don't have time to listen to this, Mbuso is bullying him I know it's his turn. "I'm leaving now, I love you both," I say. Mbuso's eyes widen while Sabatha laughs his lungs off. They don't think I have a right to tell them that, they don't know that I can plant kisses right on their lips and leave. "Did you hear me?" I ask. "Yes we heard," they say. I raise my eyebrow, even Sosha never blue-ticks my love confession. "So?" I ask. "Nothing." They are laughing. I lean over Sabatha and kiss him, and go to Mbuso and do the same. The shock on their faces! My journey back to Durban is long, this driver cannot drive at all. Yes I don't have driver's licence, I don't know the difference between clutch and handbrake, but when someone is a bad driver I know. This one must go ask for a refund from his driving school. He doesn't even know there is something called fast lane and overtaking. Ntando is waiting for me with a bowl of popcorn. She wants me to narrate the whole Ndulinde saga to her. When people start taking your life as a movie you must know that you are far from being normal. "Sosha's dick is not running away, relax," she says. "I miss him, not his dick," I say. She throws popcorn in her mouth and chews like an Indian. "He is his dick, what are you talking about? Sit down and tell me the drama." Oh, it's not a movie but drama. "Ntando I told you everything over the phone yesterday. My family



got arrested after burning one of the Mdletshe houses. Sosha came and got them out," I say. "And what did Kwenza do?" Sigh! I told her this yesterday. "He came and withdrew the case his family opened against mine," I say. "Why didn't you open...." She is going to ask me this again? Lord! "I don't want to go to courts and revive bad memories Ntando, don't even try to convince me otherwise," I say. I know how much she wants to see Kwenza behind bars and that's the right thing to do, he deserves it. But my peace matters more than justice, I want to have a peaceful life, where I only get wet dreams of Sosha and ripe mangoes. "So what now?" she asks. "So now I'm going to Sosha's house," I say. "Pshhhh," she is rolling her eyes with a bored look on her face. I call an Uber and head to Morningside, Sosha is not expecting me, it's a surprise. I told him I will see him tomorrow. You know when you are trying to surprise a person and end up being the one surprised? That's me right now, I'm surprised by locked doors. He told me he has no plans today and will be home all day. I can't go back to Westridge, Ntando was calling Sanele over. I don't want to be a spare wheel. Now I see the importance of owning spare keys. Did I eat anything? I can't remember, my stomach can't remember either. His fridge is filled with exotic food. There are leftovers but I can't tell you what they are. They look yummy though. Nay, it tastes weird, it must be his Italian stuff. My heart jumps with joy when I see French polony, now I can eat South African food. Wait, French polony? They transported polony all the way from France. We are lazy, can't we make Xitsonga polony? I don't know how many times I've stopped myself from calling him. I want him to come home, I don't care about the surprise anymore. There are voices coming outside. Loud, yelling voices. "Hey fokof man!" That's Sosha's voice. "Get in the house Sosha." It's Bayede yelling. It sounds like there is a fight outside. I'm standing in the middle of the dining room, not sure about my next move. Should I go check what's going on or wait here? An old man walks in, his sleeves are rolled up to his elbows. He has his jaws clenched, anger is livid on his face. Bayede follows with Sosha behind him. His lip is bleeding, the arm of his shirt is torn. My eyes pop out at the sight of him. Bayede is the first one to notice me. He stops dead on his tracks and looks at me with his eyes widened. "Wena nja ungazongijwayela kabi," Sosha says pointing at the man. I've never seen him this angry. Bayede pushes him and stands between him and the man. "Sosha don't do this in front of MaShenge,"- Bayede. Only then Sosha sees me. His eyes are firing hatred and cruelty. I don't recognize my boyfriend in him. "Baba let's go to the car," Bayede says directing to the man. This is their father? The one Sosha calls inja? "Stay with your brother, make sure he drink his medication," the father says. That seems to infuriate Sosha even more. Bayede has to push him back again as he charges towards his father with his fists folded. He wants to fight his own father, who does that? The whole scene is unbelievable. Their father walks out, I can't explain the look on his face. I'm sure he regrets not wearing a condom in 1990, all this could've been prevented. My eyes are burning with tears. This is his father, the man who brought him on this earth. I don't care what their story is, you don't lift your hand to your parent. You don't talk like that to an elder. What example is he setting to Maya? That she should fight with Bayede? I'm beyond shocked and embarrassed. "Hi MaShenge," Bayede says. He looks embarrassed as well. I acknowledge the greeting with a nod, I don't trust my voice at the moment. He turns to Sosha and asks him to follow him. They disappear to the kitchen. I had a kettle plugged for tea, I follow behind them. He is taking his medication. In my head it was one or two, not so many pills. He looks down



when he realises that I've been watching. This is not life of a normal person. "Do you need a lift?" Bayede asks. He is looking at me, I guess he is talking to me. "No, I'm not leaving yet," I say. He was about to leave but he grabs the chair and sits. My troubled boyfriend walks past me and leaves the kitchen. I wonder if his father did anything wrong, he said sometimes there are no triggers. I really feel sorry for Bab' Cele. Bayede takes a loud breath and asks if I'm okay. "I'm sorry you had to see him like that, he will be fine when he has calmed down," he says. "So he really fought with your father?" I ask. He ignores the question by looking around the room as if he is searching for something. I wish his father was my uncle Bhekizwe, he would've beaten the IED out of him. Desheton! I can't bring myself to leave the kitchen and look for him after Bayede has left. I regret coming here, I should've stayed with Ntando and dished the 'drama' in details for her. I just witnessed something I've never seen, a son fighting his father calling him inja. He is lying on bed with his face turned downwards. I thought we would be on our second round by now. He turns his head slowly and looks at me. His lower lip is swollen, there will be no kiss for me. "How are you?" I ask. He is quiet for a moment then he asks me to come closer to him. He wants a hug, I hold him and press him on my chest. "I'm sorry babe," he says. "Why? You didn't do anything to me," I say. "You shouldn't have seen that, I'm really trying to control things but sometimes it's hard," he says. He is apologising to the wrong person, the person he owes an apology is his father. We will discuss how ugly his father looks later. "You shouldn't have spoken like that to your father. No matter what he has done he doesn't deserve a fist from his own son. He is your parent, by doing that you are blocking your blessings. One day you will regret this Sosha, that finger you pointed in his eyes will come back to you," I say. He looks at me, anger is rising in him like a tide. He took the pills, right? "You don't know what you are talking about," he says surprisingly calm. In this calmness there is subdued pain. I don't want to poke it further. "Please answer my question," I say. "What question?" he asks. "I asked how are you doing?" "I am fine," he says. I look at his lip, he is useless to me right now. "Your lip doesn't look okay," I say "Bayede did this, he punched me." Bloody brother! "Who am I going to kiss now?" I ask. "We will fuck without kissing," he says. My eyes widen as his smile broadens. He thinks I'm here for sex, which is true, but the way he says it turns me off. "We are not fucking," I say. He raises his eyebrow with a little smirk on his face. "You are sleeping over, right?" he asks. Obviously, I came with a huge bag. "Yes," I say. "Then we will fuck the whole night." What's this moisture I'm feeling between my thighs? Months ago I was talking sex without romance but today I'm the one failing to do it. I need him to kiss me and grab my waist like his life depends on me. I want him to latch on my nipples. Sex without his lips is incomplete, Bayede has no idea what he has done. I'm the only one going to work in the morning. He is the one who makes my lunch, I don't know what's inside, hopefully it's not his Italian things. "I will come fetch you after work sthandwa sami." "But I'm not coming back here," I say frowning. He says nothing, he just smiles and kisses my cheek. The car is waiting for me outside. Life with him is truly amazing. Who could've thought one day I would be driven to work in Rolls-Joyce something? These people should get used to it, every morning I'm getting weird looks. "Hello boss lady, where is the boss?" Boss lady, really? I roll my eyes at her. She scans the surroundings and walks to me. I laugh before she can say whatever she is about to say. "Your face looks like the morning glory effect," she whispers. What does that even mean? Thank God the telephone is ringing. "Damn these customers! Look



we will talk during tea, I want all details." She rushes to the telephone and answers. It seems like my life is a 'drama' to everyone. Being back at work feels great. I didn't realise I missed the smell of freshly baked cakes this much. There are new ones covered in thick chocolate, getting a small piece can change my whole life. They cost R1600, a whole goat! I text Amanda and ask how I can get a slice. She takes her gorgeous time to answer. Her text: Boo you are in the store. Is there any sliced cake for sale? I thought she would go to the bakers and ask for me but when days are dark friends are few. My mood turns sour instantly. I vent to Ntando about how the world has never loved me and how cruel Amanda is. She replies with laughing emojis. I want to die. When I knock off Sosha's car is nowhere in sight. This day keep getting worse. I stop the taxi and hop in. I'm back at the life of passing money to the front and change to the back. Taxis have no air-conditioners, they play Gqomu music until your ears go deaf. Oh my fancy self! "What took you so long?" Ntando asks. A hello would've been nice. I throw my bag on the table and sit. What a day it has been! "I bought the test kits, go pee," she says. I look at her confused, what test kits now? She puts three white tubes on the table. My eyes got to be deceiving me! Pregnancy tests? "Ntando are you crazy! What did buy these for?" I ask. She looks at me with concerned eyes. "You never crave for any food. Have you been protecting yourself?" That's...She is crazy. I wanted a piece of cake, that's not a pregnancy symptom. "Have you?" she asks again. "Not everyday but I have been protecting," I say. I remember making a mental note to buy morning-after pills but till this day I haven't bought them. A lot is happening in my life, my memory can hardly keep up. "Yanga how can you be so irresponsible? You could be pregnant for a guy you met three months ago. Since when are you so trusting?" Since I met Sosha I've been a liquid and flowing with everything he says. I don't know how he muzzled me, he has me wrapped around his finger. "Please go pee so that we can know what is going on," she says. This is my first time testing for pregnancy. My hands are trembling, I'm just not ready. "How long should I wait?" I ask coming out of the bathroom. "I think five minutes," she says. I throw it at her and kneel down on the floor. I put my hands together and recite Our Father Who Arts In Heaven. I don't pray that much, God must take this seriously. If he can turn this test negative I swear I will go to church and pay His salary...I mean the tithe. I open my eyes and look at Ntando. Her expression is indefinable. "What is it?" I ask. She stops me with her hand. "Don't get up, stay on the floor." The tiles are freaking cold. "Is it bad news?" I ask. "Sit on the floor Yanga." I obey and sit.. "You are three weeks pregnant," she says. What? She is lying. She throws the kit to me, I pick it up with trembling hands. I'm not a nurse but I know two lines means positive. This one go as far as telling you how many weeks, soon there will be one telling who the father is. "How accurate is this thing?" I ask. "99.9%," she says. My ancestors just turned their backs on me. What did Buthelezi burn impepho for? Is this how they thank me for the chickens I slaughtered for them last year? "There is 0.1% chance that you are not pregnant, take another one," she says. I take two more tests, they all come back positive. I use to see the world as a huge planet but today it's smaller. There is a lot going on in my life. The baby cannot have two therapy-attending parents. I'm going to be a mother when I'm 32years, when Soshha has defeated the IED. He's been calling nonstop, I can't bring myself to answer his calls. "People will think you are trapping him with a baby, you'll lose your figure and have chubby cheeks. I heard giving birth is almost like dying," she says. "I know that, what makes you think I need you to tell me?" I snap. I leave





her with her innocent, flat tummy and go shut myself in the room. In Ndulinde nothing trends like a girl who went to the city to work and came back with a huge stomach. The controversy around who might be the father will be bigger than Zuma's fraud cases. I'm sorry God but I will be terminating this pregnancy. I'm not ready to be a mother. "Babe open the door," Ntando says outside my bedroom door. "Push, it's not locked," I say. There is a phone on her hand. I already know what's going on. She gives me pity look that says 'I have no choice.' I take the phone and put it on my ear. I have to act normal. "MaShenge are you there?" "Yes babe," I say. "My session delayed, I'm so sorry." I didn't even know his session was today. "It's okay, I took a taxi," I say. "Must I come over with your cake?" I look at Ntando with my eyes popped out. How did he find out about the cake? "No I'm fine," I say. "Are you sure?" Geez! I need to breathe. "Yes I'm sure," I say. "Okay but I'm coming to see you." Were we not together just this morning? I need privacy, a lot of it. "I have terrible headache, I'll see you tomorrow babe." "I will bring the painkillers," he says. He won't give up. I have no more excuses to bring up. Ntando takes her phone and asks what's going on. I tell her about my decision. For the first time in her life she keeps quiet. No questions, no argument. She just stares at me with a blank face. Guess what? Sosha comes with the cake, not the slice I wanted, a whole cake. I guess it's Amanda who told him, she doesn't let anything slides. "Are you okay?" he asks brushing my cheek. He looks even sexier with a small band aid on his lip. "I'm fine," I say faking a smile. "On Saturday Myalo is launching his first kids deodorant, I would like you to come with me," he says. Oh never, the launch is one of those big fancy function right? I don't attend those. "We will come back when you want us to," he says. I shake my head, that won't make any difference. I'm not ready to be arm-to-arm with him in front of the cameras. It's like he reads my mind, he jumps in and tells me that there won't be any cameras. "Still, I don't have fancy Durban July dresses," I say. "Boutiques are not shut down, we can go get a dress right now." I'm not going to win this one. "Okay fine, I will go," I say. "How much do you need for the dress?" he asks. We all know dresses cost around R5k, that's if they are on sale. "It's not just a dress, I need shoes, new hairstyle, make-up and a cute purse," I say. He sends his hand to his pocket and comes back with the black wallet. He puts the bank card on my lap. This shows that my ancestors aren't relaxing in heaven. "How much should I spend?" I ask. "Get everything you need," he says. Wow, even the weight of his bank card is different from mine. I feel like Patrice Motsepe as I walk back inside the building. "He is not coming in?" Ntando asks when she sees me walking in without her friend. "No, he is rushing somewhere," I say. "It's his loss, I cooked delicious chicken tikka breyani." We eat in silence, pregnancy is the only thing on my mind. As I'm eating I imagine a little thing inside my stomach, a creepy little foetus that demands slices of cake in the middle of the day. "Babe you're crying," Her voice brings me back to life. Damn! Wiping tears is like provoking them, they are pouring out like a rain. "Call Craig," she says. I haven't thought about him. Our next appointment is in two days but I need his advice as in today. I call him and he tells me what I don't want to hear. He says I must let Sosha know. He preaches honesty and mutual decision making. I owe Sosha a piece of that. The launch day comes and I still haven't told him about the pregnancy. I have done my research on pregnancy termination and googled the doctors around me and their prices. A part of me feels like I'm going to pay someone to kill my baby. Just those two words 'my baby' kill my soul. He has been complimenting me the whole journey to Mount Edgecombe where the



launch is. I know I'm stunning in this dress, but my mind and soul are dirty. I need counselling before the abortion and after it. I expected to see some kids, they said it's their deodorant being launched. No wonder kids of today have no respect, it's these deodorants and rights. Someone calls Sosha behind, we stop. It's a smartly dressed guy, he making his way to us. When he get to us he shakes Sosha's hand and greets him before he notices the human being standing next to him. This is my routine the whole time; someone calls him, we stop, they acknowledge him and then notice me. Myalo is with a lady, she is everywhere with him, in her mind she is the first lady of the launch. Well she is, but I think she should let him breathe for a minute. I've let Sosha breathe, I don't even know where he is, he left with some white dudes. Someone calls my name, the Sosha one. It's a gorgeous lady in six inch stilettos. "How are you?" She asks with a smile on her face. I don't know who she is, but for her to call me MaShenge means she knows a thing or two about me. "I'm okay," I say. "I'm Yolanda." Yolanda....Adams, maybe? "Hi Yolanda," I say. "I'm with Mlando, I thought I should come and say hi." Oh, she is perfect for Mlando. I wonder if she is the first or third chick. My dress looks cheap compared to hers, I don't know how she walks in a tight dress like this. "I'm happy to meet you," I say. She puts her hand on my shoulder, her weird perfume fills my nostrils. I hold my breath and try not to look disgusted. "We will talk later, let me go take pictures with the lady of the moment," she says. She slides through people and goes up to Myalo's girlfriend. They pose for thousand pictures, they must be Insta-queens. It's the only reason people can take so many pictures. I look around to see if I'm not the only person holding a plate of snacks. I don't want to find myself trending on social networks. "WOW!" The person says behind me. It's none other than Sabelo. He comes in front of me and looks at me from head to toe. I've stopped eating, my appetite has vanished. "Yazi you are beautiful, you just needed a bath," he says. I should be mad, that's what he is expecting. "Hi Sabelo," I say calmly. "Hello gorgeous." There is a stinking shade behind that "gorgeous". He is wearing a black tuxedo, maybe he thought this was a funeral. "I thought I've seen handsome but today you just proved me wrong. You look good," I say. He rolls his eyes. Is he real straight? "I'm taken sisi," he says. "That's such a loss, girls have missed a good treasure." He clicks his tongue, we both laugh. "Where is my friend?" he asks. I throw a dark brown, crunchy thing in my mouth. Rich people's snacks! I know Marie biscuits and Nik Naks. "I'm well Sabelo, thanks for asking," I say between the chews. A white guy appears and taps his shoulder. He winks at me and attends him. I excuse myself and look for a spot where I can eat without any disturbances. There is a chair by the concertina door, I make myself comfortable on it and kill the snacks. "Kwasuka ijuba kwahlala ungede," someone says next to me. I look up surprised. He is tall, super dark and smartly dressed. His age doesn't allow him to fight for chairs in a function though. He could be someone's father. "Is it your chair?" I ask. "Not my chair but I put it here," he says. "I didn't know, sorry," I say. He doesn't leave, he thinks I'm going to give the chair back. "I'm not going to give it back, go get another one or keep standing like that," I say. "Are you joking?" Do I look like Trevor Noah? "No I'm not," I say. He stares at my face like he is studying me. "What's your name?" he asks. "I'm Adankwo," I say. The Nigerian accent just came out of nowhere. It must be the Nigerian movie I watched last night. "Obi di muto izute gi," he says. Oh shucks! What am I going to say now? He starts picking from my plate and throwing in his mouth. At least we've switched to English, he is telling me about how he got lost on his way coming here. He lives in North West,



Rustenburg. He is Myalo's business associate. He is a Nigerian but speaks Zulu like he sucked it from his mother. Sosha appears out of nowhere. His eyes are dark, he is simmering with anger. "What's going on here?" he asks. The guy is confused as I am. What is going on where and why is he angry? There is no time to analyse the question and come up with an answer, the guy's collar is already on his hands. "You're all lovey-dovey with my girlfriend, huh?" This cannot be happening! Where is Myalo? Everyone's attention is on us, some are taking videos with their phones. Mlando comes through the crowd and pulls me towards the exit door. We leave the chaos inside being sorted by the security guards and Myalo. "MaShenge what happened?" he asks. "I don't know, I want to leave right now." He doesn't say another word, we get in the car and leave. In the morning my pictures are scattered everywhere. SOSHA CELE'S NEW GIRLFRIEND CAUGHT FLIRTING WITH ISAAC EJIKEME- This is how I'm introduced to the world, as the flirting girlfriend who caused a fight in Myalezo Mchunu's launch. He is calling, changing different numbers. At the moment I'm not taking any calls, not even Amanda's. I have the worst morning sickness, this just adds to my pain. I'm lying on bed with an empty bottle of water next to me, daydreaming about snowballs. "He is here," Ntando says walking through the door. She has this tendency of treating me like a sangoma. I look at her, ready to enquire but her eyes tell me exactly who she is talking about, it's the Cele psycho. He must go away, there is no excuse for what he did. He begged me to go with him to the launch, only to turn me into the morning headlines. Aunt July once requested a Facebook account, these viral rumours could reach the wrong ears. Because he is the boss of the bosses he trespasses and walks in my room. He just has no respect for me or my space, I can't even look at him. He squats on the floor, just below my face. The amount of view he is blocking with his big head makes body heats up. "MaShenge I'm sorry, I know I embarrassed you and..." I face the other way, his face is the last thing I want to see. "I will share my medical records with the world and clear your name. I apologised to the guy and Myalo, I didn't mean to act like that," he says. He thinks this is about his medical conditions and all? It's about the damn trust. It's not about what other people are thinking of me, it's about what his big head is thinking. I look like a cheater to him, isn't? "This is not about your craziness, it's about trust," I say. I've been fighting Ntando for calling him crazy but today I'm the one who is doing it. "It's not craziness, it's a disorder," he says. If I was him I wouldn't correct me, he is not in the position to tell me what to say. I haven't been diagnosed with any mental disorders because my unstable head needs amagobongo. Maybe he has forgotten who Yangomuhle is. "I don't care what your doctor said it is, you don't trust me and you've made me a bitch of the year. Have you seen the comments on social media?" He keeps his eyes on me and gives no answer. I know he read them, he knows what he has done. My name has been destroyed just like that. "Please leave," I say. Today he doesn't argue, he stands up and leaves. Ntando walks in after a few minutes. She is ready for an update, she is staring at me with her hands on the hips. "I hate him Ntando, you should've seen how stupid he looked attacking the poor guy for nothing," I say. She lifts her eyebrows and chuckles. "Hate him? Oh okay, alright!" Oh she doesn't believe me. "I'm 100% sure I hate him. He can go hang himself on the mango tree, I don't care," I say. She is giving me a sarcastic look, it's so annoying. Deep down I also know that I'm lying, I won't stop caring just like that. I still love him. "Did you make the appointment?" she asks. Appointment? Oh the abortion one. "Not yet," I say. She drops her head



to the side, showing her disapproval. I sigh and pull my phone under the pillow and dial the number. I have to press 'call' but I cannot bring myself to it. Am I really doing this? Am I aborting a girl or boy? "Babe don't do it, please give him or her a chance to live. You've connected with this baby, I have seen your hand brushing your tummy a number of times. Terminating will leave you with guilt and unanswered questions, don't do it," she says. Why is she not pregnant? She's been having sex too. "God is unfair. I'm not the only girl who had unprotected sex in South Africa. Why am I the only one pregnant?" I ask. The fool is laughing. She is God's favourite that's why it's funny to her. Now I have to walk around with 'Fuck Me Harder' evidence. I think God is mad at me, I don't even have the Bible App, there is no way he could've let my sex-before-marriage sin goes unseen. I have the ugliest face in the mornings. I'm the cold-looking employee at work, Cynthia will have me in her office soon. Morning customers get crappiest services, my mood only improves during the day. Sosha and I are still not on speaking terms but he doesn't forget to send me good morning and goodnight texts, of which I never bother myself replying to. Amanda is always wearing stilettos, it's easy to know when she is coming, she makes clicking annoying noise on the floor. She has ass-touching braids, probably paid by Sphelele and pulled by Sam at night. "Hey Yanga," she says flatly. She is not energetic as usual. "Hey are you okay?" I ask. She sits on the table and cross her legs. Today she is not wearing any make-up, something must be really wrong. "I'm in a big problem, my periods didn't come." Oh shut the front door! "Are you serious?" I ask. "It's bad babe." She sighs. Okay she is my partner in pregnancy, God didn't punish me alone. I accompany her to the pharmacy after work. I'm that supportive friend who gives a shoulder to cry on while wishing the worst at heart. I want her to be pregnant like me. We buy the test and head to her apartment. It's my first time in her house and it's exactly how I imagined it to be. Perfect, hardly-used kitchen and the dressing room that looks like a make-up shop. Her pictures are in every room, just in case someone didn't know who owns the house. She is in the bathroom, I'm here alone with sets of make-up. Which thing comes first here? Let me start with the eyebrows. I didn't excel in Technology but I'm sure I can draw an eyebrow that looks like road to Mecca. "There are two lines Yangomuhle, what does it mean?" I put the brushes away and walk to her. Two vertical lines, red in colour...Mmm! I'm the doctor of the evening and I have bad news for her. We go through the most when delivering bad news to our patients. "You've been diagnosed with stage one of pregnancy, unfortunately there is nothing we can do, the condition will automatically heal after nine months," I say. "You're playing, right?" Do doctors play? I doubt. "Congratulations mommy," I say. She ties her braids on top of her head and takes her stilettos off. She is feeling hot, the top is being stripped off. "I hope it's Sphelele's," I say. "It's his, imagine!" What should I imagine? He is her fiancée, she is better than me. "It's unfair, I didn't even reach orgasm," she says. "I'm better than you, at least I had several orgasms." She looks at me shocked. Oh shit! "You are pregnant?" she asks. I have to tell Sosha before he hears it from her. His car is parked outside the building. I haven't thought of how I'm going to approach the matter with him, I'm almost six weeks now. Ntando screams when I walk in. "Sosha get rough salt!" she says. I frown and look behind me. She is looking straight at my face. I'm confused, what's strange about my face? Sosha appears, his face transforms into shock. It's like they are seeing a ghost. Damn! I remember painting my face with Amanda's make-up. Her pregnancy news disturbed me half way with my eyebrows. "What



happened to your face?" Sosha asks. We are not on speaking terms, it seems like he has forgotten. I walk past them and go to my bedroom. As usual he follows me and lets himself inside my room. "Do you still hate me?" he asks. "Greet first, where are your manners?" There is a ghost of a smile on his face. He is wearing my tie and true-blue suit. "I'm sorry, how you are doing?" he says. "Pregnant..." His frown stops me halfway. I don't know how he is going to take this. "I'm doing well," I say. "Did you say you are pregnant?" he asks. I already spilled the beans, there is no turning back now. "Yes I'm pregnant." I nod my head. He walks closer and lifts my top up. I'm not showing yet but the shape of my tummy has changed. "Why didn't you tell me?" he asks. "I wasn't sure I wanted to keep it," I say. He looks at me in disbelief, there is an element of disgust in his raised eyebrows. "I'm not cruel Sosha, being a mother was not part of my plans," I say. He bites his lip and stares at me for a short while. "Wow MaShenge! Wow!" He did this to me, what does WOW stand for? "Don't 'WOW' me, you are selfish and inconsiderate. You wanted this, that's why you didn't want sex with protection, I should've known how sick your version of love is. Now I'm pregnant, PREGNANT Sosha!" I leave him inside the room and bang the door on my way out. My life is a mess, I need food and sour lemon juice. When this month ends I have to go home. How am I going to escape Ndulinde home-made doctors? They will detect this pregnancy just from the way I breathe. Real doctors have nothing on grandmothers and village women. They can tell you're pregnant two hours after conceiving. He is sitting on bed, waiting for me. Now that I'm full my anger has vanished, I overreacted a little bit. I kiss his lips and look in his eyes. He is swallowed in sadness, my words touched a nerve. I haven't changed my opinion regarding the matter but I've forgiven him. "Are you going to keep the baby?" His voice is heavy, it's packed with emotions. I have hurt him. "Yes I'm keeping our baby Sosha," I say. "Thank you sthandwa sami," he says. "It's what you wanted, isn't?" I ask. He rubs his browridge and grins. "Please don't kill me." He wanted me pregnant? Unbelievable! "Why Sosha? You've known me only for a few months and you know the journey ahead of me." He smiles and grabs my hands in a warm squeeze. "I want to keep you and walk the journey with you," he says. Who said babies keep people? I will stay because I love him, not because we made a baby together. "I felt blessed the day you said you love me, but today I feel even more blessed because we've created a life together. God has seen it fit to make us parents despite of how broken we are," he says. He is happy. I have no doubts that he will be a good father to this baby. "I sent the letter last week, I didn't include the damages part because I didn't know. I pray your fathers don't kill my uncles." He did what? I didn't tell him to send the letter, I said I will tell my father when the time is right. "Why didn't you wait for me to talk to Buthelezi as I said?" I ask. "I couldn't wait any longer, my house is not a home without you MaShenge.

Chapter 14 The Celes will tell my family about the pregnancy during the negotiations. To say I'm nervous about tomorrow would be an understatement. My mother has been giving me strange looks since I arrived. It's 32° and I have a big fluffy coat on. "Sisi are you not hot in that coat?" Sabatha asks. Only if he minded his own business. He didn't go to school, he said his neck is





sore. His questions are annoying. Earlier it was why I was not eating chicken, now it's my coat. "Do you know where the goats are?" I ask. Fear flushes over his eyes, he rushes out immediately. I pray they are not destroying someone's garden, angry neighbours are the last thing we need. "My baby girl," says Aunt July walking through the door. I've been getting special treatment from her, it's really weird. Maybe she is getting a portion from the lobola, that's the only thing that can make her worship me this much. "Kanyo told me that your man is rich, he should double the price," she says. I forget Kanyo is wet-mouthed, I bet the whole village knows. "He is not rich, he is financial stable," I say. "Does he know that Sasko added 20c on brown bread?" I shake my head and laugh. "Then he is rich," she says. She is rinsing the dishes while taking me through her youth days. She married her first boyfriend and got deflowered after the wedding. I have to act surprised to everything she says and pretend as if I don't know anything about dicks. "How far are you?" What? My coat is zipped to the neck. How did she...Village doctors! "Aunty there is a mosquito coming to your ear," I say. She laughs and clap her hands. I'm in a big mess, this woman is her brother's keeper, she will tell him before the Celes arrive. "I'm 7 weeks, please don't tell my parents," I say. "Your mother is the one who told me, they know." Oh hell no! I'm leaving two minutes after the negotiations tomorrow, I won't be able to face my father. No number of cows can erase the fact that I opened my legs for a man and that's what he is going to see when he looks at me. Ntando is here first thing in the morning. I don't know where she found Kanyo, she is holding the front seat in her car. "Umakoti ungowethu siyavuma..." She sings from the door "I'm not getting married Kanyo," I say. She doesn't care, she sings till the end. My mother is a bit annoyed, they don't get along that much. Kanyo is the type that tells you exactly what she thinks of you and blames it on alcohol the next day. The cooking begins, Ntando and my uncle's wife are in charge. Sosha said his uncles got lost but they are almost here. They are very late, they should've been here before the sunrise. They will be fined for it. He is disturbing me with his constant phone calls, I should be helping in the kitchen. "What did you eat today?" he asks. I don't know when our conversations turned this boring, he is obsessed with my eating pattern. "I don't remember but I must've eaten something earlier," I say. "Babe please eat, cook pasta and feed my baby." Did he get my address correctly? We don't eat pasta here, this is Ndulinde. "Okay I will cook pasta then," I say laughing. My aunt is busy washing amadumbe and bhatata. Ntando is making green salads and fried chicken. Where will amadumbe and bhatata go? "So tell us, how did you meet this man?" My mother asks. The kitchen is full of neighbours and relatives, do I really have to do this now? "He is her boss," Kanyo answers on my behalf. MaXaba, the neighbour, is looking at me like I broke the last rule of living. "I didn't sleep with him for the job, we fell in love after I was hired by his team," I explain. I can see the disbelief on my mother's face, she better be not her MaJali self, we are going to have a problem. When she sees the look on my face she turns to her cabbage and grate. She always thinks the worst of me. MaXaba sees the 'connection' and asks me to hire her niece who has been sitting home for years with her matric certificate. I have to explain that I'm also an employee at JC. I can't afford to hire a cab, how am I going to hire a person? There is a voice outside, the whole yard falls into silence. I've never felt so important in my life, there is a smile on my mother's face. "Siyakhuleka mnyamana kaNgqengelele Sondiya, mnaningamondi ongadliwa abantu, Owadliwa zindlovukazi zamlobolela. Siyakhuleka singoCele,oKhumbuza



Onkomo isengwa ilele ngoba mayimile iyakhahlela. Sizocela isihlobo esihle nina boPhungashe isemcakweni." I have hundred butterflies in my stomach. I don't need five years to decide, I'm going to marry him even if it's tomorrow. I never thought this day would come, I feel blessed like I've never been cursed before. "I told you he is the one," Ntando says, leaning over my shoulder. My cheek muscles are going to ache, I've been smiling nonstop. Did your father let them in? - the text. There is no way Buthelezi could've turned away money. I'm just scared because we haven't talked, I know he has a lot questions to ask. There is a lot of back and forth, I told my family about these people but still I have to dress up in knee-touching dress and doek and go acknowledge the Celes as the right people. Ntando accompanies me. It's totally different from the western marriage proposal. Here I have my father and uncles staring at me, wanting me to say no. "Yes we know them," Ntando answers on my behalf. One of abakhongi smiles, he looks like Mlando. I guess he is one of their absent uncles. "That's all we wanted to know, you're free to go." I take a huge breath when we step outside, I didn't know it was this hard. In the kitchen Aunt July is having two roasted chicken thighs and long glass of Coke. "See now you're going to start having sex, we have to talk later," she says. I'm not ready to have the sex talk with my own aunt, it's inappropriate and embarrassing. "Start, really?" Ntando whispers. She must learn to shut up. They conclude the negotiations, it's time for refreshments. Aunt July is two steps ahead of everyone, she is now eating dessert. "The guests will eat amadumbe nobhatata," she instructs. We are all shocked, except my mother and other women. "And you had roasted chicken?" I ask. "I'm family," she says. She is kidding, there is no way! "No Aunty, we went all the way out for the guests, not family," Ntando says. "Look Ntandoyenkosi, we don't know these people, we will go all the way out once they've fulfilled their promise of paying the bride price." This woman is crazy, there is no way my in-laws are going to eat amadumbe and bhatata. Did she see the cars they came in? "You're kidding, right?" I ask. "Unfortunately no my baby, they will eat what we give them. We cannot bless them with our mayonnaise and beetroot then the next thing they don't come back with my brother's cows," she says. Ntando and I bought everything that was cooked today. I really don't understand, this is about good hospitality, nothing else. They take a big jug and fill it with juice and dish amadumbe and bhatata on the plates. Kanyo is the one who takes the food to the Celes. She is a bit drunk, she doesn't see anything wrong with this. I used all my money to do the grocery for this day. I even bought an extra stove so that everything goes perfectly. If I knew this was going to happen I wasn't going to bother myself. It's early Christmas, the neighbours are dishing five pieces of meat each. The Celes barely touched their plates. I'm struggling to contain my emotions, I leave the kitchen and go to my room. MaJali follows behind me and asks if I'm okay. "I thought they would get a warm welcome, but clearly I was wrong," I say. "Unfortunately this family is not modernised, we still do things the way our elders taught us. They have to warm their way into our hearts, feeding them Christmas food is the last thing we should do after what their boy did to you," she says. "It's just food Ma, they will shit it out before the day ends!" She frowns and puts her hands on the waist. "Don't talk back to me, not in that tone!" Oh I forget that I'm a child. No voice, no opinion. "Okay it's fine," I say and face the other way. "Get your character ironed out, you are soon going to be someone's mother and wife. There are sacrifices and battles to be won and you are not going to win any with this attitude of yours." Speaking up is a certain attitude? Oh okay. "A real woman has her



head bowed down, she is watching her partner's footsteps, that way she is always one step ahead. But a girl has her head turned upwards, she is paying attention to what her ears hear and less attention to where she is going," she says. She gives me the eye of emphasis and walks out. I don't know how the subject changed from food to my character, but I will always remember her words. \*\*\*\*\* Sosha is laughing at the story of amadumbe and bhatata every day. He fulfilled his promise to my family and delivered three cows for the damages and paid half of the bride price. His rich family thought they would pay all of it at once, well not at the Buthelezis. My father told them I'm not a piece of cloth you purchase in one day. We had dinner at Bayede's house with his whole family. It was awkward, there were dirty looks thrown around the table. Sosha didn't talk to his father, not even once. Tshitshi is my second favourite in the family. She looks like her mother, India, and she is bubbly. I don't see a lot of her as she is based in Cape Town and captivated in the varsity life. Her mother is the story of another day, I don't blame Sosha for keeping his distance. I'm five months pregnant now and my feet always look like little tortoises. Amanda had the guts to go through abortion. A lot has happened, Sanele and Ntando broke up. She is now single and lives alone. She has moved to Briardene. Where do I stay? In Sosha's house. He begged me until I gave in and forced me to quit work. I'm a house-fiancé, all I do is sit in the house and eat until he comes home. I went from size 28 to 32, and by the look of things I'm still gaining further. I met Maya's mother last month, we clicked on our first encounter. She is no longer with Bayede but they maintain a good co-parenting relationship. I invited her for lunch today, Ntando and Amanda are working nonstop, I need someone to share my boring life with. She comes from KwaMaphumulo, our rural backgrounds make us relate more to each other. Unlike me, she sent izintombi to the Celes and did things traditionally. They broke up when Bayede left the country. She says it was too much for her, sometimes they'd go six months without seeing each other and she suspected he was seeing someone there in Canada. He is with another woman now, I've seen her once. She is nothing like Nomzamo, we had a two minutes chat and ran out of things to say to each other. She is a political person, I know nothing about politics, and I'm not even interested. I don't even know who the deputy president of South Africa is and I sleep peacefully at night. "Did you really cook this?" She is on my pots. I made beans curry and steamed bread. This meal reminds me home. It's Mbuso's favourite, we usually have it on Saturdays. "You are good, hey. I can never cook beans like this, my skills are on frying," she says. "Do you live on fried food?" I ask. She rubs her lips together, she does that a lot. You cannot tell whether she used little lipstick or it faded away during the rubbing. "I have a helper, she cooks for me." Did she not say she was unemployed and pursuing her Master's degree? "Oh, really?" I ask, frowning. "Maya's father is the one who hired her because I have to focus on my books." She is lucky...But wait, does the current girlfriend know about this? I doubt this is what babydaddies do for the mothers of their children. "That's cute, he is over-responsible," I say giving her a sharp, curious eye. She laughs, forming one dimple on her left cheek. She is dark in skin tone, her voice is deep like a man's. The only artificial thing she has is the nails, other than that she is just a Zulu goddess with natural black afro and round brown eyes. "You sound like everyone. Nobody understands us and our conduct of doing things," she says. This should tell her something, nobody understands them that means they're weirdos. I've heard that Bayede is gone to Spingo Hills to visit Maya a couple of times. "Fill me in, how does



your conduct of sleep-overs work?" I ask. "He sleeps with us or takes Maya to his house." Hhe mama! "Who is 'us'?" I ask. "Me and Maya." Lord of shenanigans! "On one bed?" I ask. She smiles and pulls a chair. I don't trust that smile, she is sneaky. "We don't do anything. Just like you share a bed with Sosha and don't do anything," she says. This is taking a different direction. "Who said we don't do anything?" I ask. "I overheard him talking to Bayede, he is sexual frustrated." Sosha is spreading our bedroom issues to his brothers? I'm shocked. We haven't gone that long without sex, maybe it's only five days. I've learnt to moderate my emotions, I keep calm as much as I can. I don't want to spoil my time with her, I carry on as if everything is fine. By the way she is still sleeping with Bayede, it's like a demotion from main chick to side chick. He bought her a house, car and everything. He is the one paying for her studies. They didn't break up in a sense of 'go to hell', they're just giving people like me something to talk about. I took a nap after seeing Nomzamo out and it turned into two hours of sleep. I'm woken up by a ringing phone. When I open my eyes someone is sitting next to me. "Hey babe," he says. "Mmmm." He kisses me on the forehead and puts his hands on my stomach. "How was your day today?" he asks. "I was with Nomzamo, it was okay." "Were you this beautiful all day?" He is smiling, his eyes dazzle with interest and affection. How can I forget what he did? All the Celes and their babymamas-slash-sidechicks know about our bedroom situation. "I heard that you told your brothers that you're not getting enough sex," I say. The interest that was in his eyes fades immediately, he didn't think I'd find out. "So you're discussing our bedroom issues with your brothers?" I ask. He removes his hands from me and sighs. "You also talk with Ntando. They are my brothers I did nothing wrong," he says. "Wow Sosha! What was the purpose of the talk? You wanted Bayede to hook you up?" I ask. He takes his phone and walks out. His level of disrespect is on another level. Inwardly I'm seething, my bag is packed, I'm ready to leave. He walks back in and casts his eyes on the packed bag. "Where is this bag going?" he asks. We don't answer each other, isn't? I pick it and walk out. Ntando had to leave whatever she was doing to fetch me, obviously she is not happy about it. I won't hear the end of how annoying I am. She recently did cornrows, she is effortlessly beautiful. Me on the other hand, I have defeated the Brazilian weave. I hate Sosha for doing this to me, I wasn't the most beautiful woman on the planet but I did get whistles at the taxi rank. Now I look like what? A hippo. "Can't Sosha buy you a car?" she asks. Twenty minutes later we are still on that. "No, all he wants is sex all the time," I say. Her eyes widen, she is about to demand the whole story which I've told her more than once. My bedroom mood is zero. I'd rather eat Mopane worms than to have a man sweating on top of me. "I pray to never fall pregnant, being a drama queen is not in my bones," she says shaking her head. That's rich coming from her, she is single because she is a drama queen. And I'm not being dramatic, Sosha disrespected me. In Sosha's house I don't cook, here I have empty pots patiently waiting for me. I feel like ordering pizza but my financial background doesn't allow me to spend R99 on pieces of flour. I miss Sosha, he would've flew to Debonnairs and got me triple decker with extra cheese. He hasn't called nor texted. A part of me regret leaving, I should've talked without letting my emotions take control. "YANGA!" She is carrying shopping bags, that's what must've delayed her, I was getting worried. "I'm here, don't scream," I say. She throws her bag on my lap and walks to her room. I have to pack the cupboards. Why am I alive? Oh yes, she bought a box of chocolates and ice-cream. This is surely going to lifts my mood. I was wrong



and I need to apologise to a man. No women deserves to go through this, it's torture. On top of everything we go through as women, periods and labour pain, we still have to ask men for forgiveness. Men should learn to automatically forgive us, it's only fair. I feel even weaker as I type this "I'm sorry" text. The front door opens and slams hard. I slide in my flip flops and make my way towards the kitchen. I'm ready to tell whoever it is the price of the door, but my pissed face transforms into awe when I see who it is. I wasn't done with the text, this is getting more frustrating. Now I have to apologise in person. Life of a woman! He scans the room and takes off the sunglasses. He is wearing red from T-shirt to sneakers. He looks horn-mad. "Go take your bags Yangomuhle," he jumps down my throat. I cancel the text I was typing and push the phone inside my pocket. "You're ordering me?" I ask. Before I know it he has grabbed me by my clothes and pulling me towards the door. "Let go of me!" I scream. My other hand grips on the handle of the door, my whole body is sweating. I don't know what he is going to do, Bayede advised me to call for help if he gets like this. Fortunately Ntando heard the commotion, she comes running and asks what's wrong. He lets go of my hand and glares at her. "Tell your friend to take her bags, I'm still asking nicely," he says. "She cannot go with you if you're like this, she is already sweating. Your fights shouldn't include getting physical with a pregnant one woman," Ntando says. He throws the dirtiest look at her and scoops me up like a bag of potatoes. She screams behind us, calling for help and insulting Sosha. There is no one inside the lift, he pushes me inside and stands with his arm pressed over my neck. God needs to intervene, I don't know this animal glaring at me. The lift opens, Mr Gcaba is waiting with two other security guards. I've never been happy to see him until now. He is that security guard who thinks he owns the building. "Mr Cele," he says formally. "Can I help you bhuti?" he asks in a cold voice. Mr Gcaba is almost his father's age, calling him 'bhuti' is insulting. I think they can see the fear in my eyes, they ask him to let go of my hand. "She is my wife," he says. Mr Gcaba looks at me, I shake my head. I'm not his wife, we are not married. "I will ask you to leave her, she doesn't look like someone who wants to go with you," he says. Sosha lets out an evil chuckle and firmly holds my hand. He is not going to leave me behind. "Let's go," he says pulling me aggressively. "Leave the girl alone Mr Cele..." "Ey Voetsek wena mfene!" he says and clicks his tongue. Nobody follows or tries to stop him. They let him pull me to his car. He opens the door and shoves me inside. There is nowhere to escape, he has locked the doors. "Why did you leave me?" he asks. I should start begging for forgiveness but I'm still shaken. He grabs my shoulders and slams my head against the seat. "Sosha you're going to hurt the baby," I cry. He kicks the car and bumps his fist on the wheel. "I DON'T CARE ABOUT THE STUPID BABY, WHY DID YOU LEAVE ME?" Did he say my baby is stupid? If she is stupid then she took after him. "MaShenge why did you leave me?" he asks again. My stupid baby kicks, I feel tears threatening to come out. What did I get myself into? He said he would never hurt me. A few minutes ago I was praying he doesn't hurt me, now I'm praying to arrive safely in the house. He is breaking all the road rules, I have my breath held up, he is literally racing. He parks in front of the house. I don't waste another second, I get off the car and run. I don't make it very far before my face hits the ground. I always fall but not this hard, my knee is bleeding. "Are you okay?" he asks running to me. He lifts me up. Fear is written all over his face. "Do we need to go to the hospital?" he asks, touching my stomach. Pregnant women fall all the time, what annoys me is his sudden





sympathy. "No," I say. "MaShenge we need to make sure the baby is fine," he says. What a wow! I get on my feet and limp toward the door. I turn to one of the guest bedrooms and lie on bed. My head can't make sense of what happened. Yes I overreacted by leaving the house, but for him to do this paints another picture. I cannot get over the 'stupid baby' thing, I'm beyond hurt. He walks in and calls my name. I hold back tears and look at him. The apologetic look and stupidity on his face infuriates me. "Are you okay?" he asks. "Yes," I say. "My head is not clear, I've been thinking about a lot of things. It wasn't my intention to act that way, sometimes I do things differently than I intended. I'm really sorry." Every fool uses 'I'm sorry' to justify their foolish doings. "You said you don't care about my stupid baby and pushed me," I say. He is embarrassed, he can't keep the eye contact. "I hate myself," he says. "That makes the two of us, I also hate you. I know I didn't act matured by leaving instead of talking things through but for you to assault me and insult my baby shows how little you care. I will never forgive you and I'll make sure this baby knows about it." I get off bed and leave him grounded on the same spot. Police sirens!!! Ntando is here with the police. The look on her face tells me whatever friendship she had with Sosha is over. "Ms Buthelezi are you okay?" the officer asks. "Yes I'm fine sir," I say. Ntando looks at my knee and bites her lip. I need to clarify this before she gets wrong ideas. "I fell and injured my knee," I say. Sosha walks to us and greets politely. He is back at his usual self, you'd think I'm lying if I say he was angry a short while ago. "What did you do to her?" Ntando asks glaring at him. "I fell Ntando, I swear to God," I say. She looks at me with her brows pulled together. "Don't protect a man who doesn't protect you against himself," she says. I know how much she loves me but now she is going overboard. I have never lied to her, I won't start today. "Would you like to open a case Ms Buthelezi?" "No,thank you" I say. Ntando grunts angrily. "You're staying with him? Think for the baby Yanga, use your brains," she says. We can do this all day, I look at the officers and wish them goodbye. Ntando needs a gun to shoot me right here. This is going to be a long evening. I don't know where Sosha is, he disappeared after the police. I've forgiven him, that's my weakness in this love thing, I forgive too easily. I make food and dish for both of us and take it with me to the bedroom. I wait until it dries up, he is not coming to bed. I fight the urge to go look for him, he is an adult, I have no reason to feel sorry for him. At last he walks in. He switches the lights off and gets on bed. It's his house, his rules. I've never bought even R10 electricity here. "I dished for you," I say. "Ngiyabonga," he says. There is a huge space between us, he is sleeping at the far side, and the room is filled with thick silence. "I was in the car," he finally talks. "Alright," I say. He takes a loud breath and shifts closer. "I'm really sorry, I never wanted to put you in this position but I'm grateful you defended me against Ntando. It means a lot to me, you always see the best in me even when nobody does." Really? I roll my eyes. "I didn't defend you, I just didn't want them to believe what was not true. Ntando was trying to protect me, that's what friends do," I say. "I know, but I'm still grateful," he says. I shift closer to him and wrap my arms around his body. He is shivering under the covers, I hold his hands a bit alarmed. "Are you okay?" I ask. "Yes." His voice is unsteady, he is not okay. "Babe you're shivering, it's not even cold," I say. "Just hug me tightly, please," he says. This is weird. I hug him, he hold onto me like the world promised to break us apart . When I wake up for my pee routine he is not on bed. I check the time, it's 3:45am. Remembering last night's incidents I know he is not okay, I wash my face and look for him. Sometimes I forget that he is a baker, he hardly



bakes at home. He is in the kitchen, baking. "Babe did you see the time?" I ask, walking to him. He doesn't say anything, he doesn't even look up. I pull the chair and sit in front of him. His eyes run away from me, he always gets shy after his episodes. "Who are you baking for?" I ask. "No one," he says. All this flour is being wasted for nothing? The next thing we will hear is that there is wheat-shedding in the country. "Everything is alright Sosha, I could appreciate some normalcy," I say. He gathers the strength to look at me in the eyes and tells me the real reason he woke up. My heart sinks, she raised him and never got to see the man he grew up to be. He is getting married soon and becoming a father. "It always feels like I'm 13years old, the day she died I felt like a rebellious 13year old who was crucified. It's the same feeling all over again, nobody heard me, not even my own father," he says. Today is the day his grandmother passed away, he told me the story of her passing but not the one behind his 13year old self. "What really happened?" I ask. "One day, when I'm sure you won't be judgemental and leave, I will tell you." Well that touched the nerve, I have no comeback. I am the judgemental partner who leaves with no second thought. "I'm sorry about yesterday, I made a mistake," he says. He is still on that? Lord. "I heard and forgave you," I say. "Both my heart and house are empty without you. I miss you so much," he says. I walk over him and kiss his lips. I miss him too, he is my Italian soldier. "It's been almost two weeks, Cele is hungry," he says. He is looking at my opened robe with hungry eyes, I should've worn pyjama pants. "You know I hate sex, it's disgusting," I say. His lips crack into a smile, his eyes are full of mockery. "How did you fall pregnant then?" he asks. He is starting, I shouldn't have forgiven him. "I don't know," I say rolling my eyes. He turns the ovens off and washes his hands. There is a mischievous look on his face. "Do you want me to show you how you got pregnant?" What? No ways, I don't want any black creepy thing inside me. He grabs my butt and lifts me up. He is breathing next to my ear, his shaft is growing harder. "I've been having wet dreams about you," he says. His stare is digging deep in my eyes, I find it hard to speak. He acts right on my weakness and pushes his hand under my panty. "What...Ah baby...what dreams?" I ask. "You were sitting on my face, rubbing every part of your yoni on my mouth." My face is giving it away, his eyes are twinkling with hope. I want him, every part of my body aches for his touch. "Please make my dream a reality," he says, lifting my chin up. I look around, the counter is full of baking ingredients and trays. Where are we going to do it? "Where?" I ask. "Wherever you're comfortable." That leads us to the guest's bedroom, he takes his clothes off and lies on bed. My body is Pearl Thusi and my butt is Black Coffee. The pregnancy glow stayed away from my butt, I need the floor to open up and swallow me. "I'm not comfortable with this," I say. "Why? Is it the knee?" he asks. The knee? Oh that minor injury. "No I hate my body, my butt is super black," I say. He pulls me on top of him and cups my breasts in his hands. They look swollen but they are still his obsession. "My dick is super black, have you ever heard me complain? Embrace every part of your body, this is not even permanent and it turns me on." He smashes his lips on me while massaging and spanking my super black butt. As commanded I sit on his face, the softness of his tongue shoots tingling sensations throughout my body. I almost jump when his tongue swirls around my chocolate box. I let out a scream filled with shock and pleasure. He moves me to the side and turns over me. "I love both of you," he says. His eyes are on my tummy, they look haunted. "I'm going to be a good father to her, I swear babe. Please don't leave again, at least stay and don't talk to me," he says. This is not the right



time for apologies. "Okay, fuck me then," I say. "Okay I'll put the tip only." WTH! I'm not a teenager, I want it all inside. "Sosha!" I say in a warning tone. He laughs and slowly pushes it in. His face during sex is the best ugly thing I've ever seen, it turns me on. "I have missed you so much," he says, moaning deeply. "I missed...you...too...aaah!" He thrusts faster, my voice disappears as his shaft touches my sensitive tissues. He knows how to get me gasping for air, I'm floating with my mouth widely opened. "My love," he whispers. I open my eyes and look at him. He has stopped moving, he is looking at me with almost-shut eyes. "What now?" I ask, weakly. "I needed this, your body on mine...It feels amazing."

Chapter 15 It's been a week since I came back, Ntando hasn't reached out, I guess she is still mad. I have to hit the shops and buy something for her as the peace offering. I have an appointment with the doctor at 12pm, later I'm meeting up with Craig. I'm in the house, eating whatever my eyes land on and replying to Sosha's constant text messages. Sabatha is coming over for the school holidays, surprisingly he gets along very well with his brother-in-law. I can't say the same about Mbuso, we have grown apart. I bought him Samsung Grand Prime, he joined Facebook and installed WhatsApp. I replied to everything he posted, sent shocked emojis and angry reactions, my ass got deported to blockville within a few days. I close the peanut butter bottle and wash my hands in the sink. Oh, the man of the house is back. It's too early for him to be here, my appointment is at 12pm. "Did Cynthia fire you?" I ask sarcastically. "No...How are you doing?" I just had scones and quarter bottle of peanut butter, life doesn't get better than this. "I'm fabulous," I say. He stands by the counter and stares at me. He is acting a bit strange. "Is everything alright?" I ask. "We have to go to Ndulinde, I will pack," he says. I did say he is acting strange, why do we need to go to Ndulinde out of the blue? "Why are we going home?" I ask. "Your mother wants you to come." He is not making any sense. I talked to Buthelezi last night, he didn't mention it. I thought he would pack a few clothes but seemingly he is packing half of my closet. My mother adores him, I don't know why we could possibly be summoned for urgent meetings. He pulls me into a tight hug before we go to the car. We drive to the doctor first, the baby's life matters more than anything, Craig can be postponed. Ntando is calling my phone, what a surprise! "Hey stranger," I answer. "How are you doing babe?" She still cares? Of course, who are we without each other? "I'm good, you?" I say. "Cool, is Sosha with you?" I glance at him, he is absorbed on the road. "Yes, we are on our way to Ndulinde," I say. "Please give him the phone, I want to speak to him." The last time I checked they were enemies, maybe she wants to insult him one more time. "It's important Yanga," she says. Okay maybe she wants to apologise, I hand the phone to Sosha. They talk for a minute, I have no idea what they're talking about. Sosha keeps agreeing to whatever she is saying, I hope she is not bullying him into something. He gives the phone back to me, she is still on the line. "What are you saying to my man?" I ask. "I was asking him out. Please call me when you get home," she says. She is trying to be funny but there is sadness in her voice. She is not the usual Ntando. We are in Ndulinde within two hours, there are people all over my home. I look at this man who can't even look at me at the moment.



"Sosha what's going on?" I ask. He brushes the question off and asks that we go inside. He is scared of my father, he always stay inside the car when he comes to drop or pick me here. Today he is entering? He keeps shocking me. Buthelezi finally built the house he was saving towards to and guess who the owner is? Inkosazane yakoButhelezi obviously, I sneak Sosha inside. He can't be seen roaming on the yard, he is umkhwenyana. Something is totally off here. I bump into Aunt July on the door, she pushes me back inside. Her and Sosha exchange greetings, Sosha looks really frightened. "Yangomuhle sit down," she says. I pull the reedmat and lay it on the floor and sit. I know something bad has happened but my mind is in denial. "What happened?" I ask in a trembling voice. "Your father passed away this morning, he had a heart attack." That's not true, I was talking to him last night, he sounded better than the other days. "You're not talking about ubabawami!" I say. She glances at Sosha as if she is asking for support. His face makes sense to everything. But it can't be true, not my only father! I look at him, holding back tears. "Babe tell me it's not true, please," I beg, tears escaping my eyes. "I'm sorry sthandwa sami....." I feel like the soul is leaving my body. I'm struggling to breathe properly. What is life without Buthelezi? I walk out like a mindless person with tears streaming down my face, I need to find my brothers. I need to know how they are doing. I find them in their room sitting on their beds. Mbuso is containing his feelings and acting strong but I know deep down he is shattered. Sabatha starts crying when he sees the tears on my face, I pull him to my huge stomach and hug him. "It's going to be okay Shenge," I say. I don't know how it's going to be okay. Who is going to look after the goats and cows? How does the family survive without the head? He was the glue that kept this family together. Stronger arms squeeze my shoulders. I look up to see Mbuso hugging both of us. He doesn't say anything, he just hugs us and walks out. The king has fallen and the reigns will remain on his eldest son. Today Mbuso will check if the cows are home, persuade Sabatha to fetch the goats and check Jamlude's wounds. Life forces him to be a man today. He has to decide on which side of our cemetery is Buthelezi's grave going to be located. It's a long week of distant relatives coming in with piercing screams and retaliating on what happened over and over again. I have Sosha's bank card to help with mid-week grocery, there are more than five women supporting my mother on the mattress. Aunt July and her sister-in-laws are here as well. We don't have large shops here, it's just tuck-shops that sell expired breads and chips. We have to go to town almost everyday. The Celes attend the funeral. I didn't think they would come after seeing the shaky relationship between Sosha and them. His stepmother's hat can fit the whole Ndulinde, she is rocking the Halloween black dress and huge sunglasses. She came to hold her husband's arm, nothing else. My ex-colleagues are here as well, including Dennis. Now people of this place will take me serious, I know white people. I'm glad to see Tshitshi among other people that came, it's a surprise presence. The service is inside the tent, many people showed up. Aunt July is the one who chose the coffin, I must say she has a good taste in coffins. It makes me proud to see how dignified my father's funeral is, even the head chief is here. Mbuso is the one to speak on behalf of his children. He doesn't tell stories, he just recites our clan names like a poet and wishes him a good journey. I've been strong, hardly shedding a tear, until the moment I see his lifeless body. Ntando comes out of nowhere and helps me out of the tent. It's like he is going to wake up and ask -Shengee did you eat? "Babe you're not supposed to go to the cemetery, your mother left the message,"



she says. I don't know how many things I've been instructed to do this week. Yanga do this, don't do this. It's driving me crazy. So these people think I'm not going to see my father off? Well that's not happening, my father is a good spirit, he won't harm his granddaughter. "I'm going there Ntando, nobody will stop me," I say. They are carrying his coffin out, I wait until everyone is gone and follow behind. There is more crowd in the cemetery than there was inside the tent. The village boys came out in numbers to dig the grave. Myalo is standing with his shirt rolled up, sweat is running down his face, he is holding the shovel in his hand. I'm shocked to see him like this. I didn't see him earlier, when most of them arrived. A whole business mogul is digging graves! Sosha confirmed it, he is the Nazareth so I guessed right. He is the sexiest Nazareth man I know. He did something to his beard, it's shaped perfectly, unlike some men I saw in the train. I need to discuss his love life with Nomzamo. Are they allowed to date Insta-queens? I have no doubts that Zolile is not a churchgoer of any sort. Buthelezi is not waking up, he is gone. The coffin goes down, they sing the chorus like each verse was composed for this moment, to be sung on his last day; Phind' ukhulume moy' oyingcwele, Khuluma khuluma Nkosi yami. Ngokuba zonk' izono ebengizenza, Namhla zisobala ebusweni bakho. Phind' ukhulume moy' oyingcwele, khuluma Nkosi yami. It's time to say goodbye, I throw a handful of soil inside his grave and turn my back on him. I don't look back, I'm not supposed to. I follow behind Aunt July and go to the river. We scoop a bit of umswani and bath. It's the end of him. A big fight breaks between my uncles just a few days after the funeral. Guess what they are fighting about? My father's cows. My mother has turned into a breathing picture, my father's death has affected her badly. She doesn't communicate with anyone, nobody knows how she really feels. I'm sitting under the tree daydreaming about pizza. There is so much chaos inside the house, I don't want to subject myself into it. Mbuso appears behind the yard and walks straight to me. He doesn't look happy. "Sisi did you hear what Bab'omdala said?" he asks. I wonder what that man has said again? "What did he say?" I ask. "He wants to sell three cows and exchange Jamlude with the Sibiyas," he says. Bhekizizwe is out of his mind. If he exchanges Jamlude with the Sibiyas he might as well exchange me with Zanele Sibiya. Jamlude is my sister. "What are you saying about that?" I ask. "Over my dead body!" That's Shenge Jnr! It's amazing how he has grown so abundantly in a short period of time, even his voice is getting deeper when he speaks. "Your voice is final Mbuso, that man is not going to bully you, we will go to court if we have to," I say. Bab'omdala couldn't even wait for my father's body to decompose before taking his cows. He must be turning in his grave, these cows meant everything to him. I push my hair backwards and gaze at him. "Why am I unable to view your WhatsApp status?" He grins and rubs his forehead. "Oh that...I have to go check on the thing there, I'm coming back," he says rushing away. It's all good, I won't be loading him any data this coming month. I hope he still remembers what I told him. I always add extra money when sending their pocket money for condoms and whatever he may need. Sabatha won't be visiting anymore, he needs to be here to help Mbuso with the cows. My father's death changed everything, I don't know if they will manage, sadly I cannot be here with them. Friday comes, Sosha is here to fetch me, I have to say goodbye to the family. The dust has settled between the uncles, induna had to intervene and shove Bab'omdala in his rightful place. Mbuso is doing okay for now, he takes the cows out before school and fetch them in the afternoons. The problem is going to start when women start ploughing, cows will





need to be herded fulltime. My mother is in her rondavel, that's where she hides herself. I go to her and find her folding clothes. "I'm leaving now," I say. "Okay." She doesn't even look up. She is unreadable these days. "We will communicate through the phones, don't hesitate to call me if you need something," I say. This time she looks up, her eyes are hollow, she looks empty. I should hug her but we are not that mother & daughter. I can't even ask her to open up to me, it's not my place. "He was never the same after finding out what happened to you, the truth destroyed him and that's exactly what I was trying to prevent and protect him from," she says. Did I hear her correctly? "You were protecting my father?" I ask. "Why do you think I asked you to keep quiet? Now my husband is gone," she says. I'm dumbstruck. We were in a better place, I had forgiven her but now this! She is making it clear that my wellbeing means nothing to her. "You blame me for his death?" I ask. She sits on bed and looks at me hopelessly. "You and Mbuso did this," she says. Wow! I didn't know she felt this way. I need to know if Mbuso is safe around her or not. "Do you hate us?" I ask. "I don't, you are my children." I doubt that, I will be watching my back. Mbuso is my little spy, he is watching her for me. He says she is better than the state I left her in. Now she cooks for them, my paranoia demands that he stays in the kitchen and watch when she cooks. I still don't trust her. Craig came on board, we are starting a programme that teaches young boys about women abuse. Every month he will go to Ndulinde with some experts in the psychological field to hold meetings with them. Induna gave him permission to use the community hall. Sosha is funding the travelling costs and payments. Myalo volunteered with male cosmetics, they will be gifted to the boys every month. Mbuso is part of the attendants that means I won't be worrying about his cosmetics anymore. So far we have 30 boys signed up, Mbuso is still spreading the word to his school mates. It came together sooner than I expected, they will be holding the first meeting this coming month on the 1st. I'm officially the founder of Ilizwi Youth Programme, I've never been so proud of myself. Sosha is back from work, he just informed me that his parents are coming over for dinner at 6pm. They've never came here while I'm in this house, I don't even know what they like. I also have to worry about clothes, what am I going to wear? "Bobo will arrive anytime from now." Me and names! "Who is Bobo again?" I ask. He looks at me with his eyes widened. Oh, Bobo is the chef, he usually cooks strange food. This means I don't have to worry about cooking. What a thoughtful man! "I want us to go outside for a few minutes," he says. He looks excited, now I'm curious. He pulls my hand and leads me outside. A new car! "It's yours?" I ask. "No, it's yours." What? I can't even drive. "You bought me a car?" I'm shocked. "Do you like it?" he asks. It's a Hyundai Tucson. I once made a comment about it after seeing Mbali's. I didn't expect him to buy it for me. I should be jumping up and down and screaming like a normal person but I'm just grounded on the same spot with my jaws on the ground. "I didn't expect you to buy me a car, I don't even have driver's licence," I say. "Do you want to have it?" he asks. Of course I want to, I want to drive my car. I touch it and poke the tyres a little bit, I'm not sure why. It smells brand new, dating a rich guy is finally paying off. I would've probably died without owning a mere bicycle. Now I qualify for Instagram. Wait until I give birth, I will be taking pictures on top of the bonnet, under the tyres and inside the boot. I reward him with a blowjob which results into two rounds. I'm trying to put more efforts in the bedroom, my mind is the biggest contributor towards my mood. I just have to let my guards down, ignore how ugly the dick looks and enjoy



my man. He is panting like he just ran a marathon, he catches his breath and lies next to me. "Did Craig talk to you?" he asks. "No, was he supposed to?" I ask. "He proposed that we do joined sessions, it will help us communicate better." That's a brilliant idea, maybe he can finally open up to me about his childhood. "I'm in, who is changing a therapist?" I ask. "You," he says. That's not going to happen and he knows it. It's Craig or nobody. As usual I don't know what Bobo cooked, it looks yummy though. There is an expensive bottle of wine and freshly squeezed juice for a pregnant lady. I'm a little bit scared about this dinner, the last time was awkward. Sosha is against me wrapping my head, he says it's unnecessary but I was not raised in Durban, I have to do what I was taught. I wrap my head and wear a long navy dress. "How do I look?" I ask him. "You look like a humble, beautiful makoti." That's nothing new, I'm always beautiful and humble. I turn around, showing him my back. "Sexy as well, right?" I ask. "Very sexy sthandwa sami." We are fooling each other, aren't we? I asked that on purpose, I know I'm far from being sexy. "No sex for you this week," I say. His eyes pop out. "Why? What did I do?" he asks. "Do sexy people look like this? Why are you lying?" "Was it a trap?" He is laughing. A slow baker he is, of course it was a trap, I hate being lied to. His parents arrive, the atmosphere changes immediately. After the greetings have been exchanged the room goes silent. The stepmother helps herself with a glass of wine, she is wearing a glittering red dress, she is always overdressed like Kelly Khumalo. Her name is India Molefe Cele. She is not an Indian, I think she was conceived in India. "How is your mother doing?" Bab' Cele breaks the silence. I look up, he is talking to me. I didn't think he cared about me or my family. "She is getting there Baba, thanks for asking," I say. His wife pours more wine and looks at me. "You should take her out and buy her a bottle of champagne." We are talking about MaJali Buthelezi here, what is champagne? "Is that what you're going to do when my father dies?" Sosha though! He is going to spoil everything. The moment is saved by Mlando, he walks in and hugs everyone before sitting down. He did a new haircut, his hair looks super black, I have no doubts that he dyed. This one could do anything to look attractive. "How is our daughter there?" he asks me. "She is fine," I say. He looks at Sosha and his father and mocks them with a laugh. He is the most chilled, I heard he is moving to Cape Town next year to do his Master's degree. I wonder what's going to happen to Yolanda and his other girlfriends. Bayede is the last one to arrive, things get less tense after his arrival. He is initiating conversations and making sure everyone is included. It almost feels like I'm dining with a normal family. "I heard about the programme you're starting back home MaShenge, you're doing a good job," Bab' Cele says. He is not as bad as I thought. "It wouldn't be possible without your son, he is the one doing a good job," I say. Sosha paved the way and made everything possible. I didn't become a nurse but I'm doing something close to my heart, and that is fighting against women abuse. I'm looking forward to starting more related programmes. He doesn't comment on that, he turns to Mlando and asks about his application at UCT. Mlando sounds frustrated about the delay of his application process, but I think he is more concerned about his chances of relocating than the actual application. "They will take you son, your record forces them to," he says. I glance at Sosha, he has stopped eating, when our eyes meet he picks a piece of meat. Did anyone say something wrong? I don't remember. Bayede clears his throat and asks about the changes at the bakery. "Everything is good," Sosha replies. "You should open one in Cape Town, Mlando can run it for you," he says. Mlando's face brightens up. "That's such



a brilliant idea, I'd run it for free." Too good to be true! He'd be giving his girlfriends free cakes and having sex inside the ovens. Oh crap! People are eating with limits here, I should stop eating as well. We are still on the main course, I need to leave space for dessert. "How are you fighting sexual abuse against women whereas you share bed with a rapist every night?" India asks. She is talking to me. I look around the table, my eyes land on Sosha opposite me. He is looking down, I can't see his face. "What are you talking about?" I ask confused. "He raped my niece, Amandla. Didn't he tell you he drove her to suicide? I bet he didn't, isosha lamasimba." She is not talking about my Sosha. She can't be! "Ma I think you need to slow down on the wine," I say. She bursts into laughter. Everyone is dead quiet, including Bab' Cele. They have to say something, this woman is talking crap. "Sosha can you say something? I swear my baby wants to pop out right now," I say. He doesn't say anything, he doesn't even look at me. Mlando has stopped eating, he is looking at me with pity. "Baba please take your wife and go," Bayede says in a commanding voice. His voice is low but the authority it carries is trenchant. He is the one who took after his father, but he is a doctor and he is younger. He has dark-chocolate skin, his beard is always trimmed neatly. But when all this gentlemanly fades he is going to be ugly like his father. "Why are you kicking us out? She is telling her what everyone knows," Bab' Cele says. This is escalating really fast, my appetite for dessert has vanished. Sosha has to say something. "Sosha tell me they're lying," I say. He doesn't say anything, he glares at his father. I've never seen anyone hates his father like he does, it's evident in his eyes everytime he looks at him or talks about him. "He won't because he knows that I'm not lying. Baba let's go, we have food in our house," the extravagant wife says. She takes her bag and her husband's hand and walks out. He follows her like a little puppy. I'm trying to squeeze my emotions into place. I cannot burst before hearing the whole story. My hands are under the table, they're sweating and trembling. "I need an explanation of what she said," I say. My voice is already breaking, rape hits home to me, I don't take it lightly. "My brother didn't rape Amandla," Bayede says. He is the one to take stand as usual. I was looking for an explanation, but he is defending not explaining. "Bhut' Bayede you went to Medunsa, I'm sure you know what explanation is," I say. Well that sounded rude. Luckily he is not offended. Mlando picks his plate and leaves. He doesn't want to be part of this. He always avoids drama. "MaShenge you know Sosha by now, he is not a cruel person. He didn't rape Amandla." I feel like screaming at him. Is he a doctor or advocate? Why is he always the one explaining things to me? Sosha can talk, there is nothing wrong with his mouth. I fix a stare on him, his face is expressionless. This isn't something he should take lightly, these are serious accusations for someone helping me with Ilizwi programme. "Talk before I call Ntando to fetch me," I say. Bayede sighs and takes his tie off. "You can't always threaten to leave, that's not how problems are solved," he says. This is not his surgery, his opinion doesn't matter. "I'm not spending another night with a rapist if that's what he is," I say. Instead of explaining Sosha stands up and leaves the room. I feel two angry kicks at the side of my stomach. I reach for a glass of juice and gulp it down. I can take anything from him, stupid outbursts, mood swings and all, but I cannot take what I just heard. The same hatred I have towards Kwenza is the same hatred I have towards every single rapist. He is lying on bed facing the wall. I pull the pillow under his head, he needs to face me and explain himself. "You owe me an explanation Justin," I say. Spitting those six words almost took breath away, I'm panting like I've just ran a 10km



marathon. "I didn't rape her, she used me. I was 13years old, Amandla was 17. I wasn't the most obedient child but I wouldn't have raped someone four years older than me. I wasn't even sure what I was doing at that moment." He wasn't sure? He cannot be a perpetrator of what Craig and I are fighting against. "What did you do to the girl?" I almost yell. He sits up and faces me. "I slept with her because she told me to. One week later she told India and my father that she was no longer a virgin because I raped her. I was not in a good space, I was on drugs so it was easy for them to believe her, but I didn't rape her," he says. He was on drugs at 13years? I need to leave immediately this is not a good environment for me at the moment. I distance myself from things that raise my BP, the doctor advised me to. "You don't believe me?" he asks behind me. I grab more clothes and zip my bag. I have a car but I can't drive, Mlando will have to take me to Briardene. "I need to breathe, this house is suffocating me. Take care of yourself," I say. This is the second time I leave his house this month. Things always get worst when I think they're getting better. Bayede is standing at the end of the stairway like he was waiting for me to come down. "You're leaving again?" he asks. He thinks this is a hobby, I hate doing this but his brother leaves me with no choice. Sometimes being away from him is the best thing for my mental being. "MaShenge please stay with him." He is holding my hand, begging. I have never seen him so helpless. "He didn't do it, Amandla committed suicide because of guilt and diseases she was diagnosed with. He loves you, please don't turn your back on him. He was not like this, my father killed him. He should've believed his son but he chose his wife's niece and disowned him," he says. Tears make their way down, they are always on standby. Sometimes I cry because the fridge made my ice-cream cold. I'm not sure why I'm crying now. "He was used, the whole world turned against him. In short he was raped but it was turned on him. He hustled his way up, he has worked hard to prove that his school records don't define who he is. Nevertheless the past holds him back, he was blamed for Amandla's death. She didn't leave any suicidal letter but it was concluded that he was the cause. I have never asked anything from you, but now I'm begging you to stay and hear him out. I understand where your frustrations come from but for you to believe him will change a lot in his life. He is emotional right now but he can explain if you give him a chance," he says. He doesn't need to say more, love overpowers everything. Rape is a sensitive issue but this time I need to put emotions aside and listen. I hear a 'thank you' behind and turn my head to look at him. There is relief and gratitude on his face. His siblings mean everything to him, he protects them like he protects the socket of his eye. I have a brother like him, he is 17years old. One day I wish he becomes a doctor too. The responsibilities of being the first son in the family cannot take that away from him. I walk back to the bedroom, guilt is tripping me. The sight of him crushed at the corner of bed with his T-shirt pulled up to his face breaks my heart into pieces. He is not a weak person or so I thought. His sobs are not just sobs of a person crying, he is drained of all hopes. New reality has arrived uninvited, without voicing it out I have taken Amandla's side. I don't even know her, gender influenced my thinking. As soon as I hear rape I conclude a man raped a woman, I tarnish a man before hearing both sides. I throw my bag on the floor and climb on bed. "Dubandlela I'm not leaving, I'm sorry," I say. It takes a moment for him to look at me. He is closed in a harrowing grimace. He is a role model to many but nobody knows the broken man inside him, not even me. He wanted to open up to me but he was scared I will judge and leave, and I did exactly that. I understand the emptiness in



his eyes. I don't need any explanation, the river of tears flowing down his face explains everything. An explanation is the bakery he had to open in order to make a living, the grade 11 report in his study room with 23% in five subjects and the SSRIs inside the drawers that he takes everyday. A 13year old boy with no one, accused of rape and kicked out of his home. He must've been lonely and depressed. His brothers stayed in the mansion and attended private schools. He was deported to his grandmother with just a bag of his clothes and taxi fare. "I'm always taking emotional decisions, hormones are not making it any easier. I believe you Sosha, I'm sorry I judged you before I listened, and I'm sorry about the things you went through as a child," I say. He allows me to hold his hand, I've held it and let it go a number of times but today I'm holding it forever. "Go MaShenge, leave!" he says. He cannot give up on me, I know I'm a bad partner but I want to stay. "I want to stay, please let me stay," I beg. He is trying to hold tears back but they keep pouring out. He is a soldier, his nature is to fight, but he cannot be fighting for acceptance and innocence everyday. "I love you Sosha, please give me a chance to prove that," I beg. Begging is something I never thought I would do, but life is full of surprises. I need this man, he has become my pillar of strength and place of sanity. I will get on my knees and beg if I have to. Social media can fool you and preach 'don't beg a man' whereas people begging theirs behind cellphone screens. "I love you, please don't give up on us," I say in tears. He lifts his T-shirt up and wipes his face. I have never seen him so weak, so vulnerable and so helpless. "But you judge and leave me as if your feelings for me aren't real," he says. I cup his face and smooch his wet, quivering lips. The last thing I'm going to do is leaving this house again. His hands wrap around me, he is giving in. Now we are both crying, the moment is heated with emotions. It ends with my dress lifted up and panty shifted to the side and him slamming inside me mercilessly. I hope the brothers left because the door is opened and I'm screaming like a porn star.

Chapter 16 He is back on Ntando's good books. Today she gifted us with two spoons, they were wrapped and put inside two large gift bags. It's ordinary spoons but we have to take good care of them otherwise Durban will turn into Russia. I've been learning to drive but my teacher isn't so patient with me. I will look for a driving school after giving birth. I was supposed to be on the wheel today, but due to the heated argument we had after I pressed the accelerator more than necessary I stopped the car and sat at the back. He wouldn't have made it as a professional educator. He is alright baking cakes, at least he can't shout at the ovens. I'm officially not speaking to him. I'm on WhatsApp with Ntando and Amanda in the group chat, gossiping about Sphelele. He is our daily bread, we discuss him almost every day. He is no longer that fool who was being cheated on, he came back with a bang. Now the problem is where is he learning all these styles he is bringing home to Amanda? He better be not cheating on my cousin-in-law. Craig looks at us with dismay as we find our seats without looking at each other. I'm no longer mad at him, I just don't want to speak first, that's a violation of women community standards. Men should always speak first after a fight, they are never right anyway. "Is everything alright?" he asks. "Yes," we both say. He shifts his gaze to me. "Are you sure?" he asks. I don't need to lie





to him, even when I sound petty he always understands me. "Sosha is not patient with me, he expects me to be a perfect driver within few days," I say. He tries to hide it but even a baby can tell that he is amused, his eyes are filled with laughter. Sosha's hand touches mine. "I'm sorry sthandwa sami," he says. My lips crack into a smile. "Okay, I forgive you." It was my last time driving under his supervision anyway, I will learn at the driving school after giving birth. And I'm not lending my car to anyone, just a side note. "How have you guys been?" Craig asks. "I think we've been good," he says and looks at me, I nod my head in agreement. We have been good, except for the little stupid fights that end with him apologising or fucking me. "Any thought of leaving?" he asks. This question stings like a needle, my hand squeezes Sosha's knee. "No, I don't think I will ever leave again," I say. He nods and looks at Sosha. "Any fear of being left?" I'm eager to find out. "I'm always in fear Craig, nothing is assured," Sosha replies. Oh, wow! "Don't you trust her?" Good question Craig. "I do trust her, I just don't know if she will be able to stay through it all," he says. I get where he is coming from, I haven't proven my strength to him but I know I'm strong to overcome any kind of storm that's going to come our way. "Any fear of being hurt, physically?" He is back to me. I shake my head. Sosha once pushed me and slammed my head on the car seats. But I'm not scared of him. "Sosha do you have any fear of hurting her?" He takes a deep breath, his hand is squeezing mine tightly. "Yes, the last time she left me wasn't easy. I lost control and nearly hurt her." He did hurt my knee, if it wasn't for him I wouldn't have ran and fell. He also hurt my feelings. "And called our baby stupid," I say, adding to his response. He is embarrassed, nothing kills him like being reminded of that incident. Craig is shocked, his pinkish lips are curled up, he is looking at Sosha with disappointment. "What happened?" he asks him. His hand leaves mine, he takes out a face-cloth and wipes his forehead. I squeeze his knee again, I'm here for him. "Nobody ever celebrates the memory of my grandmother, I don't think they even remember her date of death. I get emotional around the day, everything just flashes back. I thought this year would be different but she left me. It got worse than ever. I had no right to drag her back to my house, I allowed fear of being alone on my grandmother's memorial day to control me." He is not always fragile, he put his soldier hat on and keep a strong face. "Did you stop taking your meds when I was gone?" I ask. "It was the last thing on my mind," he says. I'm disappointed in him, his mental health should always come first. Craig emphasizes on communication. Both of us fail to communicate with each other properly. Sosha could've told me what he told his brothers about our bedroom issues and I could've said how I felt without leaving. He asks us to write open letters and read them to each other. My letter to him: Dear Sosha Meeting you was a blessing. I didn't know God had created a soldier for me somewhere in the suburbs of Durban, someone who is always going to be there to protect and love me. I didn't want to fall in love with you but I did, and it has been the greatest thing ever. The universe has brought us together, to love and support each other. I realise that I've done none of that excellently, but today under this sky, between the valleys and mountains of Africa, I plead with you to give me all your sorrows and battles. Trust me to be your lover, your pillar of strength and shoulder to cry on because when I lift my head and look at your eyes again I will be a new woman, and all I'm asking for is that you never stop loving me. I love you Sosha Justin Cele." When I look up his eyes are glittering with tears. He pulls my hand to his lips and plants a life kiss on it. He opens his letter and holds me with one hand and reads: "MaShenge wami I



didn't mind being alone until I met a tall, fierce young woman with caramel skin and small eyes inside my store. You kissed me inside the bathroom and left me with no air. A part of me knew that falling deeply in love with you would kill my independence but I did anyway. Your love wakes me up in mornings and puts a smile on my face throughout the day. Sometimes I ask myself how will I go on if you ever leave me? When the light dies I ask myself a lot of questions, silently. You are still young, one day you'd want to know how it's like being with a normal man. When you're gone I sleep on soaked pillows and lose all hopes. I cannot live with your love if you're not next to me. I feel incomplete, naked and powerless. My body aches to be held by your arms. My ears long to hear your voice, just you saying that you love me. You leave because you have no idea how much your absence destroys me. Losing you is my biggest fear. I love you, and all I ever pray for is that you never leave me." It feels surreal that I have a man who loves me so much. I heard his questions and I will be answering them with actions. We kiss until Craig starts coughing. He should have private bedrooms next to his office. We have to pick his parcel from Bayede's house before going home. I've been here twice, Bayede is an organised man, it feels like there are cameras watching if you drag shoes on his tiled floors. He looks at me with a look I can't understand. "You're wearing a jean?" Oh, he is being a doctor. "It's not a tight one," I say. "That doesn't matter, your waist should be free," he says. I wonder how Nomzamo lived through her pregnancy, I'm sure he was policing everything she did. "When is Maya coming? I miss her," I say changing the subject. "Tomorrow, I'll bring her over." I cannot wait for the spoilt brat, in her I see the young me. We connected from the very first day. "Did you tell her that we are all going to be in the delivery room with her?" he asks Sosha. They have to be joking! That's not going to happen. "You just told her," Sosha says laughing. Ntando is the only person who is going to be inside the delivery room with me. Even Sosha will wait outside, I'm not going to push the baby in front of a man. They must forget about it. He asks his brother aside and permits me to roam his kitchen. I don't know what he wants me to eat here, there is nothing interesting except fruits. His soft drink is sugar free but they say when you're in Rome you do what Romans do so I'll drink it. I stumble on a tiny bottle pushed between the glasses inside the cupboard. I look around to see if no one is watching and open it and smell the liquid inside. It's disturbing, I put it back and close the cupboard. I grab a pear and go back to the lounge. I should relax, he is a doctor obviously he keeps weird bottles in his cupboards. The mood is a bit tense in the car on our way home, I haven't seen the parcel we were picking. Craig taught us the importance of communication not so long ago. "What is the problem babe?" I ask. "My father, he is the problem," he says. I wonder what that chimpanzee has done. He is always the source of his sadness. "Do you want to talk about it?" I ask. "He changed his will, now everything is on India and Tshitshi." That has India written all over it, she is that kind of a wife. But they are independent and financial stable, it shouldn't be bothering him. I wonder how Bayede found out, isn't that confidential information? "What are you going to do about it?" I ask. "I don't know but Mlando and Maya have to be on that will. My instincts tell me India is planning something and my father won't see it coming," he says. Deep down he still cares about his father. Only if he can see his wrongs and do right by his son. He is the only biological parent he has, life has robbed them their relationship. My mother is not perfect either but I try to reach out to her. The last time we talked over the phone she said she missed me, that was shocking. He remains inside the car and makes a phone call. I'm surprised



to find the door unlocked when I insert the key. Did someone break in? I hope they didn't steal my peanut butter, I'd die and call Pastor Lukau to resurrects me from death. "SURPRISEEEEE!!!" What is going on here? The dining room is decorated with pink balloons, every girl I know is here. OMG! This is not what I think it is! Amanda pulls my hand and leads me to the table. "Welcome to your baby shower mommy," she says. This is so kind of them, I didn't expect it at all. Tears are running down my face, crying is my newly found hobby. "Babies cry, not mothers," Ntando says. Everyone laughs. There is Yolanda, Mbali, Lihle and Myalo's Zolile. Both Bayede's girlfriend and baby mama are here. Things may not end well. Thabile is sitting opposite Nomzamo with a specific look on her face. "Thank you guys, this means a lot to me," I say. "I'm the one who put everything together, I should start organising bigger events." Ntando and her two brain cells! She did a good job but that doesn't mean she can organise big events. I roll my eyes and kiss her cheek. She is my everything. We take pictures, laugh and eat. There are seven people here but I have more than ten gifts. Zolile got me a baby-stroller worth my car's monthly insurance. I won't say Ntando is gifting me, she's been buying me baby stuff since I was three months pregnant. They look for Sosha and bring him in. Nomzamo teaches us how to change the diaper, we are practicing using a teddy bear. He is enjoying this, I wonder if the hype will remain like this on a real baby that kicks and cries for no reason. Fortunately everything goes well, there isn't much interaction between Thabile and Nomzamo. I try to be neutral and talk to both of them but deep down I want to grab Nomzamo to the room and ask-"uthini uMama Madiba?" That's how we call the political girlfriend. I end my day with a call from home, Mbuso is not home. He fetched the cows, took a bath and disappeared without notifying anyone. Sabatha has searched everywhere with no avail, his phone is off. "Nothing happened to him, stop crying," he keeps saying this. The world we are living in is cruel, I've imagined the worst, he could be somewhere lying in a pool of blood lifelessly. "Do you want us to pray?" he asks. I wipe the tears and nod. We kneel on the floor and hold hands. He prays effusive, quotes from the Bible and lay his heart to God. I'm not good at it, I end up copying what he is saying. He has the Bible app on his phone? I'm surprised. This app is only 15Mb and I have 104Mb Gun Shooting game instead. He reads Psalms, I feel like I'm in a history class. I wonder if everything they wrote is true, it would've been nice to hear both sides of the story. My phone beeps. It's a Please-Call-Me from my mother. My nerves are short, Sosha takes the phone and calls. They speak shortly then he says goodbye and ends the call. "He is back but he is not saying where he was," he says. Thank you Lord! He is safe, that's all that matters. \*\*\*\*\* After 38weeks of mood swings, crazy cravings and tenacious weight gain my princess is finally coming. I felt weird pain in my abdomen in the early hours of morning. Sosha called Bayede and he advised us to go to the hospital. I wasn't playing when I said only Ntando will be in the delivery room, the Celes are beyond disappointed. My mother instructed Sosha to take off his belt, unbutton his shirt and wear his underwear with its inside out. A part of me regrets informing her, she is exaggerating everything. Sosha made it worse and blurted out that I didn't drink umhlabelo that she gave me, now she is telling me to drink caster oils and warm water. Ntando is the one driving, she is quiet today. I need to take last few selfies as a pregnant woman. We already have names, he refused to tell me his, he said I'll hear it when she is born. I heard scary stories about birth giving, people told me contractions make you swear to never touch a dick again. To me if felt like severe period pains, I will be having sex as soon as I



heal. I have given birth to a healthy baby girl. Ntando cut the umbilical cord and named her Peanut Butter. At this moment I'm not sure if she is beautiful or not, but she is my baby so I will say she is the most beautiful girl I've ever seen. After cleaning us the nurse calls Sosha in. He walks in with his brothers and their girlfriends. My daughter is being passed from one person to another. "So what is Peanut Butter's real name?" Ntando asks. All eyes are on me, Sosha is smiling. I hope we don't have the same name. "Zemvelo Buthelezi," I say. He frowns and chuckles. "She is Mand'okholo Cele." WTH! Ntando bursts out laughing. "It's a girl not a boy," I say. "Okholo Zemvelo Cele." Now it sounds better. It's okay she can use Okholo as her first name. Mlando looks at Bayede. "No foreign name?" he asks. I didn't think it was a tradition that a Cele child must have a foreign name. "I like Zoya, it's a Ukrainian name that means life, it can mean God's gift in Arabic. I have Maya, you have Zoya and Mlando can have...Phaya." I cannot laugh along with everyone, I'm stitched down there, one mistake the palace cracks open. My daughter is Okholo Zemvelo Zoya Cele. Oh we're not done, MaJali is calling. "Is she able to suck on those tiny nipples?" Her approach has changed, she sounds like a caring mother for once. "She is trying Ma," I say. "Tell umkhwenyana to buy formula milk otherwise she will die of hunger. Do you have amahewu there?" No I don't, I'm not sick, I gave birth. "Yes, Sosha bought them," I lie. She instructs me to drink lot of tea when I get home and soak stitches with salty warm water. And she drops the bombshell... "Your father and I already named her Nomagugu, uyigugu kithi," she says. Someone have to back down, Nomagugu needs to be registered on her birth certificate. The name is ugly and so 70s but it's honouring to have her named by my late father. I withdraw Zemvelo, Bayede doesn't mind if Zoya isn't registered but insists on the name. Finally I'm a mother to Okholo Nomagugu Cele. This Okholo girl is not a teddy bear, she sleeps the whole day and stays up at night. Whenever I close my eyes she open hers. Sosha had to hire a nanny, I wasn't coping at all. She is two months old now, a lot has happened. The Celes are divided, it's the sons against their father and his wife. My family isn't perfect either, Sosha had to speak some sense into Mbuso's head a few weeks ago when he wanted to drop out of school. He is turning into something I don't know, his reason was that he wanted to look for a job to support at home. Sosha offered to help every month but I said no and suggested that we help MaJali to start a small business. I ran the idea past her, she was okay with it and opted for clothes-selling. I received a text from Bayede in the middle of the day, he is coming to drop Maya. It's mid-week Maya is supposed to be at school, and she also has a nanny. It doesn't make any sense. He arrives in the blink of an eye. It's rare to see him wearing shorts and flip flops. Maya isn't carrying her bag as usual. "I'll fetch him soon," he says. The car leaves in a strident velocity. I send Sosha a text asking what's going on, he doesn't respond. The Cele princess kept me up the whole night, now she is enjoying her beauty sleep. I must join her, the nanny will keep an eye on Maya for me. I wake up to the tiny hands slapping my face. It's Maya, she is calling my name in a fearful voice. I don't know how long I've been sleeping. There is noise coming downstairs. Okholo is not next to me, I guess she is with her nanny. "What's going on baby?" I ask Maya. "Mommy wants to take me, Dad doesn't want me to go." She looks scared. Why would Nomzamo and Bayede bring their fights here? She is wearing only a robe, her face is covered in tears. Bayede is standing in front of her as if he is stopping her from going. He doesn't even realise that I'm standing behind them. "Leave Maya, let's go talk," he says.



Nomzamo shakes her head. He tries to hold her hand but she pushes him off. Maybe if they can reverse and fight from the beginning...I want to know how all this started. "Zamo how do you take me? You think I would've done that in front of my daughter?" Oh my Gucci, he calls her Zamo! What did he do in front of Maya? Nomzamo is breathing fire. "Maya doesn't lie Bayede, why are we even doing this in front of people?" Only then he turns his head and looks at me. He is not bothered by my presence, he turns back to her and grabs her hand. "Come on, I love you and you know that." He sounds so desperate. "You have Thabile," Nomzamo says. I need a bowl of popcorn, it's going down. "I have you, you've been in my heart all these years, you also know that. You are still punishing me for one mistake Zamo? How long is it going to take for you to forgive me? I have done everything to show that I'm sorry," he says. They're not hitting each other, I must give them space to make up if they're making up. I wonder where does this leaves Thabile. A part of me knew that she was going to end up getting hurt. Our Mama Madiba, God give her strength. Maya is crushed on bed, fear is written all over face. Kids love games, I borrow her my phone just to keep her busy. I hope she doesn't open other things, Sosha's dick is all over my gallery. Fifteen minutes later Bayede walks in with the ever crying Okholo. He gives her to me and picks Maya up. His mood has improved, he is kissing her cheeks and smiling. "Thank you," he says. I nod my head. "I didn't mean to bring the chaos here but I was out of options," he says. He owes me an update, I've been looking after their daughter all this time. "So you and Nomzamo...?" I ask lifting up my eyebrows. "You'll be the VVIP at the wedding." Say what? They are sending wedding invites already! "Yoh! So no more Thabile?" I ask. "No, Zamo is the one, she has always been." I'm happy for them. They both have deep voices, I'm glad they have talked through their differences man to man. The bakery is busy these days, Sosha comes home late. On busy days he takes the tie off and join the bakers. I miss work but they replaced me with a snob girl from Eshowe. Sosha is against me working. He enjoys coming home to his fiancé and daughter, that's what he says. As a result I'm receiving fat allowance every month. I don't pay for anything in the house, all my money goes into savings. Mbuso is going to university soon, I don't want him to be different from other kids. Okholo had my skin tone at the beginning but as she grows she is slowly resembling Bayede. She is giving me headache. "Okholo are you really going to look like your uncle and grandfather?" I ask her. She is two months old but we hold serious conversations. I talk and answer on her behalf. We get along very well. "No Mommy I'm just exploring everyone's look in the family, I will decide how exactly I want to look like when I'm two years old," she says. She is very clever, at two years I didn't use my brain. "Will you look like Mommy? You can't look like the Celes, especially not Uncle Bayede," I say. Someone clears throat at the door. Oh crap! I hope he didn't hear me. He used to laugh when I talked to Okholo but now he has joined the gang. He also talks to her, the only difference is that he talks to her in his normal voice, he doesn't switch voices like me. Tell me why I'm not a famous voice actor? The nurses stole my amniotic sac, that's why. My blanket of luck! "How are my two favourite ladies doing?" he asks. He didn't hear me, thank God. "We are good Daddy, thank for replying to my texts," I say with a fake smile. He gives me a light peck and picks Okholo up. "I'm sorry love, my day was busy," he says. Too busy to type a few words or send a voice note? I dish up for him and bring it to the bedroom. Okholo is the centre of his world. I get to hear every movement she makes while on his arms. Oh she is sighing, she is trying to suck her thumb, she is smiling and





doing this. We haven't had any outburst ever since Okholo came. "Did Bayede tell you what happened?" I ask. "Yeah, it was bound to happen but he has created war. Thabile won't let this slide just like that. She and Mpume are birds of the same feather." I hope Bayede will resolve it quickly. Too much drama has already happened and there is a child in the picture. There is a letter of izibizo my family gave the Celes before my father died. Apparently Bab'omdala requested to make some changes, now there are several additions. There is double-doors fridge, double bed and three goats requested. All these things belong to him. My late father's requests also need to be honoured, and my mother is waiting for her wardrobe and expensive pots too. Sosha is going to be bankrupt after this. Most things have been bought, the ceremony is in two weeks. I have to go home for the first time as a mother. Kanyo is doing preparations that side, I'm worried about the sum of money she requests every week. Usually hiring a tent costs R1000, but the one she hired is two times the money. Mbuso sold two goats to help with the money for food and drinks. Even though my father is not here things are coming together, the family is still intact. I got my driver's licence and created an Instagram account. I phoned home and asked them to prepare a parking space for me. I haven't decided on the song I'm going to play. Rihanna-Talk That Talk would've been nice but my neighbours won't understand a word. I need to play a song they will hear and understand, something like Umfaz' Omnyama-Ngisebenzile. Yes I worked for this car, I didn't relax my hips in order to get it. Sometimes the devil works overtime, it starts raining as I approach Ndulinde. People are inside their houses, they won't see my car. When I get home Kanyo suggests that we drive to the tuck-shop which is just around the corner. I'm the typical car owner in the family so I tell her the road is too bad, it will damage my car. MaJali hijacks Okholo, I have to borrow her if I miss her. It's Nomagugu this, Nomagugu that. I haven't forgotten what she said, I'm keeping four eyes on her. "Yangomuhle come here," she calls from her rondavel. Okholo is fast asleep on her back. She asks me to sit on bed next to her. Our private meetings are never good, I wonder what I have done. "Did I do something wrong?" I ask. She puts Okholo on bed but the little jackal opens her eyes and starts crying. I didn't know she liked being strapped on the back this much. But what is this ugly cloth she was strapped with? I take her and shush her back to sleep. "I'm thinking of doing your father's first ceremony after my cleansing ceremony. Your wedding must be after it," she says thoughtfully. She never discuss things with me, I'm a girl and girls never contribute anything into decision-making. "But you can decide what you want to come first," she says. I'm shocked. "You're asking for my input?" I ask. "Yes." Jesus is around the corner, he is coming back to fetch me and the few others. "Sosha wants to get married soon but my father's ceremony is important you can do it first," I say. Things have changed, her mindset has changed unexpectedly. I think she realises that her past actions were wrong but she is too proud to say she is sorry. I'm not dwelling on the negativity, life is too short to hold grudges. I'm the daughter I've always been, Okholo doesn't need to witness past feuds. \*\*\*\*\* Nowadays they do these kinds of ceremonies during the day but my uncles refused, they want it to be at night. Ntando insisted on decorating the tent. Everything is beautiful but I don't think it was necessary. Izinsizwa zendawo won't sit on decorated chairs, they need a house carpeted with grass so they can do indlamu. I also don't understand the cake, are we getting married? It's a long ceremony, goats have to be slaughtered and cooked at night. I'm wearing isidwaba and inhloko that is black in colour since I have a child



and it's not a wedding yet. Sosha's outfit looks like Okholo's dress, they were designed by Mbali. She is sleeping on his arms throughout the night. In the morning the Celes want a date for the wedding, we have to go to the tent to wrap things up. I'm tired, the cameraman is following me everywhere. Sosha and I have silver-decorated chairs at the front. I hope there won't be more speeches, I want to be done and go to sleep. "I have a question I need to ask you," he says leaning over me. He can see how tired I am. "Can we talk about it later?" I ask. "No we can't," he says. The tent is full, girls are still singing and dancing. I don't think this is the right time for whatever question he has. Bayede stands up and orders silence. He is wearing umqhele the wrong way, it's facing down. Where was Nomzamo when he dressed up? Sosha takes the microphone and stands a few feet away from me. This wasn't on the memo, what are they doing? "I don't call you by your name unless I'm mad," he says. I frown, completely lost on what he is trying to say. The tent is dead silent, it feels a bit uncomfortable. "MaShenge we've done everything together. It feels like I've known you for decades, you have changed me for the better. I just want to ask you one question before I leave," he says. All eyes are on me, I don't even know how to react. He should've asked his question privately. "You love me, right?" he asks. He knows that I love him, what's the heck? "Myalo give her the microphone, these people don't know anything. Some may think I forced you to be with me, they need to hear it from the horse's mouth." The fool is smiling, everyone is watching me. I cannot believe he is doing this to me. Myalo gives me the microphone, I have no choice but to say it. "I love him," I say in a shaky voice. Everyone claps, Ntando and Kanyo are screaming. They are kaak drunk. "You all heard her, she loves the man," he says smiling proudly. I don't know when he got down on his knee. I literally scream along with everyone. "MaShenge will you marry me?" he asks. We need tents with air conditioners, I'm sweating and running out of breath. "But I already accepted the..." He cuts me short by shaking his head. "The answer is yes or no?" he says. What is no? I've never heard of that word before. Who proposes two times? The thought of walking around with a rock worth half a million on my finger brings me to tears. "Yes I will marry you," I say.

Chapter 17 Time flies, the year has ended too fast. Today is one of the most memorable days of my life, matric results came out today. I've been concerned about Mbuso, this year wasn't easy for him but guess what? He passed with Bachelor and got two distinctions. He is going to university, it's like a dream come true. My mother is against him leaving the province so he is going to University of Zululand. Okholo is now to crawling. The house is always upside down, she rearranges everything she bumps into. I like how babies change like weather, she doesn't look like Bayede anymore, she looks like me except that she is dark. Almost every week there is a case of Sabatha beating a certain boy. Talking to him is like talking to a stone. The African discipline doesn't work on him anymore, the more he gets beating at home is the more he unleashes it on other boys. He doesn't care about anything, you can't punish him by taking something away from him. Unfortunately we don't ground children here. It won't work, he has to fetch the goats and water and that's when he meets his rivals. Tomorrow we are having Buthelezi's isihlangu ceremony. Bab'omdala is not coming, he hasn't set his foot here in a long



time. When my father died he thought his livestock will belong to him. Too bad Mbuso is grown and getting stubborn by the day. Men are arriving for the cow slaughtering, amongst them is Kwenza Mdletshe. I don't know if he is testing me or what. He is not welcomed here. I walk in the kitchen furiously. "Who invited the Mdletshe?" I ask. Mbuso stands up with a frown on his face. "Where are they?" he asks. "Kwenza is inside my father's kraal," I say. He grabs the kitchen knife from Aunt July's hand and races out the door. We are all shocked, Aunt July is bleeding, the knife cut her fingers. Is he crazy? Aunt July is going moer him. There is noise rising below the kitchen. "Mbambeni bo!" We push through the door and run towards the chaos. Kwenza is on the ground, blood is pouring from the side of his neck. There is a man holding him, trying to keep him awake. "He needs to go the clinic," he shouts. Everyone turns and looks at me. My car? No ways, I cannot rush my rapist to the clinic, petrol is too expensive. "Mbuso will go to jail Yangomuhle, take him to the clinic please," my mother cries next to me. I push my feelings aside and rush inside the house and take the car keys. It doesn't look good, he is groaning like a bull, his blood is all over my seats. The man is demanding me to drive faster, he keeps checking his pulse and motivating him to stay alive. We get to the clinic and they are transferring him to Stanger Hospital. It's really bad. There were more than 10 witnesses, chances of escaping the law are slim. I'm not going to survive if he goes to jail. Mbuso what have you done? The ceremony is sour, blood was spilt inside the very same kraal. No number of appeasing goats can make me enjoy this meat. We haven't got an update on Kwenza's condition. I'm praying for him, he needs to pull through. I cannot have my brother go to jail, UniZulu is waiting for him. Towards the end of the ceremony when people start to leave the police car parks outside the yard. My knees start shaking, they are coming to arrest my brother. He doesn't look shaken, they throw questions at him, he answers all of them truthfully. They take him with them and lock him inside the back of the van. The last time I cried this much was on my father's funeral. Why is this happening to my family? Kwenza Mdletshe is laid in eternal peace at his home. People came out in numbers, the cemetery is crowded. I'm watching everything under the tree at home. I should be relieved but I'm not. My brother is a killer and he is not even 20years old. He is here, acting as if nothing is wrong. They released him after three days. I don't know what Sosha did, he met up with the police captain and the next day Mbuso came home. It's only been a year since Buthelezi passed on but a lot has happened. I miss him, his long calls and Jamlude talk. If I can get another chance I'd listen and not cut his calls when he talks about his cows. I'd let him call with free minutes until they finish. Okholo cries, I gather myself up and go to her. I'm getting married in a few weeks but I have no glow, no joy. Make-up will do its job. "Have you seen Sabatha?" Mom asks. I haven't seen Sabatha since morning. I thought he was watching TV or something. Today is not the day to be all over the place, Kwenza may have been the only son in his family but we don't know what his relatives are thinking. They could be planning revenge, Sabatha and Mbuso were warned. I search everywhere in the yard, he is not here. I taste the same fear I tasted when the police took Mbuso. It's not safe for him to be wandering around. Maybe I should've taken them to Durban for a little while. I strap Okholo on my back and go to inform Mbuso. Now I see the importance of buying kids cellphones. There are no means of communicating with him. We call Bab'omcane and inform him. Time reads 18:45, Sabatha is still not home. He is not obedient but he always makes sure that the goats are home on time.



Mbuso is going crazy, he wants to go and look for him at the Mdletshes. The last thing we need is both of them to be missing. The knock comes through the door, Bab'omncane opens. We all think it's him but a young woman wearing navy clothes walks in. She looks at everyone carefully before greeting. "The boy is safe but you're not. Leave before 10pm, you'll meet him by the Xulu forest." Who is she? And what does she mean by saying we are not safe? Is she connected to the Mdletshes? "Mntanami kwenzenjani?" My mother is already crying. She glances outside as if she is checking if nobody followed her. "Sisi I asked to see you, I guess you didn't trust me. I beg you all to leave before 10pm, I'll make a plan for the boy to wait by the forest. Be warned!" There is no time to pack, we just take what's necessary and lock the houses and get in the car. Bab'omncane stays behind, he says he'd rather hide somewhere nearer than to leave his brother's home unguarded. We wait almost an hour by the forest. Mbuso wants to go fetch him. He is the story of another day, the humble boy he once was is gone. I used to think I can fight with him, but not anymore, he'd beat the crap out of me. Eventually a little shadow makes its way towards the car. It's him, we all sigh in relief. He is not hurt anywhere. No words can express my gratitude to God and that woman. He says they only threatened him and vowed that they will get Mbuso and kill him. Things have turned for the worst. The Mdletshes arrived armed, Bab'omncane was lurking by the trees watching everything. They stabbed two cows to death and left my parents' rondavel burning. All my father's pictures and clothes burnt inside. His memory was destroyed and my mother isn't taking it so well. She wants to go back home to see everything herself. Strong hands hold my waist, I inhale his cologne and smile. He kisses the side of my neck and asks if I'm okay. This is the time we should be focusing on our upcoming wedding preparations but we haven't even bonded properly. My family is always indoors, I miss him. "Do you want a massage?" he asks. "No I just want to cuddle?" I say. Lying on his chest feels good. For a moment my mind is relaxed, I'm not thinking about the Mdletshes and all the what-ifs. "I want to go and talk to them," he says. "Talk to who?" I ask. "The Mdletshes" He is crazy! It's not just the Mdletshes, it's the whole community. The same people who were eating our meat a few weeks ago joined forces with the Mdletshes and attacked my home. Well it turns out he was serious about going to Ndulinde. He asked my mother for Induna's number and called him to arrange a meeting. I think he fears that the wedding might not happen more than he fears anything. My mother should be home busy with the preparations. There are so many things that need to be done. Ntando should be helping me get things together as the maid-of-honour but she is busy with Tyler's job, the wedding planner. We all have to attend the meeting as Induna requested. I didn't know Myalo was coming, we found him already here. It's not easy identifying him amongst these people. He is dressed like them, curved cap, leopard printed T-shirt and umblaselo trouser. He is a Zulu rural guy trapped in the business world. There are people who have been following us, they are wearing all-black. I wasn't told about them, being guarded makes me feel even more unsafe. The meeting is held at Induna's homestead. The Mdletshes are sitting far opposite us, hatred is evident in their eyes. Kwenza's mother is giving me frequent icy stares. Induna rises and requests some silence. He introduces Sosha and unnecessarily narrates what he is doing for a living and how famous he is. "Cele you requested this meeting so you have to tell these people why they are here," he says before sitting on his wooden chair. Myalo whispers something to Sosha, they talk for a few minutes before he takes



the stand. He has that 'respect me' thing, he is not intimidating but not easily-taken either. His beard has grown bigger than the last time. He puts his hand up in a greeting manner and walks to the front. "Sizwe sikaBiyela!" Okay I understand why he took over, his tongue is smooth. Sosha can tell all these people to fuck off if his head tells him to. He doesn't mind calling a person imfene orinja. Myalo knows his story, he has everyone's ears from the beginning. "The previous incidents have made it clear that people of Ndulinde take violence against men more seriously than that against women. I'm not from this area but I have built a relationship with the Buthelezi and Bab' Gwala here. I'm aware that the Buthelezi daughter was raped by the late Kwenza Mdletshe who died at the hands of Mbuso Buthelezi. No case was opened against him due to personal reasons, however all of you discovered the truth last year. No man took stand and fought the rapist. He lived here and mingled with all of you. Everyone treated him like a saint, you all accepted rape." He is getting warmed up, he is pointing his finger at everyone. "Fathers are supposed to protect their daughters. You are all Yangomuhle's fathers unless if the black community traditions have changed. It's failure from all of you that resulted in a 17year old stabbing a man to death. He took a stand because none of you did. A group of men dragged his sister's rapist to his father's kraal. Someone must tell me he had no right to be angry...Please, one of you must stand up and tell me he didn't, right here right now!" They only clear their throats, nobody says a word. He looks at Kwenza's mother and my mother and frowns. Now he is intimidating, he is no longer the ever-so humble Nazareth guy who loves samp. "Omama besizwe! How do you do that bomama? How do you keep quiet and let abafokazane do as they please with your daughters? Who is going to protect young girls if our fathers and mothers are like this?" he asks. I feel a hot lump forming in my throat. I don't want to cry, I'm over it. He shakes his head as if the reality disturbs him. "I think you all have the answer, the answer is him," he says pointing at Mbuso. "He is not at the age of protecting women but because you are all FAILURES he took the responsibility," he says. Mbuso hisses, he doesn't care about this meeting. He said he is not sorry, and that is the attitude he brought. If they were dogs I'd say they have tails tucked between their legs. In Zulu they say inkukhu inqunywe umlomo. Macingwane is not done, he bursts each and every bubble. Nobody expected this meeting to turn out like this. Induna will rebuild the house that was burnt, anyone who dares to come near Mbuso will be dealt with by the community at large. The cows will be paid back by everyone who was involved. It's safe for my family to return home. Life is back to normal. I wanted a beach wedding, it looks good on TV but my uncle put his foot down. The bloody sea took my great-grand-father, and for that he hates anything associated with the sea. So I'm getting married at the Colisheen Estate in Ballito. Tyler outdid himself in everything, he definitely outdid Sosha's bank account too. I'm not getting anything done with him calling every 10 minutes. A beautiful bride takes time, he needs to chill. Ntando is over the moon like Donald. "Do I need to take the weave off? It's not fair that I look more beautiful than the bride," she says. At least she still remembers that she is not the bride. "Stop being crazy and come take one last selfie before I become Mrs what-what," I say. She rolls her eyes and smiles. I feel like I'm about to transform into a new person. We take more than ten selfies. "Don't forget to include me in your speech," she says. "And who should I say you are?" I ask. She starts reminding me how she persuaded me to give Sosha a chance. In short, this wedding is happening because of her. Although she is





petty as she says it but she is my number one human being. She made most things possible. "I love you babe," I say. She smiles and holds my hand. "Till death do us apart," she says. We embrace in a tight hug that is disturbed by Kanyo. She is a bridesmaid, there was no other way, she had to be one. She is sober, make-up looks good on her, she is beautiful. We have to go, the cars have arrived. Aunt July is already shouting, calling us izinokwe. She is wearing her maroon two-piece. The colour of the day is teal, white and blush pink. I wish everyone complied with it but this is her two-piece of luck, there was no negotiating with her. We gather for a small prayer. It feels like a send-off moment, fear overwhelms me. Everyone walks out, leaving me with MaJali and Okholo on her hip. "You are a good mother Yangomuhle, I have no doubts that you will make a good wife at the Celes. I'm proud of you even though I didn't contribute to your growth. I'm sorry for everything," she says. I forgave her long time ago but hearing the apology coming from her mouth warms my heart. Yes she wasn't the best mother but she is the best grandmother to Okholo. "It's okay Jali, I forgave you," I say. "Now you remind me of your father." I didn't know he called her Jali but what do I know? I wasn't with them in the middle of the night. Mbuso walks in...Am I ever going to leave? "Hhayi umkhwenyana is waiting," MaJali complains. He ignores her and looks at me. He wants to say something. "A few minutes Ma," I say. She says we only have two minutes and walks out. I bet the girls are getting irritated outside. "What is it brother?" I ask. He rubs his hands together and takes a loud breath. Gosh, we need to go down the aisle in 10minutes. He is wearing a tuxedo, only now I realise that my brother is not the boy anymore, he is a young man. "So you're leaving?" he asks. No no no! He is crying. "Mbuso I'm getting married, not dying," I say. He wipes his eyes and pulls himself together. "It's too soon, but there is never going to be the right time anyway. I wish you the best of luck, don't forget that you have a home. You've been a good sister, now you should focus on Okholo and Sbari. I will take care of everything, you deserve a break." How is he going to take care of everything? "You have to focus on your books Mbuso, don't worry about Ma and Sabatha," I say. He pulls me for a hug and puts his hands on my shoulders and stares at me. I haven't noticed the little beard growing on his chin. Why is he growing so fast? "I'm not pursuing my studies anymore, Mngqobi found connection in Johannesburg, they want petrol attendants for major petrol stations." Is this a joke? I'm getting married for goodness' sake, this is my moment. If I have to find out that my brother, whom I saved every cent for his tuition fees is becoming a petrol attendant, can it be next week at least? "My mind is made up, responsibilities don't allow me to follow my dreams. I'm sorry for disappointing you, I love you more than you know," he says. I close my eyes and push everything away. I will deal with it later. "I love you too," I say. He smiles with relief and hugs me one more time. "Let's go before Sbari loses his mind," he says. I bet he has lost it already. "Must I lift this thing up?" he asks. This 'thing' is the tail of the dress. "Yes moron," I say. He laughs and lifts it up. "Okaaay MaShenge." He is mimicking Sosha. We are very late, almost 20 minutes late. Maya takes her basket and walks on, throwing flower petals on the carpet. She looks like a little angel. "She looks like you," Mbuso whispers. My stomach is in knots, my run-away spirit is reviving. I don't even reply to his comment. He tightens his hand around me as if he is giving me some strength. The instruments starts, there is no turning back. Relief and tears overwhelm him when he sees me walking down the aisle. Myalo taps his shoulder in motivation, he is the best man. They are wearing teal tuxedos, Sosha



is wearing a white one and blush pink shirt. He looks dazzling with a low fade cut and tidy growing beard. He meets us halfway and shakes Mbuso's hand. He gives my hand a little squeeze and whispers a compliment. We've already given each other our hearts. I've told him all that is in my heart. I made vows long time ago, now it's only a matter of making them in front of everyone. He is looking at my eyes like he has never seen me before. I don't hear half of the things the pastor is saying, my eyes are glued to him. Mr Smartypants here we are today, vowing to love each other in front of 150 people. Yes we are here, finally. "In the imperfect world we have found happiness, we made it through storms and hurricanes. If anyone told me true love existed before I met you, I would've abruptly told them it doesn't. I believed it was a book thing, we can only live it through imaginations. But you came in my store and changed everything I thought I knew. I feel blessed beyond deserving, God has found me a perfect match. Only Him can take me away from you. You are beloved from the bottom of my heart to the end of my life. You and everything that is yours, I will cherish and respect till death do us apart." His vows are perfect, I hope he honours every word. My heart is beating off my chest. All these people have their ears sharpened just to hear us vowing to each other. No, not all of them, some came to see if nobody is stopping the wedding. With my ratchet, brandy-drinking cousin next to me I don't think that person would make it to the parking area alive. "Sosha Justin Cele, I stand in front of you today to let you and everyone in this venue know that the love I have for you is unconditional and eternal. I promise to respect and love you through thick and thin. I promise to always support you, in sickness and in health. Wherever you go I will be there holding your hand, I will love you till death do us apart," I say. It feels like we've already walked half of the journey, we exchange the rings and have our first kiss as husband and wife. I'm officially Mrs Yangomuhle Cele. Our first dance song is Black Coffee-Stuck In Your Love. I haven't lost all the pregnancy weight due to laziness but my body still moves with the beat. Kanyo is overdoing it though, there is no need to twerk for Mlando. Umabo takes place in Bab' Cele's house in Richard's Bay. He does look happy for a change, Sosha is the first son to get married in the family. I can't say the same about India, she's been sour the whole time. We are leaving as soon as everything is done. I'm freakin' tired, I need bed and my husband. "Mam' Cele..." The person is talking to me. It sounds strange, I feel like a woman who sells tomatoes. "You look gorgeous my lady," she says. She is wearing Xhosa traditional attire, she looks beautiful as always. Things have been hectic, we haven't talked in a while. I heard she moved in with Bayede, he might be sending ilobolo soon. I'm the VVIP at that wedding so I can't wait. "Thank you, you look beautiful as well," I say. "I tried, Ntando told us ugly guests will be kicked out." I laugh, Ntando is crazy. "I have paved the way for you, you need to join me soon. I can't handle the monster-in-laws alone," I say. "Marriage needs patience my girl, stay patient no matter what happens," she says. I roll my eyes, she sounds like those women who were advising me. Yes, I know I'll need to be patient in this marriage however the core of it should be love not patience. "Are you going to follow in the footsteps of the world's greatest couple?" I ask. She smiles and shrugs her shoulders. "Bayede will decide if he wants us to get married." He is here and he heard us. He holds her waist and asks why his name is on her mouth. He is smiling, clearly amused by it. "Don't sneak on me like that Baba kaMaya," she says. Her tone has changed, she is almost whispering. He holds her again and kisses the side of her face. He doesn't care about people watching. They end up pulling each other out of



the house, probably going to the car for a quickie. "Why didn't I meet him first?" Kanyo thought! She is down gulping Flying Fish. We had an agreement that she wasn't going to drink until everything was done but here we are. Yolanda is rolling her eyes, she is not aware that I'm watching her. I don't know why she is sitting with us, she should be with Amanda and Zolile. She was invited by the groom's side not us. She is not even useful, she has been on the phone texting the whole time. I loved every part of my wedding except this 'ukuhlanganiswa kwendlu' thing. I understand the purpose behind it, but my side of the family is being pure disgusting. Bab'omncane is calling spade a spade, I'm even embarrassed to have his DNA. He emphasises that Sosha owns my vagina and that I must bear him children. There are few things being said to him as the husband. It's like this marriage is solely my responsibility. They all shake my hand and say their last words before leaving. It's not easy holding back tears, Mbuso looks shattered. "I will miss you as a Buthelezi, all the best Mrs Cele," he says and embraces me in a warm brotherly hug. Sabatha doesn't look bothered, he reminds me to send him data and leaves. "Sthandwa I'm leaving," Nomzamo says walking in. We are in our room, having our husband & wife cuddle. Sosha wanted us to leave today but Myalo opposed the idea and said I should spend at least one night in the presence of the Cele ancestors. "Why are you leaving so soon?" Sosha asks her. "Your brother's 36th birthday is next week, I have something big to plan." Yoh, now we have to buy expensive gifts for the doctor. "Someone must watch and learn, go plan sisi," he says. I laugh and look at him. "I'm not planning big things for anyone's birthday. If I get you a mug designed with a red heart be grateful." "I don't like mugs," he says. "What do you like?" I ask. Nomzamo laughs in her deep voice. "You don't even know what he likes? Lord forgives. Anyway I'm leaving, please look after Maya for me, these people cannot be trusted," she says. "Don't worry, we will look after her," I say. She blow kisses and walks out. Inunu engafi is her, just when Thabile thought she had Bayede she resurfaces and took him away. Sosha locks my hand in his fingers and gives me a passionate kiss. "I feel like a complete man mkami," he says. Mkami sounds nice, he should call me this everyday. Now I can cook stew in the family gatherings and..... Gunshots!!!! "What is happening? Where is Okholo?" I scream. He pushes me aside and rushes out. The gun fired not so far, it's not safe for me to leave this room, I just pray that my daughter is safe. People start screaming, there are cars speeding off. Something bad has happened, I cannot sit here not knowing what it is. "Zamoh don't do this!" It's Bayede, he is holding Nomzamo on his lap. She is heavily bleeding, his shirt is now soaked in blood. He is begging her to wake up. "Who shot her?" My voice is trembling. "The car parked next to her and fired shots through the window, nobody saw who it was," Yolanda says flatly. This cannot be happening after my wedding. She needs to stay alive, we cannot lose her. "Bayede she is gone," says one of the elders. Bayede looks up with tears rolling down his face and shakes his head. "She cannot be, Zamo vuka!" My knees are slowly failing me, holding back tears is impossible. Wait.....Maya??? With my last drop of energy I drag myself inside the house and look for her. Most people are gathered at the scene. I hope she is safe. She is in the kitchen corner with other kids, their eyes are bulging out, they heard the gunshots. She has Okholo on her lap. "Are you guys okay?" I ask in a breaking voice. She nods, fear is written all over her face. "But Gogo is not okay," she says. "Which Gogo?" I ask. "Gog' Molefe." I haven't seen her since morning. Is she sick? I hear someone vomiting in one of the bathrooms and



make my way there. She is lying on the floor on a pool vomit and blood. "Ma what's wrong?" I ask, panicking. "It's Bayede...It's him MaShenge." What on earth is going on? "He did something...Tell Bab' Cele that Bayede has..." I wait for her to finish. What did Bayede do and what must I tell Bab' Cele? She can't continue, she is shaking, her eyes are rolling backwards. "Ma? India? India?" She is dead too.

Chapter 18 It's a very hot Saturday, you can put a pan outside and fry an egg. It's even hotter inside the tent and people are not cutting their long speeches. Each family member has something to say about their beloved daughter. Everyone has accepted that she is gone, except Bayede. He is a walking zombie, I don't know how it's possible for someone to lose so much weight within a week. He is turning thirty-six today, we should be celebrating his birthday but we are here, burying the love of his life. He is called at the front to say his last words. I thought he wouldn't make it but he is there with a piece of paper in his hand. Sosha and Mlando are standing with him. "Sthandwa sami why...?" This is not going to go well. He is tearing from the beginning. Amanda grabs Maya and walks out with her. She cannot see her father like this. "You said you have a big surprise for me today, surely you didn't mean this. If I had known that you would leave me I would've made efforts to make things right between us sooner. I never stopped loving you and it haunts me to know that I didn't give you love in some years of your life. I don't know how to look at Maya in the eyes, she keeps asking when you're coming back from the hospital and I don't know what to say to her. How am I going to raise her alone? I wish I can sing along with everyone in this tent and say 'Kulungile Baba' but akulunganga. It's not OKAY, my heart is bleeding, it hurts...." He buries his face and lets his tears pour out. They try to pull him away but he is not done. He kneels in front of her coffin, her picture is smiling at him. "Goodbye my love, don't forget me and our daughter. I love you with all my heart. You are not gone from my heart. I love you even when you're in heaven...Happy birthday to me." I thought I was done crying, tears make their way down again. I walk out of the tent for some fresh air. I mistakenly bump my head into someone. He apologises as I groan in pain. "Uxolo nkosazane." He sounds genuinely sorry. I look up to tell him he was not wrong....WTH! Are my eyes okay? I'm looking at Mbuso in his late twenties. He looks exactly like him. Sunken eyes, misaligned teeth and sharp ears. They are identical in everything, it's almost unbelievable. "Are you okay?" he asks with a frown. "You look like my brother. Who are you?" I ask. He is lost, maybe he thinks I'm a madwoman. "I'm Mmeli Mathonsi, I hope you didn't get hurt," he says and walks inside the tent following a group of young men fetching the coffin. At the cemetery my eyes are on him. He is breaking the woods, doing every freaking thing like Mbuso. We are not related to the Mathonsis, this is a weird coincidence. In the car Sosha asks about him, he also noticed him. A part of me wants to know more about him. My father once worked in Johannesburg, we all know how they behaved when they were away from home. There is also another death in the family, the funeral is next week. I was told we won't attend it. I haven't told anyone that I was there when India died, everyone thinks she died in the bathroom alone. Tshitshi is shattered. They say she spends



most of her days locked inside her room. Bab' Cele wants closure on his wife's death, sadly the doctors can't figure out what killed her. We cannot have our honeymoon yet, a lot is happening. Sosha cannot leave Bayede in the state he is in, he needs our support more than ever. Maya recently moved in with us, she doesn't understand what's going on but she knows that her mother is in heaven. Nevertheless we do need to celebrate our union, even if it's just a weekend getaway. On India's funeral day we leave for Bergville. I'm a little sad for Tshitshi, she surely needed her brothers next to her but I was told she knows the story. We are in Montusi Mountain Lodge, for a short while we are forgetting about the world and its troubles. Maya and Okholo are with Ntando, she volunteered to look after them. "Do you remember what your uncle said?" he asks. My memory isn't that fresh, that man said a lot of things. "About what?" I ask. "Babies," he says. Okholo is not even talking she doesn't need a sibling. I put my robe on and walk out to enjoy nature outside. I don't have time to talk about babies. This place is green, the grass looks yummy for my father's cows. He follows me. I sigh as his arms wrap around my waist. "Married people talk MaShenge," he says. "I know Sosha," I say. He turns me around and forces me to look at him. "I don't want to have another baby yet," I say. He lifts my hand to lips and plants a kiss on it. "I do want another baby but I respect your decision." Wow, I didn't expect him to understand this easily. Maybe in a year to come I will give him another baby, Okholo is still young for now. "Do you think we will get caught if we have sex behind that bush?" I ask. His eyes widen, he thinks I'm fooling around. I really want to have inappropriate sex. I don't have nine lives like a cat, YOLO. We take the camera and walk around the bush, taking pictures like tourists. When we are out of sight we drop our underwears and get into action. We walk back to our garden suite like nothing happened, my panty is inside his pocket. We are enjoying the cappon magro under the morning sunrise, we are an Italian couple after all. Our menu consists of risottos, gelatos and focaccias. I have adjusted to these eating circumstances. If you're in the Celes you eat what the Celes eat. I eat food that I can't even pronounce. Maybe it's time I tell him the truth. "I saw India die, she talked to me," I say. He stops eating and looks at me. The element of fear is flickering in his eyes. "What did she say?" he asks. "She said Bayede did something to her and asked me tell Bab' Cele." He doesn't look surprised, he doesn't even fake it. He just asks if anyone saw us. He doesn't tell me what to do with the information, but I know I have to keep it in my chest. Bayede may have used his medicine expertise inappropriately. I wonder if the little bottle I saw in his cupboard is what killed India. I wish things happened some other time, not after our wedding day. Our anniversary will always come with pain to Bayede and Bab' Cele. The bakery is doing well, money is not a problem in this house. As per my rich housewife's uselessness I signed up to baby classes. Sosha is not interested in attending. He says parenting comes naturally to him, he doesn't need classes. Fine I'm here, there are babies crying all over. Their white mothers don't know what to do without nannies. There is a baby who has been crying nonstop, her Indian mother is pacing up and down trying to calm her. She is younger than Okholo, maybe she is teething. "Is she teething?" I ask her. "Yes, they gave me something at the pharmacy but it's not working." Shame, she sounds frustrated. But why did she come here with a sick baby? She is disturbing us, we paid to come do nothing here. By the way she should try other options. "Make her the necklace with a key," I say. Poor Indian, she is lost. "How is that going to help?" She asks. "She won't get sick every time she is teething," I explain.





I'm a doctor, I heal baby sicknesses and old ignorant mothers. One day she will thank me with a few samoosas. Okholo loves the classes. I take a video of her singing and forward it to Sosha. She gives me a hard time when it's time to leave. Oh Bayede is here with Maya. He looks a bit okay today. I greet and take Maya with me upstairs. It dawns to me that I haven't checked on Mbuso the last three days. He left for Johannesburg with his friend, Mnqobi. They got the job but couldn't find a decent place to stay. He finally answers after two trials. "Why is the phone not being answered Mbuso?" "But I'm speaking to you sisi," he says. He is annoying but I'm happy to hear his voice. "How are you?" I ask. "I'm good, thanks for the apartment." What? "Apartment?" I ask. "The one you guys found for me, the neighbourhood is a bit boring but I get to work easily." I don't know anything about apartments. Sosha is starting to do things for my family behind my back. I'm grateful but it would've been better if he talked to me first. I'm trying my best to help where I can. The best way is if he takes care of me and I take care of my family. Bayede knocks and asks if he can come in. He got away with killing India. On other news, the prime suspect for Nomzamo's murder is missing. Thabile Zwane, she was last seen the day before Nomzamo's funeral. Her family doesn't know where she is. I knew she was heartbroken but didn't expect her to kill for a man. He walks in and stands by the window. "How are you doing?" he asks. "I'm fine, how are you holding up?" I ask. "I'm not sure but I'm still here, breathing and walking." Finding out who was behind Nomzamo's death must've killed him more. He is partly the reason why she died. Had he made his mind up and didn't play two women none of this would've happened. "I heard you wanted to know about Mmeli," he says. I frown. "Who?" "The guy who looks like your brother," he says. Oh now I remember him. "Do you know him?" I ask. "Not exactly but Zamo knew him. He was left by his mother when he was two years old. He stays with his aunt and uncle. He was a good friend with Zamo, she talked about him a lot." Mothers! I think our generation is better, we've seen many similar cases on Khumbul' Ekhaya. They dumped babies and went to look for marriages and never looked back. "I thought my father had a child he didn't tell us about, he once stayed in Johannesburg for some years," I say. "If it's not your mother," he says. That's impossible, my mother is all things but she'd never dump and forget her own child. It could be a coincidence that the guy looks like Mbuso. God must've run out of ideas and copied Mbuso. "You're really good with him," he says. I guess he is referring to Sosha. "He is good with me as well," I say. He chuckles and nods his head. "You can say that again, your love is beautiful and unique. I hope it lasts, and not even death comes between you." He is just putting a brave face for Maya's sake. Nothing can make him forgive Nomzamo's death. He tucks Okholo in his arm and pulls Maya. She is his reason for living. His only hope. \*\*\*\*\* There is an urgent meeting in Briardene called by Amanda McKenzie. She didn't say a lot of things, just that I must be armed to the tooth. I put on my tracksuit and sneakers and get in the car and make my way there. She is on her tight leggings and hard-boots. Anger is livid on her face as she paces up and down in Ntando's lounge. "Who did what?" I ask as soon as I sit on the couch. "Mpume happened," she says. Oh what has that bitch done? I thought we buried her chapter in our lives. "Is Sosha involved?" I can't help but ask. Ntando laughs, I know that she thinks I'm being insecure. Anything is possible with that Mpume. Amanda is gritting her teeth, I've never seen her this angry. "She is fucking Sphelele behind my back. She couldn't even use a condom and now she is pregnant." Oh my Italian-eating husband! What on earth is happening? This is



beyond us, it needs a sangoma involved. "But you cannot attack a pregnant woman Amanda," Ntando says. "I welcomed that bitch in my life and begged Sosha everytime he dumped her jiggling ass, now she is taking my man? That's the last thing Ntando, the last thing!" It's crazy how she cheated on him and aborted his baby but now that the tables are turned she wants to kill someone. Anyway I'm not going to miss a fight if there is one, I get in the car with them and prepare myself for a live Wrestle Mania. Oh holy Shepard! He is with her. They are lovey-dovey on the couch. Amanda gets in with a flying kick. Mpume screams and hides behind Sphelele. He is bluntly taking Mpume's side and treating Amanda like used teabag. I'm shocked by his reaction. Is this the right Sphelele? Maybe it's his twin. On our way back we have to comfort the hysterical Amanda. I didn't know she cared this much about him. We end up in Briardene watching a sad American movie and drinking. I don't know what time it is, but I'm happy and drunk. Did I say happy? Yes I'm happy and drunk. Happy and drunk! "Hello Sweet Home!" I yell from the door. Hubby appears looking handsome more than ever. I whistle and meet him half way. He doesn't look happy when I'm closer. In fact he is a volcano waiting to explode. "Why are you so ugly? What happened?" I ask, trying not to laugh. "Where were you?" he asks. Oh I went to so many places, where do I even start? Okay let me conclude everything. "I'm happy and drunk," I say. He raises his eyebrows and asks me to repeat. I don't swallow my words before my neck is in his grip. What is his problem? "You left my daughter alone to do what?" he roars. I fight, scratch his arms and kick. I just want to break free but that seems to infuriates him more. A hot clap meets my cheek. No he didn't! He is wearing only boxers, I grab his bottom front and squeeze as much as I can. He slaps me until his strength runs out. My nose is bleeding but I won't let go of his balls, I don't know what he might do to me. "O-kho-lo!" He whispers and falls on the floor with his eyes shut. Now he is barely breathing. My daughter's image starts flashing on my mind. I run up the stairway and go to her nursery and lock the door. What did just happen? I can't feel my right cheek, blood is running down my nose. There is a commotion downstairs, I heard a car driving in a few minutes ago. I hope he is not dead. "MaShenge open the door." It's Myalo's voice. Sosha is a beast when he is angry, I cannot take the risk of opening this door. "I know you're here, please open the door," he says. Lord he is not going to leave. I gather myself up and go unlock the door. He walks in and closes the door behind. "What happened here?" "I don't know." "You're hurt MaShenge, we need to take you....." I shake my head, I don't want to go anywhere. "I'm not hurt, I will be fine," I say. He walks closer and lifts my face up. He grimaces as he wipes the blood off my face. "Bayede is with Sosha, I'm disappointed in you two," he says. I don't know what he wants me to do. Cry maybe? "He may be seriously injured, you touched his dangerous part," he says. There are so many cases of women being killed by their partners, I won't die while trying to search for an ear. I'm always home, doing everything and waiting for him to come home. One lousy night away and I'm getting beaten for it? I was only defending myself, I'm not strong enough to slap him. He is taken to the hospital due to the swelling around his scrotum. Bayede leaves with him, Myalo stays with me. He is blaming me but feeling sorry at the same time. My cheek is swelling and affecting my right eye. "You can leave Myalo I'm fine," I say. "Must I take Okholo with me? She can't see you like this," he says. I pack Okholo's bag and take it to his car. When I'm sure no one is inside the house I sink on the floor and cry. We said we will never hurt each other. What is wrong with him? What if I damaged



his private part? I can't bring myself to go check him at the hospital, I get updates from Bayede. He was injured but no permanent damage was done. I don't know what he is going to do when he comes back and I don't want to find out. It's been a long time since I last travelled in a taxi, today I'm in YMCA taking one to Mandeni. Now people recognise me from the streets, I'm getting eyes everywhere. My mom is in the garden, when she sees me she puts the hoe down and meets me halfway. "Kwenzenjani Yangomuhle?" she asks. "I just missed home," I say. She frowns and looks around. "Where is the car?" she asks. I lie again and say it's gone for a service. She doesn't question further, she picks her hoe and walks with us to the house. She keeps looking at me funnily, she suspects that something is wrong. "Is umkhwenyana okay?" she asks. "Yes he is okay," I say. When I'm home it automatically becomes my turn to cook everyday. She takes Okholo and shows her off to the neighbours while I cook lunch. Sosha is being discharged today and he won't find me home. I wonder if that will sadden him or relieve him. The week ends, I haven't received a call nor text from him. I'm scared to call either Myalo or Bayede to check how he is doing. Okholo is missing him, she has been calling 'Dada' every day. Eventually I told my mother what went down, not the entire truth, I told her about the fight and Sosha ending up in hospital. She didn't say anything but deep down I know that she is taking his side. Ntando calls on a Wednesday evening, a little bird has told her that the Celes are coming to fetch me. I wake up early and clean the yard. My life is way too dramatic. I shouldn't have left in the first place, now my family is subjected into meetings with fancy people. They arrive in Bayede's car, Sosha is with them. As soon as Okholo sees him she starts crying. These little creatures are hypocrites. The meeting is tense, nobody looks happy. "Sondiya, why are you giving us your daughter and take her again?" Sosha's uncle asks. Bab'omncane gives me a look, I know deep down he wants to kick my ass. "She didn't just come back, staying with your son wasn't safe," he replies. For a moment I thought he'd take Sosha's side. "My son is the one who ended up in hospital, how is she the one who is not safe?" This uncle doesn't even know Okholo's second name, I'm surprised to see this caring side of him. He is one of those Avanza-driving uncles who get tenders left and right but never assist any of their relatives. He is always making the headlines, but where was he when Sosha needed him the most? "Had you been a good father-in-law to my daughter you would've known that she also spent a few days in hospital after an eye injury," Bab'omncane says. Me? Hospital? Okay we are lying and we're going to get away with it. The uncle turns to Sosha with a frown. "Justin what happened?" he asks. So he didn't get the whole story before coming here? "She left Okholo alone and went to drink with her friends," Sosha says. What? He is lying. "I didn't leave her alone, she was with her nanny," I say. "I didn't fuck any nanny. I fucked you, don't tell me about nannies!" he roars. Everyone is embarrassed, even Bayede looks away. He just said that in front of my mother and uncle, wow! "Why did you beat me?" I ask, fighting back tears. "I didn't mean to, you angered me," he says. As always, he didn't mean to. I'm not going to sit and listen if this is the attitude he brought. I grab my daughter from his lap and walk out. The meeting carries on without me. Later Bab'omncane comes to tell me about their final decision. I have to go back to my house and sort things out. I look at my mother, she is not saying anything. "Are you not going to say anything?" I ask. "Unfortunately no mntanami, you have to go back to your husband. This is not how things are done, you two need to sit down and decide which road to take from now on," she says. Nobody



cares about my safety. I pack my bag and Okholo's and go to the car waiting for me outside. Only Bayede and the uncle are talking. I'm wrapped in my thoughts wondering what is going to happen when we get in the house. I take my phone out and type a lengthy text to Mbuso. I vent and leave no stone unturned. He will know the truth even if something happens to me. "Don't hesitate to call if you need anything" Bayede says. He lives 15minutes away, anything can happen while he is on his way. Sosha closes the door and locks it. I hate this habit of his. For a moment we just stare at each other, not saying a word. He breaks the silence and asks how I'm doing. I respond with a shrug. "Uxolo sthandwa sami, it wasn't my intention to put my hands on you," he says. "You will always say you're sorry," I say. He takes Okholo off my lap and puts her on the floor. "I get mad when you don't communicate with me. It would've taken one phone call for you to tell me where you were and when I could expect you home. I always do the same, why couldn't you? And why did you overwork the nanny? She has family and her own kids." "I was wrong but that didn't mean hit me," I say. "You nearly killed me MaShenge but that's besides the point, I want us to work things out. I really miss you and Okholo," he says. Nothing is besides the point, he shouldn't have led me into defending myself. I don't want it to get to the point where I have to defend myself, I want to be safe around him. "I'm scared of you," I say. He shuts his eyes and opens them again and looks at me. "Don't say that, please," he says, almost whispering. "It's really how I feel, I'm not safe around any man that isn't my father or brother. I always have to look over my shoulder. By grace I hope I don't die in the hands of a man I married," I say. I touch the nerve, his eyes turn red immediately. "Are you hungry?" I ask. He shakes his head and sits on the couch. I leave him and walk to the kitchen and make myself a thick sandwich and juice. When I check my phone I find several missed calls from Mbuso and call him back. The first thing he asks is if I am okay. "Did he hurt you?" he asks. "No he didn't but I'm scared. He is unpredictable, you never know what to expect from him. Maybe one day he will kill me," I say. "Why are you still there? You have a home." He is too young, he thinks love is black and white. "There is something called love Mbuso, it's blind. I love this person with all my heart," I say. "You'll find another one, go home I'll support you and my niece," he says. He thinks it's that easy, I opened my heart and let this man in. I love him and I tied my life to him. "I'll leave when my heart says no, for now it's still chanting yes," I say. "Maybe it will say no when you're taking your last breath." Did he really have to say that? "Love is stronger than fear brother," I say. Someone breathes heavily behind me. Creepy much! I say goodbye to Mbuso and end the call. "I want to read you something" he says. What thing now? I follow him to the living room and sit on the chair. He drags his and sits opposite me. Okholo is minding her own business, arranging what she shouldn't be arranging and dirtying herself. He picks his blotter, I guess it's one of his poems, and reads out for me: "The voice of a 6year old boy Is heard in his 29year-old self. Unanswered questions ambush him And alter his sense of reasoning, They mould his heart into a ball of anger. Is there anybody home? Can anybody hear him? The answer is hollow silence, And low buzzing sound of a fan. Nobody is home to welcome him. The nanny appears dragging her flip flops. She doesn't love him, it's her duty that pays. Without saying a mere Hello She takes his shirt off and unhooks his backpack, She feeds him cold food in an empty heart. He is not hungry for food, but for love." He closes the blotter and takes a huge breath. I'm still trying to connect the dots, my poem analysing skills are poor. Oh he said they are not poems, but stories.



"I got home from work and you were not home. I tried to get hold of you but your phone sent me straight to voicemail. Okholo's nanny appeared with her crying on her chest. I tried to call you again and again, but your phone was off MaShenge. I got scared and upset. I started having flashbacks of a big loveless mansion I spent most of my childhood in. Emotions kicked in, I got angry beyond control. When you came home drunk, completely unaware of the amount of pain you inflicted within a few hours, I lost it. I care about your feelings, it breaks my heart to know that you don't feel safe around me anymore. You know I have a mental disorder and I'm trying everything I can to fight but the battle isn't easy when you're not next to me," he says. I reach for a serviette and wipe my soaked eyes. The scenario of him slapping me keeps flashing back. "I wasn't born like this, I was ignored most of my life. Bayede understood, Mlando was too young, he didn't understand anything. Then there was me in the middle who was trapped between understanding and not understanding. I needed clarity but every time I raised a question about my mother's whereabouts I was either told to go outside or punished. I suffered from ODD, it was treated with a belt or any object that was nearer. At the age of 9 I was already labelled as the problem child. I started bunking school and sniffing glue and benzene. Nobody listened to me so I didn't listen to anyone either. Amandla happened, my father and India disowned me. My grandmother took me to a specialist and I was diagnosed with Intermittent Explosive Disorder. My biggest fear is to have my daughter living the life I lived, relying on medication for sanity because her parents weren't there for her," he says. I wipe my eyes and nod. His concerns are valid but it's not that deep, I only left for a few hours. "I'm sorry for hurting you," he says and pulls my hand and asks me to shift closer. Tears keep pouring out, he wipes them with his hand and plants a soft kiss on my lips. "Seeing you cry like this breaks my heart," he says. I pull myself together, Okholo is making her way back to us. I feel a little squeeze on my thigh and look at him. "I hope you have a dildo," he says. I frown. "Huh?" He takes his daughter and leaves the room. Why would I...? Gosh I said I'm sorry.

Chapter 19 I stand in the long queue of Pick'n Pay with the restless Okholo in my arms. Why did I come here? I didn't even have a solid reason except that I was bored. Cashiers can be slow, they should work with the same determination they give when drawing eyebrows. I call the trolley-service guy to push my trolley to the car. These people walk fast, their job is demanding however their reputation doesn't give you peace when they mix in the crowd with your trolley. You start running after them and having mini strokes. Thanks to my ancestors he doesn't run with my trolley. I pay him and pack shopping bags inside the boot. A loud laugh breaks behind me. I tighten my grip around Okholo and turn. It's a lady with tumours all over her body. They are on every inch of her skin. It's like watching Body Bizarre. My whole body cringes. She doesn't look mentally okay. I have to get inside the car before she notices that I'm looking at her. My eyes cannot get off her, despite being in this condition she still looks familiar. She starts scratching herself and rubbing her back against the pole. No man, this is Thabile Zwane! I don't waste any time I call Bayede. "Are you sure?" he asks. The tone of his voice is a bit disappointing, I expected him to be shocked and angry. "Yes it's her," I say. "Ummm.....I'm still busy at the





moment but I will contact the police," he says. He is busy? A few months ago he was looking for this girl high and low, vowing to get justice for Nomzamo. What changed? Unless if the condition she is in is justice itself. If he is responsible for this then he is the Devil himself. No human being can do this to another! I get home and find Bab' Cele's car parked outside. He never come here, this is a surprise. "Sawubona Baba," I greet. He doesn't return my greeting, he follows me inside the house and asks for a few minutes. "Is everything alright?" I ask. "I don't know. Is there anything you should be telling me?" he says. He is ugly ten times today. What could I possible tell him? Michael Jackson died, but that's old news. "No," I say. He rolls up his shirt and glares at me. Oh hell, he is angry. "You had a conversation with my wife before she died but you lied and said you found her dead." Father Lord! How did he find out? I try to keep calm and show no fear. "I saw her but she didn't say anything," I say. His jaws tighten, he gets even uglier. "I'm not your husband, don't play games with me," he says. Okay I'm not doing this with him. I take out my phone and text Sosha. What....? Nooooo! "Talk MaShenge!" he roars. Okholo starts crying. There is a gun in front of her face pointing at my temple. "I'm telling the truth, she didn't say anything," I cry. "Don't protect someone who can't protect you from his madness," he says. So he thinks it's Sosha who killed his wife? "I swear she didn't say anything," I say. Bang!!! Bang!!! The gunshots. I land on the floor with my butt. Sweat is forming from every part of my body. The next bullet is surely coming to me. Is it my life or Bayede? "If you know what's good for you Cele you will put that gun down," -the voice comes from the door. Bab' Cele's face transforms from anger to uncertainty. "Macingwane....." he says uneasily. It's Myalezo? Thank you Lord! "Put the gun down and make your way out." His voice is not friendly nor begging. He sounds like a different person. I turn and look at him, he is not holding any kind of weapon. "I don't like repeating myself like a record," he says. Bab' Cele slowly puts the gun on the floor and makes his way to the door. My body is still trembling, Okholo has slowed down on crying but she is holding my arm like her life depends on it. "Are you okay?" Myalo asks. I shake my head and nod. I'm not sure how I am. "He will be sorted, don't cry," he says. I nod again and hug my daughter tightly on my chest. Sosha arrives, he looks like a madman. I'm still unable to narrate what happened properly, I end up crying. The side of him I've never seen unleashes, he is destroying everything in the dining room. He is crying and yelling. Men in all-black are here again, they are trying to calm him down. He leaves the house in tears. Now I'm worried about him more than I'm worried about my safety. He is not a good driver when he is angry. I don't even know where he is going. In the morning when I wake up he is sitting on bed with Okholo on his lap. He doesn't look like someone who slept. "Morning," I greet. He doesn't turn his head, he is staring at the wall. "Mkami," he says He is still angry. "Is everything okay?" I ask. "You and my princess are here so everything is okay." Right now is not the time to question him about his whereabouts. I start at the bathroom and come back to take Okholo to her cot. He cannot hold the eye contact, his lips are quivering. I cup his face and peck his cheek. "I hope you're not going to jail," I say. He squeezes me onto his chest and kisses the top of my head and says nothing. "Okholo was scared but she has forgotten now. That's a great thing about children, their memory washes away distasteful events," I say. I'm trying to calm him down but it seems like I'm fuelling his anger more. "I was born by a wrong dick. I hate that ugly motherfucker!" he says. I never thought he saw his father's ugliness. They have the same nose though, he dodged the bullet by luck. "He



will never come near you or my daughter again. He is no longer her grandfather, both her grandfathers died," he says. I'm glad to hear that he is still alive. Myalo looked murderous yesterday. I didn't know he had that side, the humble Nazareth man was gone. "Did Myalo do anything to him?" I ask. "Don't stress yourself about it. When you are ready to talk we will arrange with Craig. I'm sorry I wasn't there to protect you," he says. His phone rings, he glances at the screen and gives it to me. It's Bayede. "Is it for me?" I ask "Answer it," he says. I swipe the screen and answer. It seems like Bayede expected me to answer, the first thing he does is to call my name. "MaShenge are you okay?" "Yes I'm good," I say. "Thanks for what you did yesterday. I appreciate your loyalty," It sounds like there is a 'but' at the end. "You're welcome," I say. "MaShenge whether it's me or Sosha or anyone you hold dearly in your heart, never ever risk your life to save us. The only person you should to protect with your soul is Zoya," he says. Sad truth, but I'm still alive so it was worth it. "I don't know what I would've done if you died because of me. I don't know how I would've looked at my brother again. You are a good sister, I know where I stand with you, but please always choose yourself. Zoya and Sosha need you," he says. I pray nobody ever dies on me again. I was not even close to India for her to leave her last messages on me. But it's done and I understand him very well. I'm a mother, I must always put Okholo first. Sosha takes the whole week off. He is still scared, he doesn't want Okholo to get out of his sight. Now we have high remote fence and two alarms. We had to buy new furniture for the dining room since he destroyed everything. I'm not allowed to go anywhere without a bulky man in blacks following me. My life is getting complicated by the day. I can't help but wonder who Myalezo is. There must be more than what meets the eye. Bab' Cele is scared of him. He didn't even lift his finger to make him leave. And where did he came from so unexpectedly? "Babe have you ever thought about furthering your studies?" -Sosha. Here we go again! He is asking like he has never asked before. "Come on babe, Okholo needs to have at least one educated parent," he says. I yawn, hoping he will get the message and stop being boring. "Do you mind adding Business Management Degree on your CV?"-him again. Aybo this person! "Yes I do mind," I say. "You can take two modules per semester, your life won't be affected. Mbuso didn't go to university because he looked up to you. Sabatha will do the same, someone needs to set an example," he says. I can imagine being in a lecture hall with 18year-olds and thinking about marital problems instead of schoolwork. He can also go back to grade 11, they will accept him. But to get him off my back I say I will think about it. \*\*\*\*\* Mbuso is coming home for the first time after three months. I, along with everyone else, sent him a list of things to buy for Okholo and me. I was against him working but now it feels good to travel home just to take my Simba chips and Okholo's sweets. There is joy, everyone is laughing. We are wiping the tables and sweeping the yard like the president is coming. Like any other black family we didn't cook. Rice for who? There is a Joburg brother coming with KFC and rolls. The last time I was this happy about someone coming home was when my father was still working. After he retired it was my turn to receive long lists of what to buy. I don't want this to be how Mbuso spends his salary, I'm going to make sure it's a once-off thing. I want to fetch him from town with my car but the idea of pushing a wheelbarrow to the taxi stop is more exciting. He is taller and lighter in complexion. His cologne draws you from a distance. He could have made a cute doctor, I hope one day I can be able to change his mind. "What are you eating in Jozi?" I ask. He



laughs, his voice is deeper. "Food," he says. "Cooked food or take-outs?" I ask. "Bread and take-outs," he says. I expected that. I don't think he knows how to cook, boys don't cook at the Buthelezi. I should teach him a thing or two before leaving. "Wow Nomagugu is grown now," he says picking Okholo up. He calls her Okholo, he is trying to piss me off with this ugly Nomagugu name. "You are also grown Innocent," I say. Innocent is his second name and he hates it with passion. It seems like we all hate our English names. Did I tell them about Mmeli? No, I don't remember. "I met a guy who looks exactly like you at Nomzamo's funeral," I say. "Whoah, stop right there. I don't look like anyone, I'm extraordinarily," This child! I'm being serious here. "I'm serious, his name is Mmeli Mathonsi," I say. MaJali turns and looks at me. She looks shocked beyond control. "Do you know him?" I ask. "What....No!" Mbuso and I look at each other. She is suddenly coughing and stammering. She goes to bed before everyone. She's been awkwardly silent since I brought Mmeli up. Bayede's words start ringing in my ears, but is that even possible? She is up early in the morning, chairs and tables are moving in the kitchen. I'm still on bed sexting with my husband. Okholo is still fast asleep. "Yangomuhle!" She is outside my door. Nothing has changed, she wants me to help her in the kitchen. It's only 6:30 for goodness' sake! There is maize-meal porridge boiling on the stove. I almost ask who it is for but then I remember that a healthy baby eats maize-meal porridge three times a day. Obviously it's for Okholo. Instant porridges are not good enough, babies don't get full with them and they are just bad. Babies who don't eat maize-meal porridge are weak and unhealthy. "Did you talk to that boy?" she asks. "Yes, I was texting him earlier," I say. She frowns. "The one who looked like Mbuso?" Oh, the only boy in my mind is my husband. "We talked but nothing much. I bumped my head on him and asked his name, that's all," I say. It seems like this Mmeli thing doesn't give her peace. "Do you think Buthelezi had a child hidden somewhere?" I ask. The pot she was holding drops to the floor. She is shocked. I'm also disappointed in myself for having these thoughts. My father was a good man, he wouldn't have hidden and not take care of his son. "I don't think so," she says. Then it leaves us with one suspect, HER. Did she dump a child before marrying my father? Unfortunately I cannot ask her such questions. There is a guy who helps Sabatha with the cattle, he is here to collect his salary. He is around my age, he could be doing something with his life instead of herding cows for R600 per month. There is so much that needs to be improved in the rural areas, we are excluded from many things. We keep voting for change that never comes. These politicians move from mansion to mansion while we live in RDP houses that we get after bathing with sea water and reciting all ward councillor's clan names. There is no equality, the rich ones keep getting richer and the poorer stays poor. Today I have to leave, marriage duties call. I will drop Mbuso at the taxi rank where he will get a taxi to Joburg. My mother is going overboard with boiled chicken and home baked bread for him. She never packed anything for me. "Do you have maize-meal in your house?" Me and maize meal? I'm an Italian wife, duh. "Sosha doesn't like starch food, I rarely buy it," I say. Oh shut up! I told her I cook maize-meal porridge for Okholo. She has a look on her face, she is disappointed. "How do you cook porridge then?" she asks. I have no choice but to tell the truth. Okholo lives on instant porridges and noodles. I'm the worst mother of the century. "No wonder Nomagugu can't talk, she is not eating properly," she says. Maize porridge doesn't make babies talk, but what do I know? She takes a Spar shopping bag and fills it with maize meal. Lord! My neighbours cannot see this, they will



think my husband can't provide for me. "I want to talk to you before you leave," she says. I wonder what she wants to talk about now. I'm in a good mood, I hope she doesn't spoil it. I take all my bags to the car before attending her. Sabatha is wiping the car windows, he is not doing it for free, he charges more than the carwash. "How old did you say the Mmeli you met was?" she asks. Well I don't know if she knows this, but people don't go around with their age written on their foreheads. How should I know Mmeli's age and why does it matter? "I don't know, maybe he is 27 or so," I say. "I know him Yangomuhle," she says. Oh great! "Can you help him find his mother?" I ask. She wipes her face with a cloth, her hands are trembling. "What if I'm his mother?" she asks. It wouldn't make any sense. She is not a snake, she knows who her children are and where they are. "What do you mean?" I ask. "I had a baby before I met your father, his name was Mmeli. I had to give him up because your grandfather had cows and your father wanted me." If Jesus can't make it he must send Moses to come shut this continent down. "What's the fuck!" I curse right in front of her. "Don't say that word to me," she says. To hell with her fake morals! "You lied to my father?" I ask. "It wasn't solely my decision Yangomuhle." Do I storm out or sit here and listen to this crap? "I loved your father Yangomuhle," she says. "You loved him more than your child? Your own blood?" I ask and let out a chuckle, "Oh, I forget that you're capable of doing that." Her face turns red, she points her finger at me. "Choose your words mntwana ndini!" she says. "I won't choose my words, I will choose my children over anyone," I say. She takes a deep breath and calms herself down. "What is done is done. Do you think you can trace him for me?" she asks. My father must be turning in his grave. I always thought us, the 90's, are badass bitches but I was wrong. We always get caught while these old Gabhadiyas did it smoothly with their parents involved and got away with it. "You don't care about him, what are you going to say to him?" I ask. "You don't know that. I built my marriage through sweats and tears. What my parents said is what went, that's why I don't tolerate disrespectful children." She must just admit that she fucked up. "I'll see what I can do," I say.

\*\*\*\*\* Bayede is taking Maya to KwaMaphumulo to visit her grandmother. I asked to travel with them, I want to meet Mmeli. He is not even my responsibility, I hope he cares to listen. Our aim is to drop Maya off her grandmother's and go to the Mathonsis where Mmeli lives. But that's not how things work in the rural areas, we are ordered out of the car and taken inside the house. Bayede is a bit quiet. Nomzamo's picture is hanging on the wall, staring at us. He keeps glancing at it, his face is closed up, you cannot tell what he feels. They serve us juice and amaqebelengwane. I don't think he knows what they are, he probably thinks it's vetkoeks that went wrong. He only eats two while I wipe the plate clean. Only after eating they let us leave. The Mathonsi homestead is big. There are about ten rondavels and a big kraal below the yard. There is an old man sitting on the bench next to one of the rondavels. "Dunga!" Bayede greets and bows his head. He has a different character from his siblings. He is more humble, more respectful and he ends people's lives. The man greets us back and calls a girl to take us inside the house. He follows us a few minutes later and sits on the stool next to the door. We introduce ourselves and narrate what our journey is about. "Why your mother didn't come here herself?" he asks. "I wanted to know if he is comfortable with meeting her and then take it from there," I say. He shakes his head in disbelief. "26years? Full 26 years!" I'm in disbelief as well. Mmeli is 28years now, not even once had MaJali thought of coming back to look for him. "She



will answer all your questions if you give her the chance. MaShenge is the one who saw Mmeli and recognised the resemblance. She is innocent in all this, she just wanted to see her brother," Bayede says. "He is not home yet, he took the cattle to the river." A 28year old still herds cows? That's a bit strange. "Can we wait?" I ask. "I will send a boy to go fetch him." We wait for almost an hour with a jug of water in front of us. Maybe he is refusing to see me. I travelled this whole journey for nothing. "Sanibonani," Oh thank God he is here. He is wearing gumboots and red overall. I have so many unanswered questions in my head. The condition he is in at 28years is breaking my heart. "I will give you some privacy," Bayede says and walks out. He doesn't sit on the stool his uncle sat on, he sits on the bare floor. "My name is Yangomuhle Cele, I hope you still remember my face," I say. "You said I look like your brother, I remember you." I take out my phone and look for Mbuso's recent pictures. He needs to see what I'm talking about. "This is my brother, Mbuso Buthelezi. Our mother is Thandekile Jali, who I believe is also your mother." He looks at the pictures for a minute and hands the phone back. "I don't know my mother so I won't know her name," he says. "Didn't your father tell you?" I ask. Sadness dwells on his face. It seems like the question evokes packed emotions. "He died when I was 2 and half years old. My uncle raised me, he doesn't know who my mother is. He wasn't told," he says. I swallow a lump forming on my throat and nod. "Did your mother say she is my mother?" he asks. There is hope in his voice, like he wants me to say yes. "She said she left a two year old son by the name of Mmeli Mathonsi with his father and married my father." "Why didn't she come with you?" he asks. "She is scared, it's been 26years since she left you," I say. He is calm by nature, unlike any of us, the Buthelezis. I thought he'd be angry but he is calm and cooperative. "Why didn't she leave my clinic card and birth certificate?" he asks. "I don't have answers Mmeli. If you agree to meet her you will have a chance to ask all those questions," I say. He looks up and blinks rapidly like he is pushing back tears. I can see the pain in his life. "I don't want to interrogate her and bother her. I just want her to help me apply for the Identity Document. I don't like the life I'm living, I want to go look for a job like my age mates," he says. "You don't have ID?" I ask shocked. He shakes his head. My heart takes a sharp stab. ID is a pass to everything you in this country, no wonder he doesn't work. "I'm so sorry to hear that. What are the arrangements of you living here?" I ask. He glances outside before answering. He doesn't look comfortable. "I herd the cattle and live here," he says. I don't understand but I nod. I feel like giving him money to buy clothes, but that would be disrespectful. "Can I arrange for you to meet?" I ask. He is quiet for a moment before he nods his head. I'm relieved and sad at the same time. Is he okay here? Bayede is not in a good mood, neither am I. The journey back to Durban is quiet. I keep thinking about my father, the way he respected my mother and gave his all to the family. This is the worst betrayal. Mmeli is living a sad broken life. MaJali is evil, I wouldn't be surprised if the neighbours accuse her of witchcraft. One day I should search her house, who knows maybe I will find a baboon inside her wardrobe. "Are you hungry?" Bayede asks. He is taking an off-ramp to Nandos. I'm not hungry but I won't say no to free food. There aren't so many people, only a few tables are occupied. The waitresses are standing behind the counter gossiping. We get a table and look at our menus in silence. Sosha is not a fan of these type of restaurants, he is an Italian, so I don't get to eat these things frequently. "Are you ready to order?" the waitress asks. Bayede orders a simple veggie burger and fruity shake. I wish we sat on different tables, this is





going to be embarrassing. "Miss?"-the waitress. She is waiting for my order. Bayede looks at her with a little frown, he looks a bit irritated. "She is Mrs not Miss," he says. Does it matter though? The poor girl looks frightened, she whispers an apology. I give her a brief staged smile and read my chosen meals. "Quarter chicken and green salad, pork ribs snack, cheesy chips and caramel dip." She is staring at me, not taking the order. "All of it?" Hebana! "Am I not allowed to order all of it?" I ask. She shakes her head and asks me to repeat again. I could take this to her manager but I'm not that person. It takes almost 20 minutes for our food to arrive. Bayede looks thoughtful for a moment then tells me about Nomzamo and Mmeli's relationship. She is not a subject he likes to touch. Nobody talk about her when he is around, we all pretend like we don't miss her. She went to school with Mmeli, they were very close. She tried several times to help him with the ID issue but they needed his birth certificate and his mother. He was bright and had a promising future but he couldn't finish high school because he had to look after his uncle's cows. It's one of those situations where you wish you could kill someone. MaJali!!! I get home and set the table for my husband. I brought Nandos home, life of a breadwinner! "Aybo MaShenge!" says the voice from the door. I thought he has left, he is looking at the meat he bought. Sosha is looking at him, chewing a chicken thigh. "Why is your husband chowing my money?" he asks. I don't know how to respond, did he really think I was buying all this food for myself? "A good wife feeds her husband but you wouldn't know that since you've never walked down the aisle," Sosha says. Bayede grabs the plate, they start arguing over it and end up sharing the meat. Grown ugly babies! Today I'm wearing my eyeglasses and curly wig. We are meeting Ntando's new man, Toni. They started dating a few months ago. The only Toni I recognise is Toni Braxton so I don't know how this will go. Amanda is here as well. Her and Ntando have grown closer. I'm not jealous, she is there for her when I'm not. We take the lift together. I lift up my eyeglasses and look at her with my eyes narrowed. She took the ring off? Ever since Mpume came in the picture she has been wearing it everyday. She thought it would make a difference but we all know that when a man is fed up he is fed up for real. "Why the fuck are you staring at me?" she asks. Ever since Sphelele cheated on her she is short tempered. She snaps at us everyday. "You took off the ring?" I ask. "I'm done with that asshole." She is trying to sound strong but her face is painted with pain. "So you really left him for Mpume?" I ask. "It's not about her, he mistreated me and disrespected me. I deserve better Yangomuhle," she says. I don't like this Amanda, she was happy when she had her side niggas. "What's up with the eyeglasses anyway?" she asks. I adjust them and pull my wig. "My otrotomist prescribed them," I say. She cracks up and laughs. "It's an optometrist, not otrotomist," Does it matter? Petrol went up again. We walk through the door laughing. Ntando sees us and gives me a specific look. Whatever she is trying to emphasize with that look I don't understand it. I lift up my eyeglasses and look around. Where is the man of the moment? "I'm going to kick you out if you came with that attitude," she says. What attitude is she talking about? I haven't said anything. We sit on the couch and stare at her. "Where is he?" Amanda asks. "Really guys? You don't even greet me." Who is she? She is wasting our time. "We are here to see Tamar, not to greet you," I say. "It's Toni, not Tamar," she corrects me. I did that on purpose, she calls Sosha crazy too. Two minutes later a man walks out of the bedroom and comes to us. He is dressed neatly and his shoes are big enough. He is light-skinned and that's fine because he didn't waste complexion, he



is handsome. "Finally they are here," he says smiling. I like him already. His heart is light as his skin. He says how much he has waited to be introduced to us and gives us warm hugs. He speaks pure English, he doesn't even add one Zulu word. I don't know where he grew up, no matter how much you know English you end a sentence with your language in this country. I'm just saying nje. "I know your husband," he says looking at me. I think everyone knows him, he is a famous businessman, his father is well known for donating R40k to build a church and never set his foot inside it. It turns out Toni used to organise events and worked with Sosha a couple of times. "I never thought he would love someone else after his girlfriend turned out to be his cousin," he says. Oh, I've never heard of this. "He was heartbroken, I was happy to hear that he was getting married," he says. Amanda clears her throat, she looks uncomfortable. "Enough about Sosha. How did you two meet?" I shake my head and stare at her. Is she the cousin? I feel dumb right now. "Okay, we didn't know we were related when we met and we ended it when we found out," she explains. I grab the curly wig off and get on my feet. "You said you were friends not lovers," I say. "Does it matter babe?" she asks. She is my friend for crying out loud, of course it matters. I pick my bag and look at Toni. "Are you available next week Friday? I want to take you out so that we can chill," I say. "We will be available," Ntando replies "Only him, not you," I say. She gives me a look, she thinks I'm joking. Her heart has been broken a million times, I don't want it to happen again. I will take him out to threaten and emotional blackmail him. "I have to go guys, see you next Friday Toni," I say making my way to the door. Amanda stands up and follows me. "Really Yanga? I got over it, so did Sosha. Don't blow this over proportion, you know how he can get." I close the door and stand face-to-face with her. "He doesn't scare me Amanda, you both had to tell me. Now I feel like a fool hearing it from a stranger," I say. "You never told me about any of your ex's," she says. She is not married to my ex or dating any. I'm not going to waste my precious breath on her. "It's cool babe, we will talk later," I say. She sighs and folds her arms. "Yangomuhle are you really angry over this?" "No I'm not angry, hahahaha." I get inside the lift and leave her with a defeated face. I find him with Sabelo, they are watching a certain cricket match. I don't greet, I take my daughter on the floor and asks him aside. Sabelo and I don't get along for more than thirty minutes but when we do get along it's madhouse. He took his precious time and recorded a song he would have sang on my funeral if Bab' Cele shot me instead of the wall. He laughed at me for days. "Is everything okay?" he asks pulling the chair. "I just found out you were in love with Amanda at some point in your life. Why didn't you tell me?" I ask. He yawns with a bored look on his face. "Amanda is my friend and your so-called cousin," I say. "Why is it a big issue? We broke up when we found out our mothers were siblings," he says. "Were you in love with her?" I ask. "At that time I was. Why are we doing this MaShenge?" It makes me angry that they both can't see how much this is hurting me. They are both special to me. "Did she tell you about me?" I ask. "Yes," he says. Breathe Yanga! "Were you referred to date me?" I ask. He frowns. "No Yanga!" "Tell me how it happened. Amanda liked me and got me the job. You came to the store knowing who I was and fell in love with me?" I say. He pulls his brows, his eyes are blazing with anger. "You think I planned falling in love with you?" "I don't know, you tell me," I say. "You're questioning my feelings for you?" He is making this harder than it is. "I just want the truth Sosha," I say. He pushes the chair and leaves. I hear the front door slamming hard. Minutes later a car speeds off. My stomach turns, I feel like throwing up. "Is everything



okay?" Sabelo asks. I drop Okholo on his lap and rush to the bathroom. Everything I ate comes out. I feel a little dizzy and sit on the floor to recover. He is teaching Okholo how to dance, he is always energetic. I take a bottle of water and sit with them. "What did you fight about today?" he asks. I won't tell him because everything is funny to him. He doesn't stay long, he says I'm boring and leaves. I send Ntando a text, she calls immediately. "Are you okay babe?" she asks. "He left, I don't know where he is," I say. "How did you approach him?" she asks. I'm not that bad, of course I approached him nicely. "In a good manner," I say. I know she doesn't believe me. "Please don't let this come between you. He loves you, don't even question that. I know Amanda loves you too, maybe it's something they wanted to leave in the past given the fact that it's embarrassing," she says. "But still Ntando...." I yawn. "Yanga you don't have to fight everything that makes you angry. Sometimes you just need to let things go." Okay she is right, I overreacted. "You sound like Wilson B Nkosi, anyway I like Toni. His shoe size is good, are you happy with the performance of his foot?" "His foot is well trained, no complains so far. Do you like lunch bar?" Lunch bar? My eyes are going to pop out. "You're kidding, right?" I say. "No I'm not. Girl, I'm living thee life," she says. Jesus must come back, his men are going to die trying to impress women. Dicks look scary, how much more with beads inside? Dick cancer is on its way. It's almost 8pm and my lovely husband is not home. I watch a movie and go to bed with my daughter. She recently started talking things that make sense, now talking is her newly found hobby. She is a talking machine, all I have to do is agree to everything she says. She pushes the phone on my face. "Daddy...Daddy...Daddy." Lord! Is it important to say one thing three times? I call Mbuso instead of her daddy. She is happy regardless of who it is. She is obsessed with phone calls. She falls asleep while talking. I take her to her room and catch up with the big brother. He passed his learner's test, I just pray he doesn't end up driving taxis. I wait until my eyelids grow heavy, my husband is not coming home.

Chapter 20 He comes home in the wee hours of morning and goes straight to the shower. It's just after 3am, I don't know whether to confront him or keep quiet. I woke up from a bad dream and watched a movie, he was surprised to find me awake. He walks out of the shower and dresses up in his casual wear and comes to bed. "I slept in Myalo's house," he says. "Okay, I slept here." I stare until he looks away. Now he is the one leaving the house after arguments. So much for therapy! "I dated Amanda, she was my first love. After eight months together we found out we were related and called it off. It wasn't easy but I got over it and started seeing her as my cousin." He is late with explanations. Now I only want to watch the movie and see if the main character dies. "I'm not interested, I wanted to know yesterday and you left," I say. "My heart is with you. It hurts to be married to someone who doubts your feelings. You know how much I love you but you still question me." He sounds hurt. I didn't mean to question his feelings, I just wanted to know why he hid his history with Amanda from me. "I only wish you told me about your previous relationship with Amanda, I had to find out through other people. I was hurt, but I'm sorry if it sounded like I was questioning your love," I say. He breathes aloud and looks away.



"But I'm over it now," I say. He is silent for a moment, then he looks at me. There is little fear in his eyes. "She did tell me about you. When I met you, I already knew I might see my future wife. We didn't plan anything, I fell in love with you as she thought I would. If that is a sin then kill me." Oh really? Wish granted! I get on top of him and strangle his neck. He is not feeling any pain instead he is laughing his lungs off. Okholo cries in her room. He must thank her, I would've killed him with my bare hands. I get off bed and put my robe on and fetch her. He is still laughing, one day he will die while laughing, I'm very dangerous. Ntando was right, sometimes I should let things go without fighting. Not that he is going to get away with sleeping out, he will be punished for that. "For sleeping out last you're looking after Okholo, cooking dinner and cleaning the house. It's your turn of everything," I say. "Is that a punishment?" How does it sound like? Yes I'm punishing him. "You're still here? I need breakfast," I say. He laughs, everything is funny to him this morning. "I will need lot of energy, get your ass back on bed," he says. He is not getting any sex, I stick my tongue out and walk to the bathroom. I'm nauseous again. This is getting frustrating, I had an injection a month ago. Sosha cannot do this to me. I have endless bathroom trips the whole day. My instincts have confirmed this pregnancy. I only need doctor's confirmation before I start crying. Yes I'm married but that doesn't mean I want to give birth after every second year. I'm lying on bed, counting my bad lucks. "Are you okay?" he asks walking in. "No, I need to see my gynae tomorrow." He sits next to me and puts his hand on my head. "What's wrong babe?" he asks. "I've been having pregnancy symptoms," I say. "Oh!" Is that all he is going to say? Just -oh? "Leave Sosha," I say, pointing him at the door. He is smiling like a fool as he walks to the door. God knows if I strangle him again it will be the end of him. Indeed I'm pregnant. It's another long journey to sleepless nights and nappy changing. Just when I was starting to live a normal life, Okholo is a big girl now. They don't tell you to double protects yourself, now that I'm pregnant they are telling me that the injection is 99% effective. So Sosha's sperms swam through 1%? The Department of Health and Julius Malema, if he is the minister, owes me an apology. I get home in time for lunch and cook 2-minutes noodles, last night we had...I can't remember the name of the thing he cooked. He did everything I asked him to and even did our laundry. "Princess!" And then? I check the time, it's only 1:47pm. "Why are you here?" I ask. He smiles and kisses my cheek. "Am I not allowed to check on my family during the day?" he asks and takes Okholo from my lap and feeds her. What a jolly mood he is in! "How are you?" he asks. "I'm good," I say. His eyes stay on my tummy. He is here for an update the big devil. "Bakwenzanjani oCele?" he asks. He just couldn't let me mourn my divaness in peace. He smiles and pokes my cheek. "U-right girl?" he asks. He wants to piss me off. "No I'm wrong," I say. He laughs and plants a kiss on my shoulder. "I love you mkami. What do you want me to do for you?" Now he deserves my attention. "Name anything and I'll get it before the day ends," he says. I want a new washing machine but that is too cheap and it will accommodate everyone. I need a real gold digger's advice, I want to leave his bank account empty. "Give me an hour I will tell you what I want," I say. I walk to the kitchen and call Amanda. She is the only person I could think of, she has an experience in gold digging. "Hey babe," she answers in a low voice. I had forgotten that we fought a few days ago. "I'm still angry at you but I desperately need your help." "What kind of help?" she asks. I look around, there is no one coming. "What is the most expensive thing a lady can ask from a man?" I ask. "A trip to Lagos," she says. Why would I leave



the Nigerians here and go to their country? They came with their wives, corruption and all. "Not trips, something beautiful and expensive," I say. "Ayi that's my aunt's son, why should I advise you on bankrupting him?" Aunt's son my foot, they fucked. "Close your eyes. You are my friend and his bitter ex. Name one thing," I say. She laughs and says she is taking a moment. "Amanda!" I call. She is taking way too long. "His gym, ask full ownership of it," she says. What? The gym is like Sosha's second baby. "Noooo!" I say. "That will be the most expensive thing to ask from him. It will be more than losing money, a part of him is attached to the gym. It's one of the things he bought after opening JC." She is a heartless gold-digger, I can't believe she just told me to take Sosha's gym. I walk to his study and find him busy on his laptop. He looks up and asks if I have thought of anything. "Are you ready?" I ask. "Yep," he says smiling. I don't think he will be smiling after hearing this. "I want the gym," I say. His eyes widen, he didn't expect this at all. "MaShenge you don't even attend the gym," he says. "I work out here in the house, there is no need for me to attend," I say. He blows out and leans back on the chair. I'm not changing my mind if that's why he is staring at me. "What if I build you yours?" he asks. I think he is missing the point. He made me pregnant, I won't be a diva anymore. This is revenge, nothing else. "No I want yours," I say. He buries his face and grunts. It was nice when he was throwing his sperms that swim like Chad Le Clos inside me. Now it's time for PCF, Pregnancy Compensation Fund. "Damn! Okay fine, I'll get Steve to prepare the papers." I believe I can fly, I believe I can touch the sky! I don't know what I'm going to do as a boss but it feels so good. "Are we going to share the study?" I ask. I'm a boss now, I need a study room. "No I'll be tempted to fuck you every time," he says. He can be a turn-off at times. We are talking business here, not fucking. "Like now," he says biting his bottom lip. He needs to control his tongue, there is a baby here...Ummm where is she? I hope she is not breaking my things where she is. "It's just the two of us, drop your pants and come fuck me like a boss that you are," he says. I like his tone. I check outside the door, Okhola is singing somewhere in the house. Her nanny is around so let the boss-lady do this. I shut the door and dance my way to him. He always laughs at my sexy dance moves. "Ciara got nothing on you," he says. He is right, I can teach Cici a thing or two. I throw my leg over his shoulder...Yoh! My bones are going to break, I can't do this. He is dead with laughter. I didn't want to be there when MaJali meets Mmeli but as the only person who owns a car in the family I'm forced to go. I have never seen her so nervous before, she couldn't even stomach breakfast. We arrive around 12pm, today they are waiting for us, there are women walking up and down the yard. The same girl who took us inside the house the last time meets us below the kraal and takes us inside the house. The eyes we get as we walk in bleed hatred and judgement. "We meet again MaButhelezi." It's the uncle we met last week, his eyes are on me. "As promised Baba," I say. He looks at my mother, there is little disgust on his face. "I take this your mother next to you," he says. "It is her, MaJali Buthelezi," I say. He introduces himself to her and asks for an explanation. He is staring at her, hardly blinking. Mmeli is not here yet, there are men and women I don't know. Maybe it's the neighbours, they want to witness this Khumbul' Ekhaya episode live. She doesn't have any valid explanation except excuses and shifting the blame to my grandparents. Her words are accompanied by tears, it's almost sad to watch. These people are not sparing her anything they are demanding answers. After a while they send for Mmeli to be fetched. He is dressed decently today. He walks in and sits next to his





uncle. "Son this woman here says she is your mother," the uncle says. He nods his head and stares at MaJali. At this point she can't control her tears, she is a mess. Mmeli should be crying, not her. "I'm sorry my boy, I didn't forget you. I thought about you every day. I didn't know where to find you. Your father didn't give me his relatives' address," she says. They use this line a lot on Khumbul' Ekhaya, this is plagiarism, the show can sue her. "Can you help me apply for Identity Document?" he asks. It seems like he doesn't care about her presence, he just wants an ID. She wipes her tears with the back of her hand. "I can help you with anything," she says. Unfortunately Mmeli is not interesting in 'anything' except the Identity Document. After an agreement on the date of going to Home Affairs he walks out without saying goodbye. We take his uncle's number and leave. She can't get over how Mmeli and Mbuso look like her late brother, by the way we haven't told the family about Mmeli. I don't know how the Buthelezis are going to take this but it won't be pleasant. The good thing about being married is that you're able to tell your parents about pregnancy and get no drama. She is happy for a second grandchild. My life is moving too fast, a mother of two! I have to drop her at home and drive back to Durban. The Cele princess is already throwing tantrums and Sosha can't handle her. There is a Yaris parked outside. Who could be the guest? I was looking forward to a peaceful evening. Tshitshi!!! I scream in shock and hug her. She is never home, this is a pleasant surprise. "How are you?" I ask. "I'm okay," she says. She is jolly like Mlando, always making jokes and laughing, but today she looks down. "You don't look fine to me. Did you see Okholo?" She sighs and pulls her long, ass-touching braids. "She is handful, I can't deal," she says. Too bad Aunty there is another one on the way. "What brings you home?" I ask. "I missed my brothers." "Lies!" I say. She never miss her brothers, she even spend her holidays with her friends in Cape Town. "Okay, I'm here to deliver bad news," she says. Maybe I have to sit down for this. "I'm listening," I say. "I'm pregnant." No, I need to be on my feet. She is what? "You're not serious Tshitshi," I say with my eyes widened. "I have no idea how TBos forgot to put condom." The father is TBos? He doesn't sound like a father material. What does TBos even mean? "Does your father know?" I ask. "I haven't told anyone," she says. Sosha will be disappointed, he speaks highly of her. I wonder if this TBos is working, he has to take responsibility. Sosha almost jumps to the sky when he sees her. He adores his sister. "You're glowing baby sis, awusemhle," he says. "It's genetic bhutina, look at yourself," she says. Let me keep busy on my pots, the siblings are still hovering over each other. I have decided that next year I will be studying part-time. I don't know how I'm going to juggle between mommy duties and books, this pregnancy happened at the wrong time. I will be thinking about nappy's price instead of listening to a lecturer, who will probably be my age. I'm invisible on the table, he is gushing over his sister and asking her endless questions. Okholo is meddling and demanding her daddy's attention. The Cele siblings are the best, they don't let parents' issues get between them. When they are together, it's all love and laughter. She takes her empty plate and sends me a silent message. "I'll go to bed early, MaShenge will tell you something, please don't be angry," she says. I have no interest in doing this. I was not there when she went raw with TBos, she is the one who wanted it harder. I clear the table and take Okholo to bed. He is impatiently waiting for the news. He has no idea how disappointing they are going to be. He wrap his hands around my waist. "Did she fail?" he asks. That's nothing compared to what he is about to hear. "Yes," I say. "That's part of life, she will do better next time." "She failed to use a condom," I say. His



hands leave my waist. "What?" He is in disbelief. "She is pregnant," I say. He brushes his face and looks at me again. I confirm it with a nod, he closes his eyes and blows out. I think this is how Mbuso felt when I was pregnant with Okholo, how amazing can karma be! He is feeling the same pain he made someone feel years ago. I sit with him on bed and hold his hand. He is beyond disappointed. "Does she know the father?" he asks. "Yes, his name is TBos," I say. The expression on his face! "Bayede needs to hear this," he says taking his phone out. Now the issue is being passed to the deputy parent, there will be hell on earth. You know how us, the eldest ones, are. We monitor, judge and discipline these rebellious little creatures coming after us. Oh I'm no longer the eldest, thanks to MaJali. There is lot of noise about Tshitshi's pregnancy, the brothers cannot accept that someone slept with their sister. Bayede is going to P.E with her, he wants to meet TBos' family. I don't hear much about Bab' Cele, nobody speaks about him. Maybe the lacy relationship was officially called off. Mlando is in Cape Town, we keep up with him on Instagram. I don't think Yolanda is still in the picture, he post pictures of other girls. I wonder if he ever thinks of settling down, he is approaching 30 now. Talking about settling down, Myalezo is sending his delegate to Zolile's home. It delayed because of belief issues. I don't know if they resolved it, Zolile made it clear that she won't be a Nazareth. Maybe they reached some common grounds, love always win. I can't wait to see the groom on his wedding day, he had some cute Zulu dance moves on my day. I have no doubts that his wedding will be traditional, he comes from Ndwedwe after all. I have to check how things are going at home. In a few days my mother will meet Mmeli at Stanger Home Affairs to solve the ID issue. I have no idea what is going to happen after that but I'd like to have a relationship with him. I wake up to a hot cup of tea and plate of breakfast. Only a few get to experience this feeling, some only get breakfast in bed when they are in hospitals. "I brought a bowl of warm water" he says when I attempt to get off bed. "Thanks babe but I need a bathroom first," I say. He smiles with a stupid look on his face. "Come and pee inside my mouth," he says. I knew something annoying was coming. I roll my eyes and walk away. I'm not happy with the volume of my pee, the whole bathroom is buzzing. It's normal breakfast, eggs, toasted bread and mushrooms. He is good in the kitchen, whether it's baking or cooking, he is a master. "MaShenge we are going to church today," he says. Something is wrong with my ears, I think he said mall. "Where?" I ask. "It's Sunday, we are going to church," he says. There is Sunday in every week and we never go to church. What makes today special? "Why are we going to church?" I ask. "Because we are blessed my love, not every crazy girl like you finds a loving husband and mother such a beautiful daughter. And not every broken son-of-a-dog with mental issues finds a beautiful, sexy wife," he says. I will ignore that he called me crazy. Craig hasn't said that so I'm perfectly fine. "I can install alarms, surround my home with electric fences and send bodyguards behind Okholo everyday, but above it all we need God's protection. Both of us know how cruel the world is, we need God to be closer." He doesn't play when it comes to God, he takes religion seriously. We don't pray everyday but when we do it is intense. He taught Okholo 'Our Father Who Arts in Heaven' prayer. I didn't know the importance of praying growing up, I only prayed when I was in need. It warms my heart to know that my daughter will grow differently. Ntando replies to my text, I told her that I'm about to go to church. They only drink wine on Good Friday, don't waste your time- her text. Who said I'm going there for wine? This heathen! Aunt July gave me a hat



before umembeso day. Today this hat is saving my day, I feel like a member of Joyous Celebration. We leave all the churches in our neighbourhood and surroundings and drive to Pinetown. Maybe this one has a different Jesus Christ. There is a maze of cars parked outside. People are walking in groups, this is what I don't like about church. If you don't know anyone you end up feeling like an outcast. When we walk through the gate they start acknowledging us with wide smiles. Everywhere Sosha goes he becomes the VIP, we get seats at the front row. He is familiar with many people, they keep thanking him for coming. The service is good, I enjoy the singing more than everything. The pastor delivers the sermon, his wife is shouting the loudest 'Hallelujah'. In her mind she is Maria and her husband is Joseph. We all have to stand up if she does, she is our Highness. "UMKHULEKO UNAMANDLA..." And now??? He is on his feet singing in a deep gracious voice with his eyes closed. He is a bad singer at home, both Okholo and I are shocked. Everyone is singing along with him, he is lost in the song, tapping his foot and folding fists. I'm so uncomfortable, I don't know why. He greets everyone according to their church positions, seemingly he knows them very well. "I didn't come with MaXulu today. I came with Okholo and MaShenge Cele," he says turning to us. People shout long a Hallelujah and clap hands. "MaShenge sukuma bakubone," he says pulling my hand up. I can't believe he is doing this to me. There is applause and Hallelujah. The spotlight is too bright, I can't wait for this service to be over. I didn't expect him to do this. I must say he analyses the Bible better than the pastor, there are endless Amens. I decided to spend the afternoon with Amanda. I know she is wearing a mask, she is still hurting over Sphelele. He looks happy in the pictures with Mpume, she could give birth anytime now. Passenger once said, you only need a light when it's burning low and only miss the sun when it starts to snow. That's exactly what is happening to Amanda. There is India's car outside my house, I guess Tshitshi is here. I take Okholo who is fast asleep and put her over my shoulder and walk in. There are voices coming from the lounge. My ears refuse to take one of them as Bab' Celes. We made it clear that he is not allowed in this house or anywhere near us. Indeed it's him. This is a test! "He came with me, we want to see bhutina," Tshitshi explains. She looks like she has been crying, her eyes are puffy red. I leave them in the lounge and go to my room. I need to alert Sosha, I don't trust this man. I don't know when he arrived, I hear his voice shouting downstairs. Tshitshi is wailing, I can't hear what she is saying. I put a blanket over Okholo and rush downstairs. "Tell her what you did Sosha," Bab' Cele says. They are both looking at Sosha. He looks like a bomb waiting to explode. "Did you do it bhutina? Tell me you didn't kill my mother." She is crying. "Why would I kill her Tshitshi? What would I have gained from her death? I didn't even care about her existence," Sosha says. Out of all people Sosha is the suspect? I can't believe Bab' Cele. "You had a cousin named Amandla, maybe you don't remember her. He raped her and drove her to suicide, that's why your mother didn't like her." Not this again! This man really hates Sosha. "Babe Okholo needs you upstairs," I say. These accusations break him and his father knows that, he wants to see him broken. "Sosha!" Tshitshi exclaims. She never call him by his name, she is angry and disappointed. "Babe please go upstairs," I say. I know what happens after this, I beg with my eyes until he leaves the room. Tshitshi runs after him, she wants to hear the truth from both sides. I fold my arms and glare at the monster in front of me. "Wathwala ngezinyembezi zakhe yini"? I ask. There is flush on his face, for a moment he looks numb. "What tickles you in seeing him cry?"



You have tried to bring him down, none of your strategies worked. He is making it without your help and support. His businesses are doing well, I'm sure you didn't expect him to be where he is today. Thanks for naming him Sosha, he is indeed a soldier and you cannot break him," I say. He sizes me up and lets out an evil chuckle. "I won't argue with you," he says. He glances at the guard standing by the door and adjusts his belt. I know he has a gun on his waist. "Another thing Bab' Cele, don't ever point your gun at me, there will be hell to pay," I say. He takes his cellphone from the coffee-table and looks at his wristwatch briefly. "Make sure your husband drinks his meds, you should get prescription as well," he says. He walks out and deliberately bumps his shoulder on our guard. I will teach him a lesson, these rich people tend to take us for granted. My brothers may be little but I come from a village and have hundred brothers. Bab'omncane is shocked to hear that I nearly died. I tell him everything, he asks for directions to my house. Hell will break loose, nobody points a gun at me and gets away with it, I'm from Ndulinde. Tshitshi is his brother's keeper, she undoubtedly believes Sosha's innocence. She is here, trying to make up to him. He is in his study, writing on his recipe book. He is not okay, pain is reflecting in his eyes. His father knows very well which buttons to press to hurt him. In the morning a taxi buzzing maskandi on full blast stops outside our gate. It's Ndulinde brothers from KwaMashu Hostel. I thought Bab'omncane will send a few, not a full taxi. I wanted someone to put Bab' Cele in his place, I didn't want a war. "What's going on?" Sosha asks. "Your father has some explaining to do, he had a lot to say yesterday. He is not even sorry for pointing a gun at me, I want him to know that I'm not an orphan," I say. Ngwenya Gwala is the son of Ndulinde's chief, he is walking on Sosha's garden, stepping on his flowers like they're just wild grass. I offer them juice, only two of them drink it. Others want beer, unfortunately Sosha doesn't drink their kind of beer. They call him Sbali, he is answering a lot of questions. Sbabuli is carrying iwisa, I didn't know he carried it this side as well. He is threatening the whole Cele clan and Morningside neighbourhood. "I can start down the road and break everyone's skull open until I reach to that man's house," he says. Maybe Bab'omncane should've asked other people for this. I don't want anyone to get hurt, I just want Bab' Cele to get the message. He comes at the drop of a hat, it's Tshitshi who made a call, his princess. When he walks in his eyes meet Ngwenya's. A pang of fear strikes on his face. "Is this him?" Ngwenya asks. I boldly say yes, he can take his gun and point at me again. "Good morning," he greets them politely. They break into laughter. They are laughing at 'good morning'. We don't have that term in Ndulinde, we use 'sawubona' any time of the day. "We heard you are...who is that guy Ngwenya? The one who points guns and shoots on TV?" Sbabuli asks tapping his fingers, trying to collect his memory. "I don't watch TV," Ngwenya replies He waves his hand dismissively and looks at Sosha. "Sbali you know this person, his name start with La..it's La-something," he says. Sosha shakes his head. I think he wants to say Rumbo. "That La-person, you madala acts like him. Why did you point a gun at our sister?" he says. Bab' Cele looks at me in disbelief. He never thought someone would stand up for me, he is rich and feared. He adjusts his hat and sits on the chair. Mphemba walks to him and takes the hat off his head and puts it next to him. It's disrespectful to wear a hat inside the house, he is helping him. "Baba did you attempt to shoot MaShenge?" Tshitshi asks. She is clueless, in her eyes her father is perfect. He plainly denies it. I'm shocked. Now I am a liar? Ngwenya stands in front of him, his eyes are steaming anger. "Yanga is not going to suffer any



more pain at the hands of a man. Whether it's a rich man or father-in-law, nobody is allowed to threaten or touch her. We are here to deliver that message for today, if you want to attest to it point your gun at her again," he says. The message is clear on the receiving end, he is nodding his head. Ngwenya looks at his mates and signals that it's time to go. "Madoda asambe," he says. They all stand up and leave except Sbabuli. He remains on the chair, his face says he is not done. "We don't go around delivering messages, we are doing this for Sbali. You have to pay for our petrol." He is scamming him, his hand is on the table waiting for money. The Mighty Cele doesn't hesitate, he takes the wallet and gives him R200. I can't believe he is sweating just from iwisa. He doesn't move until he hears the taxi driving out. Sosha's face is unreadable, he is still leaning by the wall like he's been the whole time. Tshitshi storms out angrily, she is learning the truth about her perfect father. Sosha and Cele share a long stare, I don't know what it's about. Eventually Bab' Cele stands up and leaves. I close the door behind him and sigh in relief. I hope he heard them, they won't be so nice next time. "I won't fail to protect you. I will lose my life before someone touches you and my daughter," he says and walks away with his hands pushed inside the pockets. I know him, he has taken offense. This is not about him failing to protect me, his father must know that he is rich, not untouchable. I come from Ndulinde, the village can take him right inside his security-guarded house and show him how hell looks like. Some of them don't like me, I refused to date some, but when we come this side we treat each other like siblings. They will deal with him accordingly. I wake up in the middle of the night craving for milk. This man is not on bed. I check in the bathroom, there is no trace of him. Who vanishes in the middle of the night? You know high school stories about Satanists flying out of the windows in the middle of the night and going to the atmosphere to meet with Lil Wayne and all rich celebs to plan car accidents. I don't want to think he is one of the flying squad. What is he doing here in Okholo's room? He is sitting on the rocking chair staring at the sleeping Okholo. The room is dim but I can see that he is crying. I walk in quietly and kneel in front of him. "What's wrong babe?" I ask. He wipes his nose and looks away. "Sosha!" I call. "I love my daughter MaShenge," he says. This is strange and it's scaring me. "Why are you up at this time?" I reconstruct my question. He looks at me, tears are still glittering on his cheeks. It pains me to see him in pain, I get sick. "I just want to be a perfect father to them. I love my children MaShenge. They are my blood, my joy. I will never let anyone abuse them. When they are under this roof, they will be protected and loved all the time. I swear on my mother's grave, I will protect them with all that I have," he says. I forget about milk and pull him back to our room. I hold him until his train of thoughts disappears, he falls asleep with his hands tucked between my breasts. This is not about him and his children, there is a void in his heart. Nothing can fill it. He needs his father but his father hates him. Bayede does his best but he is not his father. I call him early in the morning and ask to see him. Sosha is still in a depressed mood when he leaves for work. It breaks my heart to see him like this, he is the most loving person I know. He may lose it at times but he is kind and humble. Bayede comes with a gigantic toy house that's going to take half of the playroom. His Zoya is over the moon. I'm sure the next few hours of my life will be quiet, she won't leave the playroom. He sits opposite the counter, he looks worried before he even hears it. I wonder if he has tried dating again, he has mourned Nomzamo more than enough now. I'm sure she also wants him to move on and cut his beard. "Is everything okay?" he asks. "I don't





know, your brother was crying in the middle of the night," I say. His brows furrow, he didn't expect this. "Did you ask him what was wrong?" he asks. "He wasn't clear, but what I picked from it is the void your father left in him. Deep down he still needs his love, unfortunately Okholo and I can't fill that," I say. He is silent for a few minutes. I know there is no way to fix this, you cannot force people to love you. However I want him to get closure. What did he do to him? It cannot just be the rape accusations. Maybe it's his mother's sins, he is trying by all means to bring him down. Whatever it is must be laid on the table. "I will try to speak to Cele," he says. He has done that in the past and it didn't work out. "I don't want to force their relationship. Maybe if he clears things up Sosha will be able to heal from his childhood pain. Okholo and the coming baby cannot grow up in this misery," I say. "I understand MaShenge, I'll make a plan," he says. I make chicken tortilla wraps and pack them with some fruits. He loves freshly squeezed orange juice, I pour it in a bottle and Okholo's tea in another one. She doesn't like to see her daddy eating while she is not, he always end up eating her leftovers. She is talking all the way to Musgrave. How is it possible for someone to talk this much? She never keep her tiny mouth shut. "Guess who is back home?" Amanda says meeting us half way. She still doesn't come to work on flat shoes. I don't know if I'd survive two hours living her life. She looks inside the basket and says she is also hungry. "I'll come with yours tomorrow, is my husband in?" "He is in the kitchen, go wait in his office I will call him." I have missed this place. Many changes have been made. There are two new cashiers, Asih got fired a few months ago. Now the reception area opens out to the cafeteria. Cynthia is still managing the place, she hasn't changed one bit. I take out his cutlery from the drawer and set lunch on his desk. I had my first nippegasm in this office, I miss those good old days. "This is a nice surprise," he says walking through the door. "It's a treat for a good husband," I say. "Thanks I really deserve it." I laugh, he is so full of himself. He wastes no time he digs in and wipes the plate clean within minutes. "Your daughter is a receptionist today," I say. "We are born clever, we don't need education." Nay he is lucky, the struggle is real when you're not educated. I want Okholo to finish school and get a degree. "I talked to Bayede earlier," I say. "About what?" he asks. How do I say this? I don't want him to think I'm meddling in his business. "Do you wish to have a relationship with your father?" I ask. His puts the glass on the desk and tightens his jaws. He is about to take this to a wrong direction. "He wanted to shoot my wife in front of my daughter. Why would I want a relationship with him?" I take his juice and hand it to him. He needs to breathe and speak from his heart. I won't be a reason why he doesn't fix things with his father. "Babe you're angry at him, he is angry at you. Now most people are getting involved. You can pretend this is not true whereas it's eating you inside. What is the root of all this? Why did your mother leave his children and never looked back? You cannot heal by being the father you wish you had, get closure," I say. "You think I haven't done that? I've tried to reach out to him, he is just an asshole," he says. I have been there most of the times, neither of them ever address each other with respect. They bluntly hate each other. "Maybe you need professional intervention," I say. "Just a few days ago you had your home boys threatening him. I wouldn't be surprised if he bought your forgiveness," he says. So he thinks I'm corrupted, that I accept forgiveness bribes. Even the ANC is not that corrupted. "I don't like to see you cry, it breaks my heart. One day Okholo will wake up and find her daddy, whom she idolize so much, staring at her with tears on his face. You need to uncover



your wounds because they are not healed. Fight one battle, don't burden yourself with unnecessary hatred," I say. He closes his eyes and massages his browridge. Something kicks at the side of my tummy. "Your baby just kicked," I say. He opens his eyes immediately and rushes to my side and puts his hand on my tummy. He is smiling nonstop. "She likes my office babe," he says. "She?" I ask. "I think it's a girl again, Okholo will be a big sister and protect her," he says. I'm not hoping for a girl. I'm tired of bathing dolls and listening to endless stories. I want a boy now, he will play his cars and mind his business. "I think he agrees that you and grandpa should talk to someone and have that someone's professional advice." I'm not letting this go until he agrees. "He can refuse or say more hurtful things, I'm trying to let go. I want to focus on what makes me happy, you and my children," he says. "Do you feel like you need him?" I ask. "Yes and I feel stupid. I speak hate and feel some love. It made me sad to see him frightened by your homeboys and trembling. He is alone, no matter how much we didn't like India but she was his love. The same way Bayede felt losing Nomzamo is the way he felt, and no one was there for him." Now I understand why he was staring at him, he was trying to see if he is okay. "As soon as my mother left his love for me vanished. I even went to do DNA test because I thought he was not my father. I don't remember doing him wrong to the point where he can hate me for the rest of my life." "That's why I'm saying find out my love. You cannot be questioning yourself forever, you deserve answers," I say. The next chapter of my life should be peace, love and family. Phone beeps! You are invited to Mlando's welcome home party, the entry fee is R150. Gifts must be sent on the 6th before 5pm. Your presence will be appreciated- Mlando's text. Sosha is reading the same text, laughter is choking him. Who throws a welcome-home party for himself? I'm not going to talk about the entry fee, we cannot afford it.

Chapter 21 Did I say Myalo and Zolile worked out their differences? Well they didn't and we found out after fetching our attires that they're calling it off. There is no wedding anymore. Myalo couldn't take it. Apparently in his house there is no heat allowed on Saturdays, but Zolile being a slay queen that she is didn't respect those rules. It wasn't only that she also failed to comply with the Mchunu rules. My close source said Myalo is heartbroken and has taken time off to deal with it. Sosha and Bab' Cele had a few sessions with Craig, I can't say things are okay but there is progress. Apparently he is the reason why his mother left, not the core reason but he alerted his mother about India who was the side-chick at the time. He was a baby, he had no idea what he was doing nevertheless his father held a grudge. But he finally listened to Sosha's side of the rape story and that has cut some tension. I'm going home to spend time with my three brothers together for the first time. I expected my family to be angry and dramatic about Mmeli but they accepted it and moved on. He was not interested in having a relationship with us but Mbuso kept pestering until he agreed. Sosha is not happy with me leaving two weeks before giving birth, but this is the only time we can be together, Mbuso works nonstop. This time he insists on being inside the labour room when I give birth. The sun shone to my side, I'm having a baby boy. Weeks are turning into decades, I can't wait to meet my prince. Half way to Mandeni I receive a text from Mbuso, plans have changed, they will arrive tomorrow morning. Mom had to



go with Mmeli to Mandawe to meet her relatives. I buy take-outs for dinner, I'm too disappointed to cook. It's a bit dark when I get home. My eyes quickly dart to my father's kraal, there are no cows inside, it's empty. The door of the main house is closed. Is Sabatha not home? I push to check if it's locked, luckily it opens. There are whining screams coming from the boys' room. "Yes baby...Yes!" WTF is going on here? "Sabatha!" I yell. It can't be what I'm thinking. I send Okholo to my room and give her my phone. He walks in the kitchen with his eyes bulging out. "You're here?" he asks. His voice is deep and different. I feel fear steaming from my toes to every part of my body. Sabatha is 12 years old! "Who is in your room?" I ask. "No one," he says. I raise my eyebrows. He exhales and rubs his hands together. "Must I go check?" I ask. "Nomtha came to check on me." Jesus Christ! "You brought a girl here?" I ask. "I just needed company, I was alone." He thinks I'm stupid, company and 'Yes baby' are two different things. He is having sex right inside our family house, his disrespect is on another level. "How old are you Sabatha?" I ask. "I'm 16." Whaaaat? He was 12 years two weeks ago. At what speed do these kids grow? I haven't had the talk with him, I doubt Mbuso had it either. Nobody has been paying attention to him, he is our little brother and that's how we expected him to always be. "Take her home," I say. He disappears and comes back followed by a short girl who could be in her early teens. Her face is turned down I cannot see her. I warm our food and dish up. He comes back walking like a rained chicken and sits on the table. Okholo is not familiar with him, Sabatha doesn't have time for kids, in fact he doesn't have time for anyone. I'm realising how weak my relationship with him is. I have my attention on Mbuso. The only time I call him is when he is in trouble, I don't call him for a general chat. "I'm sorry," he says. His voice is deeper than Mbuso's. I don't understand how he grew up so fast. "Are you okay?" I ask. He nods and pulls his plate and starts eating. I feel tears dropping on my cheek, how did I let this happen? I was supposed to look after both of them. "Is it about the girl? I didn't know you were coming, I'm sorry," he says. I shake my head and wipe the tears. "Do you protect yourself?" "Yes I do," he says. I want to ask who taught him about sex but I remember he goes to school and attends Ilizwi programme every month. "I didn't realise you were so grown, our relationship isn't where I'd like it to be. Ubabawami taught us unity," I say. "You're married now, you have new brothers at the Celes," he says. "You, Mbuso and Mmeli are my brothers," I say. "I'm trying to say I understand why we can't be always Dad's ideal siblings, you have different priorities now." He doesn't get it, I want him to be my priority. "I want us to be close, that's what I want. Tell me about your life. What is going on? Who is Nomtha?" He grins and carries on eating like he didn't hear my questions. I know the girl is from around judging by how fast he came back from accompanying her home. "Do you want me to tell MaJali and Mbuso?" I ask. That gets me his attention, I get all the juicy details. "She is the reason why my father's cows didn't come home, people are complaining about the goats as well," I say. It's my duty as a sister to blame this girl for my brother's mistakes and negligence. "She didn't do anything, she..." I stop him with my hand, I don't want to hear it. She is the reason and that's it. He has grown, his conversations are matured. We talk about Mmeli, Ilizwi programme and university. I didn't expect him to be interested in going to university. This one's ears take only what he wants to hear. I have intense pain in my womb. I'm due in two weeks, it can't be contractions. I check the time it's 3:22am. I try to sleep but the pain comes back stronger. I wake Sabatha up and tell him that I'm sick. He is confused, he asks if I need



painkillers. "I'm pregnant Sabatha, I need the doctor," I say. He is more confused. Why didn't I listen to Sosha? My bag is always packed, I just don't know how I'm going to get to the clinic, I can't drive in this state. "Must I go ask Baba kaMenzi to drive you?" Gosh he is still here? I'm in pain. He runs out and comes back with our neighbour after a while. I have no other choice but to leave Okholo with him, I know she will cry when she wakes up. I'm holding onto a steel bench inside the clinic and banging my head on the wall. Okholo's birth was not like this, today I'm praying for the temporary death to come. I asked the nurses to send me to theatre for C-section they just laughed at me and said I must march up and down the corridors. I don't know when Sosha and Ntando arrived, checking time increases pain as well. I need something strong to push, maybe a steel table. "How far is she?" he asks the nurses. I'm the one who is in pain but he is the one sweating. "6 centimetres," the nurse says. They've been saying different centimetres since yesterday. What annoys me is how calm they are when they say it. I'm not allowed to sleep on my right side and my breathing pattern is being judged. I must breathe and not groan in pain. Sosha thinks this is Days of Our Lives, he is brushing my forehead and squeezing my hand. He is causing me more contractions. "Please leave," I say. "But I want to be here," he says. I let out a scream that frightens everyone. I hate him, he did this to me. "MaShenge don't chase me out, please." God please take me and resurrect me like Lazarus! "Get out of here Sosha!" I scream again. He nods and walks out. Ntando is squashed in the corner, her eyes are all out, she is freaked out. I don't know how nurses work, one comes pulling a trolley and tells the other one that it is time. Ntando gets inside before they close the curtain. She counts to five and asks me to push. I push and push and push. My energy is running out. Why didn't they send me to theatre for a C-section? They ask me to push harder, I'm getting tired. "Is that the head? Oh My God it's coming out right here!" Ntando screams. I close my eyes and give the last push. The first thing he does is to cry his lungs out, how normal! "Eeeewu the intestine is out," Ntando says peeking between my thighs. My heart nearly stops beating. What intestine? I can't lose an intestine. Where am I going to get another one? I've never heard of intestine donors. They are all laughing, the fool is talking about the cord. This is a public sector there is no privacy. They send me to post-natal ward where all new mothers are placed. Sosha walks in, he looks drained and tired. I feel guilty, he wanted to be part of this birth more than anything. He leans over me and smooches my lips like there is no tomorrow. "You are brave, thank you so much," he says. "I'm sorry for kicking you out," I say. "It's okay, how is my son?" he asks. Son is sleeping peacefully next to me. He removes the blanket off his face and looks at him. He is the happiest man alive, his smile has never been so wide. "What's his name?" Ntando asks. "Bandile," I say. "It's nice, and you Daddy?" she asks looking at Sosha. I hope it's not Moy' Ongcwele, we already have Mandl' Okholo. "He is Nqabenhle," he says. I knew something Godly was coming, I love the name though. This time Mlando won't be happy because there is no foreign name. I cannot spend time with my brothers, Nqaba arrived early and his father doesn't want to leave without him. Okholo is a bit sad, everyone is cheering on the new baby, nobody is paying attention to her as usual. "Come here baby," I call her. She jumps off my mother's lap and stands in front of me. She is crying, this is exactly what I feared. "Mommy loves you. You are her baby, okay?" I say. She nods her head and sucks her thumb. I ask Sosha to take Nqaba and pull her to my chest. I will never replace her, she is the Cele princess. "Nomagugu is better, you nearly fainted when



Mbuso came," my mother says. "And she was seven years, a grown old woman!" They are all laughing at me. Mmeli's silence is worrying me, there is no doubt that he is not feeling at home. I wanted to be here to see how everything goes. We have lost many years without him, we need to fill that gap. Sosha is walking like he owns the world, this baby is giving him too much pride. If it was up to him I'd be driving while he sits at the back with his children. We say goodbye to my family and leave. There are three cars parked outside our house. They couldn't even wait a day. I'm tired, I haven't slept since yesterday. Oh well Bab' Cele is here too. I wanted this little relationship between him and Sosha but that doesn't mean all is forgiven. He is not my father, there is no need for me to love him. "Nqaba's mother," he says. I don't know if it's his way of greeting or what. I greet them and walk past with Okhoho. There is joy, everyone is happy to welcome the family's first grandson. "He is a photocopy of me," Mlando says. "No he looks like me," Bayede argues. I thought I'd get some sleep but they are making so much noise downstairs. I take a cold shower and lie on bed with Nqaba. It's too early to judge but I think he is not a crying machine like his sister. There is a knock. How did I fall asleep? I don't even know how long the person has been knocking. It's Amanda...She is here too? There is a smell of braai filling up the house. They are exaggerating now. "Must I bring you food?" she asks. "No, I just want to sleep," I say. She nods and stands still. She has an unreadable expression on her face. Eventually she walks in and sits on bed next to me. "Is everything okay?" I ask. "I'm happy for you," she says. I'm too sleepy to smile. "Thanks babe," I say. She ties her weave behind her neck and sighs. She is acting a bit weird. "I knew you were the one the first day I saw you. I told him about you, roughly describing how you looked. He was very eager to meet you." She pauses and takes another huge breath. I don't know where this is heading, she is serious and scaring me. "I care about you. I cared from the day I set my eyes on you. I'm always happy to see you happy," she says. Maybe I'm too sleepy, I don't understand what she is trying to say. I sit up and lean on the pillow and look at her. "I love you," she says. So sweet! "You know I love you more," I say. She stares at me while biting her lip. "What's going on Amanda?" I ask. "I have feelings for you, I fell in love with you the first day you walked in the bakery." Feelings as in she wishes to share a bed with me? WTF! No ways, I need to un-hear this. "Is it the first of April in your calendar?" I ask. "I'm not kidding Yangomuhle, my sexuality didn't allow me to love you for me. I regret that mistake, you could've been mine." Okay this is enough. I need her to leave and talk to me when she is sober, she must be drunk. "I need to sleep, close the door on your way out." I lie down and pull up the covers. I can't believe what she just said. I'm married to her cousin for crying out loud! "I'm not playing Yanga," she says next to my head. The next thing I know her lips are on my mouth. She is kissing me. My mind freezes, WTF! "MaShe...." He doesn't finish calling me, he sees Amanda's lips on me and walks in like a madman. It's too late when Amanda jumps off, he is right in front of her. He grabs her neck and throws her against the wall. He is an animal, her screams are filling the room. This is not how I wanted to welcome Nqaba home. He presses her against the wall and looks at me. "Who is going to explain la masimba. Is it you or this bitch?" he asks. Tears burn my eyes. I don't understand this whole thing. Why is Amanda doing this to me? Sosha thinks I kissed her back. "MaShenge didn't do anything, don't hurt her," she says and spits blood on the floor. "Amanda umenzani umfazi wami?" he asks. A fist follows after the question. He is crazy, he is going to kill his cousin. "I told you about her, I love her," she says. What is she





doing? She is infuriating him even more. His eyes turn red within seconds. "Amanda leave," I say. He turns to me and shoots an icy look. "Are you her bitch?" he asks. "She is bleeding Sosha, please let her go," I say. He shoves her to the floor and takes something from the closet. Amanda finds strength and runs out but he is right behind her calling her isifebe. I take Nqaba and lock myself inside the bathroom. My body is slowly failing me, I gave birth seven hours ago. My head feels light, I put Nqaba on the floor on his blanket and lie next to him. "MaShenge!" It's Bayede. They've been banging the door for more than 5 minutes now. I can't get to it and open. Nqaba is crying on the floor next to me. My whole body is frozen, I can't move. I hear a loud bang and the door breaks open. Bab' Cele, Mlando, Bayede and Sosha walk in. Mlando rushes to Nqaba while Bayede and Sosha come to me. The last thing I remember is Sosha running with me to the car and Okholo crying behind us. I slept as soon as I got inside the car. The doctor says I've been here for a couple of hours. There is IV drip connected to my arm. Sosha is here, he is sitting on the chair, staring at me. "Are you okay?" he asks. I nod my head but inside I'm broken. My children are not next to me, my dear friend messed up my marriage and my husband, whom I love with everything in me, doesn't trust me. They discharged me the following morning. Mlando is the one fetching me. He keeps stealing glances at me but doesn't say anything. I can hear Nqaba crying from the driveway, as soon as the doors unlock I get out and rush inside. Sosha is feeding him the bottle on the couch. His cheeks are red, he must have cried for a while now. I greet and take him and head to my bedroom. They didn't even wrap him with a blanket, my poor baby. The bathroom door has been fixed, it's like nothing ever happened. I wonder if Amanda is okay wherever she is. Even though she did what she did I still care about her. I send Ntando a text asking her to check up on Amanda for me. He walks in and sits on the other side of the bed. "MaShenge," I don't know whether to respond or keep quiet. I'm not sure if I'm still angry or not. "I'm so sorry, the doctor said I must take care of you and I didn't do that well yesterday. I didn't want to welcome my son that way, I was angry. Amanda is my cousin, I trusted her with you and my children. I didn't expect her to do what she did," he says. He has calmed down, maybe I should do the same. "Neither did I, she told me what she told you and I told her to get out then the next thing I felt was her lips on me. I was shocked, my body couldn't even react," I say. He walks around and sits next to me. I lift my head up and look at him. He looks remorseful. "I wouldn't have hurt you," he says. He takes Nqaba from my arms and puts him on bed, he brings me closer to him and kisses me. I have my doubts, he was going to hurt me. And what is that thing he pulled out of the closet? I'm pretty sure it was not a stick. "She is out of our lives. I don't want her anywhere near you or my children," he says. "Are you firing her?" I ask. "No, but she won't come inside my bakery if she knows what's good for her. I'm glad Sphelele saw his worthy and broke the stupid engagement," he says. Well, the Amanda chapter is closed in my life. I delete her contacts and block her. There is no need to say I will miss her because I already do. She has left footprints in my life, we created memories together. I don't love her the way she would love me to but she does have a special place in my heart. I choose my marriage. \*\*\*\* Ntando is not just a friend, she is my twin, as soon as she found out about Amanda's saga she cut her off. It's been three months since it happened, my life is boring AF. I sit home all day with my two attention-demanding children. I was right, Okholo cries more than Nqaba. She is a big baby, she doesn't eat by herself. She wants me, specifically, to feed her. I



think it's all about proving a point to Nqaba. She calls him 'this boy'. He is her least favourite person in the world. Tshitshi is in PE with Tbos' family. She gave birth to a baby girl, we haven't met her yet. She will come back when the family brings ihlawulo. Bayede is not fond of the family, he has been making crazy demands throughout her pregnancy. Brothers will amaze you, they sleep with other people's sisters but expect theirs to start having sex at forty. Sabatha is calling me. Our relationship has picked a new pace in the last few months. He texts me every day. Unlike Mbuso, he allows me to view his status messages and tolerates my comments. If he posts something about relationships, I write him a long text about the importance of education and how girls are going to stop his life and destroy his future. He doesn't block me for it, he is my favourite brother. "Sisi I'm in trouble," he says. Trouble? My mind is running wild, I'm already panicking. "What trouble? Are you okay?" I ask. "Nomtha is going to the hospital," he says. My memory can be slow...Nomtha? Oh I remember her, the girl who was screaming in his room. "What happened to her?" I ask a bit chilled "She is giving birth." Chill gone! Whaaat? "And wena how is that any of your concern?" I'm asking just for the sake of asking, I already know that he is the most foolish person on earth. "It's my baby," he says. This situation needs a little bit of fainting but I'm still standing by the counter with the tablespoon in my hand. "Sabatha you made her pregnant?" I ask. "I tried to protect but it wasn't working, I'm sorry. Can you please call Mom and tell her for me. The baby doesn't have any clothes. I was waiting for my monthly allowance, I didn't know it will happen this early." Why can't we slap someone over the phone? I feel like getting in the car and driving to Ndulinde just to slap his stupid face. A 16-year-old father? No scratch that, he is 12years old. What is wrong with these kids? We need a new testament, sex before marriage sin is not scaring anyone nowadays. I get another call from Nomtha's old sister, she has given birth on her way to the clinic. I'm an aunt to a baby boy. I was not ready at all, I'm such a young aunt. "Mbuso just told me, congratulations Aunty," he says walking through the door. "Yaay!" I say throwing my hands up. He laughs, he thinks it is funny. This person is still in school, he is going to university next year. Who is going to take care of the baby? "It's not funny Sosha, babies are expensive. How is he going to support the baby?" I say. "His brother works in Johannesburg and his sister is the gym boss. Why should he be worried? Everything is going to be taken care of," he says. I work hard for my gym, making calls to check if they don't need new equipment and everything. Mbuso has his own expenses and doesn't earn that much. Okholo is always the last one to sleep. Firstly she makes sure that the baby is not on our bed and then checks if none of her toys are missing, as if Nqaba cares about the ugly dolls. "You know she took after you right?" he asks. He has to be kidding, I'm not like this little diva. Not one bit. "No she didn't," I say. He chuckles and pulls my leg over his waist. His hands start skimming under my panty. We have gone three full months without sex. The doctor said six weeks, my mother said three months. I always choose African doctors, I did the same with Okholo. She said they will be slow if I rush into sex. I don't know how, all I know is that if Sosha inserts his penis inside my vagina before the period of three months my babies will be slow and dumb. Who wants a dumb baby? No one. "Bayede said you're indirectly punishing me, he said there is no such thing," he says. Again, he is discussing our bedroom issues with his brother. His big head doesn't work sometimes. "I miss my yoni," he says inserting his fingers inside me. I'm lost in his lips, his finger is touching my soft tissues. My body aches for his touch on every inch. My nipples are



itching, it's been a while since he played with them. What am I going to do with Nqaba's milk? My nipples need some sucking from his father. He asks for the first round and takes me on like he last had it ten years ago. Mmeli finally found the job, he lives with Mmqobi and Mbuso. He is the quiet type, maybe I took after him. He says what you want him to say and ends the call. Circumstances made him move out of his uncle's home and go to my mother's home in Mandawe, Now there is a lot of tension between the two families. Mbuso sent three cows to the Makhayas to pay Nomtha's damages. Sabatha's allowance from me goes to the baby. Thanks to Ilizwi programme, he never runs out of cosmetics. In the past few years we've had fewer cases of boys assaulting girls. No cases of rape have been reported so far. Induna and local men have imbizo every now and then to discuss manhood and family issues. My story made a difference. This year mothers are going back to school. Okholo and Nqaba's mother is back on the desk again. I pray not to think about diapers while in class. I have registered for Diploma in Small Business Management at Unisa. Someone is hooting outside the gate. Long, loud hoots. It's Ntando, she is driving a car I've never seen. "I'm driving bae's car," she yells. That is what all this noise is about? It's not the first time she drives Toni's car. "You won't believe what I'm about to tell you," she says. Curiosity sparks, her unbelievable stories are always lit. "What?" I ask. "Nyambose is taking a second wife and she is my age." Her father is a grandpa of the century. What is she talking about? He should be taking funeral policies not second wives. "You're lying Ntando," I say. "I wish I was. This thing stresses me out that's why Bae is taking me to Knysna," she says. Clap once, clap twice! I've been stressing my whole life and nobody ever took me Knysna. "Knysna heals stress?" I ask. "Yes it does," she says. We learn until we die. "When are you leaving?" I ask. "Today boo, I'm here to borrow your hats," she says. She is not leaving the continent I should relax and be happy for her. She didn't send me to marriage and crying babies, this is the life I chose. One day I will go to Knysna as well. "Plan your trips forehand, you have to bring me something for my hats," I say. "I will bring you sea water, you need to cleanse off Amanda's kiss," she says. Urgh! She just had to remind me that, I'd forgotten it ever happened. Amanda resigned at JC, I have no idea which part of the planet she lives in now. Nqaba is starting to act like his father, you never know his next mood. One minute he is playing and laughing and the next he is crying. He is chubby and enjoys being carried around. Only his father carries him more for more than 10 minutes. We have to go to Dad's house, please get ready- Sosha's text. Why are we going to that man's house? I haven't set my foot there since the wedding day. I get the kids ready and wait for him. He arrives after an hour and takes the kids to the car. He doesn't look okay, something bad may have happened. He doesn't say anything about the purpose of this visit, he is talking only because Okholo never lets people keep their mouths shut. It seems like everyone is here. Bayede's Jaguar is parked next to a white car that I've never seen. Only Mlando changes cars like underwear, I guess it's his. There is no one outside the yard, not even the garden boy. I only hear voices when we walk through the front door. Bayede is standing by his sweaty father's chair. He has his sleeves rolled up to his elbows. Something is not right here. Mlando pushes the chairs to us. There is a white lady sitting next to him, she is writing something on the document. A dark-skinned woman emerges and takes Okholo and Nqaba, I recognise her as Bayede's helper. She disappears with them in the passage. "He is dying," Bayede directs to Sosha. He is talking about Bab' Cele who is struggling to breathe



properly. He is covered in sweat, his eyes are sunken. "What happened Baba?" Sosha asks, his voice is filled with concern. Bab' Cele opens his mouth a number of times before he manages to spit words out. "Bayede..will..tell..you..the..truth son." Bayede shakes his head and says it's not his place to tell Sosha. Whatever it is must be bad. This person is dying he should be rushed to the hospital, not put on the chair in the middle of the house. Mlando stands in front of Sosha, I've never seen him this angry. He shoots a look at his father and shakes his head with a disgusted face. "Bafo you had a twin brother, he was killed in front of you and buried inside Clermont's old house. They made you drink his blood in a juice bottle so that his spirit lives in you. Mom didn't just leave, you told her and when she confronted this man he threatened to kill her if she ever looked back. You've been a troubled soul since then, they sacrificed your twin brother and your mental well-being for the growth of the Cele legacy." By the time Mlando finishes to explain Bab' Cele is gasping for air, his body is shaking violently, he is dying. Bayede snatches my arm and pulls me down the passage. He locks us inside the room and goes back. The TV is playing loud, we cannot hear anything. Maya is also here, she looks frightened like she knows what's happening. An hour has passed and we are still stuck inside this room with no idea of what's going on. At last the door opens, Mlando walks in and takes Nqaba. I guess we are leaving, I pull Maya and Okhlo and follow him out. There is no one in the living room, everything is arranged as if nothing happened. All the cars are gone except Mlando's. He takes us home and asks me to look after Maya. I know the worst has happened, he never acts so cold with us. No matter how tense things are he is the one who always bring humour. It's been two days now and I have no idea where Sosha is. I haven't heard from any of them, Mlando dropped us and never came back. Bab' Cele is dead, his death is all over the news. They say he died from respiratory failure at his home, no further details are shared. With Ntando gone and the Celes gone MIA I realise how less sociable I am. My circle is too small, I need to socialize at the campus and make some friends. I'm about to go to bed when the main door opens. Relief washes over me as my eyes meet his. He is wearing a long, brown hoodie jacket I've never seen before. "Mkami," he walks in and embraces me in a tight hug. His eyes are empty but he is smiling. I dish for him and prepare him a bath. We don't talk about his father, he kisses his children and comes to bed. I don't hear anything about the funeral, the subject is not touched. Days go by, Bayede and Mlando come for dinner. We eat and joke like nothing happened. Tshitshi will be coming home with her daughter for the first time, we will go to Richard's Bay to welcome ihlawulo. Cele left his businesses and properties behind, none of his children have claimed them. Some businesses are collapsing, his cars are inside the garage of his unguarded house. You can't find his picture anywhere in this house, there is no single memory of him. Okhlo will not remember him, her grandfather who wanted to kill her mother in front of her. It's like he never existed. Mlando asks for a toast, he hasn't changed one bit. He toasts to the new legacy, new generation and good life. \*\*\* I'm trying to do my last assignment, it's due in three days. There is little voice that keeps telling me it's still early. I end up closing the laptop and taking a wine break. "I thought you were studying," he says walking through the door. We are sharing the study room, we usually take quickie breaks. "I'm taking a break," I say. He looks at the Saint Celine bottle on the desk and shakes his head. "I'm here to ask something big from you," he says. This sounds serious, I pour another glass and give him my full attention. "MaShenge I want to take a second wife." My face says it all. Excuse



me? No, excuse him. "Angizwanga umoya?" I say with my eyebrows raised. "I want to take a second wife," he says. I gulp a whole glass and pour another one. Is he seriously asking this from me? What haven't I done for him? "Why?" I ask. "I have too much love," he says. My palms are getting moist. I gave him a daughter and a son. I try to fulfil my wife duties every way I can. "If I say no?" I ask. He massages his chin and keeps quiet. "Sosha you said you only love me," I say. I'm trying hard to hold back tears. My hands are shaking, this can happen to MaDlamini Zuma and MaCele Mseleku but not me. I'm MaShenge Cele, I cannot share my husband. "I do love you but my heart has too much love," he says. The wine spills on the desk as I mindlessly push back the chair. "Divorce me and take that wife," I say and storm out. Ntando is always my shoulder to cry on, I call her and tell her what's happening. She wants me to come over. The nanny will be leaving in two hours, I must hurry up. I find her with a skinny guy who is doing her make-up. "Maybe you should let him do what he wants. Come on fix that ugly face," she says. She thinks this is a joke. My marriage is in crisis. Ndulinde people are going to get the hottest topic of the year. Those I didn't invite to my wedding will have good laughter over this. Umabuy'emendweni! The guy forces me on the chair and paints my face with his things. He keeps saying I will feel better after make-up. I don't think having drawn eyebrows will erase the fact that my husband wants a second wife. Ntando comes back wearing a long red dress. She looks gorgeous, but where is she going? She can't call me here and leaves me heartbroken with this guy. "I have another dress, it's white though. We need to show Sosha why he married you," she says. She doesn't get it. I'm still the girl I was five years ago, nothing has changed. This is not about me, I have nothing to prove. This guy! Where did she get him? He is annoying. He is ordering me around and forcing me into her silky white dress. Ouch! Why is he combing my hair so roughly? And who said I wanted to style my hair? I shouldn't have come here. "Trust me, beauty is the best medicine," he says. Is it? I attended a slay-queen's funeral last year, why didn't beauty heal her? He offers to drive us to my house so that we can pick the kids. I'm leaving Sosha to take his second wife. It hurts, I can't imagine my life without him. Nqaba is not even one year old, I wanted them to grow in a warm home. Why are all these cars here? Did he call a family meeting to announce his decision? "This way babe," Ntando says, she is behind me. The front balcony is decorated, there is red carpet with flower petals leading outside. My mother, Bab'omncane and my brothers? What's going on here? He is coming to me, smiling, holding a bunch of flowers in his hand. I'm still lost, what is happening? "Happy 5th anniversary MaShenge, I still choose you." Whaaat? I thought he wanted another wife. And today is our 5th anniversary? I can't believe I forgot such important day of our lives. "You're the first, the second and the forever wife. Stop crying you're ruining Tumi's hard work," he says. Everyone laughs. I feel so stupid, he planned all this behind my back and pulled it off. This is the first anniversary celebration we have with our families. We usually buy gifts for each other, I don't know how I forgot this one. Maya is turning 13 soon. Yep, time flies. Her father is not bringing anyone home, his life revolves around Maya and his surgery. We haven't celebrated his birthday since Nomzamo passed on. He is turning 41 this coming week, it marks five years since she died. Mlando is in a stable relationship. We haven't met the lady but they've been together for five months. He is finally working in Ogies, he bought a house that side. My family slept over, they are leaving today. I have to fetch my mother's orders in town. I ask Mmeli to come with me, we





don't spend much time together. "How is work?" I ask. "It's okay," he says. "Have you met any lady? I want a sister-in-law, someone I can judge and gossip to MaJali about." He chuckles and fastens the seatbelt. "You are in for a long wait." Long wait? I raise my eyebrows. "Are you gay?" I ask. "No, I lost someone who meant everything to me," he says. He is bruised from the tone of his voice. "I'm sorry to hear that brother," I say. He looks outside the window for a good while with his jaws clenched. Then he sighs and wipes his face. "I paid a price for being poor. The love of my life, my daughter, my blood. I lost everything that kept my hope burning. She told me straight in the eyes that my child will never be mine. Her family asked if I will be able to pay the damages and their daughter's university fees, I was not going to be able to do that. Sometimes I didn't have food for my own stomach, and sometimes no shelter. Where was I going to find a job with no ID?" He is opening up, there is so much pain in his voice. "Yes I made a mistake by falling in love with iqhikiza and sleeping with her. She wouldn't have chosen me over the life her rich boyfriend gave her. She left with my baby and half of my heart," he says. We've been singing men are dogs for the past few years, our wrongdoings and heartlessness as women go unnoticed. "Have you ever met your child?" I ask. "Yes, a couple of times. Even today I sat with her across the table and pretended as if I didn't know that she is mine. My hands ached to touch her face and see her smile closer but I couldn't. She lives the best life, the one I couldn't give her," he says. He sat with her across the table? He cannot be talking about Maya. That's impossible! "Don't tell me you're talking about Nomzamo!" I say. "I loved her Yanga. I held no grudge against her, whenever she needed me I was there. I attempted suicide twice, I didn't see the reason to live. Nothing was working out. I couldn't even buy a perfume for her." Nomzamo needs to wake up from that grave and explain this. Two guys are mourning her death? Lord of Sheningas! I'm unable to look at Bayede in the eyes. Nobody is aware of how Mmeli's eyes are fixed on Maya. The car needs to come faster and take them home before Bayede notices this. I'm holding my breath the whole time, Maya is not leaving the room, she is sitting right in front of her biological father. "Ma the car has arrived," Sosha says walking in. The best five words I've heard in my whole life. I walk them out and help them pack their bags inside the car. I've never been so relieved to see my family leave. As much as Mmeli is broken by this the truth will break Bayede even more and I'm not ready for that. "Is it me or your brother had his eyes on Maya the whole time?" Myalo asks. Silence. My breath is held up on my throat, what is wrong with this Shembe guy? Doesn't he have 23 or 25 to attend? "He knows her mother, they were close," Bayede says. Relief unties my tongue. At least he, the main character, doesn't suspect anything. "My wife is bored, when are you all getting married?" Sosha asks. Mlando picks his glass and makes his way out. I thought he found the one, that's what he's been telling us. They laugh and ask him if the girl really exists, he shoves his middle finger and disappears. Our eyes turn to Bayede, he has mourned enough now. "Don't even look at me, I'm still searching," he says. Searching at 41? I have a feeling this search is going to take forever like the HIV cure one. At this point I can even offer him my cousin, Kanyo. She could do with a doctor boyfriend. Myalo walks in with a strange look on his face. "There is a weird-looking person outside the gate." Who could be looking weird outside my gate? All weird-looking people I know are here, inside this house. They walk out and come back with a young woman. She looks tired and hungry. Her dress is torn on the shoulder, it looks like it was last washed when Omo was still R10. I take a



closer look at her, she looks a bit familiar despite the state she is in....I know this girl. It's the late Kwenza's wife. What happened to her? "Are you okay?" I ask. She nods her head and asks for water in a dry voice. Bayede rushes to the kitchen and comes back with a bottle of water. "She came to the bakery looking for you, remember the woman I told you about babe," Sosha says. "She is the one who helped us find Sabatha," I say nodding my head. Since that day our paths have never crossed. I never got a chance to thank her for saving us, I feel really bad. "Are you hurt anywhere?" Bayede asks. She shakes her head, she looks very weak. Maybe I should fix her something to eat. "I will make her something to eat," I say. "Give me two oranges first," Bayede says. I rush to the kitchen and slice oranges. I wonder how her life was after Kwenza's death? Did she get away with tipping us off? As dirty as she is Bayede puts her on his lap and feeds her orange slices. I guess he is being a doctor, saving lives as usual. My phone keeps ringing, I'm trying to ignore it. Bayede needs this food immediately. I throw it inside the microwave and check who the persistent caller is. Mbuso? He was here an hour ago, why is he calling me so many times? I call him back while waiting for food to warm up. "Hey what's up with thousand calls?" I ask. "We had an accident, it's bad Sisi." Accident? It was my wedding anniversary yesterday, today marks the same day India and Nomzamo died. This cannot happen again. "Are you alright? Is everyone alive?" My voice is shaky but I'm trying not to panic. "Mmeli is still stuck inside, Sabatha and Mom are okay." Stuck inside the car? We cannot lose Mmeli. "Are you getting any help?" Silence. "Mbuso?" A woman screams painfully in the background. My knees are failing, I pull the chair and sit. "He is dead Yanga...My brother is gone." What? No no no

