

THE PRIME

CHAPTER 1

[LATOYA SAMUELS]

I put on the new shoes then looked at her. She was just staring at me.

"Ok.. So you are just going to stare me?" I asked getting irritated. She was supposed to tell me if they looked good on me or not but then again looking at her sense of style I highly doubted she could give me the opinion I wanted. She had a very dull taste, such taste could chase customers away.

"Ummh they look good on you Ma'am." She said probably refreshing herself. I sighed, they did look good. Worth the price. "I'm taking them," I said taking them off. She took them then led me to the till. I was the only one in the shop, I had booked the day in the shop the previous day. I hated having to shop with a crowd looking at me. It was just annoying and irritating. After I paid for the shoes I took the shopping bag and walked out to my new car. Getting in the car I put on my sunglasses and drove to Nothando's house. She was probably waiting for me. We had planned to meet at around 1200hrs but now it was around two. I pressed the hooter when I arrived by her gate. The moment the gate opened I drove in and parked next to her old city golf. I still wondered why she still had it, if she wanted a car all she had to do was say the word. I would buy one for her if she wanted, the same way she used to do for me in varsity. I could never complain, the same way she never complained. All my varsity life, she was the one who took care of me. I got out of my car and walked to her door. I opened it walking straight in. She was

in the kitchen, on her laptop.

"Love!" She said taking off her spectacles smiling.

"Hey.. I'm sorry I'm late. I got caught up."

"Caught up? With?" She asked with her eyebrows raised. I sat besides her.

"With this Gucci shoes. They are so pretty. I had to get them!" She chuckled shaking her head.

"Wow! Anyways want juice?"

"Wine please.."

"I don't have that." She was now standing by her fridge browsing through.

"Well you could have told me to get wine."

"Toya.. I don't need wine. Your presence is enough. How's.. Home?" I groaned wishing she had wine because thinking about home made me just want a glass of wine.. Or maybe two. She put orange juice in front of me smiling.

"Don't even ask! Strict hag was just up on everyone's case!" I said pouring the juice. "She was just so irritating! Talking about "some of you don't ever do anything".. Obviously she was talking about me. She wouldn't say that to Silent Sue! She said I will get arrested for paying the hotel a bit more than what they were supposed to get so that they don't talk to the police about the inconvenience I faced there."

"Inconvenience? Toya you were doing cocaine!" There went the motherness in her. I sighed.

"It was a once off thing. You are blowing this out of proportion honestly."

"You can't be serious Toya.. Remember Sarah?"

"Really now? You are going to talk about Sarah?"

"You will end up like her!" I rolled my eyes.

"Anyways Silent Sue was just silent yesterday. Honestly she's not perfect. I know she has some dirty on her."

"Out of everyone else, I really like Lelo, she's nice. You just don't like her because she's prettier."

"Are you trying to say I'm ugly?" She laughed.

"I said she's prettier. Don't get it twisted Sisi,"

"Mxm!" She laughed harder.

"Don't get upset. Anyways how's the Princess?"

"You mean Ice Queen? She's.. Well in her moods. Called me a prostitute. I wonder when she's going to her mother!"

"You can't probably hate her. You know why she doesn't like you. Sometimes you are too much."

"She doesn't like anyone. Even Silent Sue!"

"Don't hate her. You are chowing her father's money."

"Her father have weird sex fantasies. He does things which are not meant to be done! I deserve the money!" She laughed.

"BDSM?"

"No.. It's more than that. I won't be surprised if one day he ties me to the chandelier."

"What?" Noxy asked walking inside the kitchen laughing. "To the chandelier?"

I clicked my tounge as I stood up.

"Noxy!" Nothando said standing up. If there's one thing I didn't like about her.. It was her twin sister. Thank God they didn't look the same. If I could I swear to God I would just burn her alive!

"What? Slay Queen doesn't like hearing the truth.. I know and it

hurts.." She paused looking at me. Between her and Nothando, Nothando was the pretty one. I was still not sure if she was a lesbian or not. "I will tell her either way.. You are in the same WhatsApp group as a prostitute. You like or not. You are a trophy wife. All you know is spending without earning it! That's all you know, all you care about. For the other two women I still don't understand why they are married to one man but you.. You are a gold digger. That's why you are married to him. Money!"

"Well ok. At least I'm doing something with my life rather than milking my sister dry everyday all because I don't like working!" Noxy laughed.

"You call being a prostitute working?"

"If I'm getting paid for it then why not?" She just shook her head and walked away.

"Honestly I am going to kill your sister." Nothando closed her laptop then sat down..

"I lost my job." She said quietly.

"What?"

"Yeah.. I'm jobless, I smell unemployment.."

"Hey.. Look, we can always get you a new job."

"I'm at IT Latoya.. It's hard getting a job with such profession."

"Look I will call Kevin and-"

"No.. I'm good. I am going to an interview at some restaurant tomorrow. I'm fixing my CV.." She pointed at her laptop. "The pay is not much but it will keep me going. I'm going to continue singing at the bar. Plus that pay I will manage." I held her hands.

"Please let me help you. Please.."

"I'm good love.. I'm going to get more gigs.. And I will be good."

"They won't pay much. You know.. The recording label I told you about.. It can be your breakthrough and-" I was cut short by my phone ringing. I took it out from my handbag. It was Kevin. I took a deep breath.

"Babe!" I said as I answered.

"Where are you?"

"I'm with a friend."

"A friend who?"

"Nothando. Do you want me to come over your work place love?"

"Yeah... Come."

"Ok, I love you sweety.." I said hanging up.

"You are going?" Nothando asked.

"Yeah.. Look I will call you. Bye," I said kissing her cheek and walking out.

My life was pretty simple. Let Kevin get what he wants so you get what you want. I didn't love Kevin and that was a fact, but then again being with him benefited me. I got to travel all over the world, like I wished. I got to be wherever i wanted, wore anything I wanted and I got the protection I needed.. After all I was Mrs Robert, didn't matter if we were three.

[JANINE ADAMS]

"I need back up right now!" I whispered as I slowly walked inside the warehouse.

"We are sending backup this minute Detective Adams." Luke said.

"Bye!" Quietly and quickly I put my phone away then held my

gun with both hands. I took a deep breath trying to keep my nerves on check. I couldn't afford to mess this up.

I couldn't see anyone though I knew they were somewhere around. As I moved into a clear view I saw a woman, it looked like they were three. I knew there were more people somewhere and I also suspected that Big Daddy was somewhere with those people. They were busy packing cocaine.

"Right now step away with your hands up!" I said as I came into view for them to see me holding my gun. They slowly stepped away, I wondered how long the backup was going to take to get here. Without the backup I was at loss. I slowly approached them, trying to keep a good eye in case one of them had a weapon. I took out my handcuffs and cuffed one man to the table they were standing by.

"You! Lady.. Tie this one up! Try one stupid move and I won't hesitate to knock you down." I said looking at her. She took the rope that was on the table and tied her mate. I approached her when she was done. I was going to tie her to her mate but when I got closer to her she took me my surprise hitting me with her fist that I lost balance.

"Shit!" I cursed regaining my balance. She had started to run by then. I took off, running after her. From the way she was running I could easily tell she wasn't going to get far. I increased my speed, closing the distance between us. When I was a few feet from her I grabbed her T-shirt from behind making her fall to the ground.

"You bitch!" I said as I gave her one hell of a punch out of anger. She groaned. I pulled her up then walked back with her to the

warehouse. By the time we got back the backup had arrived.

"Janny!" Orlando said as he approached me, he was my colleague.

"Hey! Took you long enough!"

"Tried running for it?" He asked taking the clever lady from me.

"Yeah.. Is there anyone here?"

"If there is.. Probably they ran. We only saw the two you tied down." I closed my eyes as he handcuffed her.

"It's not the end. We have to get this ones to talk and we will get him."

"The day I catch him he's going to regret it."

"I know.. It's only a matter of time. Don't worry about it. We can go." I nodded.

I was disappointed but not that much, I knew Big Daddy was clever. Smart. His time was limited though. His days of being a human trafficker were limited. Days of being a drug Lord. I was close to getting him. Getting back at the police station I wanted to interrogate the clever lady. I knew she wouldn't talk so I decided I would interrogate her the following day after I got some information about her. I needed leverage on her so that she talks.

"The chief constable wants to see you." I groaned looking at Orlando.

"Right now?"

"Yeah.. Don't worry.. I'm sure it's nothing."

"That male chauvinist!?! Please.. He's always looking for an issue."

"I will be here.. waiting for you." I gave him a faint smile as I

walked away to Constable Sibeko's office. I had never seen a man like him.. Or maybe I did and saw him everyday. I hated Skhumbuzo Sibeko with all my heart but I hated him even more because of Kevin. They had the same personality of looking down on women. They were gender biased, believed that all women were good at was having kids and cooking and cleaning! They saw no value of women and that angered me. I couldn't even stand Kevin. Not even for a second. The way I hated him I swear one day I was just going to stab him. Hating him was enough but hating him and having to be married to him was worse. The story to how I ended up married to the sexist male chauvinist douchebag was a story for another day. I sighed as I knocked on Sibeko's door. His voice commanded me to come in. I pushed the door opened and walked in. He was looking at me. "Adams." He said as I walked in. His voice made my skin crawl! I wondered when he was going to get transferred or even better when he was going to retire. I swear this man had been a cop almost his whole life and was probably my father's age mate or even older.

"Constable Sibeko."

"You were not supposed to go to the warehouse alone. You know how we work. Why did you leave your partner behind? You are supposed to work on this with him not alone."

"I was only passing by, to just check on what was happening there and either way I wasn't really sure if the warehouse was the one. I didn't want to drag my partner to something I wasn't sure about."

"Still.." I wanted to roll my eyes. He was just looking for an issue.

"Being careless was possibly something you were not trained to do." Agree to whatever shit he's saying and leave. I told myself inwardly.

"Yes Constable and I apologize. It won't happen again."

"Good. You can leave."

"Pig!" I muttered beneath my breath as I walked. Orlando was still standing where I had left him.

"And?"

"Said I should have went to the warehouse with you."

"But you did well. Caught three people. He should applause you but being whatever breed of donkey he is.. He just can't." I chuckled.

"Yeah.. I'm going for lunch. I will be back later."

"Ok.." I walked out. Getting to my car my phone started ringing. I groaned out of annoyance as I looked at the caller ID.

"What?" I answered.

"Is that a way to greet your husband?"

"You bastard! What do you want?"

"Come home quickly. I have a business associate who's coming for dinner."

"You want to play happy family? Why can't you do it with the trophy wife?"

"Damn it Janine! Can't you just fucken do as you are told?!" He roared making me laugh.

"Unfortunately I can't. I'm sorry."

"Your father's treatment is being paid by me. You better bring your ungrateful ass home quick!"

"Fuck you!" I yelled as he hung up. I was angry. Sometimes I

wished to just shoot him in his sleep. He was the worst human being ever. He was the devil himself. If I could I would be paying for my father's treatment but because I don't even earn that much I just had to suck it up with Kevin. Only for my father I just had to suck it up.

I got in my car and drove to my everyday restaurant. If it wasn't the French thug I was after it was Sibeko or his brother from another mother, Kevin. Namhla walked up to me as soon as I settled. She was used to me and was my friend in a kind of manner. The only friend I had. We met in this restaurant a year ago when she had just been hired.

"Janny.. Hey.. The usual?"

"Yes.."

"How's work?"

"Work is ok.. How's your sister?"

"She's fine. She finally came home." Her sister had a tendency of disappearing and reappearing whenever it suited her.

"Well that's great."

"Yeah.. Let me get your lunch." She said walking away. I sighed as I relaxed my body. I just felt tired. Kevin was in my head. I wonder why I had to be present while he had his slay Queen of a wife or the Shy Wife. He could do with the two women without me. Namhla brought my lunch a few minutes later. I didn't even finish it, it wasn't going down well. After paying my bill I walked out. I was going to drive back to work and try doing some research on the clever lady. As I got to my car I was stopped by a soft pat on my shoulder which made me turn. I inhaled a sharp breath.

"Hi.. I'm sorry for this but I'm really lost. I'm new here, arrived yesterday. I'm supposed to meet one of my friends at this place but I'm lost." He said smiling. I took a deep breath composing myself. I didn't like to seem or even look disoriented. I liked looking intimidating and confident. Confidence was my motto. My confidence was being tested I swear. I had been in relationships before but my relationships were countable. I hated relationships. They always held me down, restrained me from doing things I wanted to do. They tied me down. They were a setback. Major setback. And besides all that I had never met a handsome guy who just managed to sweep me away. I laughed inwardly. Not that I believed in that but once upon a time yes I did.

"Lost?"

"Yes.. I'm going to.. Soweto." I laughed before I could hold it in my mouth. He looked at me looking a bit confused.

"I'm sorry I just... Well I.. You are going to Soweto.. You.. Well I didn't expect that."

"Why? Because I'm white?" He had a weird accent.

"Well you are.." I shook my head. "I guess it's just a mentality situation I'm going through. But I can direct you. Are you driving?"

"No.. I have my motorbike." He said pointing at the BMW beast. There was a time I wanted to buy it but the money it required was just a lot. I sighed before I started directing him. He was just staring at me.

"Are we still together?" He chuckled.

"I really can't even understand a word you are saying. I think I

should just call him."

"Yeah.. That's a good idea."

"Yeah.. I'm Kingsley. King.. Shortcut." I slowly nodded.

"Nice to meet you Kingsley. I hope you don't get lost.. again." He laughed.

"I will try not to."

[NOMPUMELELO SIKHOSANA]

I looked at Tshidi as she explained the new client we were trying to fish. From her description he seemed too complicated and demanding too. That all didn't matter though because we needed him. We needed a new client, a very good one because it had been ages since we got one. This client was going to be a breakthrough, not a breakthrough financially but a breakthrough in the market. We were losing our touch.

"We need him." I said at last. "We need to get him."

"That's the thing Lelo.. He doesn't want. He says his paintings are not for galleries. It seems like he never sells them. He sometimes gives to the Charity." I sighed.

"What do you have on him?"

"33 years old, has one sibling.. His brother who is a footballer.. Lost his sister when he was 16. Has a girlfriend/fiancé. Besides being an artist he's an accountant."

"Name again?"

"Nicholas.. Nicholas Dumisa."

"Do you know where he lives? Maybe I can persuade him. We really need him Tshidi."

"Ok.. I do have his location and contact details. I'm sending them

right away."

"Thanks." She stood up and left. I took my phone which was ringing.

"Kevin." I answered.

"Butterfly I need you home early today. I have a business associate who's coming for dinner."

"Ok."

"I got you a present."

"I'm fine thank you. Give it to Toya, she would appreciate it. I have to go, bye." I said as I dropped the call. I didn't want to argue with him. I hated arguing either way. It always drained me. I clicked on a new email on my laptop. Tshidi had sent the information. He stayed at the Sandton Executive suites. His contact details were also there. I stood up taking my handbag with me. I walked out of my gallery as I waved Nancy bye. She was the receptionist. I had first met her at her mother's tuckshop in Soweto. She was done with varsity but couldn't find a job. It felt like the right to do when I hired her and the way she handled the clients in the gallery just proved she was good. It proved that I didn't make a mistake. I decided not to call Nicholas but just go to his place uninvited. I didn't want him to shut me out over the phone. I could persuade him face to face. When I finally pulled up by the suit I took a deep breath summoning my confidence that I practically didn't have. Low self esteem was a big part of me. Walking inside the elevator I got in with some lady. Just the way she was, she reminded me of Toya. Her long nails that disabled her to do anything, the 32 inch weave or wig. The six-inch heels and the short dress. Exactly Toya's kind of style the

only difference was that Goya's style was high class, if it was not a designer then definitely she wouldn't wear it. I got off the elevator when it came to a stop. Third floor. His suit number was 28 so I walked straight there. Confidence is key, without confidence the client won't have faith in you.. I chanted to myself. I wasn't shy or anything.. I was just scared. My whole life I was just scared. I knocked on the door with shaky hands. The door was opened after a while. From the photographs Tshidi had sent me I knew this was him. I held my handbag tightly trying to stop my hands from shaking.

"Hi..?" He said, probably wondering who I was. I cleared my throat then swallowed the huge lump that was suddenly on my throat.

"Hello, my name is Nompulelelo Sikhosana from The NK Gallery. I'm the owner, you must be Nicholas Dumisa." He looked at me for a while in silence. "I know I came uninvited but..-" he cut me short.

"But you did."

I smiled constructing my sentence. "I know and now that I'm here I think we can discuss business."

"I already talked to one of your workers. I don't want to sell my paintings nor work with you and your company."

"And I understood that well and that's why I'm here." I said softly in a very understanding tone. "But I just want 5 minutes of your life so that I-" he cut me short again and it was beginning to annoy me.

"4 minutes 58 seconds."

"Can we talk inside?"

"No.. Here is fine." Things weren't going the way I thought they would. They were taking a different turn or maybe he just wasn't what I thought he was. He was just too grumpy and rude too. I even regretted coming to his house.

"If you work with us Mr Dumisa you can get millions for your paintings. We have a very good marketing-"

"That point is invalid. I can still get those millions even if I sell my paintings alone."

"Yes but the gallery will put you on the map with-"

"I'm already on the map so your point is?"

"You are wrong. You are on the map to those who know you. A lot of people out there don't know you and no, you can't get millions if you sell those paintings alone. Not the millions my gallery can get you anyways. You will be exposed to very important people who-"

"Who will just hang my paintings on their walls while actually not understanding their meanings?"

"Can you let me speak without cutting me short?"

"I think your five minute is up." I looked at wrist watch the back at him.

"Ok. Thank you for your time Mr Dumisa." I said steadily.

"Whatever.. please next time call. I hate uninvited guest." I chuckled as I walked away. There was never going to be a next time. He was arrogant, grumpy and rude. All of the three things on one person. He had issues, serious issues and so did I. I was upset because of his behavior but more upset with myself. Why did I even go at his place in the first place?!

[ROCKELLE ROBERT]

I drove straight into the free parking space. I was over the edge, I was angry. I just needed a drink. One glass and to get laid possibly. It had been a while. I thought about going to a party I had been invited to come by some ratchet ass girl I didn't like. Maybe I could go there. Maybe there I would find someone for tonight. I thought about all this as I stepped out of my car and walked into the bar. Just to piss Daddy I would do that. Just to get his attention I would do that. He expected everyone to jump when he talked. He could count on it with the gold diggers but not me. I sat by one of the bar stools leaving the tables. I needed to be closer to my supply. I could hook up with Mandla tonight if I wanted. He was a good fuck that I was sure of but the last time we spoke it wasn't so nice but then again.. Who cared? Because I didn't honestly.

"Vodka dry please." I said to the bartender. He gave me a slight nod. It wasn't that busy yet. I took my glass as soon as he placed it in front of me and took a sip.

"And tequila." I added. I just needed to get drunk and piss off Daddy. Maybe I could even show up drunk. I could already see his face. I could already see him angry.

"If your father sees you.." A voice said. A voice I knew well. I turned getting bored with his presence already.

"If you mind your own business Sean.." I replied tiredly. He laughed.

"How are you?"

"I'm fine. I'm sitting in a bar that my cousin's dad owns and that cousin manages it. A cousin I once fucked.. Only once. Just one

time. No longer even sure how long he lasted.. that cousin and he always reminds me every time I see him. That cousin. Now imagine how I feel." He sighed in an exaggerating manner.

"That would be a whole load of shit on one person."

I smiled. "You can imagine."

"Still crying for daddy's attention?" His brow was up now.

"Still not going to school?"

"How are your stepmothers?"

"How's your AIDS circle?"

"Still have the smart mouth I see and still a spoilt brat." I laughed.

"Oh thank you sweetheart.. Still stupid I see." He chuckled before walking away. I stood up immediately, paid my bill without even drinking my order and walked out. I had woken up to a bad day. First it was Mazwi. I still didn't understand why I was with him, maybe it was to impress Daddy. I wasn't sure anymore. He woke up talking about taking things to the next level.. maybe I was with him to impress Daddy but he was also with me because of the benefits that came with dating Kevin Robert's only daughter. Only child. He was boring. Too professional. Talked about legacy. Building a legacy for me and our kids. First of all.. I didn't want to have kids nor get married. All he cared about was his status. He was a tart. An ass licking tart. I was glad he had left for China in the morning. Then after Mazwi it was Nikiwe. The waiter at one of the restaurants I usually go for my breakfast. She spilled the juice on me. After that then the traffic to Lincoln's place. The guy who wrote my exams for me and also did all my assignments. The day had just started badly.

I walked to my car. I had a great idea, instead of actually going to some party I could hold my own at my flat. All I needed was to call Gail. My fake ass friend. Matter of fact saying she was my friend would have been a lie. She was an acquaintance. Ever since I was born I realized that people loved, liked, respected you for what you were.. for the amount of money you had in your bank account. If they thought or knew you had money they treated you differently. They licked the ground you walked on. They agreed to whatever you would say or do. No matter how wrong you would be, they justified you, defended you. That's how it was. Money spoke volumes. If you had it, you were important. Once you didn't have the money anymore no-one knew you. The friends you maybe had thought you had, they disappeared with the money. I started the car as I dialed Gail's number.

She didn't take time to answer her phone.

"Rocky.."

"Hey.. I'm holding a party at my house.. the flat. Can you get the word out there."

"You don't have to ask twice. I'm on it. It's going to be lit."

"I know.. Thanks."

"Anything Rockel." She said before she hung up. Now what I needed was booze and the party was set. I cursed as my phone started ringing. It was Daddy.

"Daddy?"

"Rocky where are you?"

"I'm not feeling well Daddy."

"Princess this is very important. You need to-"

"Daddy please.. I am really sick. I'm going to be with Mommy."

"Honey if this is about-"

"It's not. I'm just sick. I love you Daddy."

"Daddy loves you too princess." He then hung up.

That had went better. Maybe he was going to be worried about me.. Or maybe not. Rather than thinking of Daddy I was going to host a party and try to get laid. The last guy I had went for was just a flop. He didn't even know what he was doing. I didn't reach. Problems with having a big dick and not knowing how to use it. Maybe this time around I would get a guy who would make me cry out of pleasure.

I stopped by the liquor shop. After getting the booze I drove straight to the luxurious flat I rarely used. I didn't use it, it was basically for parties and sometimes for sex. If I didn't check in a hotel I used the flat for my one night stands.

I called Gail as I pulled up by the flat.

"People are going to start arriving in a while. It's all set." She said before I said anything.

"Great!"

CHAPTER 2

[NOMPUMELELO]

"You have very beautiful wives Robert." Mr Tshekedi said making Kevin smile.

"And they are lovely too." Kevin added looking at us. I could see Latoya batting her eyelashes, blushing though I wasn't really sure if she was blushing or not. Janine looked rather annoyed and she wasn't even pretending to be happy or cheerful. I

sighed as I took my glass of wine and sipped on it. The way the other men looked at Kevin probably boosted his ego. I could see from the way they looked at him, they wished to be him. It wasn't a secret Kevin was a very rich, well known politician. Now on top of that he had three wives. That was what most men admired about him. Looking around the table I thought about Rockelle. I didn't blame her for hating us. I would too if I was her. We were like gold diggers. We were married to one men who was years older than us. I was only 29, Latoya was 26 while Janine was 31 and Kevin was 48. That was enough proof to the people that we were gold diggers. Latoya didn't make things better too but I didn't blame her. She loved it, her history wasn't so good. Her background.. She stayed with her Aunty. She lost her parents when was 13 and she had three siblings. She grew up in poverty so I didn't blame her for spending money like she did. As for Janine, I knew she hated Kevin. She hated him so much. They always argued. What made things worse was him looking down on her, always telling her she will never get anywhere. Janine at those moments said what she wanted. Called Kevin names. Sometimes she got physical. She would start throwing things at him. I didn't really know the reason why she was married to him though I suspected it was something to do with her father.

I looked up when I heard Kevin call me.

"Lelo honey please get Mr Tsheledi one of our best scotch." I smiled standing up. Walking to the basement all I was thinking about was what happened at Nicholas's house. I felt insulted it made me sick. I hadn't expected it. I wondered how he lived with

his brother or even how he had a fiancé. I got inside the basement, that's where Kevin kept all the liquor. I took the first bottle of scotch I saw. Every bottle was the best according to Kevin. Walking back with it I gave it to Kevin smiling.

"If you may excuse us, Mr Tshekedi and I are going to the study."

"It's ok darling." Latoya responded. She was always happy, always smiling and when it came to pretense, she took the award.

"Thank you ladies, for the wonderful dinner." Mr Tshekedi complimented. I just smiled while Latoya responded with "we only make the best Mr Tshekedi." Janine didn't say anything. As they walked away I started clearing the table. I knew this was the time were Janine and Latoya would start arguing. It was not great to watch honestly but they did it everyday. They never got tired.

"Rough day?" Latoya asked Janine as I walked to the kitchen. By the time I came back to finish clearing the table Janine was gone. I guess today she wasn't in the mood. Her lower lip was cut a bit, I had a feeling the criminal she had caught today had punched her or something though I didn't ask. It was non of my business either way. I took the rest of the dishes then loaded them in the dish washer machine. I walked back to the dining room. She was still drinking her wine.

"I loaded the dishes in the dish washer machine, please finish up. Night." I said walking away. Latoya never did anything in the house. Her nails were too long for that but today she was just going to find a way. I walked to my room. Getting inside I locked the door. I didn't want Kevin on my bed. I didn't feel comfortable

with the way he liked having sex. I could deal with anything but not him having my ass.

I started undressing. All I needed was a quick shower and my bed. I quickly got under the shower before I changed into my pyjamas and got on bed. As I closed my eyes my phone started ringing. It was Tshidi.

"Tshidi.."

"Hey.. I'm sorry but Mr Dumisa called." I shut my eyes.

"And? Tell him it's ok, we understand if he doesn't want to work with us."

"He wants to see you. I gave him an appointment. At 1p.m he will be in your office."

"Ok."

"You don't sound happy. This means he's finally coming around."

"I don't think him and I can work together. He's too.." I wrecked my brain for the word to use. "He's too much. I don't think we can work together peacefully."

"But we need him." Tshidi said softly.

"He's not the only one. I'm going to make a few calls tomorrow. We might get someone even better than Nicholas. Someone who can work well with me. With the gallery."

"Ummh ok. So should I cancel the meeting?"

"Ummh.. Yes. Cancel it."

"Ok.."

"Good night." I dropped the call then put my phone under the pillow. I knew Nicholas was going to be the antibiotic the gallery needed but at what cost? I didn't want to work with someone who constantly made me feel stupid. Someone who was rude

and grumpy. I could deal with that at home but not at work too. Just then I heard a knock on the door followed by Kevin's voice. "Sweetie.. Are you sleeping?" I pulled the blanket over my head and closed my eyes.

[ROCKELLE]

I looked at the crowd that had filled up already. Everyone came, after all what sometimes mattered was who was holding the party. I was still holding my red disposable cup as I looked through the crowd, looking for my prey.

"This party is top notch!" Gail said standing besides me.

"Yah. Thanks."

"It's ok. Anything for you. I invited Brian." I looked at her.

"You did?"

"Yes.. I think he's coming."

"Great!" Brian was something at least and he didn't catch feelings. Just then I heard a few screams.

"I think he's here!" Gail said giggling. She had a crush on him, most of the girls had a crush on him but not me. Brian was a certified fuckboy. He was the type to fuck you up and leave you and come back and charm you back into his arms only to fuck you up again and again and again till he got tired. He fucked anyone he wanted, married or not. He destroyed more that he built. And Gail was right, it was him but he wasn't alone. He was with two of his friends. I watched him mingle here and there till he sat at the far end couch with his boys.

"I didn't know he was bringing company." Gail said making me look at her.

"It doesn't matter, the more the merrier."

"Well let me go and mingle. It seems like B already got a girl."

Quickly I looked back at Brian. He was with some girl now. She was so thick. I went to the kitchen and took two disposable red cups and filled them with wine before I walked straight to Brian and his company. Tonight he was mine. They all looked at me as soon as I approached them.

"Rocky!" Brian said standing up and giving me a hug. He smelt so good.

"Brian.. It's nice to see you around."

"You have been scarce." He said letting go of me. I chuckled.

"You too.. We can really catch up tonight." He looked at me biting his lower lip.

"Wine?" I purred looking into his eyes. Brian was hot. Very handsome and he knew it. He was a radio and TV presenter and also a part time Dj. I wanted him tonight.

"Yes please.. Great party." He whispered taking the disposable cup from me.

"Thank you." He sat down pulling me along so I sit besides him on his left side. The thick girl was still there.

"Rockelle.." One of his friends said. I wasn't so sure of his name but I think it was Sizwe or Senzo. Between those two names was his.

"Hey.." I said. "You look good I see." He blushed.

"Thanks.. you too."

"T-bone." I said to the other friend. I still remembered his name. We once smoked a blunt together.

"Ssup shorty?"

"I'm good, always good." He chuckled. A song came up, I wasn't so sure who was controlling the music anymore. The thick girl stood up and started dancing seductively. After a while she was twerking right on Brian's face. I won't lie she was so good at twerking. Brian's eyes were on her ass. My hand made it's way to his sweatpants. I heard him inhale sharply. I put my hands inside his sweatpants then held his stiff dick in my hand. Madam Bootylicious was still at it. I squeezed Brian a bit.

"I think we can take this to the bedroom. All three of us." I said seductively in Brian's ear.

"Yeah!" He said standing up. I put my hands in my hoodie's pocket as he whispered something to Madam Bootylicious. After a while we were in one of the bedrooms in the flat. From the fire in the eyes of Madam Booty and the lust in Brian's eyes I knew tonight was going to be worthy it. Worth every second. Madam Booty walked up to me pulling me into her and kissing me. I had slept with a few girls before, for fun and sometimes I had just been drunk. She coaxed her tounge with mine. I grabbed her fat ass, it was so soft. The thought of Brian watching us had me socking wet. She pulled away from my lips then helped me off my hoodie followed by my bra then my jeans leaving me in my lacy panty only. I undressed her too till she was naked. I could feel Brian's eyes on us. It was time to give him a show. A very good show.

[LATOYA]

I put on my dress, I was meeting up with Terry and Tamia. They were my other friends. We had met at some party a while ago

and honestly they were fun to be around. It was so quiet. I knew everyone had gone to work. I wondered how the strict Hag did it. Yesterday she had slept with Kevin or more like he had forced her into it. I heard her screaming, not out of pleasure. She was screaming "stop!" I heard a few things break then Kevin insulting her though the screaming didn't stop. I had felt her screams move something in me. I had forced myself to sleep but I couldn't close my eyes. Her screams haunted me all night. She didn't want him and he had forced himself on her. Janine could leave Kevin but that was going to be at the expense of her father. Kevin was going to stop paying for her father's treatment. Her father had schizophrenia and Kevin was paying for his treatment. It was so expensive she could never afford it and also besides that her father was the one responsible for Janine being stuck with Kevin. I still didn't know why Lelo was married to him. In the middle of the night I had woken up and passed by Janine's room. She was crying. She did it most of the time but this time it was different. I had felt my own tears wet my cheek too. Lelo never came out of her room. I don't know if she heard or not but I knew most of the time she stayed away from such situations. She never availed herself at such. There was a time I thought she just never cared till one day. She just.. was too fragile. I put on my new recent shoes then took my handbag before walking out. I was going to go out with the red BMW convertible. I took the keys from the key holder and walked out. Arriving at the restaurant Terry and Tamia had already ordered. "Hey love," Terry said hugging me followed by Tamia. "Nice shoes." Tamia commented.

"Thanks," I sat down and looked at them. Terry and Tamia were very different from Nothando. Nothando was the type of friend you would go for advice, that type of friend who would have your back at all times while this two were all about fun. All about what's trending. About who's dating who. Who's fucking who. "And guess who I saw yesterday?" Terry said taking out her phone from her purse.

"Who?" Tamia prompted while I just looked at her.

"Sthembile Mbuzo!" Tamia screamed drawing attention.

"Really chomi?"

Terry responded in a matter-of-fact voice. "Yebo mzala! and that nigga is still hot I tell you. And I got his number and.. He called me. We are going out for dinner tonight."

"Unamanga!" Tamia whispered fascinated by Terry.

"What do they call me? I'm not Terry for no reason!"

"Isn't he married?" Terry looked at me.

"So?"

"Well he's married with a wife. He is married so you should leave him alone." Tamia laughed. "Why should she? If he wants her, it's not her fault. Why do women always get blamed?"

I chuckled, I couldn't believe her, I couldn't believe them.

"His wife is probably going to be crying all because of you. Why can't you just go for your own man who's not married?"

"Because Latoya they are either lying cheats, lowkey gays, into kinky sex, drug users, pimps or even cheating on their wives. It's one and the same thing. Either way if he's a cheat he's cheat. It might not be with me but he's still going to cheat."

"Anything is ok Terry but married men?"

"You are dating a 48 year old man.. You are married to him. What's worse?" She responded but I could tell she was upset. I stood up taking my handbag.

"I think I have to go."

"Look guys come on.. Can we all just cool down? Please.. Toya there's no need for you to leave." Tamia begged. They probably wanted me to pay the bill and maybe take them out for shopping. I sighed as I sat down. I knew if Nothando was here Terry would have been more than upset.

"There. Now guys let's talk about Grizzy's party that's coming up. I'm totally going." Tamia said changing the topic. This was what she did best.

"I'm going too." Terry said screaming a bit. Sometimes I wondered how people saw me with the kind of company I kept around me. I took my phone from my handbag and answered it though it wasn't ringing. I just wanted to go so I did what I had to do.

"Hey love?" I said looking at Terry and Tamia. Now they were quiet. I was going to leave them with their bill.

"I'm with my friends," I continued with fake call. "Really? Now? Ok.. I'm on my way. I will be there in...." I looked at my wrist watch with diamond details. "20 minutes. Ok.. Love you." I then pretended to hung up before I put my phone back in the handbag and stood up.

"I really have to go. I will call you guys."

"Ummh.. Ok," Tamia said.

"Yeah.." I walked out of the restaurant and walked to my car. Maybe it was about time I just threw them. I didn't need such

friends in my life. Getting to my car I felt my face heat up with anger.

"Oh. My. God!" The two people turned and looked at me. It was a lady and a man though I could notice it was the lady who was the cause.

"What happened to my car!?" I screamed.

"I.. It was a mistake. I don't know what happened. I..". I inspected my car closely. She had hit it with her car from behind.

"How did you even crush my car? It was parked!"

"I.. I'm really sorry. I will get it fixed."

"Do you know how much this car cost?" I asked before I could get hold of mouth. Stop! I screamed inwardly to myself.

"I'm sorry Mam. I will have it fixed." I looked at her then her corolla. It wasn't even the new invention.

"How fast can-"

"I will fix it." The guy she was with responded. I looked at him.

"Excuse me?" I said, I wasn't the only one confused, so was the lady who crushed my convertible.

"I said I will fix it. Right now. I just need to take it to the garage." I looked at both of them contemplating on what I was going to do. I didn't have anything to do on my plate. If the lady didn't crush the car I was probably just going to go shopping.

"I'm coming with." I finally said.

"Ok.. You can drive behind me." He walked to his car. When I had been looking at him he didn't strike to me as the type to drive such a car. I had grouped him with the people who drove either a golf or polo vivo, not a BMW i8. I tried to balance the issue in my head. Maybe it wasn't his and it was his friend's. Maybe he had

borrowed it. That's all I could think of. That he had borrowed it. It just couldn't be his. He got in the gold i8. I quickly unlocked my crushed car and started the engine. The garage was far, it was almost a 45 minutes drive. We drove in straight in the garage. I parked my car outside as he closed the gate. The garage was located in the kasi, in the ghetto. I didn't like ghetto places, they were too shady.

"Welcoming to LT's garage." He said as I got out of my car. I looked around. It did look like a garage but only clean.

"How fast can you fix my car?"

"2 hours tops. Want something to drink? I have water." I chuckled.

"Water? You are offering me water?" He raised his eyebrow.

"I'm offering you water. What's the problem?"

"No love, I'm good with the water thank you." He chuckled, that mocking kind of chuckle that annoyed me.

"Look Mrs Surbab.. We not in the surbabs. Better deal with what you are offered. You can't be acting like a coconut here. Throw that attitude away. If you wanna be acting like a coconut then phuma la!" He said not smiling. He was all serious now.

"Maybe you should start fixing my car."

"Maybe you need to leave." He said taking out a box of cigarettes from his pocket. He took out one and put it between his lips.

"You volunteered to fix my car!" He took out a lighter then lighted his cigarette.

"Uyabona attitude yako!" I opened my handbag and started looking for my phone ignoring him totally. Coming here was a

mistake. Just then the gate opened and Noxy walked in. I was confused, what was she doing here?

"Ehh LT!" She said giving him a handshake.

"Ntwana!" He responded. Noxy looked at me.

"And slay Queen?"

"Nxa! You mean Mrs coconut."

"Don't call me that." I responded. I was annoyed and angry and lastly I wanted to leave this place.

"More like Mrs prostitute." Noxy said as I took out my phone. I felt my palms sweat when I realized it was off. No battery. I wanted to laugh. It was getting worse by the second. Now all I could do was drive out of the garage and go home but with the turns we had taken I was sure I was going to get lost, then get robbed then rapped and lastly get killed. I didn't want to die. I still wanted to live.

"She's married to a 50 year old man just for money!" I looked at Noxy. She just had to say 50. I knew she was doing it to embarrass me but what she didn't know was that I didn't care. If being with a 50 year old sent my siblings to school then it was ok. If being with a 50 year old kept me alive then it was ok. I didn't mind. You could possibly say all the bad things to me but one thing I knew was that I wasn't going to be embarrassed when someone called me a whore all because I was married to Kevin. I had a story, my story too and I wasn't going to tell it to people just so that they can look at me with pity, I'd rather let them believe whatever they wanted to believe.

"Unamanga ntwana!"

"Ask her! She's married to a 50 year old for money." Noxy

continued to fill him about my life as they smoked.

"The fact that you know all this about me, every single detail about my life surprises me. If I'm a prostitute then why does it matter to you who I'm married to? Why do you make it your job to always know what I'm doing? You see.. This is thing.. You think about me instead of focusing on your life. You waste your time thinking about how I am a prostitute rather than thinking of ways to get a job. To me you are nothing but a pathetic loser who's all over the place with no purpose in life. With no mission. You are a failure yes but to make it all worse you are wretch. I pity you." I said finally when she was done filling her friend on my life.

"You-"

"Hold it right there Sisi, go look for a job." She clicked her tounge.

"Luts I will come back when she's gone."

I laughed. "Truth hurts."

She clicked her tounge again before she walked out. Maybe she was a lesbian. I was still not sure but I didn't care. It had nothing to do with me. The only thing I cared about was my car. It was my favourite. I felt the anger that I had forgotten a few minutes back resurface.

"Can I borrow your phone?" He looked at me for a while before he threw his cigarette on the ground and squashed it with his shoe. He started walking towards me.

"What do you want to do?"

"If you don't-"

"Ey wena! Oska papa! Eses! Uya jwayela manje!" I closed my

mouth for a while.

"I want to call my 50 year old husband, I want to leave."

"No need for that. I volunteered to fix the car and I will do just that so relax. Now you can tell me all about your 50 year old husband while I fix the car. How's that?"

[JANINE]

"You know that you are going to go to jail for having illicit drugs in your possession right? But if you tell us what we want your sentence can be very good. It won't be as hush as you not talking. Now imagine what's going to happen to your sister when you go to jail? Who's going to provide for them?" I asked looking directly in her eyes. "This means she's going to starve. Is that what you want?"

She blinked a couple of times. Since morning she had been just quiet. She wasn't saying anything. She probably was scared of Big Daddy. I had a feeling that he would want all the people we arrested from his warehouse killed so that we won't have anything on him. I had to work in time because I knew no matter what, I wasn't going to be able to protect them. Big Daddy probably had one of the cops under his pay role. Someone from the inside to always update him. I looked at Khanya, that was her name.

"We can protect you. Move you, your Grandmother and your sister to a safe place where no one will find you but.. That's only if you tell us what we want."

"He's going to kill me either way!" I smiled.

"Not if he doesn't know where you are. If he doesn't know then

how will he kill you?"

"He will find me."

"I'm going to protect you Khanya." She laughed.

"You? Protect me?"

"Yes. You are going to have to trust me. If you trust me you might find out that I'm on your side. If we work together we can do wonders. If big Daddy is in jail then no one will want him." She looked at me for a while.

"He works with the Russians. He steals.. Well not him but he has people who steal and sell cars for him but sometimes he also does the buying of stolen cars." She was whispering.

"Tonight they are stealing cars. Do road blocks and you will catch them. Normally he buys from some guy I don't know his name. As for the drugs, there are mules. We transport them to America mostly but sometimes London. I don't know a lot about human trafficking, all I know is that the girls are sold." I leaned over to her.

"So where were you taking the drugs we caught you with?"

"London."

"What about ATM's?"

"I don't know about that."

"Bank robbery?"

"I don't know."

"I feel as if you know the location."

"What location?"

"Where the girls are. You just don't want to tell me."

"The fuck lady? I told you everything I know and you are still on my case!"

"See.. You probably know the location because you have been working for Big Daddy for a while now. Some of the girls, you are the one who kidnap them. Don't forget we didn't arrest you only. If one of you talks, that person is saved but if you lie to me you are going to jail for a very long time and that I promise you."

"I don't know what you want me to say. I want to call my lawyer."

"Go ahead." I said walking out. The more they were not talking the more I was getting frustrated. Maybe she was telling the truth about the cars. I walked to my office. Just as I sat down Luke walked in my office. Well not entirely mine since I shared it with Orlando.

"There's someone here to see you."

"Who?"

"Some woman, says her name is Lerato." I sighed standing up. I walked back to the front desk with Luke and there she was. She still looked the same. Nothing had changed about her.

"Lerato.." I said as I approached her. She looked at me smiling as she took her handbag from the desk.

"Matlogonolo,"

"What are you doing here?"

"I came to see you."

"What do you want?" She faked a laugh.

"Hawu Couzy!" She exclaimed but I kept a straight face. I wasn't in the mood for her.

"Ok ok.. I want money."

"So?" She laughed her fake annoying laugh again.

"Couzy I really need money. I wouldn't have come if it wasn't that I was really in need." I looked at her for a while. She was in tight

jeans and a plain black T-shirt with heels.

"Where's your mother?"

"You know Mama have been sick for a while now and we can't take her to the hospital. We don't have money."

"Don't make your problems mine. I don't have money."

"You are married to a rich man Janny, I know you do have money which you just don't want to give me. We are your family--"

"Family from where? Don't. I don't have money." I said as I walked back, leaving my Aunt's daughter standing there. I wasn't going to pretend to her, I didn't like her nor did I like any member of my family. I wasn't going to pretend like I did and tolerate them while deep down in my heart I was burning. I wasn't going to be fake. If I didn't like you I wasn't going to pretend like I did, why put myself under all the struggle of pretending?

Walking back to my office my phone began ringing. I took it out from my pocket.

"Papa.." I said as I answered it after a bit of hesitation.

"Matlhogonolo.." He said weakly.

"Papa how are you?"

"I'm fine. When are you going to come to see me?"

"I don't know. Work has been keeping me busy." Too busy for your own father? The voice in my head screamed.

"Ohh ok. It's ok my daughter. How are you?" I shut my eyes tightly as I felt something move in me. Something that was jabbing my heart repeatedly causing tears to sting my eyes.

"I'm fine Papa."

"Thank God."

"How are they treating you?"

"The doctor is very nice. You should come see her. I told her about you. She likes the story where I took you out for Christmas day that year. Do you still remember? When you cried after seeing father Christmas?" I felt warm tears wet my cheeks that I quickly wiped away.

"I remember. I like that story too."

"I like it too. Matlhogonolo you should come see me. I don't know what tomorrow holds for me but I want to see you. I will not be alive forever."

"Don't say that.."

"It's the truth. Come and see me." I nodded and just then the call got disconnected. I took a deep breath as I put my phone back in my pocket. It took me a few seconds to gather myself and compose myself. I didn't like feeling vulnerable. It made me feel sick. I walked back to the interrogation room. Orlando was still there with Khanya.

"Still not talking?" I asked looking at Orlando.

"Yes. What now?" He turned away from her and looked at me.

"She called her lawyer."

"She's going to jail. No attorney will fish her out of this one. We need to do road blocks. I think we might get a few more of Big Daddy's people. As for the two guys, after putting enough pressure on them.. One is going to slip up. I'm sure about that."

"Ok.. Are you good?"

"Yeah.. Let's get moving." I said walking out of the room and signalling the police officer that was by the door to lock Khanya up. Orlando was behind me all along.

"Your face is kind of bruised Janny. Is he hitting you?" I

chuckled, I knew who he was asking about.

"No one can ever hit me. Not him. He knows what I will do to him if he does." I said still moving.

"Then what happened?" I stopped abruptly then looked at him.

"We had a fight.. as always. But I'm all good. We need to set up the road blocks. We are looking for stolen cars. How did it go with that guy's case.. That one you suspected was stealing cars.. what's his name again?"

"Ohh Maphoto. We didn't get anything on him. He's sleek as they come." I looked at him for a while.

"Maybe we should pay him a visit some time but right now let's do the road blocks."

"It's early morning. Do you think-"

"They will steal at the times they think we won't be alert. Stealing cars at night is too obvious. They steal them now and transport them at night. We need to catch them now."

"Ok! We on." And from there we set on to work. Catching the car thieves who worked for big Daddy was important. The more of his people we had, the more closer we could be to catching him. Yes he was smart but I didn't think all his workers were as smart. Someone was bound to slip up and that I knew. As soon as we got in the office to prepare for the road blocks Sibeko walked in. "There's a call that came up. Someone reported to have their car stolen a few minutes ago. A new Mercedes C63." Orlando looked at me.

"Do the road blocks. I will join you, after I deal with this." I said staring at Sibeko. A car stolen and something deep in me told me it was one of Big Daddy's workers.

[NUMPUMELELO]

"Nicholas insist on seeing you." Tshidi said as I walked in my office following behind me. I sat down putting my laptop bag on the table.

"What exactly does he want?"

"He didn't say. Daniel's piece got sold. It went for one million. He's happy with us."

"That's great. I called one of my associates in the morning. He said he might have an artist for me. He says he's good so I have to go and see her."

"What's her name?"

"Bonnie.. Bonnie Khuzwayo." She nodded.

"Her name sounds familiar, I think she's good though."

"I hope so. I'm meeting with her at around 12 a.m."

"Ok. Let me get going." She said walking out. I took out my laptop then read some of my emails. Some were not very important. There was one though that caught my eye. I had been invited to Paris for the one of the best museum viewing that took place every five years. They normally displayed first edition art works of the likes of Michelangelo and Leonardo Da Vinci. Normally the ticket to go there was really more than someone's salary for months. Some people could never dream of it.

I screamed getting up from my chair. The rush of excitement that sparked in me had me jumping up and about.

"And?" Tshidi asked getting in my office.

"Guess where I have been invited to?"

"Where?"

"Paris! I can't believe I'm one of the people who will be viewing first edition artworks."

"Ohh my God! That's wonderful. I'm happy for you Lelo.." She said hugging me.

"I'm so excited!"

"So when are you going?" She asked letting go of me.

"In three days.. I'm going. No one is going to stop me this time around."

"Stop you from what?" I looked at the door and looked at him.

"Ummh I will leave. Congratulations again Lelo.."

"Thanks Tshidi." I watched her walk out before my eyes settled on him again.

"Mr Dumisa Nicholas, how can I help you?" He looked around my office before making himself comfortable on the couch I reserved for visitors.

"I think we can talk." He finally said.

"And who exactly do you think you are?"

"Someone who's going to get your gallery back on the map."

"We already got someone else Mr Dumisa, your services are not needed here."

"Stop lying to yourself. Anyways I'm here because my sister thought I was rude." I just looked at him. He was so full of himself.

"So you can put up a contract so that we discuss the deal."

"Unfortunately for you I will be in Paris in the next three days. I will be back after a week. Maybe we might talk then.. " I said as I got up and opened the door for him. Who did he think he was? If

he thought he could just come back after his rudeness last time he was playing with himself. I didn't hold a grudge on him, no, I just couldn't work with someone with such a character. He stood up and walked towards me till he was standing right in front of me.

"You are going to the Paris museum?" I just stared at him in silence. "Well.. We shall meet again Ms Sikhosana." And with that he was gone. I closed the door and walked back to my chair. I looked at my laptop again rereading the email again. I squirmed. I just couldn't believe I, Nompulelelo Sikhosana, was going to Paris. Yes I had dreamt of it before but I never thought that one day I was actually going to go there.

[ROCKELLE]

I opened my eyes slowly. The headache that had me was enough to send me to an early grave. I slowly got up from bed, I was alone. I sighed out of relief. I slowly padded to the kitchen. I wanted water and a remedial for the headache. Getting in the kitchen I was met up by some lady. She turned and looked at me. No doubt she was the cleaning lady who always kept the flat clean at all times.

I looked around. The house was a real mess. When my eyes fell on her again she was still staring at me.

"Hello.." I managed at last. She just kept staring at me. "Urhh Sanibonani? Dumelang? Thobela.. Molweni? Murisei..?" She just kept her stare.

"Ummh.. ok." I walked to the tap and took a glass which I filled with water. After I drank water I looked at her. She was just

looking at me. I looked down on myself that's when I realized I was naked but then I wasn't ashamed of my body. I loved my body and looked after it with all my heart.

"Ohh.. It's my nakedness? I'm sorry.. Am I making you uncomfortable? I'm sorry if I am." I walked to the coffee machine. The moment I turned it on there was a knock on the door. I looked at the cleaning lady before I walked to the sitting room. Quickly I took the jacket that was on the couch as the door swung open covering my front.

"Daddy!" I screamed as he walked in.

"Rockelle what is going on?" He asked. I blinked a couple of times, wrecking my brain for a possible lie. I looked at him realizing I was fucked. There was no way out of this one.

"I'm sorry.."

"So you were not feeling well?"

"I'm sorry.." I muttered.

"I asked you a question. I said so you were not feeling well Rockelle Robert?" He roared. There was only one thing I could do now and that was to cry. If I cried he was going to feel some type of way then maybe calm down. I blinked a couple of times before tears wet my cheeks.

"I.. You don't care about me anymore. All you care about is your wives. You are leaving me like you left mommy. You hate me now." I said as more tears poured from my eyes. His eyes softened.

"Rocky princess you know I love you. I love you so much. You are my daughter. I can never hate you. You come first in my life." I wiped away my tears clumsily.

"Come on.. Go dress up princess. We will go for breakfast today." I nodded looking at him. He turned then I made a run for it to my bedroom. I threw myself on the bed as relief brushed over.

30 minutes later we were walking inside the restaurant that was a few blocks from the flat. We had left the cleaning lady still cleaning the mess. Something told me she thought I was a spoilt brat, a messy one for that matter but then I wondered why she would think of that. My dad probably paid her more than what she deserved.

"I will have coffee please. Strong." Dad said to the waiter as soon as we sat down.

"Water for me." She then walked away.

"I want to talk to you about something. Your mom and I have discussed this together and we have made a decision." I looked at him.

"Are you and mom getting back together?" He smiled.

"Unfortunately no but.. We have decided to send you back to school. Maybe law wasn't for you. Maybe you need to study something you can enjoy." I just stared at him with my jaw right on the floor.

"What?"

"Yes princess. You just can't just sit around and do nothing with your life."

"I can!"

"Well you have two options. We are doing this because we love you princess. We are your parents and we--"

"Are you disowning me?"

"No. Never. If you don't want to go back to school we are cutting you off completely." I laughed. He was probably joking and it was a bad joke.

"You have 7 days princess. Either go back to school or.. No more anything from me and your mom. You start fending for yourself."

"Fending for who? I'm your responsibility! You brought me in this world."

"You are your own responsibility if you refuse to listen to us. If you refuse to listen to your mom and I."

[LATOYA]

I sipped on my water as I watched him fix my car. I still regretted not calling the insurance company or calling Kevin. He would have had it fixed.

I looked around and wondered if he worked alone in his garage. Probably he had to have workers. What still lingered in my brain was how he was connected to Noxy. Where they friends?

"Ok Ma'am.. Your car is now good to go." I looked at him. I had been so lost in my thoughts that I didn't even notice him walk towards me. I stood up then stretched my arms.

"You done?"

"Yes.." I walked to the car. It was fixed.

"Thank you so much.. So how much can this be?" I said opening my purse.

"Very expensive but I don't want money." I looked at him with my brow raised.

"What do you want then?"

"It's very simple actually." I looked at him, awaiting his request.

CHAPTER 3

[LATOYA]

I looked around the place as I walked behind him. I could see the way the people looked at me. Maybe my dressing made it all worse. Instead of the above the knee boot and the black bondage dress that reached my mid thigh I could have worn something more respectable.

"You can sit, I will go and order." Luthando said pointing at the free table that was at the corner of the pub. I looked around then back at him.

"Go and sit Mrs Surbab."

"Stop calling me that!" I hissed.

"Stop acting like one, now go and sit." I reluctantly went over to the table then sat down. My eyes were fixed on him all along. His request was something I couldn't have guessed. He wanted to take me out to a nice place in the Kasi. He said I would like it and that's how I knew his name. Luthando. I sighed as I saw him walk towards the table.

"Our order will arrive shortly." He said as he sat across me.

"Whatever. After eating I'm leaving!" He chuckled.

"Tell me something.. before you married the rich man where did you stay? I have a feeling you were not always rich."

"That's non of your business but I stayed with a friend."

"And where does this friend of yours stay?"

"Why should I tell you?"

"You don't have to tell me but all I'm trying to say is.. you can't possibly look down on other people just because you are

married to a 50 year old and you live a better life than them." I smiled.

"You don't have to spare my feelings, you can say the word. Say I'm a prostitute, I know that's what you are initially thinking and let me tell you something... I don't care what you or anybody else think of me. And no, I don't look down on people just because I live a better life than them but that some conditions I'd rather not relish them."

"What conditions? The conditions around here?"

"People are different. I'm different too."

"Do you love the old man?" I smiled slightly.

"He sends my siblings to the best schools and they live a good life. What is love? I don't know love from anywhere."

"How old are you?"

"26.. Or 26 in two months."

"So what do you do? Besides being his wife?"

"I'm a trophy wife though I studied journalism and media."

"So you shop all day and do nothing?"

"That's another way of putting it." He laughed.

"Latoya Samuels, I'm just trying to understand you."

"Just understand Noxy's version of understanding. Is she lesbian or what?" I asked as the waiter brought our food. Burgers. I laughed, I remembered the time I survived on this kind of burgers back in varsity.

"What is it?"

"Nothing. Can I eat?" He smiled.

"Honestly I thought you were going to cuss me out for ordering such."

"I'm not a bitchy trophy wife if you may know Luthando."

"I didn't think you were but it's good to know." I took the burger and started eating. He had his eyes on me for a while till he started eating too.

"So do you work alone in your garage?"

"Weren't you taught table manners?"

"Unfortunately my parents passed on before they could teach me."

"I'm sorry and no I don't work alone. I have three workers." I

gulped down my coke. "How many siblings do you have?"

"Two. They stay with one of my Aunts in UK. They are like her kids now. Can you stop with the 21 questions. I'm tired."

"I see you are done. Want more or-"

"No thanks. I'm good. Can we go now?"

"Yeah.."

We stood up and walked out. He walked with me toy car, everyone's eyes were on us.

"Thanks for fixing my car and for the food."

"You are welcome Latoya.. Perhaps I can call you you sometime."

"Call who? I don't know you from no where so who are you calling?" He snatched my handbag from me.

"What the..". He started rampaging through my handbag till he took out my phone which was off.

"It's off."

"We can charge it."

"Luthando.."

"I have a USB code in my car, I'm coming." He said walking to his car. He unlocked it then got inside. He was in the car for a while.

When he came back he looked really pleased with himself.

"Take. I will call you." I snatched it from him then immediately got in my car. From the restaurant I knew my way back home. I started the engine then reversed and drove away leaving him standing there. I drove straight to Nothando's house wishing Noxy wasn't there. When I arrived there, her car was still on the same position. She probably had no fuel and I knew if I offered her money she was going to refuse. I was just going to give her the money either way round. I could put it under her pillow, yes she was going to be mad but the money was going to help her a lot. I opened the door then walked in.

"Nono!" I screamed as I walked to the kitchen. She wasn't there.

"Nono!" I screamed again walking to her bedroom. Walking in there she was dressing.

"Hey!" She said putting on a blazer.

"Hey.. Where to?"

"I got a job.. As an IT officer! I called a friend and he managed to get me something where he works." I smiled.

"Well I'm happy for you! So now where are you going?"

"They have called me. They want to show me the ropes. I'm officially starting tomorrow."

"I'm glad you found a job. It's good seeing you smiling." I said hugging her.

"Yeah.. Anyways what brings you here?" I let go of her then sat on her bed.

"So.. Today I went to meet Terry and Tamia for breakfast. I left earlier though. I can't have such friends in my life." She laughed as she put on her shoes.

"I told you."

"I know anyways.. When I walked back to my car someone had crushed my car from behind. Some lady."

"And let me guess.. You caused havoc?"

"Mxm.. Have some faith in me. So I get there and this other guy says he will fix it."

"So you did cause havoc." Nothando said laughing.

"Do you want to hear it or not?"

"I'm sorry. Go ahead."

"So this guy offered to fix it and next thing I know this guy is driving an i8."

"So you are there, shocked.. wondering how." I looked at her as she tried to stifle her laugh.

"I'm sorry I'm sorry.. Go ahead."

"So we drive to his garage and guess who I see? Noxy!"

"Noxy?"

"Yes.. She tells this guy that I'm a prostitute and the rest you know. After that she leaves and this guy fixes my car."

"Wait.. What's his name?"

"Luthando.." She looked at me for a while in shock, not saying anything.

"What is it? Do you know him?"

"What? No.. I just thought.. I would but no I don't."

"You look pale and shocked.. Is it an ex?" She gave me a look.

"No.. I have never dated anyone called Luthando. Anyways.. What happens next?"

"So after he's done I ask how much I should pay then he says he doesn't want my money.. He wants to take me out somewhere I

will enjoy. We then drive to some local pub and he orders burgers.. Those burgers we used to eat when we didn't have money." She laughed.

"I remember those.. And then?" She was now sitting besides me.

"Well that's all. Then I drive here from there."

"Do you like him?" I laughed thrown off by her question.

"Are you kidding me? I just met him."

"So? Ok.. Do you think he's hot?"

"I don't think so.. I know he is very good looking but I don't like him. Why would I anyway?" She smiled.

"Ok.. Anyways now that you are here you can drop me off at the company. How's Silent Sue?"

"You really love that girl don't you?" She laughed.

"Are you jealous?"

"Fuck off!" I walked out leaving her laughing. I felt much more better after talking to Nothando. She was like my sister but just from a different mother. Dropping her off at the company she was nervous but I knew she was going to be fine. She could conquer anything. I drove to the mansion after dropping her off. All I was thinking about was what she said about me liking Luthando. I didn't like him. I could never like him or anyone else for that matter. Yes he was handsome but I was too much damaged to even be thinking of liking anyone, I didn't even like myself. As soon as I got home I put the phone on the charger and lay on the couch watching TV. This was what I was good at. Doing nothing. Kevin said it too. I could never be anything than what I already was. I felt lonely. I only had myself, even sometimes when I was with Nothando I felt she didn't

understand. Yes she was trying to but she didn't understand. She could never understand. No one could ever understand. I took off the shoes while still lying on the couch. My brain darted to Luthando. Yes he was very annoying and irritating, or maybe beyond annoying and irritating but.. It had felt kind of nice being with him. That short time he had managed to make laugh, smile, angry and even want to burn him alive. All those emotions had erupted from deep within me with him. I took my phone and went on Instagram. There was nothing wrong with a little stalking. I put my phone down immediately. I didn't even have his last name, there was no way I could find him on social media. I went back on the couch and lay down closing my eyes, maybe I could have been a journalist. Chasing after stories for a living. But that was not for me was it? The last thing I saw was Luthando before I completely fell into darkness.

[ROCKELLE]

I looked at the newspaper wondering if they ever took a break. I was on the front page. I threw it down then took my phone. I couldn't believe mom had agreed to whatever dad had said earlier on. She picked up after a while.

"Hello sweetie, how are you?"

"I'm fine.. Mommy what is Daddy talking about?" I whined.

"Sweetie school is very important. You need to study something so to get a job. Ummh look sweetheart.. I will call you. I have to go."

"Mom wait you-" I kept quiet realizing that she had dropped the call. My mother's job required travelling around the world. She

never just settled at one place. She was always all over the world trying to make money. Everything to my parents had something to do with money. I had learnt to live with it from young age.

"Ok!" I put the phone down. I didn't want to go back to school. School was just a whole load of crap for me. I had dropped off when I was studying law, on my third year. From there on I had just been sitting doing nothing. I didn't have to work if I had parents who provided for me. All I had to do was reason with Daddy. I took my phone which was ringing. It was Gail.

"Gail.."

"Hey.. Twinky is having a party and you are invited."

"Twinky? Who's that?"

"Rachel's brother.. The one who was schooling at Oxford."

"I don't know who that is."

"Well you have to come.. I'm sending you directions right now. You have to get on the plane right now."

"What plane?"

"The party is in Durban." I laughed.

"Ummh as much as I would like to come I can't."

"I heard Calvin will be there." I paused for a while.

"Calvin? As in my ex?"

"Yes!" I sighed. A part of me wanted to see him, to just show him that I had gotten hotter than when he last saw me. Calvin was the worst guy I have ever dated. We had broken up after two years. According to him I was too much of a brat, too childish, always running to Daddy. A part of it was true and is still true. I shook my head. I had grown up now. You are still a brat. A voice in my head screamed.

"Ok, I will be there." I said to Gail over the phone before I hung up. I just had to look hotter. I stood up and walked to my closet. I was at my mom's house, where I stayed most of the time. After 20 minutes I was already dressed and ready to leave. I called the pilot as I walked out of the house. Benefits of being rich was you could get anywhere you wanted at any time. I couldn't shake off the feeling that all this was going to turn out badly.

Roughly about an hour later I was getting inside the hired uber. Gail had sent the directions. I gave the location to the driver before he started the car. The venue wasn't that far from the airport, it was a 25 minutes drive. Getting there he dropped me off a few houses from the house where the party was because of the cars that were parked on the road. This Twinky person was definitely important. I walked to the house keeping my shoulders squared and my head held high. It was definitely filled if I may say so myself. The house was packed, music was on a full blast. I squeezed through the crowd and went straight to the mini bar. I don't know why I was nervous. I didn't even understand it myself. Maybe it was the fact that Calvin was somewhere in the crowd. I got a glass of champagne from the mini bar and drank steadily as I looked around. I don't know between Gail and Calvin who I was specifically looking for. After a while I had spotted a few familiar faces.

"Well! Well! Well! If it's not her Majesty herself!" I didn't need to turn to know who it was. I took a deep breath before I turned to look at him. He still looked good though I wanted to yank off the smack that was pasted on his face. They had been days were I melted at seeing him, days I couldn't stop thinking about him,

days were I thought I loved him. Maybe I had been childish but who could blame me? I met Calvin when I was 19. I was still a child. Daddy didn't like him. Maybe that was what made him cheat on me. I smiled sweetly.

"Wow! Fancy seeing you at places like this.. I thought they were not for you." He chuckled. I wondered why the volume had went down.

"You look good." He said looking at my lacy body hugging dress. "I'm always at my peak."

"I see.. It's been time. I wonder if you have grown up from the little girl you once were." I wanted to spill the champagne on his white T-shirt out of anger. He was still a dick! I laughed.

"You are still pathetic I see."

"Pathetic? Me? I will not waste my time arguing with you. Did you finish your degree? I'm sure you didn't though."

"And how's that any of your business?"

"No.. I'm just reminding myself I made a very good decision by leaving you Rockelle. You are so beautiful I won't lie. I won't be surprised if you are beautiful more than everyone here but beauty with no brains is a total turn off." I swallowed blinking away my tears. Come on Rockelle! Don't let him get to you. I chanted to myself.

"I found a woman actually. She's really pretty and she's a dentist. She's a woman not a girl like you. Girls like you, the spolt brats can never get anywhere because you always expect Mommy or Daddy to do it for you. The reason why you haven't done anything with your life is because you always run to Daddy. And let me tell you something-"

"Babe I have been looking for you." A voice said accompanied by a hug from behind and a soft kiss on my neck. I was confused. I turned and looked at the guy who had just called me babe. He winked at me smiling.

"And who's this?" The guy asked now looking at Calvin. I cleared my throat before I smiled.

"Honey this is Calvin.. an old friend and Calvin this is my... husband." I introduced as I held the strangers hand. I could see Calvin couldn't believe it. He blinked a couple of times.

"Your husband? When did you get married?"

"Hi, my name is Lungile Zwane. Babe who's he? I don't remember you talking about him." I smiled looking at Lungile.

"He's not important. Maybe that's why I never mentioned him. And it's been time Calvin. It was nice seeing you around." I turned when walked out with my fingers still linked to Lungile's. Getting outside I finally realized how hot it was inside the house.

"Hi.." Lungile said stretching his hand.

"Hello.. I'm Rockelle.. Rockelle Robert." I responded shaking his hand briefly.

"Lungile Zwane."

"I'm really sorry about that."

"No need to apologize. I was looking for a friend when I heard him talk to you. He registered to me as a bitter ex." I chuckled.

"Yeah but almost everything he said was true but either way thank you. If you hadn't come.. He would have probably told me the entire truth and nothing but the truth."

"Sometimes we tend to believe what our haters tell us and start thinking it's the truth but whilst the only reason they said so was

to drag us down." I chuckled.

"Are you a psychologist?" He laughed briefly.

"No.. But I do know this things. Anyways I will be leaving now. I can't find my friend so I might as well leave. Do you need a lift or you are sorted?" I didn't have a plan on my accommodation. I felt really stupid that moment, all I had been thinking was Calvin that I didn't even think about my accommodation plans. So here I was, in Durban, with no accommodation or even a plan. The private jet was only taking me back home tomorrow morning. And on top of that I was cold. I looked at Lungile. I didn't even know him. Maybe he was a rapist.. Or a serial killer. Who knew? I was never good at boxing but I knew the regular self defense. Lungile was taller and bigger than me. He could squash me without even thinking about it.

"I'm not going to hurt you if that's what you are thinking but then again why should you trust me." He smiled before he started walking away. I looked around. He could drop me at a hotel and I could just check in. I opened my purse to locate my phone. I took a deep breath after taking my phone and started looking for my credit card. I couldn't have possibly left it. The black card was my life basically. I looked again and it still wasn't there. I don't know but I think deep down I was wishing it would just appear from nowhere. I looked at the guy who was approaching me. He looked high. Anything could happen. I quickly ran after Lungile, following the direction he had used. The moment I walked outside the gate I saw him walk down the street, probably to his car.

"Lungile!" I called out as I ran after him. He stopped then turned.

"I'm sorry but I do need transportation.. And accommodation. I forgot my credit card back at home."

"Back at home?"

"Yeah.. Jo'burg."

"Well lucky you.. I'm going to Jo'burg." I laughed.

"Right now? It's late!"

"Yeah.. But I have a meeting to attend early morning so I have to go."

"Are you being serious right now?"

"Yeah.. Pretty much. Take it or leave it. Are you coming?" He asked as we approached an Audi.

"Rockelle.." He said softly as he shook me. I slowly opened my eyes and looked around. It was still dark and I was still in the car.

"Are we there?" I asked stretching.

"Yes.. Where do you stay?"

"Vaal River." I said as my eyes adjusted. We were in Jo'burg I could very much take that in.

"Ok.." He started driving to my mother's house. He was silent the whole journey, the same way he had been quiet from Durban. All I needed was my bed. I wanted to just sleep. When he finally parked in front of my mother's house I felt more than relieved. I was tired from all the sitting and listening to J cole together with Drake.

"Thank you so much Lungile."

"It's ok Rockelle.. I will wait till you are inside the house." I smiled then got off the car. I walked to the door as I took out the house keys. I tried them on the door but they couldn't get in. I tried again and again, more calmly. Did I have the wrong key? But

then this was the key. I tried again but still. I heard footsteps behind me.

"Everything ok?" Lungile asked.

I sighed. "The key.. It won't open the door."

"Let me see.." He took it from me then tried it on the door.

"Ok.. Seems like this is not the key."

"But it's the one."

"Then possibly it's no longer the one." I took out my phone almost immediately and dialed mom's number. I didn't care what time it was. I was cold and I wanted to just sleep. She picked up after a while. I was even surprised because I knew most of the time she never answered.

"Rocky sweetheart.."

"Mom the key won't open the door."

"Ohh yeah.. I had it changed."

"And you didn't bother telling me? Look it's ok.. Where are the new keys at now?"

"I'm sorry honey but you won't be staying in my house anymore. I had your bags packed though. All your things are safe." I laughed.

"Excuse me? Mom are you drunk?"

"No sweety.. You are moving out."

"Moving out? Why? And shouldn't you have told me at least? Mom what's going on?"

"You are no longer going to be staying with me. I am going to New York tomorrow morning on business. I will be gone for quite a while." I leaned on the wall trying to understand because I just couldn't understand anything.

"Mom.. I'm lost but.. Uhh so where are my things? At my flat?"

"No.. They are in a truck in front of the house. Or a few houses away."

"Wow! I can't believe this honestly."

"I have to go honey.. Will talk. Bye." I put my phone away.

"And?" Lungile asked.

"It looks like I'm moving to my flat. Don't worry.." I looked around till my eyes fell on the truck. "That truck is supposed to take me to my flat. Thank you either way. For everything."

"It's ok. Will you be ok?"

"Yeah.. I will be good."

"Ok.. Take," he gave me his business card. "You can call if you need help." I took it, I probably looked like a lost puppy to him.

"Thanks.. Again." He nodded then walked to his car as I walked to the truck. I knocked on the window and it looked like the guy was sleeping. I knocked again, a bit more louder than the first time. The man immediately woke up. He took a while to open the window.

"What?" He spat with a voice full of annoyance.

"I'm Rockelle Robert. My mother-"

"Ohh Ms Robert. You can get in. Ms Lana told me to take you anywhere you want with your luggage so that I can drop you off."

"Yes.." I walked around then got in. I gave the man the directions to the flat. The whole night just seemed like a nightmare and I just couldn't wait till I woke up. It was a bad idea to even go to the party. I should have stayed home. There was no reason to see Calvin. At least I had met Lungile. When the truck finally pulled up in front of the flat I got off the truck together with the

man. I went over to the door and tried opening the door but it was locked though the lights that were on told me someone was in. Maybe it was the maid. I knocked a couple of times more as the man unloaded my bags. Some woman opened the door. She definitely was not the maid or maybe Daddy had finally looked for a more suitable maid.

"Hello?" She said.

"Hi.. Who are you? Are you the new maid?" The lady looked at me in shock.

"The maid?"

"Yeah the maid. You can help me with my luggage." I said pointing at my bags. They were a lot. Mom had really outdone herself.

"Excuse me but I have a feeling like you are lost. I'm not the new maid and lastly this is my house." I laughed.

"No.. This flat is mine. I'm the owner. Rockelle Robert, daughter to Kevin Robert."

"This house was sold to us two days ago by Kevin Robert."

"What?"

"Yes. I have the lease agreement in the house. I can-" just then a man appeared behind her. No doubt he was the husband.

"Love everything ok?" He asked.

"Yes.. Just that this lady says this is her flat but her father sold it to us."

"Ow.. She's the daughter he was talking about. Hello, my name is Ashton and this is my wife, Michelle. We moved in here today."

"My father.. He sold my flat to you?"

"Yes.." All blood drained from my face. I couldn't believe it.

Daddy could never do that to me. Not my Daddy.

CHAPTER 4

[JANINE]

I sat in my office, wide awake staring at nothing. If someone had to just walk in on me no doubt they would accuse me of witchcraft. I was supposed to be home but here I was, in my office. I would rather be in my office than home. I still didn't understand why I called it home. It didn't even feel like home. My office was my home. This was the only place I would be instead of that dungeon I called home. We had done the road blocks and obviously as I suspected we caught two cars. The man who's Mercedes had been stolen claimed he went to Mug&Bean, left his car at the parking lot and coming out it was gone. He claimed his car had a tracker but it seemed like the thieves were clever enough to get rid of the tracking device. We had hit the wall on it. I finally stood up and walked out. I could sleep in my car, it would not have been the first time either way. As I passed the front desk the phone began ringing. I walked to it then picked it up.

"Hello?" There was silence followed by someone sniffing.

"Hello? Anybody there?"

"Hi.. My.. My name is Cassandra Ferguson." From the voice I could guess she was somewhere between 18 and 20.

"Hi Cassandra, how can we help you?"

"My dad.. He.. He raped me. I'm scared."

"Your father? Biological father?"

"Yes.. He came home drunk and forced himself on me."

"Ok.. Where's home? Where do you stay?"

After a while I was walking to the door. I knocked a bit. I was at the house adress Cassandra had given me. I knocked again, more violently than before.

"Police!" I shouted. "Open up!" I heard footsteps then the door clicking. I waited silently till the door was wide open. A woman was standing there, in her grey robe. She was the mother Cassandra had mentioned. It was not the first time her father rapped her in front of her mother. I felt bile rise up as I looked at the woman. What kind of a mother was she?

"I'm Detective Janine Adams, can I come in?" She looked at me for a while before she opened the door wider. I walked in the house looking around.

"How can I help you Detective?"

"Ma'am is your husband here?"

"Yes.." She whispered. She started walking away making me follow after her. We got to a certain door which she pushed open and got inside. I got inside after her. It was a bedroom. I held my breath as I looked at the man who was on the floor, lying on his own pool of blood. There was a gun on the bed.

"I killed him." The woman whispered. "Because he hurt my baby." I looked at her then back at the dead body.

"So what happened exactly?" Orlando asked staring at the body.

"She killed him because he was rapping their daughter. Shot him twice." I said as I took the gun and put it in the plastic bag.

"Was he?"

"The daughter has been taken to the hospital to check though I think yes. What I just don't understand is the reason why all

along the mother wasn't saying anything." I said giving him the gun.

"Maybe she was scared but then.. this is her daughter. I don't understand honestly."

"Me too.. I think she's hiding something. We are taking her down to the station with us."

"Great." I walked out of the room as my phone started ringing. I took off the gloves then took it out from my pocket. It was Kevin.

"I'm at work! What do you want?"

"I'm going to New York tomorrow morning. On business. I will be back after a while."

"Look go be with your wife. I really don't care. Even if you die right now I wouldn't care so spare yourself the energy to be calling me."

"You are my wife.. I thought I should let you know. You are going to be staying at a flat I rented for you. I don't want anyone at the main house because I don't want Rocky there. I have arranged your things to be moved to the new flat you will be staying at and don't worry. It's yours alone. I don't want you killing Toya while I'm gone. I sent you a number, that person will direct you to your house."

"Great!"

"I will be gone for two months or three. I'm not so sure yet. Take care of yourself."

"I hope you die."

"Your Aunt called me. Apparently you refused to give them money because you don't have."

"So?"

"I gave them the money."

"Good for you. Ohh and I wish nothing but death upon you." I said dropping the call. I exhaled. I couldn't hide the fact that I was happy, maybe more than happy that he was gone, that I was going to be staying alone.

"Everything ok?" Orlando asked coming from behind me.

"Yes. I'm good. We done here?"

"Yeah.. I will question Mrs Ferguson, you go home. It's been a long day.. Long morning." Orlando said to rubbing my shoulders.

"Ok.. I guess I can do with some sleep. I was thinking tomorrow we can go see that Maphoto guy. I have a feeling he knows Big Daddy." Orlando laughed.

"Janine.. Go home and rest. You need it."

"Ok.. Ok!" I said with my hands raised in defeat. "I'm going." I walked to my car. I loved the Mercedes Maybach though Kevin had bought it for me. I couldn't escape it's comfort and perfectness. It was a go getter. I took my phone then took the number Kevin had sent me. The person took a while to answer. When she did I realized the house was actually closer to where I was. I drove to the filling station first, I wanted food. Most of the shops and restaurants had already closed. It was just after 3a.m. I got three cupcakes and a soft drink. Walking back to my car after paying up I saw the white guy I had met few days ago because he was lost. I blinked a couple of times as I swallowed my non existent lump. He was tall, muscular with black unkempt hair. I wondered if it was fashion to walk around with tousled hair with the white folks. He was wearing a black suit that fit his broad shoulders perfectly. Everything about him was just

perfect. I slapped myself inwardly forcing myself not to stare but he had already saw me. I suddenly felt very self conscious as he walked towards me. I cleared my throat as he approached me.

"Hi!" He said, though I could catch a hint of cockiness in his voice. There was just something about his accent that made my skin burn or the way his grey eyes looked at me.

"Hello."

"And what's a lady doing late at night alone?" I smiled.

"Duty calls."

"Really?"

"Yeah.. I hope you didn't get lost." He laughed.

"No I didn't. Thank God! Still remember my name?"

"Kingsley.." He smiled, his smile was full of naughtiness.

"Good. What's yours if I may ask."

"Janine. I have to get going. It was nice seeing you around Kingsley and I hope you are enjoying your stay here in South Africa."

"I am actually and surprisingly I keep on bumping into beautiful things everywhere I turn." I chuckled already walking away.

"Well beauty and my country are always together. Same WhatsApp group." I unlocked my car then put the muffins and soft drink on the passenger seat. Walking to the drivers seat Kingsley was still standing where I had left him. He was the type to get whoever he wanted when he wanted, I could see that with my own eyes. He was definitely not my type not that I had a type. On all my past relationships they had all ended on a bad note. It's either they cheat on me or it was my career. When it came to my career I didn't need to think twice. I started the

engine of my car as soon as I got inside. I had to focus on my career rather than thinking about men. Being with Kevin had taught me one thing, this creatures we called men weren't worth it. My career was enough for me. That thought was thrown out through the window as I my eyes caught Kingsley walk towards my car with determination in his grey eyes. I rolled down the window.

"It's not a secret that I don't know anyone around here expect you and my friend. I'm lonely. Can we share your dinner?" He asked looking at my muffins and soft drink. I smiled.

"I hate sharing unfortunately."

"Sharing is caring. I'm sure you wouldn't watch me starve." I looked at him for a while and surprised myself when I opened my mouth and told him it was ok to share. But I was more surprised with myself when I suggested we eat at my house. Something I never did.

[NOMPUMELELO]

I looked around the flat. It was nice but something probably Toya would go for. It was still early in the morning. I walked to the kitchen, the house was completely furnished. I started making myself coffee. It felt nice being in my own house, alone. I loved the peace, the quietness. The feeling that I could freely walk around the house not prowl around in a stealthy manner.

I was alone and it felt so good. When I received a call from Kevin telling me he was going to New York on business I wasn't even bothered. It was clear that he was going to his wife, Rockelle's mother. I was happy for him. He didn't need me or Janine or

Latoya. What he needed was his wife and getting his family back. I prayed he got back with Lana, because if he did that meant I was free. I had met up with Bonnie Khuzwayo yesterday. She was good but not as good as Nicholas. Her portraits were not as good as Nicholas's paintings. I hated the fact that at the end of the day he was still the one the gallery needed.

I walked to my bedroom with the coffee and took out my laptop. I had to contact my lawyer so that he draws the contract. I quickly booked in my accommodation at the hotel Tshidi suggested I stayed at when I got to Paris. She described it as one of the best. Going to Paris was also going to give me a chance to look at what other galleries offered. I quickly made a short list of the galleries I had to look into at Paris on my laptop then emailed my lawyer about the contract. After that I finally went to take a shower. As I dressed up my phone beeped, it was a text and it was from Julie.

*I'm around babes, let's meet up.

Coffee?*

I smiled as I dialed her number. She picked up almost immediately.

"Lelo!" She screamed out.

"Julie! Oh my God.. I can't believe you are here. When did you arrive?"

"Yesterday. So? Breakfast? I have a lot to tell you."

"Yeah.. Where?"

"At my usual favourite place. 8?"

"Yeah.. By 8 I will be there."

"Great! Ciao.." I dropped the call. Julie and I met at a museum a

year ago. It was so amazing how I had met someone who understood me in and out. We were friends for a while till we found out we were sharing a boyfriend. Vusi. I still don't know if Vusi knew we were friends or not but the day we found out we became best friends. I put my phone away and put on my shoes. I combed my hair and held a tight bun. After stealing a quick glance at myself on the mirror I realized I was good to go. I was going to drop off by the gallery before I went out for breakfast with Julie. I packed my bag quickly before I put it in the car. I arrived at work as Tshidi unlocked the doors.

"I woke up late today." I chuckled, I wasn't mad.

"It's ok.."

"Did you manage to see Bonnie?"

"Yeah..she's good but not that good."

"So what now?"

"I guess I just have to suck it up and have the contract brought. We do need Nicholas."

"I'm sure you will be fine." I laughed.

"Yeah.. I will be good." She unlocked then we walked inside. The other workers hadn't yet arrived. My gallery wasn't that big but for security purposes I had to hire four more workers besides Tshidi and Nancy. I walked straight to my office with Tshidi behind me.

"Did you contact the hotel?"

"Yeah I did. I'm waiting for them to confirm my booking."

"Well ok. Some guy called Tumiso called yesterday." I sat down looking at her.

"Tumiso?"

"Yes.."

"And what did he want?"

"He wanted to talk to you, said he will call today."

"Ok, thanks." She immediately then walked out. I wondered why Tumiso was calling me. This was the guy I liked in my last year in varsity. I wished to say we dated for a week before he broke up with me but that's not what happened. Tumiso and I dated for a long time till Vusi came along. But then besides Vusi I'm sure he had already lost interest. Things were not the same anymore. He had stopped trying to make me happy, all the little things that made happy, he had stopped doing them. Communication was strained too, if I didn't call then he wouldn't call. His excuse was he was busy. The sex too.. It was just sex, it had stopped being interesting so I guess it was over long before Vusi. I quickly sorted some paper work for the major clients, replied some emails. As I walked out to my car Nancy had already arrived and was at the front desk as usual smiling her beautiful smile.

"Morning Lelo.." She said as I passed her.

"Morning Nancy.." I greeted back walking out. Julie didn't like late comers, she was obsessed with punctuality. I quickly drove to her favourite restaurant. She stayed at P.E so the time we saw each other was limited. I parked my car at the parking lot then got out of the car and walked straight inside the restaurant. As soon as I walked inside I spotted her. She was already holding her mug of coffee.

"Julie!" I said as I approached her. She still looked beautiful as always.

"Oh my.. Lelo. How are you Bunny?" She said hugging me.

"Hey.. You look good."

She giggled. "You too. Sit. I already ordered. How's the gallery?"

"It's going well I guess.. I have a new client who's rude and grumpy."

"Rude and grumpy to you? You are the only person I find it hide to be rude to. What's his name?"

I looked at the waiter as she placed our breakfast before us.

"Nicholas Dumisa. And the fact that the gallery really needs him makes me just wish to die." She started laughing. "Askies my love. So what now?" I puffed out my cheeks in frustration.

"The gallery needs him. I contacted my lawyer."

"Well I'm sorry but you will be fine. I know this. How's Kevin?"

"Out of the country for three months. I know he's with his wife and I just pray they get back together." She smiled. "Me too.. Let's eat. I have to go and see mom and my annoying big brother."

"I have to meet your brother one day. The way you make him sound so evil I swear he must look like the devil himself." I said laughing.

"Because he is! Though I'm glad he broke up with his previous girlfriend! That cunt! But you have to meet him. You are perfect for him."

"You have started."

"No.. Honestly imagine if Kevin gets back with Lana.. You know it's going to happen either way then he will probably divorce you and the other two. You and my brother stand a chance. You are the rightful girl for him I swear." I smiled, looking for an escape but one thing I knew about Julie was that.. once she set her

mind to something.. there was no stopping her.

"Maybe he has found a new-"

"He's single. And he's 30. And he's your perfect match though you might want to see him for yourself. Come with me. Let's go see my mom together then you will decide." I knew there was no way she was ever going to let this go. Julie was a bit obsessive. It was a mental issue. She had told me this in our 1 year friendship.

"Ok.. If that makes you happy then ok."

"Yes! Let's eat up."

After eating I had to call Tshidi to inform her that I wasn't going to come back to the office right away. I drove us to her mother's house in Soweto. I could tell she was so excited about me and her brother but to please her I was just going to see him. Maybe then after that she could let it go. I arrived at her mother's house after about 45 minutes. We got lost a couple of times due to Julie's unsureness. When I finally stopped the car in front of her house I was taken. The house was bigger than what I had been seeing in the whole street. It was big and beautiful and elegant and had an electric gate.

"Wow!"

"My brother extended it. It didn't have the electrical fence or gate before. It was a three bedroom house but now it's bigger."

"What does your brother do again?"

"Well he owns his own garage and the local gym and also the local supermarket. He bought the supermarket when the garage started making money."

"That's something. He must be doing well for himself."

"Yes he is.. press on the hooter." I pressed on it and after a while the gate was opening. I drove inside the house.

"Is this your brother's car?" I asked as I parked my car besides the sports car.

"Yeah.. Come on. Let's go." I got off the car with her then let her lead me to the main door.

"Mama!" Julia screamed as she walked in. I followed in slowly. The house was exactly what I had expected it to be. It was the kind of home that was friendly. That was warm.

We were in the sitting room.

"Mama!" She screamed again but more loudly.

"Ehhh! Warasa! Where do you think you are? Nxla!" A voice said making me turn immediately. I knew I had come across good looking guys before but they never managed to make my knees weak as the man who was standing right in front of me. I felt my knees buckle and my breath hitch. His looks intimidated me. He was above handsome. No doubt God took his time creating him.

"Ok.. Lelo this is my brother Luthando and Luthando this is my friend.. Nompumelelo." I cleared my throat as I felt my heart beat fast and hard against my chest. My palms were even sweaty. I smiled, trying to look composed though I suspected my facial expression was giving me away big time.

"Hello.. Nice to meet you." I said though I wasn't sure if my voice was audible or not. God please help me. I prayed silently.

CHAPTER 5

[NOMPUMELELO]

He looked at me then his sister. The room was suddenly

suffocating, I couldn't seem to get hold of myself.

"Hi," he said as his eyes darted back to me. "Mama went to church." He was now looking at his sister.

"Ow.. When?"

"A few hours ago. It's those prayer what what."

"Ok.. Where are you going?" He frowned.

"And where does where I'm going concern you?"

"Haibo Thando! I came to see you and you are leaving already? Look let me call Mama." She said taking her phone and walking out after giving me a wink. I didn't understand if this girl knew how scared I was. How nervous I was. This guy was just above the word hot. He was above anything I had ever seen. Did she understand what she was putting me under. I didn't want her to leave me alone with her brother. No. I wanted to get in my car and leave. I looked down at my shoes. I knew I always had confidence issues but today it was just on another level.

"I don't bite." He said making me chuckle and look at him. "Are you shy or just.. Scared?" I giggled, the way he was looking at me made me highly uncomfortable.

"I'm not shy.."

"So you are quiet? Natural quietness?"

"Maybe.."

"Ok. See you around." He said as he took some keys that were on the small wooden table and walked out. A few minutes after he walked out Julie walked in. I wondered if she had been talking to the president for just one phone call to take hours like that.

"You did that on purpose didn't you?" I accused.

She raised her eyebrows placing her hands on her hips. "Did

what on purpose?"

"Did what on purpose? Leave me with your brother Julie! Do you know how awkward that was?" She started laughing as if I had just cracked the biggest joke ever. "I'm sorry ok? But I could tell.. you was gone. You like him don't you?"

"He's hot and handsome yes but I don't like him. And I'm sure he has a new girlfriend."

"No he doesn't and I know for sure you guys will be Bonnie and Clyde. I called Mama, she's on her way." I just looked at her. Her brother was fire but then.. That was it. He was just handsome and I bet he knew it too but I didn't like him. He was not the kind of guy I had in my head. Luthando was just not for me.

"You are over thinking this Lelo.. Luthando definitely likes you. I know my brother. I'm sure Mama will love you. You are lovable." I just smiled. Maybe she didn't have to know that I didn't like her brother. I was just going to leave her think whatever that is she wanted to think. He was not my type. So what's your type? My inner self questioned. Maybe the fairytales relationship I wanted, my Prince charming that I wanted.. Maybe they were not real but Luthando looked more like a Dark Knight than Prince Charming or maybe I wanted a taste of a bad boy. Someone who I knew was going to hurt me by just looking at him. I looked at Julie as she sat down in front of the TV. Did I like him? Wasn't it too soon to like someone.

[JANINE]

I walked into the police station a few minutes before eight. I was late, usually I came at seven. Luke gave me a nod as I

proceeded to my office. Getting to my office Orlando was already there.

"Hey! You look.. Well rested." I looked at him as I settled on my desk. "Yeah.. But I'm late and I hate being late." He chuckled as he put down the file he was holding.

"You are on time in case you don't realize it."

"I'm late. Did she say anything? The lady who killed her husband."

"Yes, she went with the story she gave you. There's just something missing about the whole ordeal."

"What did they say at the hospital?"

"There was penetration.. And the results do show it was him but.. Why didn't they report this man when it started? Why wait for a whole year to report him?" I sighed.

"Did you question the daughter?"

"Yes.. There's just something about this whole case that I'm missing. I feel like this is a murder. Why didn't she report him? And you know there's something else.. When I questioned the daughter she said her mom has always known but the mother says she only found out recently."

"If it's murder was the mother working alone or what?"

"That's the thing I'm trying to figure out. The time the daughter called you was exactly at 01:10 a.m and the call took two minutes and ten seconds. From there on 20 minutes later you had arrived. When she called you she reported rape. Probably she killed him then or before the daughter called you. The mother says they argued and then she shot him. She says she wanted to report him."

"But why would she have killed him?"

"I have a few relatives lined up. I'm going to be asking them a few questions to just understand the kind of relationship that was going on between this couple."

"That's great anyways we have to go see that Maphoto guy. Maybe after that we can go to question the relatives."

"Yes! You really look rejuvenated today." I laughed.

"Well thank you." I was rejuvenated. I woke up in high spirits. Maybe it was because I had dinner with Kingsley. Or that I fell asleep while we were still watching some tv show and I woke up in my bed with a note on my bed side. Or maybe it was because Kevin was not around. I was free. Yesterday when I had invited him over to my new flat I couldn't believe it, I couldn't believe that I, Janine had invited him over. Maybe I had been dreaming but everything went all real when he parked his car behind mine at my flat, the car that later on he explained was hired. I enjoyed his company or maybe it was the fact that he loved that I was a detective and also the fact that I stood my ground. Or maybe it was the fact that he didn't call me stupid and foolish.

I walked out of the office with Orlando. I hated the police car but I wasn't alone, so did Orlando. We used his car to go to the Maphoto guy's garage. Arriving there we parked near a car that was being fixed.

"Zulu!" Orlando said as we got out of the car. I noticed the guy that was fixing the car we had parked besides. He walked towards us as he fixed his bucket hat whistling. "I don't know if I should be happy and over the moon kana yang? Eita bosso yam!" He was relaxed, didn't seem scared to see us. My eyes

darted around trying to locate the man we were here for but I couldn't see him anywhere. "Zulu! Where's he?" Orlando asked. This Zulu guy just chuckled as he shook his head. "He's not here as you can see. Mara this problem of blindness is serious.."

I chuckled. "And where is he?"

"Inside my pants, come take him." I smiled as I walked towards him steadily. "Look.. How about we all play nice? Huh? We don't want this to get sour."

"Sour? It's already sour sweetness."

"No.. I don't think it has been sour yet because when it gets sour it gets really nasty you wouldn't like it."

"Look lady cop, arrest me if I have broken the law!"

"Where is he?"

"I don't know. I'm not his assistant. Ow.. There he is!" He said making me turn. A gold sports car was driving in. I looked at Orlando who gave me a nod. Our guy was finally here. He parked his car and got out.

"If I didn't break any law then I'm afraid you are not welcome here." Maphoto said as he approached us.

"Maphoto.. Good to see you again." Orlando said as chilled as him. He chuckled. "I wish I can say the same too. Am I arrested or not? If I'm not kindly leave." He said as he walked away. I could see he wasn't going to answer any question though I wasn't going to back away.

"Maphoto.. We are not here to waste your time. We are here to tell you we know." He didn't turn, "and also to tell you that we are watching you. You may think you are smart but you are going to get caught and I will be the one to catch you." He started

laughing as he turned to look at me. "You? Catch me?"

"Yes. You may underestimate me but you will be surprised when I throw you in jail. Better play your game carefully because I'm watching you."

"Instead of catching real criminals you here with stupid ass threats. Ma'am go do your job." I kept my smile on my face.

"I will catch this real criminals Maphoto and that I can promise you. Their time is limited."

"Well I'm glad, you can leave now." I wondered how he still managed to look chilled. His facial expression was hard to read. He looked like a closed book. He turned his back on us then focused on the car Zulu was looking at. I knew we were done with him. Orlando and I walked back to the car.

"He's real hard to crack." Orlando said as he reversed out.

"Yes.. I think we need to keep a close eye on him but not directly. If we head on this directly we may fail because this Maphoto guy really looks smart. We can get through him through Zulu."

"Luthando is very smart.. Remember the Nxumalo Gang?"

"Yeah.."

"He was part of it though when they got caught he didn't. Apparently he was the mastermind in the Gang. He was their brains."

"I see.. We just need to outsmart him I guess."

"Yes.. But how?" Orlando asked as he gave me a quick glance.

"It's easy. By playing his game."

Getting back to the police station I went to see Khanya. She was still in jail. At least Big Daddy hadn't killed her yet. Her case was going to court in a week's time. The other two guys were going

with her but before they went I wanted to have a talk with the other one. He was the one that looked scared and frightened. Khanya rolled her eyes as they brought her in the interrogation room.

"So it's you?"

"How are you?"

"I'm very good thank you."

"I have someone I want to call. Someone who may want to speak with you." I said as I pressed call on my phone. The phone was answered after a while. Quickly I put the phone on loud speaker.

"Hello?" A voice said, a tiny voice. Khanya's eyes widened. She looked at me then back at the phone.

"Hello?" The tiny voice said again. I smiled at Khanya.

"Hello. This is Janine. How are you Ayanda?" I heard a little movement.

"Can I speak to Sisi?" The tiny voice asked. I saw tears fall down from Khanya's eyes.

"Yes my love. Khanya?"

"Sis'Khanya..?"

Khanya cleared her throat. "Aya?" There was a tiny scream.

"Sisi when are you coming to see me? Mbali took my toy. Gogo is sick." Khanya bit her lower lip trying to stifle her cry but I knew the more she was trying hard the sooner she was just going to break down. Seeing her like that proved to me she wasn't the girl I had thought she was. Yesterday before Luke left I asked him to help me locate where exactly Khanyi's family was. Luke was nice enough to even get me Khanya's Granny's number. All I had to do after that was call her.

"I'm coming soon baby. I will bring you lots of toys. I love you Sthandwa."

"Sisi I-" I then dropped the call and looked at Khanya who was very emotional. "If you help us catch Big Daddy then become a state witness. And then you give a testimony against Big Daddy when we catch him.. You will walk free. Khanya your sister needs you. Your Granny. They won't survive without you."

"You fucken don't understand shit do you?!" She screamed. "Do you understand what's going to happen to me after that? Do you even care? I'm good as dead if I talk! It's the same! Am I in prison or dead. She will still suffer!"

"We will protect you. If you agree to work with us we are going to immediately move your Granny and sister into a safe house. And you too. All you need to do Khanya is tell us where the girls are. Who supplies you with the illicit drugs and guns. That's all." She looked at me as tears prickled her eyes. I had her at last.

[LAYOYA]

"Where are you?" She asked as I sipped on my wine.

"In my exquisite flat." I heard her chuckle.

"I don't want to track you down and come off as a stalker. Where are you?"

"Nothando I'm at the flat I wanted to tell you about but guess what? You didn't answer my calls."

"Askies my love. We can do lunch today."

"I don't want your lunch... But I'm lonely. You can come over. I will send you the directions."

"Where's he?"

"New York. Though I'm not even concerned. We can go shopping today."

"Toya I have work. I'm only coming to your house for lunch. You must be happy." I took a sip of my wine as I looked over the other houses. "I'm happy I don't share my space with anyone anymore. I wonder how Silent Sue is holding up. I know Strict Hag is happy."

"Lelo is probably doing fine. Janine yes...probably she's happy too."

"You really like Lelo."

"She's likable. I know you know what I'm talking about. She's really pretty."

"We know! Anyways look there's another call coming. I will send you the directions then we can go for shopping." I said dropping the call, not even giving her the chance to respond. I answered the call that was coming up.

"Latoya speaking hello?" I answered.

"Good morning Ma'am." Involuntary I felt a smile creep on my face though I really tried not to smile. His voice still sounded as sexy as how it sounded face to face. I pinched myself a bit, I had to get hold of myself.

"How can I help you? Since when do you call coconuts?"

"Since they are married to 50 year olds." I laughed. "He's still my husband.. Whether 50 or 80!"

"Nxla! What husband? Anyways I was thinking maybe you want to test drive my car."

"What car? Is that even your car?" I knew probably if he was smiling, he was no longer smiling. A frown was probably pasted

on his face. "If it's not mine then who's it for?" There was no humor in that sentence, it was all cold.

"I don't know. A friend? Stolen maybe.. I don't know." He chuckled but his mocking chuckle. "You like trying me huh?"

"I heard. But guess what? I don't give two fucks. Matter of fact I'm hanging up. I don't see the reason why you called. If you have time to waste don't drag me into it." He started laughing.

"You see that attitude of yours toots.."

"I have too much attitude to dish out. If you are getting annoyed-"

"Where are you?"

"My flat."

"Alone?"

"No. With my business."

"I want to see you but I'm not coming there."

"Keep wanting then."

"I wonder why you hate me so much." My smile widened, I couldn't control it anymore. "I don't hate you."

"Then I want to see you. It's fine. I will drive over wherever you are."

"Luthando I don't think that's a good idea..-"

"I'm not scared of your old man. Where are you exactly? I'm coming over.."

He walked in the house looking around. He was frowning as he continued to analyse my house.

"Does this man even care about you?" He asked as he turned to look at me. "Care?"

"Yes.. care about you or he cares with the money?"

"I'm happy with the money."

"Money can't buy you happiness toots."

"Who said I needed happiness? I don't give a rat about happiness!" He closed the gap between us. He carefully caressed my face gently, the way he looked at me made my heart swell. Nobody had ever looked at me like that. I didn't even know how to react but the moment his fingers got in touch with my skin I shivered. My heart leaped in my mouth as he got so close to me. My brain turned mushy. He got so close till I could breath in his breath that was coated with mint and nicotine. In a heartbeat my eyes shut close. The weight around me was so heavy. "I believe in happiness." He whispered. Fireworks erupted in my stomach but I forced my eyes open stumbling back. What are you doing Latoya?! I screamed at myself in my head. I shook my head. I had to get it together.

"We should go." I stared at him not registering anything.

"Go?"

"Yes.. The test drive. Let's go." I just nodded. He took my hand and led me out of the house. His i8 was parked right besides my two cars. I locked the door then walked with him to his car. I smiled as he opened the door for me. I got in the car silently as I pressed the button for the gate. The moment he got in his car he started the engine and drove out.

By the time he finally stopped the car so that we switch I was just above excited. The car was what I called a beast. I watched him as he got out of the car. Luthando was.. very handsome. Tall. Sexy. He deserved to be featured in the men club magazine. He opened my door for me. I stepped out of the car, everything

happened so quick because suddenly I was pressed against the car. I swear with the way my heart was beating I could just die. "I think I'm losing it. I'm going crazy!" He whispered as he pressed his body against mine. I felt myself moisten. Just having his body against mine made my pussy clench painfully. "I just can't get you out of my head.."

"I pity you. I feel sorry for you. I'm not the kind of girl you should be thinking about. I'm not the kind of girl you take home to meet your mother." I said steadily looking into his eyes. I couldn't read his expression. It was so impassive. Did he know this already? Maybe he just wanted to have sex. Yes! The voice in my head agreed. The only thing I was good at was sex. Opening my legs. That was all I was good at. "Why would you say that?" He asked, his voice still came off as a whisper. It was still arousing.

"Because I know. I just do. Why would you want to introduce a coconut to your mother? A prostitute? A gold digger?" He blinked a couple of times then chuckled. "And who said you are a prostitute or gold digger?" I smiled. "Some things are just too straight forward Luthando. I know this. I know that's what people think of me. I know that's what people see me as. It's not even a secret."

"That's not what I see you as. I'm not 'people' Latoya." I raised my eyebrow. "Noxy probably didn't tell you enough."

"I don't care about what she told me. Want to know how I see you as?" I just stared at him. "You are so beautiful I don't know if you see it. You are beyond beautiful.. in and out. Sometimes life throws us at the wolves but then it's life. You are not a gold digger. You a hustler." I started laughing. "A what? Hustler?"

"Yes.. we all have different ways of surviving. I admire your strength. I can never be with someone I don't love." An involuntary smile invaded my lips. Maybe the way he looked at me scared me. Made me feel uncomfortable because nobody ever looked at me like that. But.. I loved it. I loved the way he looked at me. I loved the way my skin set to fire when he touched me. I loved the way he handled me. Like a rare diamond. I just loved the way he made me feel, it was so foreign but I loved it. I loved everything though it scared me. I hadn't noticed the tear that oozed from my cheek and glided down my cheek till he wiped it off.

"And either way.. If my mom doesn't like you then there's nothing I can do to help her." I felt my skin get hot. So hot I wanted to fan myself so to get cool. I still couldn't understand how he managed to make me feel like that. It was so foreign. "Can I test the car now?" I managed.

"Yeah.." He stepped back, his body heat was replaced by the cool wind. I wanted him back against me. Don't do this to yourself. The voice in my head said. I forced my legs to move and walk to the driver's seat. Sitting on the seat the wave of excitement that had withered came back in full force. He was now on the passenger seat.

"Ok.. we can go now." He said. I didn't need to be told twice. The car was everything I imagined it to be. The way it went, so smoothly. I wished it was mine. After the test drive he made me drive to a restaurant of my choice. Of course my favourite restaurant wasn't a pub and grill.

"So this is where you normally eat?" He asked as we settled on

an empty table. His eyes scanned the restaurant.

"Yes.. It's my favourite."

"It's not bad.."

"I know." I said as I started going through the menu that was on the table. I was hungry, I hadn't eaten the whole day. The wine didn't count. I raised my hand summoning the waiter. We made our orders and after a while our food was before us. The moment we started eating his phone started ringing. He took it out then answered it.

"Yes?.. I don't know... Julie what will stop dinner if I'm not there?.. And who's problem is that?.. I will come!.. You will see me when I come. Stop being a nausea." He put his phone away. I looked at him wondering who Julie was. Was Julie his girlfriend? I felt my intestines knot. What was I going to do if Julie was his girlfriend? I felt something jab my heart. Why did the theory of him having a girlfriend hurt while I was married?

"Everything ok?" I asked trying to sound normal.

"Yeah.. Just my sister." I smiled, a smile of relief though that was short lived. Julie was sister but no doubt he had a girlfriend. This days most of this niggas had kids. Did he also have a child?

"Do you have a child?" I asked before I could hold the words in my mouth. "No.. No I don't have a child."

"How old are you?" He smirked.

"What's this? A test to know if I'm good enough to be your affair?" I laughed.

"No.. this is me just wanting to know."

"I'm 30 you are 26. I think our age difference is ok." I tried so hard to hide my blush from him. I couldn't let him see what he

did to me. "I don't want to be your affair.. Wait.. Do you ever have affairs?" I opened my mouth in shock. What kind of a question was that?

"What?"

"Do you ever cheat on the old man?"

"Well.. I.."

"You?"

"Sometimes.. But it's all for a good reason." I didn't know why I felt like explaining it to him. I didn't owe him any explanation but I couldn't help it. "Sometimes.. Well.. He's.."

"You don't have to explain. This old men have a weak game. I don't want to be one of your affairs. I want to be the only one. You are going to leave this man." He said, so simply as "leave this man."

"Luthando are you listening to yourself? Do you know Kevin? He will destroy me.. You! He's dangerous!"

"Destroy who? I'm not scared of that old man. You are going to leave him Latoya. I don't like sharing. Am I clear?" I found myself nodding. "I don't want to kill anyone.. Let's eat." He started eating as if he hadn't talked about killing someone.

CHAPTER 6

[ROCKELLE]

"Daddy you can't do this to me. I have nothing. What am I going to do?"

"Look for a job." He replied making me laugh.

"A job with what qualification?"

"A waiter doesn't require any qualification."

"A waiter? Me? Waiter?"

"Well then I don't know what you will do."

"Dad please.. I will go to school. I swear.. Please.."

"We will talk when I come back."

"How long are you gone for? I'm not going to last a week! I only have R100 rands in my purse. People are going to start talking. I can't stay with Gail. She's cohabiting with her boyfriend!"

"You are 23 years old Rocky.. Going to 24.. I'm sure you will make a plan." I clutched my forehead. I couldn't believe anything that was going on. I couldn't believe that my own parents where the ones doing this to me. That my own father and mother were doing this to me. "Look honey I have to go. I will be gone for quite a while. I love you Rocky." I put my phone away when I realized he had hung up. I covered my face with my hands then peaked through my hands to look at my luggage. The boxes and suitcases.. Last night I had slept at Gail's house. It was a simple bachelor pad. I had to sleep on the couch. At least her boyfriend wasn't there but he was coming today so I couldn't sleep in her house. My luggage took up most of the space in her tiny living room. I was at my father's house. The doors were locked. I couldn't see anyone's car. Janine's Mercedes wasn't there or Lelo's Range Rover or Latoya's two cars. Nothing. Even Dad's cars weren't there. There was nobody and all the doors were locked and the locks were changed. The only thing I had was the gate's remote.

I was done for. No money. No where to sleep. No one to call. At times like this that's when you realized the fake people you had in your life. I sat on the ground wondering what I was going to

do. I could call Brian, I could get his number from Gail then call him but then.. Why on earth would he help me. We were not even friends or even acquaintances. We were more like fuck buddies and not regular fuck buddies.

I stood up after a while. My luggage was still in front of me. All my cards had declined. Daddy had totally cut me off. I took my phone as I swallowed my pride. This was not the time to be prideful. I dialed Natasha's number. She was one of my friends, one of the fake ones. Her father and my father were friends. She didn't take long to answer.

"Hi, Rocky.."

"Tasha.. Hey, how are you?"

"I'm fine love, you?"

"I'm.. Good. Ok.. That's a lie. I'm currently stranded at the moment. I need a place to crash for a while as I sort out my things." There was silence for a while.

"I would love to help Rockelle.. But the flat.. I'm using it with two of my other friends. Why don't you try Kamara?" I took a deep breath. "Yeah.. I will do that. Thanks."

"I would have helped you just that.."

"I understand.. Bye." I said dropping the call. I felt angry. Nobody knew you when you needed them the most. I dialed the second number on the list. I hung up when it led me straight to voicemail. Somehow I felt relieved Mandla's number had led me to voicemail, staying with your regular fuck wasn't the best idea on earth. I couldn't call Mazwi, he was still out of country on business and I didn't even want to go to his house. I hated his house plus I didn't want to make him think I wanted to get

married and have kids. I swallowed as I dialed Lelo's number. I never exchanged a lot of words with Lelo because she was just too closed off. She never talked to anyone. She minded her business.

"Rocky?" She answered with her soft voice that always came off as a whisper.

"Hey.. Ummh.. I'm stranded. I don't have anywhere to stay. Where is everyone? I'm at home."

"I don't know but I moved out. What do you mean you are stranded?"

"Dad cut me off. I don't have anything with me right now expect my luggage."

"What about the flat?"

"Sold. Dad sold it."

"And your friends? I'm not allowed to offer you any helping hand. I would help but your father won't let me. Do you have money on you?"

"No.. I have R100. I don't know what to do."

"I don't know how I can help. You know your father knows all the transactions I make from my bank account. I would help you, you know it." I sighed. Obviously Dad had managed to block me everywhere.

"It's ok. I should go."

"So what are you going to do?" I could hear the concern that had laced her voice. "I will figure it out."

"Ok.. Bye." I dropped the call. I hesitantly took out the business card Lungile had given me last night. I had kept it. He was my last chance. The fact that I didn't know him didn't even matter.

He probably didn't remember my name. I closed my eyes for a while before I finally dialed the number on my phone. I listened carefully as the phone rang. It rang for a while before it was answered.

"Hello?" His voice said. I held my breath. Deep down I had expected him not to pick up.

"Hello?" He said again, I could hear he was getting impatient.

"Hi.. Lungile this is Rockelle Robert. We met-"

"Hi Rockelle. I still remember you. Did you get to your house safely?"

"Yes I did. Thank you. Ummh are you free right now?"

"No, I'm in a meeting but I guess if it's important I am free."

"I'm stranded. I have been cut off.. My house was sold, my cards were cut off. I don't have anywhere to go..." I sucked in my breath as I closed my eyes. I sounded like a brat that I was. I couldn't believe I was doing this and his silence was enough for me to just wish death upon myself. "I really don't know why I called.. You don't even know me." I sighed feeling defeated.

"Look forget I called. I should get going."

"Hold on.. Wait.. I know we don't know each other but we are siblings according to the Bible right?" I laughed. "Yeah."

"Great. We are all God's children and as siblings I would like to help my sister out." I bit my lower lip. I couldn't believe he was saying what he was saying.

"I have enough space in my house. Where are you?" I blinked away my tears as I told him where I was. He said he would arrive in 20 minutes. I felt relieved but then until when was I going to stay with him? I didn't have any money to pay him for my stay. I

didn't have a job. I wondered how he was going to feel with staying with someone who did nothing but sleep on your bed, watch your TV and eat your food.

I could sell some of my clothes and jewellery. Maybe it was going to be enough to rent a room but where? I was startled when I heard a car hooter. Quickly I got up from the pavement and pressed the remote. The gate opened and his car came into view. He drove in the yard and parked it besides me then got off. He was putting on a suit today. He looked different from last night.

"Hi.." I smiled.

"Lungile.. Hi," he looked at me then my luggage. "Are this all your things?"

"Yes. That's all me."

"Ok.. I don't think they will fit in my car so let me call someone who will pick them up."

"Thank you. Thank you so much. I can never thank you enough." He smiled. "That's what siblings are for right?" I chuckled. "Yes." He took out his phone and called the someone. They talked for a while till he hang up and looked at me.

"He's on his way. We will wait for him. Where did you sleep yesterday?"

"With a friend. She can't accommodate me today because her boyfriend is coming. It's her boyfriend's house."

"Ohh.. Did you eat?" My stomach decided to do the unthinkable. It just flipped and made a sound. I didn't eat. Gail didn't have food. She said she had to do shopping but I knew she didn't have money. Most of the time I'm the one who gave her money.

"No.. But I'm good." He chuckled.

"That's a lie." I flushed feeling mortified.

"I will get you a takeaways on our way home."

After a while some man was loading my things into an enclosed truck.

"Is that all Sir?" He asked Lungile when he was done.

"Yes. Follow after us." Lungile said as we got in his car. It smelt him. I put on the seatbelt as he reversed out of the yard. He did stop by some restaurant to get me a takeaway. His house was nothing I had imagined. It was not that big but it was beautiful. Calmly beautiful.

"Ok.. Welcome to my curve."

"It's beautiful."

"Thank you. Come.. Let me show you your room." He said as he absent mindedly took my hand. The gesture took me by surprise. We walked to 'my room' as he showed me around the house. It wasn't that big though it was beautiful.

The interior design was just out of this world.

"Ok.. You will be using this room." I looked at the huge room. It reminded me of my room back at my mother's house but that this one was extra big. "The ensuit is there.. Then the walk in closet. Then lastly the glass sliding door leads to the balcony."

He said pointing at the door. I nodded.

"Ok."

"Good. Ummh Josh is coming with your luggage, I'm sure it will fit in here."

"Yeah.. Thank you so much Lungile. As soon as I get money I will be out of here."

"Stay for as long as you like."

"No.. You have done enough. I will cook, clean the house and do any house work required. I have nothing to offer you."

"No.. You don't-"

"I don't feel comfortable in just sitting doing nothing. It doesn't seem right so I will do any house chores to pay for my stay here."

"You really don't have to but if it makes you feel better then it's ok." Just then Josh walked in with two of my suitcases. He took a while to have everything of mine in the room. Lungile gave me my takeaway as soon as Josh was gone.

"Eat. Make yourself feel at home. Don't behave like a visitor. You are not. There's a pool at the back of the house if you feel like swimming. There's food in the fridge and in the kitchen unit if you feel like you are still hungry. Basically.. Treat this as your home too. Ok?" I nodded.

"I will. Thank you."

"It's ok. I'm heading back to work."

"Ok.." I watched him as he walked out then minutes later I heard the gate opening. I sighed as I sat down in the living room. He had switched on the TV. I looked at the food that was before me. I didn't have the appetite. I wasn't hungry. I had to look for a job with no qualification. I could be a waiter but that would give people a reason to talk about me. I could already hear them talk. I took my phone and scrolled to Vince's number. I clicked on his number and waited.

"Rocks!" He answered.

"Vince.. Hey.. Ummh did you find a replacement for the trainer

that you lost?"

"No.. Though we are still looking."

"I have someone in mind." I heard him chuckle. "Someone? Someone who?"

"Me. I know I don't have qualification but-" he cut me short by laughing.

"You? You are that bored?"

"Please.." I beseeched. Something I never did.

"I will call you tomorrow but if I may ask why? Why do you want the job?"

"Because I'm jobless."

"Yes but you don't need a job. You have all the money in the world."

"I no longer have the money so I need the job."

"You.. no longer have the money?"

"Yes. I will wait for your call tomorrow."

"Yeah.." I quickly dropped the call. Vince was the owner of the gym I went to on daily basis. He once liked me or still did, I wasn't sure anymore but I prayed he gave me the job. I put my phone down then focused on the TV. I didn't want to think about my life problems. The last 24 hrs of my life were the worst. I was now my own responsibility. I only had myself in my corner. Just me. Alone. I watched the TV as the images changed. To bright. To colourful. To dull. Over and over again. I had suddenly turned oblivious to my surrounding. Only the images which kept changing had me looped in.

I looked at my laptop. Tshidi had made two sells on the past

week. When I hired her I knew she was just what I needed. From the beginning she was with me. From the very first she was by my side. I looked away from the laptop when I heard my office phone ring. It was Nancy.

"Nancy.."

"Lelo, I have Tumiso on the line. Should I connect him?" I sighed. I wasn't going to escape him. "You can put him through Nancy."

"Ok," I waited for a while till I heard his voice.

"Hello?"

"Tumiso, hi."

"Lelo.. How are you?"

"I'm very good thank you."

"That's great.. I miss you."

"I'm sure you do... But it's ok. It's ok to miss people."

"Can we meet up and talk?"

"I'm very busy so I'm afraid not."

"Babe please.. I love you and I'm so so sorry."

"I don't know what you're sorry for Tumiso. I don't see any reason why we need to talk. We talked and talked. I wish you nothing but happiness Tumiso. It was very nice talking to you. I have to go. Bye." I said as I hung up. I didn't hate him. I didn't like holding grudges. Grudges destroyed you. They were dangerous. I liked letting go. Letting go always set me free. It made me feel light headed. I put away the office phone as Julie's brother invaded my mind. I still didn't understand but I couldn't get him out of my head. Julie had said he was single but I found that hard to believe. He was too handsome to be single.

"And that smile?" Quickly I turned. Tshidi was standing by the

door looking at me with her eyebrows raised. I laughed.

"I'm just thinking about my trip."

"Lier! There's a man involved." I stood up and started packing. It was time to go home. "There's no man involved... I will see you tomorrow." I said as I quickly put my laptop in it's bag. Walking out of my office I chastened myself to order. He wasn't my Prince charming. Though he can be your dark Knight. MyY under self said.

"Stop! Stop stop stop!" I said out loudly to myself as I reached my car. I let out a laugh as I realized that I was acting like a complete crazy person. A lunatic. I got in my car then started the car. As I drove out of my gallery I called Julie who didn't take time to answer.

"Lelo..."

"Hey.. Ok. I like him." I admitted. "God what have you done to me!?" I heard her giggle. If anything this girl could giggle.

"I told you. Can I set you guys up?"

"Yes but don't make it too obvious. I'm going to Paris in two days. Don't forget."

"Don't worry. I got you. I'm so excited!" She screamed! "I can't wait for you to be my sister in-law. Mom loved you. I told her that you would make a good wife to Luthando. She agreed. I think she's also rooting for you."

"Let's not get ahead of ourselves. He might not like me."

"He will. Maybe he already does."

"Ummh Julie I have to go. There's a road block."

"Ok.. Bye."

"Bye." I put my phone away then quickly strapped my seatbelt. A

police officer motioned that I park at the side of the road. I parked the car as I rolled down my window. I looked up when a police officer approached my window. I smiled as I realized it was Janine. She looked ok.. but then she always looked ok. I knew she was happy that Kevin was gone. I wondered how Latoya felt.

"Janine.."

"Lelo.." I could see she didn't know what to say. I took my license then handed it to her together with the car papers. She took them for a few seconds then returned them.

"You can go."

"How are you?" I asked. She smiled. I liked her smile, it made her whole face change. She looked beautiful smiling.

"I'm fine and you?"

"I'm fine too." There was silence for a while till I started my car.

"Ok.. Bye." She just gave me a nod. I stepped on the accelerator and drove away. Leaving her behind

CHAPTER 7

[LATOYA]

"Breakfast?" I said raising the basket of blueberry muffins I was holding in my hand. "I made them." She just stared at me, she was upset I could tell. "I'm really sorry Nothando.. Something happened. I know I should have called but I lost track of time. I'm so sorry. Please forgive me. Forgive your sister from another mother. Please.." I said going down on my knees. She looked at me for a while before she smiled. I sighed, exaggeratedly standing up.

"Whatever that came up better be good." She said taking the basket of blueberry muffins from me. It was just after half five in the morning. I had tried calling her yesterday night but she didn't pick up. I smiled as we walked to the sitting room.

"It's so good. Something that has never happened to me is happening to me Nono.. I'm so scared." She sat down on the couch then patted the space that was besides her. I sat right there then looked at her.

"Don't laugh. I'm still trying to understand everything myself. Nono I think I like someone. Like really like them. Really really like them. Like that like.. That intense liking."

"Like you want to be with that someone like?"

"Yes. Like I feel.. happy when I'm with that person. Like them to the extent of where I can be myself with that someone." She smiled taking my hand into hers.

"There's nothing to be scared about Latoya."

"There is.. Nono I'm incapable of liking someone or loving them. That's not me. I don't have that emotional side with me." She sighed as she squeezed my hand.

"You are capable of loving someone. You love your siblings."

"I care about them. I'm too.. too damaged. I can never like anyone. Or love them."

"You are not damaged Toya.. You are human.. Like anybody else. Like me. You have been through a lot but you have always came up on top. Nothing about you says you are damaged. You are scared of getting hurt so you shield your heart. You built walls around yourself. It's normal for you to protect yourself. You can love and can be loved. I want you to stop looking down on

yourself." I shook my head. She didn't know what she was saying. She didn't understand.

"So who's the guy you like?" She finally asked. "Where did you meet him? Yesterday when you went out?" I found myself smiling remembering yesterday.

"It's Luthando. He makes me so happy Nothando. I know this sounds so corny but.. I can't help it. He came over at the flat yesterday then we test drove his beast of a car. Then we went out for lunch. I think he likes me too. Well he.. He wants me to leave Kevin for him.. Nono I have never met anyone like him. I like him but I don't want to." I looked at her with my hands on my cheeks. She smiled nodding slowly. I giggled. "Am I going crazy?" She shook her head no. "No.. You are falling in love with him that's what's happening." I covered my face with my hands as I buried my head between my legs. "Hey.. It's ok to fall in love with people. He makes you happy. Honestly I have never seen you like this. There's nothing wrong with falling in love with him. From what you have told me I think he feels the same too." I released my head from my legs then held her hands. "No.. It's wrong Nono.. Can't you see. Kevin will destroy him. I don't want Kevin hurting him." She smiled.

"This Luthando doesn't seem scared of Kevin. He knows about Kevin but that's not stopping him. You should trust him. I'm sure he will treat you right." I smiled. "Nothando you need to see him. He's.. Perfect. Not entirely because of his attributes. He has his moments.. But.. That doesn't mean anything. You need to see him." She blinked a couple of times. "Isn't it too soon for him to meet your gang?"

"It's too soon?"

"Yes.. Let's wait for a while before I analyse him. Ok?" I nodded.

"Yeah.. Do you think he has a girlfriend?"

"Did you ask him?"

"Not.. Isn't that a turnoff to most of the guys?"

"You have to know. Ask him."

"Ok.. I will when he calls. Where's your sister?"

"I don't know. She went out with her friends yesterday."

"Great! No wonder it's so peaceful here." She chuckled. I relaxed my body on the couch. Luthando had dropped me at the flat after buying me dinner. He had to go home, his sister had come back from P.E where she worked and she was so persistent according to him. I found her to be cute, she probably missed her brother and just wanted to spend time with him though Luthando didn't see it like that. He said she was annoying. He didn't try anything, even a hug though I badly wanted to have a feel of his arms around me or his lips. I had expected him to call me but Lelo was the one who called. She was checking up on me. Lelo was naturally nice and soft. Maybe that's what made her more prettier, her character. The way she was.

"How's work?" I asked after a while.

"It's ok. I have been getting more gigs lately so financially I'm ok if that's your question."

"I'm glad. I don't like seeing you suffering." She laughed her deep laugh. "Suffering? You are so funny Toya.."

"Do you think Kevin will sign the divorce papers when I hand them over to him." She was silent for a while.

"I think he's going to sign them. Have you spoken to Latifah?"

"No. I sent money two weeks ago though."

"Call her. She's your sister. She probably misses you."

"Yeah.. Later."

"Now!" She commanded. I closed my eyes briefly, she was right. She probably did miss me. I took my phone and called her standing up and walking away from Nothando. The phone rang for a while before she picked up. Latifah never called unless I did. Anyone could sense the distance between us. It was as if we were not sisters.

"Latoya." She answered.

"Latifah.. How are you?"

"I'm fine Latoya."

"How's Latisher?" I had two siblings. Latisher and Latifah. My parents passed on when I was 13. Latifah was 6 by then and Latisher was 2.

"She's fine."

"How's school?"

"School is fine."

"Why are you angry with me Tifer..?"

"I'm not."

"Then what's the problem?"

"Do you hate us Latoya? If you do, it's ok. It's fine. I won't blame you."

"Hate? Latifah hate? Latifah I love you so much. I might not know what love is but I do. I love you so much. You and Latisher. But I can't stay with you. I can't. Do you love the school you go to?"

"Yes.."

"Do you want to stop going there? Don't you want to go to

Harvard or Oxford university?"

"I want to.."

"Then I can't stay with you. I want you to go to school. Get a degree and be someone better. I want Latisher to look at you as her role model."

"But you are already our role model Latoya. We should be together. As a family. That's what mom and Dad would have wanted. Latisher misses you. It's her birthday in three months. Are you going to come?" I swallowed.

"Yes. Yes I'm going to come. I'm going to be there I promise."

"I don't like Kevin." I laughed.

"I don't like him too. We both don't like him. I'm going to leave him. Then I will find a good job then maybe we can stay together you know.. But first I have to secure your future and Latisher's. It won't take long."

"Ok. I hope you will meet someone who will love you and cherish you. Someone who will also love us." I smiled.

"Me too. Say hi to Latisher. I will call again tomorrow ok?"

"Yes."

"Bye.."

"Bye." I hung up then sighed. That had went better than most times. Usually I knew we argued. Maybe that's what made our relationship.. Distant. The frequent arguments. Sometimes she just refused to understand but I understood where she was coming from.

"And?" Nono's voice said from behind me.

"I'm going to go ahead with my plan.." I said turning to look at her.

"What plan?"

"The plan." My mind was made up. There was nothing to wait for.

"Are you nuts? Latoya that's dangerous! You will die! Do you know that he will kill you? Do you?" She half screamed but that didn't shake me.

"I'm going to die either way but I won't die because I'm going to outsmart him. I just need to plan carefully."

"Latoya you can't steal from Kevin. He will find you!"

"It's not like I will be taking all his money. Just some millions. I will then move. I will move to New York... to.. to.. to LA.. I have always wanted to to live in Los Angeles. I will definitely move there and get a job as a journalist. I will be able to send Latifah to Harvard. I will send Latisher to the best school. Then I will be happy." I said as I felt the excitement reap me apart.

"What about Luthando?" I looked at her.

"Maybe he will come with. He believes in happiness. We will be happy together."

"You are being delusional. You think he's just going to up and leave just because of you?"

"Then he can stay behind! I want to taste a bit of happiness too. Can't I be happy too?"

"You can but-"

"But nothing. But nothing Nothando. I need to have the money before he comes back and he won't even know it was me." I didn't need the money to only leave but there's someone I had to pay back. Someone I owed big time.

I wrapped a towel around my wet body then walked out of the bathroom. I reached for my phone which was ringing on my bed.

I sat down on the bed smiling as I answered it.

"Luthando."

"I want to see you. I'm coming over." He said. The way he said it I knew I wasn't going to stop him. I wondered if I ever told him about going to LA would he agree? Perhaps he was going to look at me as if I was crazy. Or maybe not. Did it matter? I swallowed as it registered to me that it did. It would hurt if he said no. I knew he was going to say no. It was obvious. I felt the weight on my shoulders get heavier. The thing that wrapped itself around my neck choked me. Threatened to kill me. It strangled me.

"Ok." I said.

"I will be there in 20 minutes tops." He said before he hung up. I stood up. By the time I was done dressing he was all I was thinking about. I didn't bother putting on makeup. I wondered about what we were going to do today. He always had something exciting to do. When he knocked on my door I quickly ran my lip gloss on my lips before I opened for him. He looked at me for a while.

"What?"

"No heels today?" I chuckled.

"Yes. No heels today." I was putting on some tight jeans, a white top and a denim jacket with white sneakers. He smiled, there was just something about his smile that made my heart leap in my mouth. That made my whole face burn.

"You still look beautiful toots. Heels or no heels. You look more beautiful with no make up." I bit my lower lip trying to not blush then nodded.

"Let's go." He said taking my hand into his. Electricity sparked as his fingers entwined with mine. The energy between us was so strong, almost palpable it scared me. He didn't say anything expect squeeze my hand. He must have felt it. There was no way he couldn't have felt it.

Driving from the yard he was silent. I badly wanted to ask where he was taking me but I couldn't seem to get the words out of my mouth. They were stuck just on my throat. They just sat there and wouldn't leave my mouth.

"I'm meeting an estate agent." He said after a while.

"You want a house?"

"Yeah.. I want to move out from my house that my mom lives."

"Ow.. Want help in choosing a house more suitable?" He turned to look at me grinning.

"That's why I picked you up."

"Well you have done the right thing. I'm the best thing that can ever happen to you. I have a very good idea." He chuckled.

"I know."

And as planned we did meet his estate agent. He had a few houses that Luthando could choose from. The nicest part was when we went to view them. I loved one house out of all four. It was a three bedroom double storey. Had two lounges and a very huge kitchen. It was mainly full of black and grey. The colour combination suit Luthando so much. It also had a terrace, it was beautiful.

"It's perfect. It just needs to be fixed here and there. I know someone who can fix it all. I think the tiles are one of the things that need to be changed. If they are black tiles it would really

give the house that.. that thing. I like the kitchen and the foyer." I looked at Luthando who had his eyes on me. I smiled a bit, wondering what was going on in his head.

"I'm sorry am I being too forward? I'm sorry if I am. I can't help it."

He started walking towards me. "It's fine. I'm glad you are here. With me." He was now standing right in front of me.

"It's ok. Which one are you choosing? All of them are just beautiful."

"I'm choosing you." I flushed then sunk in my teeth into my lower lip. He had a way with words. "You can think about it but I don't take no for an answer. I'm going out of country tomorrow on business. I want you. I really like you or maybe I feel more than that feeling of like. But.. I want you. When I come back you can tell me what you think." I forced myself to look into his dark black eyes. I wanted to caress his face gently, to feel him under my skin. "You are leaving?" I choked. I didn't want him to leave. To leave me.

"I will be back. Don't worry about that." My heart bled. I forced myself to smile and nod.

"Well good luck."

"You can come with." I looked at him for a while before I started laughing. I couldn't help it but laugh. I laughed till my ribs hurt.

"Did I say something funny?" My laughter abruptly stopped.

"Wait.. You are being serious?"

"Yes. Let's go together. I want you with me." I laughed again.

"If you make jokes like this then what will Kevin Hart joke about?"

"I'm being serious Latoya."

"You have known me for what? 1 second? You are not being serious. You are just not."

"I am being serious. I want you to come with me to Paris."

"Luthando.. You don't even know me."

"I know what I need to know. The rest will come after." He placed his hands on my waist and pulled me so close to him till our bodies were against each other. My breath hitched as I looked into his burning eyes. "I want you to come with. Are you refusing?"

"No.. I just think.. We barely know each other.. We.. You.." I sighed. I didn't even know what to say. Words were failing me.

"I think we know enough. But if it makes it better.. You can ask me anything." I took a deep steady breath. Our bodies were still against each other. Fireworks were erupting everywhere. My body felt more warmer. I wanted him to claim me.

"Where's your girlfriend?" I asked breathlessly.

He frowned. "Is that what you don't know? What you want to know?"

"It's essential."

"Essential? For who? It's essential for who?" I looked straight into his dark black burning eyes.

"For me it is.. Where's she?"

"I'm looking at her." We kept the eye contact for a while, I searched for it in his eyes. When I found it I felt tears sting my eyes though I quickly blinked them away. "It's been two days only." I whispered.

"And? Look I can't change the way I feel. It's not possible. I really like you and I know you feel the same. And if you may know.. I

broke up with my ex girlfriend two years ago. When are you leaving the old man?" I cleared my throat. "I need to talk to my lawyer first." I said though lying. I didn't have a lawyer and I wasn't planning on leaving Kevin. Not before I had the money. Not before I knew where he was hiding more of his money.

"Ok.. Do that. We are leaving tonight. You can tell the old man you are going on a vacation."

"He won't call." I smiled as I let myself loosen up. "Paris is nice at this time of the year."

"I know.. I want you to meet someone." He said letting me go. I pressed my lips together feeling disappointed. I wanted him to kiss me. I wanted his lips against mine. He took my hand then led me out of the house straight to his car.

"So are you taking the house?"

"Yeah. As long as you like it I will take it." I beamed, by then he was driving away from the double storey. "Can I please be the one to have it renovated? Please.." I begged. He glanced at me.

"Yeah. Whatever.."

"You won't regret it!"

"I know.."

It didn't take me long to realize we were headed to his garage though I was surprised when the car didn't park at the garage but rather some house. I looked at him in confusion.

"Who's house is this?"

"My mother's house." I gasped as the gate opened. He was being serious. I went from being angry to being confused to being overly overwhelmed. He was introducing me to his mother.

"Luthando.."

"What? Let's go." I quickly opened my handbag then took out my makeup. I always carried basic things with me in the handbag. I took wipers then cleaned my face before I started putting makeup hiding all my black spots. All the freckles on my chin and cheeks.

"And then?"

"First impression counts. I don't want your mother to think I'm a ratchet." I said as I fixed my eyebrows.

"Well I don't care if she thinks you are a ratchet or not." I ignored him, he didn't know what he was saying.

"Your sister is also here right?" I asked as I put on lipstick on my lips then put on mascara and the eyeliner.

"Yes. Latoya can you stop?"

"I'm done." I put away the makeup then took out my heels from my handbag. I had just put them there incase I needed them. I thanked God. He probably knew I was going to need them.

"Really?" I looked at him.

"Yes really." I took off the sneakers then wore the heels. "We can go now." He just sighed before we got out of the car. He didn't understand but I knew I had to make a good first impression. Even with heels, Luthando was still taller than me. He took my hand then led me to the door. I stopped on my tracks.

"What now?"

"No need to be grumpy! If you told me we were meeting your mother I would have came prepared."

"You would have refused."

"Yes because this whole idea.. Is absurd. But now that we are here.. What's your surname?"

"Maphoto."

"Your mom uses that one too?"

"Yes."

"Ok. We can go." He opened the door then walked inside the house with me. I looked around the house. It was those normal houses you expected from old people. The design and property combination just said it all. Probably his mother was one of those ladies who was considered the nicest in the street. One of those ladies who always held prayer sessions. One of those ladies who offered visitors juice and biscuits.

"I think they are in the kitchen. Come.." He said as he led me to the kitchen. We heard voices as we neared the kitchen. I fixed my denim jacket with my free hand. As soon as we walked inside the kitchen the voices stopped talking. I smiled as I looked at his mother and sister. I could see the resemblance between the mother and the sister. They looked like sisters. His mother reminded me of Hangwani in Muvhango. The way she dressed and the doek. Or maybe she even looked like her. I wasn't sure anymore. She took a dishtowel and dried her hands looking at her son. His sister was just staring at me. Probably she was trying to understand what was going on.

"Ma.. This is Latoya, my girlfriend." My chest heat up as he introduced me as his girlfriend. I couldn't believe he was mine. Mine alone. I wasn't sharing him with anyone. Mine. "And toots this is my mother, MaMaphoto and this is my sister, Juliette." Juliette chuckled. It was now established, she didn't like me. For what? I failed to understand. The mother looked at me for a while before she extended her hand.

"It's nice to meet you." I shook her hand though her eyes were stuck on my nails. I can clean with the nails! I screamed in my head. The look she gave me I knew I wasn't the ideal girlfriend she had in mind for her son. She probably wanted maybe Lesedi from church. Lesedi who sang in the church chore. Lesedi who always wore skirts and covered her hair. Lesedi who most parents wished their daughters were or wished their sons could marry. Lesedi who she adored. And I wasn't Lesedi.

"Likewise Mrs Maphoto."

"Where did you get her?" Juliette asked staring at me.

"Mind your own business." He responded making Juliette laugh.

"She looks like a hooker." I smiled.

"I'm not a hooker."

"You are married! Mama she's married. Luthando did you know that?" She asked her brother. I had removed the ring. I looked at Luthando wondering how his sister knew. I was never featured in any magazine. Or maybe she knew from social media where people shamed and hated me.

"She's married to a 48 year old but she's below 28. Then you say you are not a hooker?"

"Luthando is it true?" His mother asked. I took a deep breath.

"Whether she's married or not, I don't care. It's non of anyone's business here. I'm introducing you to my girlfriend and-"

"I will not accept her! She's married to a Blesser! Do you know that MaDlamini's husband left her for a mistress? This girl is not suitable for you. She's a prostitute. Girls like her are nothing but gold diggers! They are rotten. They work for the devil! What do you want from my son?" She fired looking at me.

"I want nothing from your son Mrs Maphoto."

"Then why are you with him? I won't be surprised if this girl has AIDS." Juliette said laughing.

"It's enough. Latoya and I are leaving now. Wena.." He pointed at his sister before clicking his tongue and walking out with me. He opened the passenger door for me. Getting inside I took off my heels then rubbed my eyes.

"Toots are you ok?" I looked at him. "Yeah. I'm good. It's not the first time. I told you about what people see me as. It's nothing new to me. I long stopped caring about what people said about me. I told you.." I took a deep breath. "Luthando I'm not the kind of girl you introduce to your mother. I'm trash. Damaged goods. No mother would want her son to bring home someone like me. It's nothing new to me." He took my hand into his then kissed it. My heart swelled.

"I don't care. They will just have to deal. Let's go out for breakfast. The plane leaves tonight at eight." I looked at him.

"You still want to go with me?"

"I told you I don't care if they like you or not. Where do you want to go for breakfast?"

"Anywhere is ok."

"Ok.." He drove straight to the pub he once brought me to. I selected an empty table as he went to place our order. I was now putting on my sneakers. He joined me after a while.

"What did you order?" I asked as he sat across me. Before he could answer some guy screamed his name.

"LT!"

"Skizo!" Luthando said standing up. He gave the guy a shoulder

bump before he sat down again. The Skizo guy whistled as his eyes fell on me.

"Where did you get this diamond LT! She's way above your league!"

"Nxla! What league wena?" The guy started laughing.

"She's not for you ntwana!"

"Tsek!" The guy walked away still laughing.

"His name is Skizo?"

"No.. It's a nickname."

Our food soon came. After breakfast I asked him to drop me at the flat so that I start packing. He was still not sure how long we were going to be there. It seemed as if everyone knew him because as we walked out of the pub and grill to his car someone called him but only this time it was a female voice. We both turned to look at the woman who was walking towards us. She was in a reaped high waist jean, a crop top that held together her big breast, a Cardigan with some heels. She flipped her weave or wig, I wasn't sure what it was. The way she flipped was just too dramatic but I wasn't moved. When she got closer I knew it was a synthetic.

"Oh my God Thando! Long time no see.." She said taking off her sunglasses. She was using the wrong foundation for her skin. I looked at her as she batted her fake lashes.

"Motlatsi.."

"How are you?" She said opening her arms to hug him blocking my nose with her cheap perfume.. or maybe it wasn't cheap and I was just jealous. I got closer to him blocking her from hugging him.

"We are fine thank you." I said smiling sweetly. She chuckled moving back.

"Uhh Thando you didn't tell me that.. There's been a replacement."

"Babe meet a friend.. Motlatsi and Motlatsi meet my girl.. Toya.."
She smiled though even a blind person could see it was fake.

"Hi.." She said still smiling.

"Hi."

"Ummh I will see you around Thando.." She was already walking away.

"Wait.." I said making her turn. "You are using the wrong foundation for your skin type." She looked at me for a while before walking away. Luthando was just looking at me.

"What? I'm trying to help my fellow sister. Knowing the foundation that works best for your skin type is very important and it will help her choose the perfect shade. That's why I advice people to have beauty consultants. To avoid making a circus out of your face." He chuckled.

"Maybe you should become her beauty consultant."

"Me? You are going far now. Look drop me off at home. I want to pack and also hit the saloon."

"Ok.."

CHAPTER 8

[ROCKELLE]

I drank my water as I walked right in the gym. It still looked the same. It was almost a week since I last stepped in the gym because well.. most of the time I didn't need the gym. Kelly was

at the reception as usual.

"Hey!" She said as I walked towards her. I smiled putting my gym bag on the counter.

"Hey.. Is Vince in?"

"Yes, he's been waiting for you."

"I know.. Let me go in." I said taking my gym bag and walking to Vince's office. He had called me early in the morning to come by the gym. Our meeting was practically supposed to start at 0930 a.m but because I didn't have a car anymore, I had to use a cab. I knocked softly on his door before I heard him say come in. I walked right in. He was busy on his laptop but soon raised his head as I placed my bag on his desk. His office was small but according to him it was comfortable.

"Hey.. Sit," I sat down looking at him. "So I thought about your proposal.. The fact that you don't have qualification is a set back but.. But I have managed to overlook that and came to a decision. You have more experience than those trainers with qualification so you are hired. You are going to be our gym trainer but also as part of the package be a sales manager. Practically Rose was that so you are taking over all her duties. She had her clients. You are also taking them too."

"Ok.. For how much?"

"It's not a lot.. Being a trainer only monthly is R2300."

"What? R2300?"

"Yes. But since it's you I have upped it to R2500.."

"That's abuse!"

"Take it or leave it Rockelle.. That's all we can offer you. Our gym is not that big so.." He shrugged.

"What about being a sale's manager?"

"Well that depends on the number of people you have made buy per day." I laughed.

"You can't be serious."

"I am. The gym closes at 1700hrs everyday but on weekends we subtract 3 hours of our regular closing hours. We start at 0700hrs while on weekends we start at 0800hrs."

"So for a 10hr job I get paid R2500?"

"Pretty much Rocky. Life is hard out here.. There's the contract." He said handing it over to me. I knew I didn't have a choice. Beggars were never choosers. I quickly signed it then hand it over to him.

"Great! Since you know the place so well you can get to work. Rose's client is up in 10 minutes. Catherine."

"Ok." I stood up and walked out of his office.

"Everything ok?" Kelly asked. Kelly and I never talked. We only talked when necessary. Gail and her had beef, their beef was mainly because Kelly had called Gail fake. I smiled.

"Yeah. I'm your new trainer around here."

"Well.. Welcome."

"Yeah.. I'm waiting for Catherine."

"Ow.. She's some rich woman who wants to slim. She's always envied you. Your petite body." I chuckled.

"Envied who?"

"Envied you. You guys are going to work pretty well together. She has body issues."

"Well I hope we..-"

"There she is!" I looked at the door. No doubt it was her. She was

really.. thick. She walked up to us.

"Hello!" She was cute and chubby and short.

"Hi Cathy.."

"V said he's found a replacement for Rose. I hope she's good."

She looked at me smiling. "Hi."

"Hey.. I'm Rockelle,"

"I know. You really have a nice body Rockelle."

"Well thank you."

"Cathy Rockelle is your new Trainer." Vince's voice said coming from behind me. "She's taking over Rose."

"Really?"

"Yes.. I'm sure you guys will be ok right?" Vince asked as he softly squeezed my shoulder.

"Yeah. Cathy and I will be ok."

"Good then." I walked from the reception then went over to the treadmill. Cathy was behind me.

"Ok.. We are going to start by stretching. Stretching is very important. We don't want you pulling a muscle. Let's start with the arms but as we do that I want you tell me.. How much do you want to loose weight?" I said as I stretched my arms. She repeated after me.

"So bad. I wish I can be like you."

"Where you born like this?"

"No. I started eating then got fat." I started stretching my right leg muscles and she still repeated after me. She seemed familiar with the stretches.

"Are you still eating?" I said moving to my left leg. She hesitated with her answer with came off as a whisper. "Yes,"

"Let's stretch the neck now.." I said showing her how to do it.

"There's nothing to be embarrassed about."

"I don't know how to stop."

"How to stop eating junk?" She nodded.

"It's hard. We have an hour of exercising. Is it possible to also be my trainer off work?"

"I knock off at 1700hrs."

"I will pay. How much do you charge per hour?"

"R300," I said laughing, there was no way I could work after 1700hrs.

"Ok. I will take it. We will exercise for two hours."

"What?"

"I will take it. Please.." I did a quick calculation of my pay in my head. It was R6000 monthly. Plus the R2500 it was now R8500 and plus the Sales manager pay. I could find a bachelor pad to rent.

"Ok. When do you want us to start?" I said more eagerly.

"Today. Please."

"Ok.."

Catherine was easier to work with. She was more than ready to try out anything though I knew my biggest enemy was her love for food. After she was gone I decided to put up a diet for her and also write what she shouldn't eat and what she should eat. She weighed 115kg.

My next client after Cathy was Candy. Candy unlike Cathy was exercising for fitness. She even brought her friend who signed up immediately after we were done. The friend had an attitude for days. The way she carried herself one could swear she was

the President's daughter. Cathy and Candy were my only clients in the middle of the day. My last client was MJ, according to the data base I had about him, he was on the wheelchair. When he walked in I was just taken up. For someone who was on a wheelchair he was so energetic. The way he smiled. He was a happy soul. The fact that I wasn't qualified put me at unease but MJ was just in high spirits.

"You know when I heard that Rose quit I was sad but I just had a feeling that her replacement was just going to be as awesome."

"Well I'm glad you find me to be awesome."

"Being awesome is in someone's blood. I love awesome people. They are just amazing."

"You are pretty awesome yourself."

"Well thank you."

It was a bit hard training with MJ but he was showing me the tricks and techniques. By the time we were done I already knew a lot about him. He was 25 years old. He got in a car accident when he was 18 which resulted the wheelchair. He was depressed for a while but then he realized he had to be thankful that he was alive because maybe he wouldn't have made it. So he joined basketball. He was the team's captain right now and he was also studying MBA. It had always been his dream. He also played the piano, it helped him refresh most of his time. When he left I felt down, lonely. His presence was just soul lifting.

"Well how was your first day?" Kelly asked as I packed my things. I had already showered.

"It went well. More than what I thought it would go like."

"I'm glad you enjoy it. I see a friendship is starting between you and MJ."

"He's a happy soul. I can't resist."

"I know."

"Yeah.. I will see you tomorrow.."

"Wanna grab dinner?" I smiled apologetically. "I would love to but I'm putting in some extra hours with Cathy."

"It's ok. Some other time I guess."

"Yes." I took my gym bag and walked out. I had already called a cab. Before Cathy left she had given me directions to her house. Getting inside the cab I gave him directions to her house. As the cab pulled up in front of her house my phone started ringing from my hoodie's pocket. I swallowed as I realized it was Mandla. I paid the cab then got out as I answered the phone.

"Hello."

"Rocky.. Hey."

"Hi.."

"How are you?"

"I'm good and you?"

"Are we good? I know last time.. there was an exchange of words."

"It's all good. We are good."

"Want to hook up?"

"Unfortunately no. I'm pretty busy."

"Since when are you busy?"

"You have missed a lot. Look.. I have to go. See you around." I said dropping the call and ringing up the intercom. I waited for a while till the gate was opened. I walked in, getting to the door

she was already standing there in her gym suit.

"Rocky.. Come in." I walked inside the house. It was so huge. Bigger than big.

"Wow!"

"It's too big I know.. I get pretty lonely alone in this house. Do you want anything to eat? To drink?" She asked rubbing her hands together. My eyes glanced over the dining room table. There was a box of potato chips there. I sighed as I looked back at her.

"I can't help it." She said softly.

"Where's the kitchen?"

I put the refugee bag in the dustbin outside as she stood a distance from me. I could see she was teary, she was at the verge of crying.

"No more junk food!" I said walking back towards her. "No more what?"

"Junk food." She said with a breaking voice.

"Say it with confidence. Food won't defeat you Cathy. No more Junk food!"

"No more junk food!" She repeated after a while.

"No more junk food! Again!"

"No more junk food!" She said more loudly, more confidently.

"Again!"

"No more junk food!"

"Again!"

"No more junk food!"

"Good. You will not let food defeat you. You are stronger than that! We will fight and we will win!"

Somehow I knew it was going to be a challenge for her to let go of her eating disorder. I knew it was going to take more than chanting it. It was going to be a struggle but I was open for a challenge. She was going to have to work hard. By the time we finished up she was wasted. I gave her the draft of the diet she had to follow. She offered to drop me home as it was already late but either way I didn't have enough money to get back at Lungile's house. By the time she parked in front of the gate all I wanted to do was take a well deserved bath, eat and sleep.

"Thank you so much for the lift. Try to follow the diet." I said as I got off her car.

"Ok.. Bye Rockelle."

I smiled as I opened the gate with the gate's remote that Lungile had given me in the morning. He had left around seven in the morning. The previous night I had cooked dinner before he came but he arrived late and I was already sleeping. He didn't eat it, I had threw it away in the morning. Today morning I cleaned before I left. Now due to my schedule it meant early mornings. Getting inside the house Lungile was in the sitting room watching soccer. He looked at me smiling.

"Hey.."

"Hi."

"Gym?" I was still wearing my gym wear. Thank God I had went with two. The one I had gone wearing was stinking sweat.

Tomorrow I was going to carry two and clothes that I was going to wear going and coming back.

"Work actually.."

"You have a job?"

"Yes. I got it today."

"At the gym?"

"Yes.. It's not much but it's something. At the end of the month I will be out of here I promise."

"Look don't feel pressurized. And well I'm happy for you but how much are you getting paid?" I sat down on the single couch.

"2.5.."

"What? How many working hours per week?"

"50.."

"200hrs for R2.5? Tell me you are joking!"

"It's life. It's rough. I will manage well. I was even thinking of advertising for personal training though the only issue I have is the lack of qualification."

"Look I'm a lawyer. That's just super unfair."

"You are a lawyer?"

"Yeah.."

"I studied law and stopped halfway though."

"Why?"

"I guess.. I am not a law person or maybe I was ignorant. Or maybe childish or spoilt. I knew even if I stopped with school I was still going to survive."

"It's life."

"Yeah.. I'm going to go take a bath." I said standing up.

"There's food in the microwave."

"Ow.. Thank you." I stood up and began walking to the door that led to the bedrooms but to only stop halfway.

"Hey Lungile.. Are you allergic to something I cooked last night?" I asked before I could hold it. He turned from the TV and looked

at me.

"You cooked?"

"Yeah.. Or maybe you were full.."

"No.. No.. I didn't see the food." I smiled.

"It's ok. No sweat." I said resuming with my journey. I pinched myself immediately as I got in my borrowed room. He may have ate with his girlfriend or friends and here I was asking non important questions. I stripped naked quickly then walked to the bathroom and ran myself water in the bathtub. As my water filled my phone began ringing. I padded back to the room and took it only to wish I hadn't. I answered feeling tired already.

"Mazwi.."

"Hi.. " A female voice said.

"Ow.. Hello."

"Is this Rockelle?"

"Yes.. How can I help?"

"I'm Olinda.. Mazwi's wife." I chuckled as I sat down on the bed.

"Hi Olinda."

"Please.. I'm begging you.. I'm bowing before you.. Please leave my husband alone. We have kids. Two. They still need their father."

"Olinda your husband never told me he was married. Honestly the only reason your husband is with me is because of how powerful my father is. I don't even love your husband."

"He's leaving me. Said he found someone else."

"He's a sleeky bastard. I don't want him and I'm going to leave him don't worry."

"Thank you so much."

"Have a nice evening Olinda." I said as I dropped the call. I knew there was something about the bastard!

CHAPTER 9

[JANINE]

I looked at my board for a while, trying to fill in the missing points. Trying to find out what was missing. I was missing something, a key. A key that I was supposed to use to unlock all Big daddy's secrets. Khanya knew where the girls were but.. The girls were not there. That was an old location. I couldn't really tell if she didn't know or she was lying but then after hearing her sister I was hoping she wasn't lying. I put my mug of coffee down after a while. I hadn't slept all night. No matter how many people that worked for big daddy I was getting, I was still not getting anywhere. I was still stuck on the same place. I wasn't moving forward.

I rubbed my eyes as I heard the door bell. I was very much sure it was still before 6 a.m. I walked to the door wondering how the person had gotten around the gate, I was pretty sure the intercom didn't ring. I opened the door slowly, I knew how to fight. I could get at it with my hands. I gasped as I looked at my visitor.

"Wanna go for a run?" He asked smiling. I chuckled. "Is this a joke?"

"Nope.. I'm serious." I looked at him, I couldn't stop smiling. I just couldn't believe it. Believe that King was right in front of me. Right there on my door step. "Maybe you need to go and change. Into your gym wear." He suggested. I just could not

bring myself to even believe it.

"Ok.." I opened the door wider for him. He walked inside the house, he didn't wait for me to lead him to the lounge. He knew his way around. I rushed to my bedroom then wracked through my clothes checking if I had any gym wear. I sighed when I realized I didn't but my sweatpants and T-shirt seemed like a very good innovation to the situation.

Quickly I put on the sweatpants and T-shirt together with my sport sneakers then walked out.

"I don't have a gym suit but.. Can't this do?" He looked at me, still smiling. His hair was still tousled. Still messy and Lord did he still look good.

"You look more than good. You look beautiful."

"Ok.. You don't have to say that."

"But you do look good. We can go now.." He said standing up. He was also wearing sweatpants. Adidas sweatpants and a T-shirt. We walked outside. It was still dark.

"Ready?" He asked as we walked out of the gate.

"Yeah.." It had been time without running a long distance. After about 20 minutes I felt as if my lungs were failing me. My limbs just couldn't anymore. We were closer to the nearby park I had spotted yesterday when I was coming from work. I pushed till we got there. King didn't seem affected by anything. He was doing just fine while I was on a death tour. The moment we reached the park I threw myself on the ground. My lungs were on fire as I gasped for oxygen. King looked at me as I panted. It took me a while to get in control of myself. It felt as if I had ran hundred of kilometres.

"How are you feeling?" I forced myself to sit up straight.

"I'm better now."

"You are not a regular runner?"

"I'm a regular thief chaser. Thug chaser." He chuckled as he sat besides me.

"Today was the first day. I'm sure next time you will do much better." I looked at him, there was something about the way he said next time that made me feel giddy.

"Yeah.. I guess."

"So you always wanted to be a cop?" I shook my head. We were in the morning twilight sitting by the park. People who were running passed us from time to time again.

"No.. It wasn't always my dream."

"Then what was your dream?" I laughed pulling my knees towards my chest so that I hug them. "I wanted to be a business woman. I wanted to be that powerful lady who could get anything she wanted. That kind of lady people admired. That kind of lady who possessed from every angle. I know it's silly but.. That's who I wanted to be."

"What happened then?"

"My mom was killed. I was left with my dad. My step dad. He loved me like I was his own even though he had kids of his own. Everything was ok when mom was alive but when she passed everything turned south. My dad worked at a mine so most of the time he wasn't home. He really worked so hard to keep the family going. All of our relatives left us. They didn't like me. They didn't like me because I wasn't my dad's biological daughter. It was hard. The constant insults. The physical abuse. The.. The

sexual abuse. The emotional abuse. It was all too much.

"I was 18 by then. Things were hard. I told my dad. He didn't believe it. It's like they had poisoned him against me. When I told him he got so angry he kicked me out. I was 18. I didn't have anywhere to go. I was stranded. I had expected it though. Deep down I knew the day was going to come. The day.. the day I was going to realize that I had always been alone. And it came. I was unprepared. It came as a surprise. I slept under a bridge. I'm sure wherever you come from.. There are people who sleep under the bridge. I slept there on a rainy day. In the cold. I relayed on my body heat to keep me alive. I don't know how but the following day I found myself in a hospital. That's where I woke up." I looked at King. "It really took me a while to realize I was in the hospital. When I did I thought Dad had come after me. That he had finally.. found out the truth. I was very disappointed when I found out that.. He wasn't the one. He didn't come after me. I felt like death and just lay there wondering what my future held. Wondering why God hated me so much. Wondering what exactly I did. My good Samaritan was Thulani. He.. He was caring.. kind. Full of sympathy.

"I told him what happened. Why I was under the bridge. He understood. He explained he understood because he too was once under that kind of situation. That his parents passed on and he was left with his brother, his younger brother. He offered to accommodate me. You know Thulani was like that brother I never had. I met his younger brother. He was a year older than me and was studying law. Thulani was the one taking his brother to school. They were so close and he.. he loved his brother.

They had this.. this wonderful relationship. The love was just.. It was just deep you know. And they welcomed me with open arms. Thulani told me to go back to school. He bought the uniforms. Everything. He was 28 and working so he could afford it. He had a nice car, a nice house. I don't know what happened but.. His brother and I started getting close. He was.. attentive. His name was Lungile. He was a Gemini and so was I. We shared so many things in common. I told him about my dreams. My ambitions. My.. my fears, strengths. We got more than close and.. things happened.. things happened. He loved me or I thought he did. I loved him too though we didn't tell Thulani. It was now about 6 months since I had been staying with them..-" "Why didn't you tell Thulani?" The way King said Thulani made me laugh. He had a weird accent.

"Well.. I was scared. I didn't want him to think I was forward. I didn't want him to think that I was a whore. I mean.. I was already shagging his brother in his house. What did that make me look like? So.. One day when Thulani came back from work he was different. The way he looked at me was different. I wasn't the only one who noticed. So did Lungile. Thulani kept up with his different.. behavior for a while just till one day I was sleeping. I never bothered locking the door. I mean.. I was in a safe place. But little did I know. Thulani came to my room. He told me about his.. Undying love for me. About how he loved me since the first day he met me. About how he was a bit nervous about telling me all along. I was shocked, I mean this was the man I saw as a brother. I didn't even know what to say.. but he didn't pressurize me into anything. He told me he would give me time to think

about it. That's when the gifts started. He started showering me with gifts.

"I told Lungile.. He.. He suggested we break up. I couldn't believe him. I mean.. This was the guy I was in a relationship with. He was supposed to stand up for us. But no.. No.. He suggested we break up. I was hurt. Beyond hurt. A few days later Thulani wanted my response. I told him no. A simple no. I don't know but.. You know he stood up. Walked out but only to come back a few minutes later." I chuckled. "He told me that I was ungrateful. That I didn't appreciate him. That he took me to school. That.. I could have been a street kid without him. I don't know how but he knew about me and Lungile. He knew and he called me a whore. A dirty whore. That's when he started taking off my clothes forcefully. I told him no! No! I did but.. He continued. We fought for a while till all my energy was gone. It was at night. Lungile was sleeping in the room besides mine. He heard my screams. My pleads. But he didn't come out. Thulani had his way with me. He raped me in his house. The following morning after Thulani left for a work I went to Lungile's room. He was there. You know.. I was hurt. I was so hurt. Just looking at him I felt my heart break into tiny pieces. I asked him. I asked why he didn't come out to help me. His response was a shock. He told he couldn't interfere because I had lied to him. Lied to him about not wanting his brother. Lied to him. He said I was always in a relationship with his brother and I was just playing him. It's like he had forgotten everything. All along I had been nothing but honest with Lungile. It hurt. It hurt so bad. I walked out of his room, out of the house and went to the police. I told

myself I wasn't going to be a silent ball. That I was going to tell. I reported Thulani to the police. When he was questioned he said we were in a relationship and we stayed together. That I was a gold digger.

"The police didn't believe him at first till his brother, Lungile, backed him up. He told the police that I was even seducing him. That I was a slut and the case was dismissed. It was over. Now I couldn't go back to Thulani. Now I was on my own. I left. That was the last day I saw Thulani and Lungile. I was glad I had written my matric. I went back home. Getting back home all my step siblings were gone. My Dad was sick. He looked closer to death. I took care of him. Took care of us. I found a job at some restaurant and I took care of us. When my results came out I had done so well. It seemed as if Dad had money he had stored somewhere. So I went to a college and studied being a police officer. Two years ago my dad's healthy really got.. Serious. He started hallucinating. In his head mom was still alive. He believed she was alive. He got diagnosed with schizophrenia. I couldn't afford his treatment. I met Kevin at the hospital. He stopped to talk to me. It seemed as if everyone knew him. The respect he carried around was just too much. He got in my father's ward and they talked. The nurse explained to him my father's healthy. He offered to help but deep down I knew Kevin was just another Thulani. He was old. My dad begged me to say yes. Said he still wanted to live.

"So I said yes but I knew I had made a deal with the devil himself. I researched about this Kevin and I found out he was a politician, and he had recently divorced his wife or his wife had

divorced him and that he had a new wife. I also found out that he had a daughter. Somehow the fact that he had a new wife calmed me down. She was so pretty and young but that calmed me down. He paid for the first treatment but the second treatment came with demands. Demands that my father agreed to behind my back. And that's how I got married to a man I hate so much."

"Kevin Robert is your husband?" I looked at him, surprised that he knew him.

"Yes."

"Why can't you leave him?"

"I can't afford the bills. My father's bills. Kevin threatened he would make me pay him back all the money he paid for my Dad's treatment. Besides that he will kill him. It's so simple for him to do that."

"So there's no way you can leave him?" I shrugged. We were silent for a while before he stood up.

"Can I please be your friend?" My jaw dropped straight to the ground. "What?"

"I want to be your friend. Please.." I laughed nodding. I hadn't expected that from him. I let him help me up.

"You are beyond strong. You didn't even shed a single tear."

"You never know how strong you are until being strong is the only option you have."

"When do you start work?" The sun was out. "8 though I start at 7. What time is it?" I asked already walking back home fast. I hated being late and today I knew I was going to be late.

"Hey.." King said grabbing my hand. "It's 7 right now. I want to

take you out for breakfast. Please.."

"King I-"

"Please.. We won't take that long." I sighed as I realized I was actually considering it. Getting back home he waited for me as I took a quick shower. I reminisced the previous minutes of my life. I couldn't fathom why I had told him all that. For good 11 years I had kept this all to myself. I didn't visit no therapist, no shrink. It was surprising that I had told King without hesitation. Maybe it was because he understood me. Or did he? Maybe he was just another Thulani. Every man I had ever met in my life was just a Thulani undercover. I didn't trust nor give completely. There was nothing to give either way. What could I possibly give?

I had never been a heel person. I didn't like heels. I didn't feel comfortable with them but surprisingly I still wore them. I took time fixing my hair. It was short but not so short anymore. It could make a mini afro if blow dried. I didn't take much time blow drying it. I looked at myself on the vanity mirror then laughed. I looked different. The heels made me look different. Everything else was me expect my hair and the colourless lipstick that was on my lips and the diamond studs earrings together with the heels.

I grabbed my bag then walked out, I was pretty sure he was even tired of waiting. He was still on same position watching TV. He looked at me for a while. He smiled after a while, the giddy feeling returned making it hard for me not to smile back.

"I swear to you... Even those thugs won't even refuse being caught by you." I forced a straight face.

"Ok. That's enough. We can go."

"Yeah." He stood up and we walked out.

Arriving at the restaurant we were in different cars. I used mine because I had to get to the police station immediately after the breakfast. We sat on an unoccupied table before the waiter approached us with the menu.

"I will have your breakfast special please." I ordered.

"Same but please make me black tea."

"Yes." The waiter said then walked away.

"How does it feel to be married to one man with two other woman?"

"I really don't care. I don't even love him and also again I don't even know them those women. Latoya.. The one who came first.. She's all about the money. She doesn't care about anything but the money then Lelo.. She.. The reason why she married Kevin was because he made her feel as if she owed him. Her varsity fees were covered by him. All her student loans. The gallery she owns today.. He bought it for her. She's just trapped. And either way.. It was either her sister or her. She made a sacrifice for her sister."

"How old is the sister?"

"Lelo is 28.. The sister is 22."

"So all of you can't leave him?"

"Pretty much.. unless he dies.. which is unlikely or maybe if he gets back with his wife."

"So death and him getting back with his wife are the only options?"

"Yes." We kept quiet as the waiter placed our breakfast before

us.

"You.. You have a lot to give." He said at last.

"What?" I asked confused by his statement.

"You have a lot to give. You.. You have a heart of pure gold just that it's locked away. I want to find those keys. I want to find the keys to your golden heart. I know you are scared. I know you have doubts. A lot of them but.. Please.. Give me a chance. A chance to find those keys." I looked at him, unable to move or talk or just do anything. I was frozen to my chair.

"You can think about it. I won't pressurize you into anything. But when you are thinking about it I want you to answer this question for me.. It's simple actually.. What do you stand to lose with me? I know the saying of better stick to the devil you know than the angel you don't but is the devil really worth it?" I forced myself to break the intensity between us. I looked down on my food and started eating. Or at least tried to start eating.

"What if you can't escape the devil? Then what?" I asked still looking down on my plate.

"But maybe the Angel can help you." I raised my eyes and looked at him. I couldn't stand the electricity that was sparkling between us.

"So.. Where do you come from?" I asked changing the subject.

"Well.. I'm from France.. But I stay in London most of the time." I chuckled.

"What?"

"No.. It's just that I'm chasing after a French thug. Better not be a thug."

"What if I am?" He asked with a smug on his face cocking his

head to one side.

"Then I will catch you."

"I'm a thug. And I want to steal your heart. That's all."

"Ummh.. Thank you. For the breakfast. For.. the run." I said standing up.

"Do you think you can away from this?"

"Running away from such is my speciality."

"You can't run from this Janine. But.. I will give you time to let it sink. Take.." He said giving me a piece of paper. "When I read this.. I felt I was reading something that you wrote." I took the paper from him then quickly walked away. If I could, I would have ran. Getting in my car I immediately started it then drove straight to work. I regretted letting him that close to me. That was the worst mistake I had ever made. Pulling up next to Orlando's car I took a deep breath. I couldn't be shaken like this. I took the piece of paper he had given me. It was a poem.

"My condolences to anyone who has ever lost me,
And to anyone who got lost in me,
Or, to anyone who felt they took a loss
With me.

My apologies for the misunderstanding
Or the lack of relief,

I'm sorry you missed the God in me,
And I'm sorry you missed the light.

I'm sorry you forgot the way I arose like
The moon.

Night after night with the burden to
Forgive.

Eager to feed you everything.
See, I'm a holy woman,
I know what it's like to give life to being
Without needing to press skin against one another.
I've practiced how to hold my tongue long enough,
I'm afraid I forgot to say goodbye,
I'm afraid you're under the impression
That I was made to please you.
I was under the impression you understood better.
The truth is, I'm a super woman,
And some days I'm an angry woman,
And some days I'm a crazy woman,
For still waiting, for still loving harder
Even if I'm aching,
For still trusting that I'm still worth
The most,
For still searching for someone to understand me better."
I blinked and warm tears cascaded down my cheeks with ease.

CHAPTER 10

NOMPUMELELO]

I looked at myself on the mirror, fixing myself for the last time. I had arrived the previous day at night. I went via London. I looked good if I say so myself. I was still taken with Paris. Its beauty was undeniably awesome. I had planned to go on a tour in the morning then later visit one or two galleries. I was putting on a high waist flared red African print long skirt that reached the floor, it had a vent on my right leg that started just above my mid

thigh. On top I was putting on a crop top that looked more like a sports bra than a crop top of the same African print. I had my fanny pack on my waist which was white and my white sneakers. I had curled my hair, it was pretty long itself. I put on my sunglasses after putting on makeup and stuffing my phone and small camera in the fanny pack. Walking out of the hotel I had long booked I let the fresh air hit me. I started walking in the streets of Paris, not minding anything. Letting the fresh air hit my skin lightly. I managed to get in the subway. It wasn't that full so I managed to get a sit that I wanted. I took as many pictures as I wanted. The subway enabled me to see a lot. When I finally got off I was closer to the B Paris Gallery. It was one of the best galleries and I was just going to pass by. From where I got off the subway to the gallery it was almost a five minutes distance. As I walked to the gallery I stole a glimpse of someone though that person was not looking at me. I was 99.9% sure it was Julie's brother. She didn't manage to set me up yesterday because her brother was travelling out of country. I held my breath as I got more nearer to him. He turned before before I approached him and there he was. I felt my skin get hotter at just staring at him. Everything about this guy was just perfect. The way he looked at me I swear my knees got weak. I walked over to him while removing my sunglasses.

"Nompilo?" I chuckled.

"Nompumelelo.. Luthando." He smiled putting his phone away. His smile was just toxic, as toxic as how he smelt.

"What a coincidence."

"Yeah.. What brings you here?" I asked letting myself get

confident. Something told me this was just going to end badly but I wanted him. I wanted him regardless the fact that I was married. Regardless the fact that maybe he had a girlfriend.

"Business. You?"

"Business too.. I own an art gallery and I was invited to some museum though right now I'm viewing the wonderful city."

"Julie did mention you owned an art gallery. It must be doing well." He said, trying to keep his eyes from my exposed thigh and cleavage. I raised my chest a bit, the fact that he was noticing me made me very confident.

"Yes it is.. though I'm very lonely. I mean.. I don't know anyone around here. I miss home already, I wish I brought company." His eyes were stuck on my cleavage. I had an hour glass body. That moment I thanked the heavens for blessing me with such a body because it seemed as if the man, the dark angel that was standing in front of me couldn't resist it. "Yeah.. Ummh I have to go. I will see you around.."

"Yes..!" I took a deep breath as he started walking away. Do something! I screamed to myself inwardly. "Uhh wait.." He stopped then looked at me.

"Yeah?"

I smiled. "We can do breakfast tomorrow.. If you are free. Or if you want.." I stammered. I couldn't seem to get hold of myself. I was just a hot mess. He looked at me for a while. "I'm kind of busy tomorrow.." He said. "I'm taking my girlfriend out." It felt as if cold water had just been poured on me. It was so cold that it immediately put out the burning fire. I ran out of words to say. I knew deep down that he had a girlfriend but I never thought he

would mention it in front of me just like that. I chuckled. "You can bring her with. It's still ok." He walked back to me till he was a few inches away. My throat tightened.

"I don't think she would like to meet you." He whispered "Then she can stay." He looked at me for a while with a smirk before he walked away. This time I didn't bother calling him. I let him walk away. I released my breath that I had been holding all along. My palms were even sweaty. I couldn't believe I had just done that. I respected people's relationships. I wasn't a relationship wrecker but with Luthando I wasn't going to hold back. He wasn't married. I wasn't married. He could be anyone's man. He was still on the market. I put back my sunglasses before I walked to the gallery. I don't know why but the fire that had been put away was back. It was more intensive than anything. It was.. so much strong. The gallery was everything I thought it would be. It was exquisite. Different from mine. I even met with the owner. He was at about his 50's. He explained how and when he got the gallery. It was his inheritance. The kind of artist he worked with were so impressive and so was the art pieces they sold. I didn't blame his gallery to be one of the best. He even gave me some contacts on some best artist. After I left I treated myself to lunch. All along I was just thinking about Luthando. I wondered how his girlfriend was. When I got back to the hotel the first thing I did was stalk him. I found him with ease on social media. I checked his pictures, checking if there was a girlfriend. There was non expect some girl who used to tag him though it was about 2 years ago. I didn't let that scare me because she wasn't that pretty. I was not someone who shamed

woman but this wasn't just any woman. I called Julie before I slept.

"Hello?"

"Julie.. It's me."

"Hey.. How is Paris? How.. are you finding it? You were supposed to call hours back."

"Yeah.. I'm sorry. Anyways that's not why I called. I saw Luthando."

"In Paris?"

"Yes. In Paris. I told you.. He has a girlfriend."

"Uhh you saw her?"

"No.. But he mentioned it." She laughed.

"She's probably trash. Look.. That can't stop you. Which hotel is he in?"

"I don't know. I didn't ask."

"Ok.. Look I'm 100% sure his girlfriend is not that pretty. He likes you.. I know he does."

"Or maybe he just thinks I might be a good smash."

"Great! Look let him in your panties.. You will take it from there."

"Are you well? You want me to let him sleep with me so that he tells me he has a girlfriend after he's done?"

"No.. Look.. You give him your best game ever. No nigga can leave a bomb ass pussy. You can win him. I.. think his his girlfriend is married."

"What?"

"Yeah.. she's not going to leave her husband. She's a gold digger. All you have to do is show him that you can be a wife."

"But I'm married too Julie.."

"He doesn't have to know all that."

"You want me to keep secrets? That's a bad start."

"No.. Listen to this.. Kevin is with his wife in New York right?"

"Yes.."

"We all know he's going to get back with Lana. They have a child. A 23 years old child. They belong together. He's going to leave you. Luthando doesn't have to know because soon enough you will have divorced." I sighed.

"So what should I do now? I hate that I'm this desperate! It makes me just sick!"

"Listen.. You like Luthando.. And he likes you too. His girlfriend must a cheap girl. You know.. a slay Queen."

"Like Toya?"

"Exactly like Latoya! All you have to is show him that you are someone with class, someone reserved.. Someone who is not materialistic but don't come off as a slut directly. Be a lady of elegance. Be sexy but classy."

"That can work."

"Yes.. You can even get pregnant. Luthando have been talking about family lately. He says he wants to get married and have kids-"

"No no no no! No!"

"Listen.. You have always wanted kids Lelo.."

"Yes.. Yes I have always wanted to have kids but not this way. Not this way. I'm not going to trap him. No.. I will not do that. If we are not meant to be then we are not. I can't help it. I will not be that kind of woman."

"Listen.. It's not like you are trapping him. He also wants this. He

wants kids. Lelo I just want what's best for my brother. I don't want him to start a family with someone who is not suitable."

"And I get that but-"

"Lelo.. You want him. You guys can get married. The moment you get pregnant he's going to leave everything. You are perfect for him."

"No.. I'm sorry. I can't do that. I have to go."

"Lelo wait-" I hung up. I couldn't believe her. I couldn't believe she had suggested that. That she had suggested I trap him with a baby. I walked to the bathroom then washed my face. I wasn't that desperate. I looked at myself on the mirror.

"He's not for you. He's never going to be yours. You will meet your own one day. And when you do.. You will be exposed to abundance happiness." I said to myself as I stared at myself on the mirror. I wiped my face then walked out of the bathroom, out of the room. I needed a walk to just help clear my mind. To just rethink everything. When I stepped out of the hotel I used the other way, not the one I had used in the morning. I started walking getting rid of Julie in my head. If Luthando wanted me then it wasn't supposed to be because I pushed him into it.

Pushing him into it by trapping him with a baby. I stopped on my tracks when I saw a house like which was written 'Fortune Teller' I didn't believe in such, I never did. I found it to be too.. shady for my liking. Too deceiving. I stood there for a while till I found myself walking to the house. It was after dusk. The door was closed. I knocked but there was no response. The voice in my head told me to leave immediately but the curiosity in me won. I tried the door and surprisingly it opened. It was dark

and spooky.

"Ummh hello? Anyone here?" I said as I slowly walked further inside the house. As I walked in further I felt the hairs at the back of my neck stand. I shivered. I regretted coming to this place. All I wanted right there was to run away and never look back. I screamed as I felt a voice behind me.

"I'm sorry.. I'm sorry.. I'm not a ghost.. I'm sorry." I now had my hand on my mouth as I stared at the lady who was holding a candle. I was shaking.

"I'm really sorry. I didn't mean to scare you." She continued with her soft voice.

"I'm Kcacilda. You are?"

"I.. Ummh.. I am Lelo."

"Ow.. Hi. Come.. please." She said walking away. I slowly followed after her as my breathing went back to normal. My heart beat was calming down. We got to this other room. It was lighted with candles. There was mat on the floor. I looked around the room standing by the door looking for any goblins.

"Shoes.." She said before I walked inside the room. I removed my sneakers then walked inside. You can sit Lelo." I slowly sat down.

"There's nothing to be scared of. There are no spirits roaming around here or chairs which move on their own."

"Can you really see the future?" She smiled.

"Depends on what you believe. Do you want to know your future?" I looked at her for a while.

"I don't believe in such."

"A lot of people also don't."

"You can tell me my destiny." She smiled then took out a crystal

ball.

"Before I do anything.. I want you to know the future can always change. It's not really guaranteed it will happen as I see it. You may change it. Someone else might. The decisions you make today can change your tomorrow."

"Ok.." She closed her eyes then started saying some weird things. She was holding my hand, she kept squeezing my hand tightly as she said her weird things.

She opened her eyes after a while. I sat there wondering if I could classify her under witches. I wondered if maybe she consulted white ancestors or something. She didn't let go of my hand as her other hand held the crystal ball.

She let go of my hand after a while then put the ball away.

"What did you see?"

"I see death. A painful death. Confusion. Tears. Conflict. Heartbreak. More heartbreak. More tears. More conflict, conflict at heart and blood then death again." I took a deep breath.

"Death?"

"Yes. Death."

"Am I going to die?"

"It might be you. Someone around you. Someone who is linked to you."

"Can I avoid it?"

"Yes but I don't know how. I can only see but.. Be cautious of your heart. I saw conflict. This conflict led to a dilemma but after this dilemma there was a heartbreak. Tears were shed."

"This.. This is..I'm sorry but I don't get this and I'm not going to. So I'm going to leave."

"Lelo be cautious of your heart. Your heart is your biggest enemy. Be very cautious of your heart for your heart is your biggest villain. Be very tentative with your heart." She said, now raising her voice. I stood up. She started saying her weird things loudly. Quickly I ran out after taking my shoes, not looking back.

[LATOYA]

I ran red lipstick on my lips before doing the final touches. I was wearing one of the lingerie I had bought earlier on. It was a red number. I put on my new silky night dress on then stepped away from the mirror. He still hadn't tried anything. We shared the bed last night but I guess I was too tired to even care if he tried anything or not. Today when I woke he left. He had somewhere to be. He came back just after lunch but I was glad because I got the chance to do a bit of shopping. I personally bought the lingerie for him. He was all I was thinking about. I was tired of imagining what our sex would be like. He wasn't in the room, he had left minutes ago. He didn't say why but either way it was a blessing in disguise because I got to change into my number. It did look good on me, I couldn't even complain about the price. I waited for him at the center of the room. He came back after a while holding a box of pizza and a bottle of wine.

"I ordered pizza for-" his sentence was cut short when his eyes fell on me. I had really gone all out to look good for him. Lust dissolved in his eyes.

"You like?" I asked taking off the gown.

"Is that.. all for me?"

"Yes." He put the pizza and bottle of whisky on the dressing

table then walked towards me.

"You look... I don't even know what to say."

"Don't you like it?"

"No.. I like it very much. At this stage I'm beyond liking. I wonder how you would look.. Without it." His seductive voice had me leaking.

"You can always find out." He bit his lower lip. My body was already reacting at the anticipation of what was about to happen. I wanted his hands on my body. The moment his hands came into contact with my skin I felt goosebumps erupt from my stomach. My body shivered at his touch.

He moved his hands from my waist down to my ass. He gently squeezed it. A slight moan escaped my lips. My heart was already racing. He leaned over and kissed the corner of my lips. My body was under an intense tremor. I couldn't even locate myself. I was floating in the air.

"Can I wipe off the lipstick?" I nodded almost immediately. He picked up my gown then wiped off the lipstick. He threw the gown down after he was done. Just the way he was looking at me made want to come undone. The intensity in his eyes. I swear he could just take me right there.

He leaned over again then licked my lips. I could easily smell nicotine and mint from him and I loved the smell. It was intoxicating. He licked my lips again making me moan more loudly. I felt dizzy. I wanted to endure everything he was doing to me. He lastly covered my lips with his, sucking and nibbling on them. My hands were on his broad chest. He opened my mouth with tounge then glided his tounge inside my mouth. I stood on

my toes as I wrapped my arms around his neck then he picked me up with much ease and placed me on the bed. His lips didn't leave mine, his soft sweet lips, his hand went down to my lace panty and slipped inside. I moaned in his mouth as he pressed my clit. His lips pulled away from mine then started kissing my neck as he started rubbing me. I didn't know what to do with myself. He slipped his hand out of my panties then took off my bra, followed by my panties. From his actions I could tell he wanted to be buried deep in me that instant. He pulled his pants just a bit down. His lips were soon back on mine as he settled between my legs. With one swift move he rammed into me with so much fierce that had me screaming. It was like metal cutting into skin but with the pain was exquisite pleasure. I felt so full, I had never felt that full before. He felt so big. My nails dug into his skin as he set a steady rhythm. His jabs were steady but hard and deep. I shut my eyes tightly feeling each and every thrust.

CHAPTER 11

[LATOYA]

"Jimmy.." I said as he picked up his phone looking at the view of Paris from the balcony. I could see the Eiffel tower from here.

"Who's this?" A female voice answered. He was still at it, I was sure if he didn't stop picking up random sluts he was going to catch AIDS.

"This is give Jimmy his phone!" I said annoyed still looking at the tower.

"Excuse me?"

"Give Jimmy his phone!" I said again, trying to keep my voice on

check, I didn't want to wake Luthando up. I heard voices through phone and after a while it was Jimmy at the end of the line.

"Who's this?" He asked.

"Latoya.."

"Ohh babes.. Jeez! Where are you with this kind of number?"

"I'm out of country at the moment."

"Ow.. So how can I help you beautiful?"

"The plan.."

"The plan?"

"Yes. The money."

"Ohh the plan! Ok.. What about it?"

"It should play out. Jimmy I need the money."

"I thought it was too dangerous for you Señora.." I took a deep breath.

"I don't care anymore. It's a die or win."

"Are you sure about this? You know there's no backing out right? Once you are in.. You are in. No going back."

"I know. He's out of country right now. He will be gone for more than three months. I need to get it before he comes back."

"Ok. Then I guess it's time we visit the black board. Try to figure out where most of his money is."

"Yes."

"How long are you gone for?"

"I think in a week I will be back. I'm..-" I kept quiet when I heard Luthando's voice. He was calling me.

"Look Jimmy I have to go, I will call you later ok?"

"Ok, later babe." He said then hung up but by then Luthando was already standing by the slide door looking at me.

"Yes Latisha.. I will.. I love you sweetheart. Say hi to Latifah and Aunty.. Ok." I pretended to hang up while really I was deleting Jimmy's call.

"Hey.." I said putting my phone away and walking towards Luthando. He was in his sweatpants and nothing else. Seeing him like that made last night's events to come back fervently in my mind. He was gifted but furthermore.. he was a beast. He was skilled, more skilled than anyone I had ever been with and he was rough. Not too rough..but enough rough. The kind of rough that had me screaming his name while scratching his back.

"Who was that?" He asked though I couldn't read him. He just had a.. unreadable expression on his face. "My sister, Latisher."

"You have a sister?"

I smiled. "Sisters. They are two."

"Ohh.. come here." I walked towards him. I was putting on my gown and my gown only. I stood before him, looking at him carefully. Luthando was just.. too hot. Too hot and too shady too. I looked at the tattoos that were on his left arm, the whole arm. I had never been a fan of tattoos but seeing Luthando's completely changed my perspective. They looked so good and sexy on him.

He placed one hand on my waist pulling me closer to him as his other hand opened my silky gown exposing my nakedness. He cupped one breast in his palm making me inhale sharply.

"You look beautiful.." He whispered seductively as he ran the hand which opened my gown up and down my thigh.

"And you feel.. amazing. I want you.. Now." He said before he

abruptly picked me up, making me wrap my legs around his waist. He turned and pressed me against the slide door. I was already panting, waiting for him to fill me up. Slowly he sunk into me, filling every corner. My teeth sunk in my lower lip as my nails dug on his back. Just him sliding into my warmth was so delicious. I closed my eyes as I took in the pleasure he was giving into me. His thrust were slowly, deliberate and controlled. He picked up speed after a while and I knew the beast had been pulled out. After a while I was tightening around him, releasing all around him. His hand found it's way to my weave then began pulling. It was painful but I didn't care. As he lost control, hitting into me harder deeper again and again my toes began to curl and I felt myself build up again. When he shot his seed deep in me, I unraveled with him as my body tensed. I wrapped my arms around his neck as I tried to calm my harsh breathing. After a while he was walking back inside the room with me. My body was tired, it had suffered enough orgasms. The moment he put me down I found it hard to keep my eyelids open. I was tired and sweaty.. and I just wanted to sleep.

Opening my eyes again I was alone on the bed. Slowly I sat upright as I blinked a couple of times trying to get my eyes to adjust to the sun. Getting out of bed I staggered around before I found my balance. I felt thoroughly well fucked. Before I arrived at the bathroom I heard a phone ringing. A phone which was not mine. My eyes prowled around the room searching for the phone till I came across it. It was Luthando's. I stood there for a while looking at it ring before I finally forced my legs to walk up to it. Getting to it, it had stopped ringing. I knew the saying of 'don't

get mad when you get what you are looking for because you had been looking for it' but I ignored it totally as I picked his phone up. The person who had been calling was Julie. She had left a message. Quickly I opened it and read through.

*Mom z nt hppy abt u jst
leavn wtht tlln any1. Whr
u? Anyways she hopes u
nolonger wth ē cunt. U
shud luk for a real wife nt
prostitutes. Call whn u
gt ths. We nd to
discuss yr potential
wife*

I chuckled putting his phone away. Julie was just extreme. I knew she didn't like me but I didn't think it was to that extent. I walked to the bathroom. I didn't dwell much on Julie, if her brother wanted me then there was nothing she could do. I stood under the shower thinking about Jimmy. Jimmy and I were not friends exactly, we had a mutual friend. Nothando. I knew Jimmy through Nothando. The first time I came up with the plan I was desperate for money but I lay the idea off when I found out what Kevin did to one of his man who betrayed him. I had heard him over the phone in the study, he thought there was no one home. Since that day I just got scared but not anymore. I wanted the money and I was going to get it one way or the other.

What I knew was that the money wasn't in any of Kevin's accounts. He had a lot of money stacked somewhere though I wasn't really sure where he got it. I knew if anyone knew where

the money was, it was either Rockelle or Jessica. His other daughter that Rockwell didn't know about but Lana knew. That was the main reason they divorced. Jessica resided in Durban. I had to find a way to get her and who could do the job better than Jimmy. He was good looking but not my type. After a while I walked out of the bathroom. I changed into my white high waist shorts, white vest tucked in with a white blazer. After putting on my heels I brushed my weave. I had no plan today expect for shopping, maybe I could visit the Eiffel tower. I took my phone and called Mazwi. He picked up after a while.

"Latoya.."

"I have been waiting."

"Look my wife called Rocky." I laughed.

"So? We had a deal."

"Latoya you know how Rocky is! What should I do?"

"That's for you to figure out. We are running out of time."

"I will go see her today."

"Make sure she believes that you are not married. God! Why can't you ever do anything right?"

"Maybe if you stopped barking orders at me I will do things accordingly!" He snarled.

"Mazwi don't forget you owe me."

"With you reminding me every second you get I can never forget!"

"Good. Get Rockelle. You marrying Rockelle is as important as you breathing." I said then dropped the call. If I didn't need Mazwi so much I would have long thrown him to the wolves. I looked at myself on the mirror. If things played smoothly no one

could get hurt. I turned and looked at the door as Luthabdo walked in. He was already dressed in sweatpants, a hoodie and sneakers.

"Finally awake."

I smiled. "Hey.."

"I wanted to take you out for breakfast."

"Ow.. I would love that." I stood up then took my new handbag that I had gotten yesterday.

"Let's go.." He took my hand and led me out of the room. In my happy ending I prayed Luthando would be part of it.

CHAPTER 12

[ROCKELLE]

I packed my bottle of water in my gym bag in the kitchen together with my lunch. After that I put on my headphones then turned to walk out of the kitchen. Lungile was standing there in sweatpants and a T-shirt holding a bottle of water. I could see he was from a run though all along I had been thinking that he had already left for work. I took off my headphones.

"Morning.."

"Hey.. Off to work already?"

"Yeah.. I don't want to be late."

"Why don't you just start your own thing... I mean you are getting more money on the part time job than the actual job."

"I don't have qualifications to be a trainer."

"Nobody has qualifications for anything this days. All I'm saying is you can do your own thing till we manage to find you a suitable job."

"We?"

"Yes we.. I mean.. Siblings help each other out so.."

"Thank you.. But really there's no need. I'm doing ok."

"You can get a better job with proper working hours. With a good pay." He said as he put his water on the kitchen counters.

"But on the side you can keep on the part time job. Get more clients that you will work with an hour or so after work."

"That can work but I-"

"You don't have any qualification I know. You can be a PA."

"A personal assistant?"

"Yes. It's actually better than being a gym trainer and sale's manager."

"Ok. I will look into a few companies and see if I can get an interview though I doubt they will give it to me."

"I have already looked into a few companies."

"You did?"

"Yeah.. Your working hours at the gym are the worst. Your boss must be some selfish bastard."

"So which companies did you look into?"

"I think maybe you should check in with the Mokwena Law Firm."

"What makes you think they will give me a job or even grant me an interview? Mokwena law firm is one of the best. They can't possibly hire people with no qualifications."

"You never know till you try it Rockelle."

"I know they are going to reject me Lungile. I just don't want to waste my time..-"

"All you have to do is try them." I sighed, there was nothing wrong in trying them.

"Ok. Let me go to work i-"

"I set an appointment for you today. I know it's short notice and you have to go to work but it's really worth a try."

"I'm going to lose the only job I have if I don't go to work Lungile. The only job I can ever get."

"Sometimes you need to be optimistic, every cloud has a silver lining." I chuckled.

"Yeah. I guess it's worth a try. What time are they expecting me?" He looked at his watch.

"In.. 30 minutes."

"Ok.. Let me go and prepare but first I will call the gym."

"Yeah.." I walked back to my borrowed room then put my gym bag down as I dialed Kelly's number. She picked up after a while.

"Rocky.."

"Hey.. I won't be in.. I'm going to come a few hours late."

"Ow.. It's ok and either way Vince isn't coming in today and your first client is after lunch."

"Great! Bye.."

"Bye." I then hung up. I took out my black body hugging dress. It was still new, I had gotten it from a fashion show I once attended with Gail. I put it on then took my red bottoms. They were a gift from dad, a gift that I never bothered myself with. I tied my curly hair into a tight neat bun before I put my makeup on. I had to look at least professional. After running MAC's Ruby Woo lipstick on my lips I grabbed my handbag and I was good to go. Walking back to the kitchen I felt more confident. More in control. The silence in the house told me Lungile was already gone. I peaked through the kitchen window and his car wasn't there. I took my

phone and called a cab. I was glad Cathy was paying me immediately after each session. When the cab arrived I quickly walked out of the house, locking behind me. I had always heard about Mokwena law firm. When I was still in varsity almost everyone wanted to be an intern there. It was a big company but according to what I had heard, the owner of the law firm was young. During orientation he was there only that I missed the orientation because I was nursing a hangover. Arriving at the law firm it was drizzling. I wondered if it was bad luck or good luck. I paid the cab fare then quickly ran over to the big tall building. The sliding door automatically opened as I approached it. I swallowed as I took in my surrounding. It was like I had completely stepped into a new world. A world that didn't belong to me. I took a deep breath as I squared my shoulders then walked to the reception. The receptionist was a lady with a tag on her left breast written;

Puleng Malinga

Main Receptionist

Mokwena Law Firm Ltd.

I smiled as I approached her. "Good morning."

"Good morning Mam, how can I help you?" She responded sounding cheerfull. Probably she sounded cheerful to everyone.

"My name is Rockelle Robert, I am here-"

"Mr Mokwena is expecting you Miss Robert. You will need this.."

She said handing me a tag like hers but only this one was written 'VISITOR' in bold letters.

"The 15th floor is where you are going."

"Ok, thank you." I walked to the elevator. As I walked I realized

there was more than one elevator. I did a quick count and they were 5 elevators. Getting in the elevator I pressed 15 and the elevator doors closed. I took out my mirror as the elevator started moving. I was still looking good. I put the mirror away then fixed my dress. When the elevator finally stopped I had collected myself, I was Kevin Robert's daughter. Nothing could defeat me. I walked out of the elevator with determination and walked straight to another reception. There was a lady there, she looked older than me with 5 or so years and she was dressed formally. She smiled as I approached her though there was just something about her smile. It wasn't friendly like Puleng's. This one looked forced. I looked at her tag. Her name was Nandi Sithole. Secretary manager.

"Morning, I'm..-"

"Miss Robert, Mr Mokwena is waiting for you. Please.." She said gesturing me to follow her. She was putting on a black skirt that hugged her hips perfectly and her ass. She opened the door which was written MOKWENA right in front of it. I followed inside after her.

"Mr Mokwena, Miss Robert is here." She said flipping her weave. I raised my head so I look at the Mr Mokwena. My throat immediately went dry when my eyes met his. He didn't seem affected, I closed my eyes briefly. I felt somehow because that moment it dawned to me that I didn't know the man I stayed with. I never even made an attempt to try to know him. I was selfish, I admitted to myself. I was self centered.

"Miss Robert welcome, thank you Nandi." He said.

"You are welcome." Her voice had changed including the way

she was now talking. Was she his girlfriend? I looked at her again. She was pretty, they did make a cute couple. She walked out closing the door behind her.

"Please sit.."

"Mokwena Law Firm is yours?" He smiled.

"Yes."

"It must be your biggest achievement."

"It is.. Rockelle sit." I smiled nervously sitting down opposite him.

"I know this is nepotism and just so you know I'm into meritocracy but I guess I'm bending the rules a bit."

"You don't have to do this. I can use the route for getting this job that is used by everyone."

"No. It's ok. We can start the interview now."

"Ok." I looked at him, waiting for his questions.

"I suppose you have never worked as a personal assistant before?"

"I have never worked as anything before." Honesty was the way to go. "Expect my newly found job at the gym."

"The fact that you studied law a bit.." He chuckled rocking his chair a bit. "This interview is supposed to be 20 minutes long so.. I'm just going to waste time." I laughed. He was just funny. He didn't look like the owner of one of the biggest law firms in the country. No.. He just looked like the Lungile I knew but only in a suit.

"So as I was saying the fact that you studied law a bit makes you the best assistant."

"I hated it. Too many books to read. Too many assignments. I even had someone doing my assignments and paid a couple of

people for my exams I never attended any lesson."

"In law you never stop learning."

"Do you also own the Mokwena Insurance company?" He looked at me for a while before he slowly nodded. "Yes.. I own it."

"I thought your surname was Zwane Mr Mokwena."

"It is.. My name is Lungile Mokwena Zwane. Zwane is my.. my father's surname but I use Mokwena, my mother's because I don't want to be associated with my father's family."

"Ow.. but why didn't you just tell me the first time we met?"

"I didn't want you throwing yourself at me. Most women do as soon as they find out who I am."

"I'm not that woman. I was never going to do that even if you told me."

"I know. So.. When you quit law or stopped attending what did you want to do?"

"I wanted to be a designer. Fashion designer but I knew dad was going to refuse. Besides that I have always wanted to be a model.. Matter of fact that's what I wanted to do but dad refused."

"Why can't you do it now?"

"I don't have money for school. I don't have the connections I need to be recognized. Maybe when Dad comes back from New York."

"Your Dad does everything for you?" I looked at him. I knew he was trying to say that I was a spoilt brat indirectly. I was that girl who couldn't do anything for herself but relied on Dad and Mom to do it for her.

"Yes he does."

"But not anymore?"

"Yeah.. but not anymore. I'm my own responsibility now." I looked around his office, it was beyond huge. And the design was just as nice as his house. "Nice office.."

"Thank you. The HR is going to take you through the contract after this."

"I got the job already?"

"Yes."

"So Sir, how do you like your coffee?" I asked in a nonchalant manner. I was holding in my laugh. He smiled.

"I like my coffee strong. Very strong. I usually want it on my table the moment I walk in."

"Lunch?"

"I rarely eat lunch, most of the time I will be out on a meeting or I will be working."

"What else do you like? Are there rules?"

"I like my things in an organized manner. My meetings should be clear and I should always know about them. I hate missing meetings or getting at a meeting late. I hate late comers, just to be safe you should arrive a few minutes before me. My desk should always be organized. My previous PA used to place the files according to alphabetical order. I like that. It ensures easy identification of any file I would like."

"Is that all?"

"Pretty much. You will learn the rest as time goes on."

"Thank you so much."

"You are welcome." Just then the door opened and Nandi peeped in.

"Your meeting with Mrs Manaka starts in 10 minutes Mr Mokwena."

"Ok.. Thanks Nandi.." She walked out and closed the door.

"Ummh I think that's it. Nandi will show you where the HR is."

"Ok.. Thank you Mr Mokwena."

"Lungile please.." I smiled.

"Lungile.. Thank you." I stood up then took my handbag. As I walked to the door his voice stopped me.

"I think you getting a good job deserves a celebration later."

The human resources management was at the other wing. Nandi did direct me. It was either she was dating Lungile, or she was an ex or lastly.. she wanted him and he wasn't noticing her. I felt sorry for her. The worst thing that could ever happen to you was to love someone who didn't love you back. It was painful. The HR manager, Nikiwe, took care of me. The contract was pretty simple but the pay was the only thing that caught my eye. Just for being a personal assistant I was shocked. The pay for being his personal assistant was just too much. I didn't hesitate signing the contract. Nandi was going to show me the ropes on Monday because it was going to be my first day at work. Walking out of the building I stopped on my tracks when my eyes fell on Mazwi who was standing right in front of me.

"We need to talk." He said quietly making me laugh.

"You are right. It's over, matter of fact.. It's long been over."

"What are you doing here?"

"It's non of your business. Why don't you go and focus on your wife and kids?" He chuckled.

"So you believed?"

"Believed what?"

"The call you got yesterday. I didn't think you were this stupid but you don't fail to surprise me."

"What's that supposed to mean?" I fired, now upset.

"I don't think I need to break it down for you. But that's ok babe. It's fine. We need to talk."

"Talk? I don't want to think about you worse still talk to you."

"Rocky please don't cause a scene. Can you behave.. at least just for today. Just for a few seconds."

"You and I have nothing to talk about! And as I said.. It's over! You need to leave me alone!"

"Rockelle I'm going to ask you one last time. Let us go to the car and talk." He now said through gritted teeth. He was pissed I could see but I didn't care.

"No. Move out of my way." He got much more closer to me then picked me up. I kicked and screamed as he led me to his car but no one seemed to even care or even notice. The moment he threw me in his car I tried fighting him so that I escape but a lightning slap that left my cheek on fire made me just freeze. Everything just stopped, the world stopped moving.

"Try anything and I will straighten you up!"

[JANINE]

I wracked through my clothes once again. I couldn't wear a skirt. That was just not me. It was Friday and I needed something casual to wear because I wasn't going to work. I took out my sweatpants and wore them together with a white vest. It was not like I was going anywhere. And I didn't need to impress anyone. I

could only impress myself. My inner self just looked at me as I lied to myself. I wanted to look good in case King came and that made me sick. When did I turn to be like this? I was someone who always wore what I rather felt comfortable with. Today I wasn't going to work, Simon was back. Simon was another detective and he was going to be with Orlando though Orlando did promise me that he would call incase he needed me. He was still handling Cassandra's case with her mother. As for Khanya her case was starting on Monday. She was the state witness, she had finally agreed. I had her Granny and sister already moved to a safe house. At this time Big Daddy was going to try everything to destroy the case we had already built.

I went to the lounge and threw myself on the couch. I took the novel I had been trying to read for a while now. It had been months since I owned the novel and surprisingly I was still on page one. I took a deep breath then really tried reading. For about 10 good minutes I was tired. My brain couldn't anymore, I was already thinking about King and what he said yesterday. I didn't want him anywhere near me. I never let people that close to me and I don't know how I hadn't noticed him getting much more closer before. The intercom that rang had me sitting up straight almost immediately. I wanted to hit myself with something on my head for wishing it was King. I stayed still as the intercom rang again. I stood up after a while then opened the gate while peaking through the window. A jeep drove in and parked right straight besides my car. I waited eagerly for the owner to step out of the car. I held my breath as the door opened and he stepped out wearing sunglasses. I had never

seen him in simple jeans and a T-shirt but God did he look good! I stepped away from the window as he walked to the door. I wet my lips when the door bell rang, at least not to look ashy. I walked to the door and opened it. He smiled as I opened the door. His cologne was hard to resist. I wanted to bury my head on his chest and keep inhaling it.

"Janine.." I liked the way my name rolled on his tongue, it was so sensual.

"Hi."

"I went to the police station and I heard you were not in today."

"Yeah..."

"Thank God! I want to take you somewhere." I gaped at him. Take me out? Take me out where? As if he could hear my thoughts he answered to them. "It's a nearby place. I'm sure you already know the place but the fact that I discovered it just yesterday makes it so hard for me not to take you there." He sounded really excited about this place of his making him look cute.

"Come in. I will go and change." I said opening the door wider for him. It was funny how I didn't even have to think about it, how I easily said yes to everything he asked of me. He walked in, right that moment I wondered if Kevin had his people watching me though I had already tested that theory. If he did then he would have known a lot of things he didn't. I closed the door behind me and walked to my bedroom. I took out a jean and a T-shirt, it was more my style. Combing my afro I wondered if I had to cut or not. Finishing it off I put on my converse and a jacket because it was still drizzling a bit then walked out.

"Ready?" King asked as soon as I got in the room. I nodded.

"Great! Let's go."

"Where are we going again?" I asked as we walked out to his car.

"You will see when we get there." He said opening the door for me. I got in silently. I was just going to keep quiet and wait till we get there. He still had his sunglasses on. I stole a glance at him. He was beautiful, his words from the previous day in the morning replayed in my head like a song. Maybe he really was my angel. The angel which was going to save me but... Was he going to survive the devil? There was something about King I couldn't quite put my finger on. He was too.. perfect. There was something I was missing but deep down I didn't think I was going to pursue it, I didn't want to find out about his not perfect side, I just wanted to stay believing he was perfect even though he wasn't. I just wanted to believe he was good.

"Thank you for the poem." I thanked him. Yesterday the whole day I kept rereading it. It did feel like it had been written by someone who was like me. He looked at me before turning to look at the road.

"I will look for more if it makes you happy." I smiled. Of course it was going to make me happy but in the midst of my happiness I knew something was going to develop. Something I didn't want to develop. It was like a metronome was counting the seconds till that something developed though I was trying so hard to shield myself from being part of the development. I was surprised when the car came to halt in front of some resort. I looked at him.

"Uhhh..?"

"Wait and see." We got out of the car. I walked behind him as he led the way. It didn't take me more than 10 minutes to realize his plan. He was taking me on a boat ride in the Vaal river. I had once been here, visiting Lana, Rockelle's mother. She stayed in a mansion that was besides other rich people's mansions. When Kevin and Lana divorced, there were demands Kevin had to fulfill, demands like the mansion Lana was staying in including other houses all over the country. There was even a house Lana took which was in Belgium I think. Besides that he paid Lana close to a million every year, she owned shares in one of the companies Kevin owned. The biggest company he had. Lana got out with a lot on their divorce.

"What are you thinking about?" King asked as the hotel management led us to where other people who were going on the mini boat cruise where.

"Nothing.. Just remembering last time I was here."

"What happened?"

"I had come to see Kevin's Ex wife. She had summoned me. She thought.. she thought that I was stupid."

"And you proved to her that you are not." He said clasping my hand with his.

"Obviously. So.. How did you find this place?"

"Well.. I searched for a nice place so that I can impress you." Laughter escaped my lips. "I know how this sounds like but.."

"It's ok. Thank you for researching about it though."

"I'm glad I did." He stopped walking making me look at him.

"What is it?"

"You remind me of my mother." I looked at him not knowing what

to say. "The way you are. The way.. You are so strong. She would love you." I flushed. What was he suggesting? It was too soon for him to be talking about his mother but I didn't tell him that. No, and I don't know why I didn't.

"Would she?"

"Yes. She likes woman who save themselves. She likes strong woman. She likes woman who know what they stand for." I took a deep breath. It was overwhelming.. So overwhelming hearing someone say something like that to me. Calling me strong. "I think I'm going to go ahead and find the keys to your golden heart without your permission." Before I could respond I felt his cold lips on mine, wetting mine. For a moment there my brain couldn't register what was going on. When it did I found myself following his lead as he pulled me closer to him by my waist. I stood on my toes wanting to feel him completely against me.

[NOMPUMELELO]

"Ladies and gentleman, thank you for availing yourself on this extraordinary monumental event. The art pieces that you saw are all from the first edition and will be in the museum for the next 12 months. And ladies and gentleman, this is it from us. Goodbye!" Howard said. It was late afternoon and the event had started at 9 in the morning. I smiled politely as I made my way to Ethan Andrews. An artist. I had read about him sometime ago. I smiled as I approached him.

"Ethan Andrews. Hi, I'm Lelo." He turned away from the man he was talking to and looked at me smiling. I summoned my ancestral spirit of confidence as I looked at him.

"Hello. How can I help you?"

I kept my smile on my face. "I own an art gallery. I will not beat around the bush. I have read about you and I would very much like it if we worked together. I know most of your artworks are sold in America and China but.. Have you ever thought about the people in Africa?"

"No.. I didn't think there was market there plus.. My art pieces are very expensive." I smiled.

"And who says the people in Africa don't have money? There are a lot of people in Africa who would want to get access to your art work but just don't know how. Working with us may benefit you the good publicity in Africa you might need."

"Miss Lelo.. I hear your point but..-"

"Ethan!" A voice said making both Ethan and I look up. My mouth immediately went dry when I saw Nicholas walk towards us. Tshidi had given him the contract the day I left. I had to call her today and just check up on things. Ethan smiled then walked towards him. They hugged briefly.

"I can't believe I'm seeing you!" Ethan said.

"Me too.. Where have you been?"

"My job requires me to always travel around."

"I called Angel.. She told me you were in Mexico."

"Yeah. I was covering some show there. You know how it is..

How's Sally?"

"She's ok.."

"I'm so glad you guys are getting married. We have been waiting for years!"

"I know. We have come a long way."

"How many years has it been?"

"10 now.." Ethan smiled then looked at me. I was still standing where he had left me.

"Ohh.. Ummh Miss Lelo I..-" Nicholas chuckled cutting Ethan off.

"Miss Sikhosana." He said making Ethan look at him in confusion.

"You know her?"

"Yes.. She's the owner of the gallery I work with."

"Wow really? Is she good?"

"Yes. Very much." I looked at Nicholas in confusion. I had expected him to badmouth me and ruin the deal for me. I stood there trying to figure out what he was doing.

"Ok.. You know what? I am going to get my agent to call you."

Ethan finally said. I felt like jumping up and down. When I approached Ethan I hadn't thought I was going to get him. I smiled then took out my business card and handed it to him.

"I will wait for the call Mr Andrews, and nice seeing you Mr Dumisa."

"Pleasure is all mine Miss Sikhosana." I smiled briefly at Nicholas before I walked away. I wanted to jump up and down at my achievement. As I walked away my eyes fell on Patricia. Patricia Thanor. She was a photographer, one of the best photographers out there. I once used her to market one of the paintings I had in the gallery.

"Patricia!" I said as I approached her. She turned and looked at me before smiling her perfect smile.

"Lelo.. Hi!"

"Hey.." I gave her brief hug then stepped away.

"Oh man don't you look good." She said looking at my dress. I smiled, remembering that she worked for both teams.

"Thank you. How are you?"

"I have been good. How's the gallery?"

"The gallery is doing well but is in serious need of more artist." I said suggestively.

"Yeah.. I know what you mean. Look there's this lady. She's in need of a gallery to work with. She's based in Nigeria. My girlfriend is the one who knows her." There are days where she had a boyfriend.

"Ow..?"

"Yeah.. Let me give you her number so that you can call her. She's really good." She said wracking in her bag till she took out a business card.

"There. Her name is Tracey." I took the business card then put it in my purse.

"Thanks Pat. We should have coffee some time." I knew she never stayed in one place and was probably here just for a few hours.

"I can't. I have to go back to New York." I smiled.

"Its ok. I will see you when I see you."

"Yes." I walked away from her, through the crowd and out of the museum. I sighed when my eyes met up with the Paris sun. I took a deep breath in then started walking. I was happy, signing Ethan Andrews was going to benefit the gallery so much.

Instead of chasing after men who didn't want me I could focus on the growth of my gallery. Yesterday when I got at the hotel I was terrified for a moment there. I could still hear Kcalda's

voice.. Hell I even dreamt her but waking up this morning I realized... there was no reason for me to be scared. I didn't believe in such so there was no use of dwelling much on things I regarded as myth. But one thing stayed tuned in my mind, maybe she was right about being cautious of my heart. I had to accept that Luthando was not mine to be. I could always find someone who was meant for me.. Or maybe there wasn't anyone meant for me.

I stopped on my tracks when I heard my name being called. Quickly I turned and it was Nicholas. I stood there till he was standing right in front of me.

"Nicholas.."

"Lelo.. Hi."

"Hi.."

"I think you owe me?" I raised my eyebrow. "Owe you what?"

"Ethan wasn't going to give you anything if I didn't back you up."

"I didn't-"

"Don't lie to yourself. You owe me."

"Ok fine. What do you want?"

"Nothing.. well at least not now." I chuckled. "Whatever." I started walking with him besides me. "Did you get anything else expect from Ethan?" I glanced at him. "Yes.. Well not exactly but it's all good. I'm surprised that you are engaged."

"Oh why surprised Miss Sikhosana?"

"I wonder how your fiancé deals with you. You are too rude and arrogant." He laughed. "I'm not rude and arrogant. You just don't know me."

"I know all I have to know."

"You don't know enough." He stopped walking. "Come.. This restaurant sells the best fruity cream cheese tart." I laughed. "The what?"

"Comeeee!" He said getting in the restaurant. I walked inside but to only stop when my eyes fell on Latoya. What was she doing here?

CHAPTER 13

[NOMPUMELELO]

I blinked a couple of times looking at Latoya. She stood up after a while then started walking towards me. She hadn't seen me yet, she walked looking down on her phone. Her shorts exposed her legs and thighs. She wasn't that thick, she had a slim thick, hips and ass that went well with her body. The moment she approached me she raised her head from her phone. She looked at me in incredulous astonishment but then smiled. Sometimes I wondered if she ever stopped smiling.

"Nompumelelo." She said looking carefully at me. I smiled.

"Latoya. Nice seeing you."

"You too. What brings you here? Leone Da Vinci?"

"Leonardo Da Vinci," I corrected though I knew she didn't care.

"And yes.. I was invited to one of the biggest museums."

"That's nice.. You look good."

"Thank you, you too." She looked at me in silence for a while.

Latoya had this dark black eyes that made me feel as if she could see my most darkest secrets. Every time she looked at me I always felt exposed, vulnerable. There was just something about her that made my intestines knot together painfully. Yes

she was beautiful, extra beautiful maybe but that thing about her that scared me made me not to think of her as an ice Queen but rather an Aphrodite or Venus, the Goddess of beauty and love. She was like a very big diamond.. waiting to be discovered. Waiting for the right moment to shine.

"See you around.. Lelo!" She said as she put on her sunglasses. I watched her as she walked away. She rarely showed her beauty, her speciality. She always hid it from the world.

"So you are going stand here forever and gawk at another woman?" I snapped out of it and looked at Nicholas who was now standing in front of me. His eyes swept to Latoya who was now crossing the road. "She's beautiful but as a woman it's not right for you to gawk at her like that." I smiled now looking at him. "Why Mr Dumisa?"

"If you gawk then what will I do? It's my job.. Anyways you seem to know her. What's her name? I wouldn't mind being hooked up that's if she ever notices me."

"Aren't you engaged?" He chuckled shaking his head as he led me inside the restaurant.

"I am.. but I'm not married."

"I'm sure Sally doesn't think so." He looked at me as I sat down, appalled.

"You have a sharp memory Miss Sikhosana, impressive." He sat down opposite me. "But I'm sure she wouldn't mind." My prying inner self surfaced immediately, in full control. "Why?"

"Well because she's too busy with her career, her reality show is doing the most.. Her singing career.. She's on tour so I don't think she would really mind."

"Your fiancé is a celebrity?"

"Yeah."

"Are you sure the media isn't following you? I don't want to be splashed in every magazine and newspaper."

"I can imagine.. 'KEVIN ROBERT'S THIRD WIFE SEEN WITH NICHOLAS DUMISA, ENGAGED TO SALINA VAN JUDD,' the magazine would really sell." I gasped.

"You are engaged to Salina Van Judd?"

"Yeah... Yes!" He exclaimed as the waiter put two plates of his fruity treat in front of us together with a bottle of Nicolas Feuillatte limited edition champagne.

"Merci.." He said to the waiter before she walked away.

"I can't believe you are engaged to Salina. I really like her."

"I'm sure you do." He said opening the bottle of champagne and pouring for both of us.

I smiled but only to frown seconds later. "How did you know about Kevin?"

"I did my research Miss Sikhosana, but I must say I was surprised looking into your profile. Why don't you use your marital surname?"

"Because I don't want people to give me business all because of the surname."

"Ahh! I see. Try out the fruity cream cheese tart. It's delicious." I took the fork then dug in. It was delicious. The fruits that it was garnished with made it all extra delicious. Nicholas was looking at me expectantly.

"Ok.. It's delicious." He smiled.

"I told you." I took my champagne and sipped on it.

"So when's the wedding?" I asked, still prying.

"I don't know. Maybe when she comes back from her tour."

"Ok.. Wow! I still can't believe it.. So you guys like keeping your lives private because last time I checked.. She was single."

"The grass ain't greener than the other side." I looked at him, surely Salina's career was weighing down their relationship. I took a bite of my fruity treat summoning my wise side.

"I'm sure she will be back quickly and y'all can get married and be happy."

"Are you happily married?" I almost choked on my champagne that I had just sipped.

"What?"

"Are you happily married?" He repeated.

"No.. But I'm not you. You can be happy."

"I don't think I still want to get married. I'm already unhappy in the relationship as it is."

"What? No.. Is it because of her career?"

"Besides her career.. It wasn't really working. I thought if I proposed it would make it all better but.. It made it worse. I have been engaged for 3 years now."

"3 years?!"

"Yes.. She.. I told her we should end it. I always tell her but she always threatens to kill herself."

"Noo!"

"It's long been over. For me it has."

"Why can't people just be happy?" He chuckled.

"Because they don't want to be happy."

"I'm really sorry."

"Don't be. I'm also sorry.. Sorry for her." I nodded then continued on my fruity treat.

"Thank you. The fruity cream cheese tart was delicious."

"I know.. Let's go." He said putting cash notes inside our menu. I stood up then we walked out.

"Now.. I have thought about what I want in return of my.. help with Ethan."

"What do you want?"

"It's a bit hard so.. I'm going to hook you up with Eva.."

"Eva? Eva Morris?" He smiled.

"Yes. Eva Morris."

"No! Eva? The real Eva?"

"That's what I said. Eva Morris the artist who painted the fire walkers."

"And in the ice midst.. Ohh my God! Eva Morris will.. The gallery.. It will be.. I can't even find the word!"

"Yes.. Now in return of Ethan and Eva.. I want you to play happy couple with me." I looked at him in nothing but confusion.

"What?"

"Salina will be home in a week's time. I suppose you are going back home today right?"

"Yes...?" I was still very much lost. He had thrown me in the deep seas.

"I want you and I to pretend we are together when Salina comes back."

"Pretend we are together? As in.. Relationship together? Lovers?"

"Yes.. We pretend for just a couple of days and in exchange you

get Ethan and Eva as your new clients."

"Besides the fact that it's total nonsense.. She probably knows that I'm married! She will go to the media and have my name ruined."

"She doesn't know but even if she does.. She will not go to the media. She knows what's at stake."

"Nicholas are you listening to yourself?"

"Yes Miss Sikkhosana. Ethan. Eva." I looked at him. I did need the clients but to what extent?"

"Can I think about it?"

"Yes. I will wait for your call. Till then.. Cheers!" And he was gone. I watched him as he walked away, disappearing from my eyes. I exhaled then looked around. A lot had happened in the last hours. I took my phone from my purse which was ringing. It was Julie. I closed my eyes briefly comprehending if or not I should answer the phone. I answered at last, failing hard to keep the exasperation out of my voice.

"Juliette."

"Lelo.. Hey."

"Hi."

"Look I'm sorry about yesterday. I don't know what got into me."

"I'm glad you see your fault."

"Yes. And you are right. If it's meant to be then it will be. How was the event?"

"It was great. I got a client."

"That's great! So when are you coming back?"

"Today. My flight departures at 8 evening."

"Ok.. I'm so happy for you."

"So am I..."

"I will call you when I land."

"Ok.. Bye." She then hung up. There was really nothing I could do with my time. I looked around then saw a sign of a cinema. Well.. There was nothing wrong in watching a movie. I could watch a movie then go back to the hotel after that.

[ROCKELLE]

Not once in my dreams had I ever dreamt getting beaten. Every time I would always hear about those woman who get abused I would always blame them for letting it happen. I would always blame them for even letting him come that close to them. To me I always believed that getting beaten was by choice. No one could get beaten if they didn't want to. That's what I believed but here I was, sitting in the car of the person who had slapped me, in silence with my bloody hands because my nose had been bleeding. I felt angry, but angry with myself for not fighting. Angry with myself for letting it happen.

"Are you hungry?" I looked at him in silence. "I said are you hungry?" He repeated but his voice raised a bit. I shook my head as tears threatened to escape. Just then my phone started ringing from my handbag. Mazwi snatched the handbag from me then took out my phone.

"Who's Lungile?" He asked looking at me. I blinked a couple of times, not knowing what to say. "Rockelle I'm going to ask you one last time.. Who's Lungile?" His voice was evenly low but menacing as ever.

"A friend."

"A friend?"

"Yes."

"You little cunt! If I ever find out you have been fucking around I'm going to slice you!" I kept my mouth closed. He then put my phone on the dashboard before increasing the speed. I wasn't so sure of where he was going. I looked around, I wasn't familiar with the place. Looking around I saw a screwdriver that was by my feet. Mazwi was focused on the road. I moved forward a bit then buried my head between my legs.

"The heck are you doing?" He asked. The car had stopped moving. I quickly reached for the screwdriver and raised my head jabbing the screwdriver at him. His sudden scream made me panick but I soon relaxed, I had stabbed his hand. Without hesitation I grabbed my phone from the headboard, opened the door then got out. Before I could run any further I felt his grip on my bun pulling me. I lost balance and fell together with my phone loosing it.

"Cunt!" He said as he slapped me so hard. I swear I saw stars for a second there. "Dirty little cunt!" I scratched his face making him push me away. My skin coming into contact with the road had me seething in pain but I quickly stood up. I was petrified, my throat was so dry. I looked around as he approached me. My eyes fell on a piece of wood that was a few feet from me. Slowly I moved back.

"You can't run away from me Rocky. You and I are going to get married. We are going to be married."

As quickly as I could I picked up the piece of wood and turned striking it at him with all my energy. The piece of wood hit his

head sending him straight to the ground. His loud groan sent me running to my phone which was feet from me. By then he was standing up with blood oozing from his head. I rushed back to the car then slide in at the drivers seat and immediately started the car. The moment he approached the car I was already reversing the car. I hit the breaks when it was a distant from him then turned the stir wheel as I put in drive mode. It swirved looking at the direction we had been coming from. I didn't even wait a mini second to step on the accelerator and drive away in full speed. My hands were shaking. After about 10 minutes of driving I finally came across a mall like. I drove in and parked at the parking lot. I didn't unlock my doors. I took my phone, without thinking about it then pressed on Lungule's number. He took a while to answer but nonetheless he answered. Maybe that was why I called him, because he was always there.

"Rocky.." I bit my lower lip. I couldn't break down.

"Hey.. An ex of mine tried kidnapping me. He hit me and-" he cut me short.

"Where are you right now? Is he still with you?" I could hear the concern in his voice.

"No.. I ran. I hit him with a slab of wood then ran.. I took his car."

"Where are you right now?" I told him the name of the mall that I hadn't seen when I parked the car.

"Ok. Stay there. In the car with the doors locked. I'm coming." He said. I knew he would come. He could never disappoint me. I rested my head on the stir wheel closing my eyes.

[JANINE]

"That was really nice. Thank you." I said as we walked back to the car.

"I'm glad you liked it. Now let me take you to this other restaurant I noticed."

"Another surprise?" He laughed.

"Yes.. But I have a feeling you are hungry. I don't want to starve the lady."

"Oh well.. Ok!" I said as he opened the door for me.

"Thank you for agreeing to spend the day with me. And.. I must warn you. There's still a lot in the bag to dish out." I couldn't help it but to smile. He did have a way with words.

"Well.. The stage is yours King."

"Great!" He said as he leaned over and kissed me. Ever since the first time he kissed me, there had been more moments of us kissing. I kissed him back without reluctance, for the first time in my life... I felt happy. I felt I knew what I wanted and what I wanted was King. My angel. The moment he pulled his lips from mine I was already breathing hard.

"You are so beautiful." I took in his compliment.

"Thank you." He kissed the corner of my lips before letting me get inside the car. Getting inside he closed the door as input on my seatbelt. He drove us to the restaurant and I still was taken. It was so intimate and.. beautiful.

"Table for two.." He said to the waiter who welcomed us by the door. He led us to the table and we settled down as he hand us the menu.

"This restaurant is beautiful.. I wonder how I didn't know it."

"It's recent actually."

"I can see. It's beautiful."

"Not more than you though." I blushed then looked down on my menu. It took me a few minutes to decide what I wanted.

"Ready to order?" King asked.

"Yes.." He called the waiter.

"I will have apple and cider braised pork chops." I said to the waiter.

"And you sir?"

"Chicken schnitzel and potato salad." The waiter walked away after we ordered.

"How old are you?" I asked out of the blue making he chuckle.

"I'm 34 Janine.."

I smiled. 34 wasn't bad. "So after this what's next?" I asked, completely interested in whatever he was going to say.

"I know you are probably not a shopper."

"Well yes.."

"But I have always wanted to take someone I was really interested out for shopping. Everyone does it.. I just want to.. Feel how it is." I laughed. I hadn't expected him to say that.

"Really now?"

"Yes.. So next on the agenda its shopping."

"Ok.. Shopping it is!" Just then the waiter was back with our food. I was so hungry I dug in right away. The boat ride had taken a lot of time.

"This food is so good. I'm always going to come back here."

"You should. You don't like plaiting?" I looked at him swallowing.

"I don't.. I have never had the interest."

"I think you would look good with a weave or something."

"Really?"

"Yes.. Maybe we should pass by the saloon when we leave this place."

"Ok.. If you think I would look good."

"You always look good. You are flawless." I smiled.

"That's enough compliments for one day."

"You are really beautiful. I'm going to keep on telling you just to make you believe." I looked down on my plate and continued eating. I felt loved and it made me happy.

After eating, we went to a saloon. My hairdresser was gay but looking at him there was nothing about him that screamed 'gay!' King left me in the hands of Joshua, my hairdresser.

"How do you look?" Joshua asked as he turned me so that I look at the mirror. I looked at my reflection. I did look different. The weave made me look different. It was too long, like the ones Latoya always had in her head.

"Different." I said brushing it gently with my fingers. I felt weird.

"Yes.. Different and beautiful." I smiled. Maybe I did look beautiful but I was going to wait till King said so. I loved hearing him compliment me.

"I can fix your face too if you want.."

"Make up?"

"Yes.. If you want." I looked at my reflection.

"Ummh ok.."

"Great!" Joshua immediately started working on my face. When he was done I looked like a complete stranger. I couldn't even recognize myself.

"You look so gorgeous. I'm not even upset that you are fuckinng

with the land moghel!" I laughed.

"Thank you."

"No.. You thank you. Mr Land a.k.a dzaddy gave me a fat tip just to make you look beautiful."

"He paid already?" I couldn't hide my shock.

"Yes!" I took a deep breath then stood up. I had always hated it when people did things for me. I loved doing it for myself, especially things that I could do myself. But with King.. I didn't mind. It made me feel special. Cared for. Everything I had never felt in years.

"Look at you!" King's voice said making me turn. There he was. My own man. My dzaddy!

He took off his sunglasses and walked towards me.

"You look beautiful my African Queen." I blushed. "Ready to go?"

"Where now?"

"Shopping. We are buying you some clothes."

"Honestly King, you don't have-"

"I want to spoil my African Queen.. can't I do it?" I sighed giving in. I didn't want to upset him. It was too early for petty fights.

"Ok.. We can go for shopping." He smiled.

"That's my Queen." He took my hand and pulled me into him then captured my lips with his. I loved the way he held me. I felt like a rare diamond at the possession of his eyes. I felt a ping of disappointment reel in as he moved his lips from mine.

"Let's go now." I let him take my hand and lead me outside the saloon. He put his sunglasses back on as we walked to the car. I hated how every female turned to look at us. Getting in his car he drove me to expensive shops. I didn't normally shop but not

that moment. King didn't hesitate picking clothes he thought they would probably look good on me. All the clothes he was picking were not the kind of clothes I usually wore but I was sure I needed a change of wardrobe would do me good, as Latoya always said. When we finally finished shopping it was already late. I was tired and I had changed too. I was now wearing some shorts which were ridiculously expensive with a lace leotard and a blazer. My heels were too long and they hurt my feet but I still wore them for him nonetheless.

I was more than glad when he offered to take me home. I was tired from all the gallivanting.

Getting home I threw myself on the couch as soon as I got inside the house. I couldn't even feel my feet. I was just feeling numb. King followed inside my house with my shopping bags.

"Tired?" He asked as he placed the shopping bags down.

"Very.." He walked towards me then crouched down before me. He started taking off my shoes, freeing my legs. After taking off my shoes he started massaging my feet. I closed my eyes as I sucked in the feeling, it was so good.

"How does it feel?" He asked as he started knuckling my feet slowly. A slight moan escaped my lips.

"Good.." I whispered.

He moved from my feet to my shoulders. He was so good he could find a job in a beauty spa. I relaxed my body and let him do his thing. I felt his lips on my cheek though I was between sleeping and being awake.

"Janny.." He called out softly while kissing my cheek.

"Mhmm.." I felt his hands slowly go from my shoulders down to

my breast. When he started massaging my breast I couldn't hold on my moan. My eyes were now open as he gently kneaded my breast while kissing my neck.

"Should I stop?" He asked. My panties were already drenched.

"No.. Don't." I managed. His hands abruptly left my breast then helped me stand up. Slowly he unbuttoned my shorts looking at me. I sucked in breath as he pushed my shorts down. After my shorts were fully disposed he stood up then, with his own pace took off the leotard. I was now standing before him in only my panty and bra. I thanked heavens I was putting on my lace set.

"You are so beautiful." He said while looking at me. I was thick, thick with curves and ass. He trailed his long fingers from my breast till my stomach.

"If you don't-"

"I want to.." I said without holding back. His lips found mine, I wrapped my arms around his neck as we kissed. I didn't want him to stop, to ever stop. Stepping away from me he pushed the small table that was in the middle of the room away then motioned I lie down on the white fluffy carpet. I didn't need to be told twice. Lying down his lips were already on mine with his other hand inside my bra with my breast in his palm. King was slow, gentle and loving. He wasn't holding back. After a while my bra was not on me and his mouth was on my nipple. My hand found it's way to his hair as he tugged my breast with his teeth gently. I felt my pussy clench as he continued his assault on my nipples.

From my breast he moved slowly down to my bellybutton then to my panties. He took them off with his teeth slowly then opened

my legs widely exposing me fully.

"This is so beautiful.." He said looking between my legs.

Whatever that he was seeing probably looked like a rare gemstone because of the way he was looking at it. I let out a cry out of exquisite pleasure when I felt his tounge on me

CHAPTER 14

NOMPUMELELO]

"So how did it go?" She asked.

"It went well.. I got two clients."

"That's great. Plus Nicholas Dumisa that's three."

"Yes.. I got Ethan Andrews and Eva Morris."

"No wait.. Who?" I laughed.

"Ethan Andrews and Eva Morris."

"What? How!?"

"Well.. I have connections. Things are really going to go well for us."

"Yes! Ohh my God you are the best Lelo.."

"Thank you hun.. Let me get going. I'm supposed to arrive in 30 minutes at the airport."

"Ok.. We will talk when you come to work."

"Yeah.. Bye."

"Bye." I put my phone away then looked around the room one last time. I sighed as I walked out, now it was going to be part of the places I have ever visited. I walked out with my bag to the lift. Getting inside there was some woman. Older than me with a lot of years but she looked like a business lady. She was wearing a pencil skirt, a tucked in shirt with a coat.

"Bonjour.." I greeted. She gave me a polite nod. We were silent the whole way till we got the ground floor. I got out of the lift dragging my bag with.

"Excuse me!" She stopped me making me turn.

"My name is April.. April Witherspoon." I smiled out of confusion.

"Nice to meet you April."

"You look like.. some lady I know.. Her name was Zandile.." She said getting closer to me. "Zandile Sikhosana." I swallowed hard.

"Who are you?" She smiled a shallow smile.

"I.. We used to know each other. We used to be friends." I looked at her for a while.

"I don't know Zandile Sikhosana.. I'm sorry." I said as I tried to pull my bag but she held my hand.

"Wait.. I know you know her. She's your mother isn't she?"

"I said I don't know her."

"You do.. I just.. You.. You have to help me. She ran away with my child. My husband's child. We had asked her to surrogate for-"

"Do I look like your child?"

"No.. Not you... Another child."

"Mam I don't know what you are talking about. I'm going to be late, please let me go."

"Ok.. I'm sorry if I frightened you. I didn't mean to. Can I please take your name? You can take mine together with my husband's."

"I'm sorry.. I have to go." I said pulling my hand from hers and walking away. My heart was beating so fast I swear it could just leap out. This woman.. She was the woman mom continued to

run from. I had become completely oblivious to my surroundings that I didn't even realize myself bumping into someone till I fell. Looking up our eyes met. I didn't understand why he was so hot, today he was in a suit and looked like the male goddess. His muscles were stained on the suit's jacket. My face burnt out of embarrassment as I got up.

"Are you ok?" He asked making laugh at myself.

"Yes I'm fine. I wasn't looking where I was going. I'm sorry."

"It's ok. Going home already?" I nodded.

"Yeah.."

"Ok safe journey."

"Is your girlfriend here?" I asked with confidence that appeared from no where. I didn't even understand why I asked. He smirked.

"Yes. She's here."

"Well.. too bad for her that you are not married to her." He chuckled.

"I thought you were shy.." I smiled.

"You thought wrong Luthando." He looked at me for a while. I closed the gap between us. I didn't even know what I was going to do but I wanted to do something. When my body came into contact with his, instinctively I wanted to step away from him but my bold self didn't move an inch. Without hesitation I wrapped my arms around his neck, stood on my toes and kissed him. My heart stopped beating as I waited for him to push me away and cuss at me but he didn't do such. He didn't do anything. I kissed him slowly hoping for response but when it didn't come I prepared myself to step away from him. Just as I was pulling my

lips from his he responded to my kisses as he placed his hands on my tiny waist pulling me closer. When he let my lips go I was breathing hard, my lips felt numb. He bit his lower lip while looking at me.

"I'm not the one for you..." He said softly.

"Says who?" He rubbed his face a bit then looked at me. Before he could say whatever he wanted to say his phone started ringing. He took it out looking at me.

[LATOYA]

I looked around with my phone on my ear. There was a huge crowd, all the people dressed in fancy dresses and suits. I fit in perfectly with them. Luthando had come with my dress together with the matching shoes and jewellery. I didn't ask how he knew my size because the dress and the shoes fit perfectly.

"Toots.." He answered. My heart swelled. There was just something about the way he called me Toots.

"Where are you? I'm sure whatever you left to take is not that heavy." I heard him chuckle.

"I'm almost there."

"Ok.." He dropped the call. I put my phone in my purse then walked back to the crowd holding my glass of champagne I had been offered. The party looked like rich people's party but Luthando said they were going to bid. Bid what for what..? That's what I didn't know and the way he had mentioned it I could sense he didn't want to be asked anything but I had a feeling that was the main reason why we were in Paris in the first place.

"Hey.." Luthando said kissing my cheek. I looked at him.

"What took you so long?"

"I met someone I know. I couldn't avoid her." He said taking my champagne from me and taking a sip.

"It was a her?" I asked.

"Yes.. It was a her." He said looking at me with an eyebrow raised. I ignored that look completely, I had the right to know.

"Who was she?"

"What's this now?" He wasn't smiling now.

"This is me wanting to know who my boyfriend was talking to."

"Am I sensing insecurity?" He asked making me zip my mouth immediately. I regretted asking almost immediately. The last thing I wanted was to be a insecure girlfriend who was always asking and doubting. I took a deep breath then started talking softly, "No.. I just want to know who you-"

"Says the married woman! Look it was no one. Don't dwell on it and act insecure.. It's annoying and unattractive and it makes you ugly." He said softly then kissed my lips. "I'm coming.

There's someone I want to see." He then walked away with my glass of champagne. I stared at him till he approached some man. Just then my eyes fell on the waiter that was passing by holding a tray of champagne. I took a glass as she passed then gulped down the champagne. I closed my eyes for a while, eagerly wanting to feel numb. I didn't want to feel hurt, I just wanted the feeling to go away and never come back.

[ROCKELLE]

"We are looking for him. We will find him." The detective said

looking at Lungile.

"You said that hours ago!"

"Yes but that doesn't mean we won't find him. You have to believe in us."

"Lungile it's fine. I'm tired, I want to sleep." I said. He sighed.

"I will call you tomorrow." He said looking at the detective who gave him a nod.

"Let's go." He said taking my hand and leading me outside the police station. Lungile had arrived 20 minutes after I called him at the mall. I smiled as he opened the door for me.

"Thank you." I said as I got inside the car. Mazwi hadn't left any permanent injuries on me, just bruises on my knees and a swollen face. I was so glad I got away. This made me wonder about the women who never got the chance to run away.

Women who ended up raped, beaten up or those who ended up dead. Somehow I knew I wasn't the only one. There were other woman before me. There were still women who were still yet to go through what I went through.

"Are you ok?" Lungile asked. I wiped away my tears.

"No.. I'm not." He reduced the speed then looked at me.

"Are you in pain? We should have went to the hospital."

"No.. It's ok. I just.. I wonder how many women go through what I went through today. How many of those who die." He took my hand into his.

"A lot.. But what matters is that you managed to escape. Maybe you will live to one day to tell your story to other women out there."

"What could have happened if I didn't manage to escape? Then

maybe I would have been one of those women who die at the hands of men."

"You are not dead. You are still here. I'm so proud of you. We need more strong woman like you on earth. I just want women to live in peace. You can come with me to this other organization I sponsored. It's all about women empowerment. It fights against woman abuse."

"You sponsored a women organization?"

"Yes.. I once watched a woman get hurt by a man.. And I didn't do anything to help her. It still kills me today. I just can't get over the fact that I'm a monster. I watched her cry for help and I didn't even do anything to help her." He sighed.

"I'm happy you managed to save yourself." I smiled. I could see that his story still haunted him. The car had stopped.

"Where's the woman?"

He shrugged. "I don't know.. She ran.. I know she hates me so much. I hurt her to death. Sometimes I wish to just turn back the hands of time. To just go back to that day and help her out. I failed her. I destroyed her." He rubbed his eyes. Looking at him like that I wished to take some of the pain for him. To take some of the burden off his shoulders. I took off my seatbelt and without thinking, leaned over and hugged him. My whole life, I grew up thinking men didn't get vulnerable, that men didn't cry, that men always kept it together. I never prepared myself to be exposed to vulnerable man in tears. A Broken man. My heart clenched as he let out a muffled cry making me hold him tighter. A tear fell from my eyes as Lungile went on with his muffled cry.

[JANINE]

I opened my eyes slowly. The sun was already out. I sat upright and looked besides me but he wasn't there. I got off bed and walked to the bathroom after grabbing a towel which I covered my body with.

I washed my face when I got in the bathroom. Looking at myself on the bathroom mirror I smiled. Last night was amazing.

Quickly I walked out of the bathroom. I wanted to see King. I went downstairs and he wasn't there. I peaked outside but his car wasn't there. I looked over the clothes he bought me. They were still on the floor. Yesterday we had started on the fluffy carpet then the wall. From the wall it was the kitchen counters and lastly the bed. I bit my lower lip, trying to stop smiling. I had a feeling he was out getting breakfast. I quickly rushed upstairs to take a bath so that I would change into one of the dresses he had bought for me. I stopped on my tracks when I saw a paper which was stuck to the vanity mirror. With a giddy feeling I walked towards it then took it. It was King.

It was a poem.

'The love note your mother never wrote you

Wow! You look beautiful today.

Everyday you find a way to smile brighter than the last,

Every day you remind me there's no use in regretting the past.

Every day I see myself in you and pray you have the strength to move

past whoever hold you back.

I'm sorry I was always afraid of lonely.

I'm sorry I was addicted to the way that men hold me..

I hope you understand that lust never last. And I hope you learn to tell the difference between lust and romance.

There will be hundreds of men and most will do what it takes for you to let them in. Most will love your bones till they ache and then they'll break your heart in the end.

They will sell you white lies and empty promises that you'll become more attached to them. The man will be sorry enough to touch where it hurts and make sins with your skin.

Then they'll leave again.

Leaving you more vulnerable.. more dim. But I promise the world sees you and admires how fragile your heart has always been. If I could be around your whole life, during your loneliest, I would pick you up by your chin.

I would let you know how amazing you are from within. You know... God has a funny way of putting the fiercest fire in our souls just to see the breakdown during our emptiest alone. Just to see the breakthrough once we love ourselves back to whole. Every night I pray for your well-being before I pray for my own. I imagine you could use it.

I imagine some days you lose it. Life has a way of showing ourselves through mini bruises.

But here's a reminder.

You look beautiful tonight. Every night you've found a way to shine brighter than your last. Your spirit speaks wonders and your energy uplifts the mass.

Wow.

I'm sorry I forgot to teach you about the light that comes from loving you before loving someone else.'

I flipped it over when I was done reading. Something was written. It was just one sentence. One sentence that crumbled my whole world. A world I had just taken a few days building. A world that was foreign to me. A world that was still new to me. A world that was yet to teach me new things. It all crumbled down.. to mere ashes.

CHAPTER 15

[NOMPUMELELO]

I fixed my satin blue dress that clutched my body perfectly. My thin braids were held in a tight ponytail.

"You really look good." Siya said softly. I smiled.

"Thank you. I'm just nervous. I can't believe I'm doing this."

"Don't be nervous. She's not going to react. I don't think she still wants the relationship too. I'm sure she's found someone who goes well with her style." I looked at him.

"What do you mean? Do you think she's cheating?"

"No.. I don't think so." He said standing up. "I know so. Nick.. I don't know.. Maybe he knows and just acts oblivious to it."

"I can't believe 10 years of a relationship is just going to be thrown away.. Like that."

"Sometimes the amount of time you have been with someone is worthless.. especially when the burning spark has died down." I laughed.

"How old are you again? You don't sound like you are 25." He laughed.

"Having a big brother like Nick makes you grow up."

"Yeah.. So any girlfriend for the soccer player?" I asked making

him laugh walking away. I followed after him to the intimate sitting room. It was big but the design wasn't that good. It wasn't contrasting. There were just too many colours that didn't even go well together. The beauty of the house was just swallowed by the scary combination of property and colour. The only thing that I could look at was the huge TV that was mounted to the wall. I sat down besides Siya. He was different from Nicholas, Siya was soft. Very soft and very.. Optimistic though he looked like the younger version of Nicholas. When I met him two days ago I just knew there was something about him. Something so special.

"I don't even know what to say.." He finally answered.

"What do you mean?"

"Well.. I can't say it's a relationship exactly because.. I have met her a few times only."

"What do you mean?"

"She doesn't live here. She lives in Wellington."

"New Zealand?" He nodded.

"Besides that I stay in Madrid."

"What does she do?"

"She's at varsity.."

"Wow.. And where does she come from exactly?"

"She.. she says she's from here though I think she's lying because honestly she looks white. Not even coloured but white. She's a brunette." I laughed.

"Do you love her?"

"I do but the distance... But I'm just holding on." I slowly nodded.

"That's sweet. If one day you ever get married to her.. Call me."

"Yeah.. maybe when you and Nick..-"

"What's going on here?" A voice said making me look up. I heard Siya sigh as I looked at the beautiful lady. She looked more beautiful in person. I stood up, trying to cover up my nervousness. I was damn scared though I smiled.

"Hi, I'm Lelo..." I said stretching my hand to hers but she just looked at me. I looked behind her and Nicholas wasn't there. He had left to go and pick her up from the airport.

"And what are you doing in my house?" She spat.

"My brother's house you mean?" Siya cut in. I took a silent prayer.

"Siya.. So you let this happen?"

"Let what happen Salina? You let this happen!" Nicholas said getting inside the house. The whole thing just felt like a game toddlers played. It didn't even seem real. I just stood there as Nicholas stood besides me to face his poisonous snake that was at the edge of swallowing me.

"Babe.. You said you understood..." She started now talking softly.

"Yes.. I understood that you chose your career over us."

"I didn't do that! You have always supported me. If you want to leave me, do it and leave my career out of it!" She was now crying. I wanted to leave but my legs couldn't even move. I was just frozen to the spot.

"Your career is the reason we have been engaged for three years. Your career is the reason you can't even think of a family. Your fucken damn career is the reason we see each other once a month or not even see each other!"

"I told you I wasn't ready for marriage when you proposed Nicholas and you said you would wait for me! If you didn't want then you could have said it then."

"Well I have been waiting for three years and I'm tired."

"Ok.. Ok.. We will get married. I will start planning our wedding baby. I'm sorry.. I'm so sorry.. You are upset.. And you have every right to be upset. I understand. Let's get married."

"When were you going to tell me you sterilized?" He asked sounding so chilly. I felt like an invader. The argument was between two people but here I was invading on their business.

"What?" With the way her eyes widened I could see she didn't believe it.

"When were you going to tell me you sterilized Salina? All along I talked family with you and you had sterilized. All these years you have been lying to me. For fucken good 6 years you have been lying to me!" She placed her hand over her mouth as tears streamed down.

"Not that it was enough.. You slept with Sfiso."

"I can explain.. give me a chance to explain.." She begged.

"You slept with my friend. What is it that I'm doing wrong Salina?"

"Nothing.. Nothing... It was a mistake I swear Nick.. I just.. I don't-"

"It's ok. I long forgave you."

"You did?"

"Yes.. Lelo.." He said placing his hand on my waist. "She's my fiancée.. and we are getting married." I couldn't miss the horrid look on her face.

"What?"

"Yes.. And you are going to respect my relationship with her."

"No.. Babe.. We can fix this. We can fix all this. I know I messed up.. But we can fix it." She said going down on her knees.

"We can't. Lelo is here to stay. She's 10 times better than you. She's committed to me. To us. She respects our relationship and she doesn't keep secrets from me."

"I messed up! How many times have you messed up and forgave you. I took you to varsity! I made your dreams come true and today this is how you treat me?!"

"Here we go again! Loving you is just proving to be the worst thing I have ever done! I will pay back your money Salina!"

"No.. That's not what I want babe.. I want you.. I want us. I'm sorry.. I know I haven't been the best partner. I can change all that.. Give me a chance. Give us one last chance. Please.. I'm begging you.." She was now up and holding his hands. He loved her I could see it but then maybe love wasn't enough.

"I can't.. I have had enough.. I loved you with all my being. I gave myself to you. Every part. Loved you unconditionally. Loved you even on our worst. Cried over you. I'm done. I'm done.. I can't anymore. It's enough."

"Don't say that.. Nick.. We have come a long way for us to just give it up like this."

"Us? You gave it up long time ago. You can keep the house I bought for us."

"No.. We can move in there baby.. Everything is nothing without you. I won't survive without you Nick.. Baby.. Please.."

"I will pay you back the money you sent me to varsity with."

"No.. Don't do that. I-"

"Let's go Lelo.." He said pulling me with him leaving Salina crying. Walking inside the elevator I felt like I have just been hit by something. When we finally got out of the elevator, everything was coming into perspective. I looked at Nicholas though he had an impassive look I couldn't read.

He walked with me to his car. He had picked me up from my flat earlier on. When I agreed to do it the previous week I thought it was just going to be easy but.. No. It wasn't. I felt like shit for making another woman cry but I really felt sorry for Nicholas. It hurt giving but not receiving anything back.

He started the car as soon as we got inside then reversed out. He didn't say anything till his car was parked in front of my flat.

"Thank you." He muttered.

"You love her don't you?"

"I think maybe I loved her a bit too much."

"I'm sorry."

"It's ok. It's life. I will move on."

"Can't you fix things?"

"At this stage no. We can't. It's over."

"She seemed-"

"Don't be fooled. That's what she does every time I tell her I don't want anymore. She swears she would change then goes back to her usual self. It's nothing new to me. That's her usual game."

"Maybe one day you will find your own Cinderella." He laughed.

"Stop watching Disney movies too much. It's messing up with your brain."

"What? No!" I laughed. "If I can't be happy then I can hope to be happy."

"Yeah.."

I smiled. "And I will never stop watching those Disney movies or any movie.. Romantic happy ending movies."

"You seem like the type to cry when watching a movie." He teased.

"No comment! One day I would really want to go to Disneyland, California."

"I suspected as much. How old are you?" I chuckled, I knew where he was taking this.

"Age doesn't really matter, having fun is what matters."

"How old are you?" He repeated.

"28.. And yes.. I want to go to Disneyland." He shook his head. "I have to go. I hope everything goes well for you." He gave me a polite nod before I got off his car.

Walking towards my house I turned and his car was still on the same position. I looked away as I pressed the button for the gate. Maybe he did seem like a good person. Maybe I had judged him too early. Getting inside the house I was welcomed by the house telephone ringing. I walked towards it then answered.

"Hello?"

"Sweetheart.."

"Kevin. Hi, how are you?"

"I'm fine and you? How's everything?"

"I'm fine too.. And everything is ok."

"I put some money in all your accounts.. In case you need

anything. I feel bad for being a very bad husband."

"Don't and thank you."

"All for you. I was thinking of buying all of you new cars."

"You really don't have to but if you wish, do so."

"Yes. Look sweetheart I have to go right now. I will call you."

"Rocky told me you cut her off."

"I did. I just want her to learn being self reliant. It's only for a while. I'm sure she's doing ok. She hasn't called crying yet. She's a big girl."

"Ok."

"Ok, bye.."

"Bye.." I put the telephone down then took off my shoes. I felt drained, all that happened since the day started just left me drained. I took off my dress then walked to the backdoor. Maybe I needed a swim. Getting outside I gazed at the pool, it looked inviting. I went over and sat at the edge of the pool with my legs dipped inside. The water was warm, it was always warm. It didn't take long for my brain to start thinking about April Witherspoon. I knew her, mom once mentioned her, not her name but it had been so easy for me to put one and one together when April approached me. And when she said her child.. I knew she was talking about Mayra. April was the reason why I made mom and Mayra move to another continent. She was what my mother was running from. What I had been protecting her from. Quickly I stood up then walked back inside the house. I had to make sure they were ok. I took the phone with the sim card I usually called mom with and switched it on. When it was on I dialed her number then held the phone to my ear. She picked up almost

immediately.

"Lelo!" I could hear the excitement in her voice. It had been time since I last spoke to her.

"Mom.. How are you?"

"I'm fine.. We are fine. We miss you." I sighed.

"I miss you too."

"How is everything?"

"Everything is ok. I went to Paris a few days ago."

"Ow.."

"Yes.. I met some lady. Her name is April Witherspoon." There was silence. Her silence was enough response.

"She still remembers you. I have a feeling she's going to come after me so I'm going to stop communicating with you guys for a while."

"She's going to take away my baby from me.."

"She won't. Mayra is 22 mom. She can choose who she wants to stay with and besides that.. She's yours."

"Nompumelelo we didn't tell her about her father being alive! About her parents. She's going to be very upset."

"She will understand why we never told her. Don't stress about it. I won't let anything happen to her or you. I won't let April come anywhere near you."

"Ok.."

"At the mean time.. Please tell her to privatize her social media accounts and if she can.. Take the surname down."

"Ok.."

"Mom I love you. I love Mayra. I won't let anything happen to our family. Not when I'm still alive. I'm going to send you money so

that..-"

"Zuko already sent money." I ignored that totally.

"I'm going to send you money so that you can cover up some expenses."

"Lelo when are you going to stop this?"

"Stop what?"

"Zuko is your brother. You are my kids. Do you know the amount of pain I endure because of this?"

"I have no brother. Is Mayra there with you."

"She went out with Rebecca, her friend."

"Ok..tell her I called. I love you, bye." I said then hung up and switched off the phone. I took my phone and called Steve. He answered after a while.

"Boss!"

"Steve I want you to keep a close eye on my family.. Especially Mayra. Tail her. Everywhere she goes. Everyone she hangs out with."

"Yes mam."

"Thank you."

"It's all good." I hung up immediately. If I could just keep April away from Mayra. I sat down on the floor feeling tired. I closed my eyes tightly, trying to think of other things. My kiss with Luthando took over. If he really was devoted and committed to his girlfriend then he wouldn't have kissed me back. I had hope for us, for me and him. Something just told me we could be together. He obviously could feel the connection between us. He couldn't obviously not feel it or maybe I was being delusional because I wanted him to have eyes for me and me only.

I slowly drifted with him in my mind.

I walk towards him. He is standing there looking at me, smiling. He looks happy to see me and so am I. He's wearing a suit. It's a white suit. Pure white. He looks like an Angel as his face glows. I look down on myself and I'm wearing a gown. A wedding gown. Right that moment I notice he's standing by the alter and he's looking at me. It's our wedding day. I start running towards him. But as I close the distance between us I see her. She's also wearing a gown. A gown just like mine. She looks just like me and now they are smiling at each other. I stop running abruptly as he kisses her. I want to scream no but I can't find my voice. I start gasping as tears wet my cheek. I want him to step away from her. He's mine! My Luthando. He takes her hand and they start walking away. I want to run after them but my feet feel heavy. They get heavier with each second. I let out a croud cry and feel the world vibrate.

"Lelo! Lelo!" I heard my name being called in a loud scream and that sent me sitting upright in full force, breathing hard.

"Hey..it's ok." I looked at Julie as she tried to calm me down. "It's ok. You are safe." I lay down again, laughing this time around. She looked at me in confusion as I laughed wiping away my tears.

"I can't believe my dream."

"What was happening?"

"I have been thinking about someone so much I'm even dreaming about them. This is not healthy." She laughed.

"You going crazy?"

"Yes.. I thought you would gave gone back to PE by now."

"I'm going today."

"Ohh.." I stood up. I was still in my panty and bra. "Is your brother back?"

"Yes.. He came back two days after you came back. Why didn't you go to work today?"

"Ow.. Tshidi said I should take a day off since it's Friday."

"You do deserve a break."

"Yeah.. I'm going to miss you." She held my hands.

"Me too and I pray you and Luthando be."

"That's sweet. How's your mother?"

"She's fine. Honestly I'm so glad to be leaving. Sometimes she gets too much but she's going to be so lonely now that Luthando is moving out."

"He's moving out?"

"Yah.. Says he needs his own space."

"That's good. Staying with your mother sometimes just kills the vibe."

"I know.. Go dress up and let's go out."

"Ok.." I walked to my bedroom. I wasn't going to tell her about the kiss. It was too soon.

I took a quick shower before I changed into a floral dress with flip flops then took my handbag and walked out.

"We can go."

"Ok.." She stood up.

"I saw Latoya yesterday."

"Ow.. I saw her in Paris."

"What was she doing there?"

"I don't know.. Having fun maybe."

"Well I saw her with some guy."

"Ok.." We got in the car.

"What happens if Kevin finds out she's cheating?"

"I don't know.. How will he find out?"

"So she's cheating?" I looked at her as I drove out of my yard.

"Where are you going with this? You also want me to cheat with your brother."

"It's different."

"How so?"

"You are trapped.. She's not. She's a gold digger! A prostitute!"

"Julie.. Toya is no gold digger. You don't understand anything Julie. She's not a prostitute. You think it's easy for her to be stuck with someone she doesn't love?"

"Then she can leave and work!"

"I'm not going to say anything anymore."

"I can never look at her in another way. She's a prostitute!"

"Why do you hate her so much?" I finally asked.

"Because she's a disgrace to all women out there."

"Maybe to you she is but not to me. To me she's an Aphrodite."

CHAPTER 16

[ROCKELLE]

Quickly I put the bottle of water on the table then placed the files down carefully. One file in front of each chair. After that I set Lungile's laptop in front of his chair then connected it to the projector.

"Hmmm.." A voice said making stop what I was doing so that I look. I smiled when I realized it was Nandi.

"Hi!"

"Everything going well?"

"Yes. Everything is going well." She didn't like me and she didn't even try to hide it. Maybe that's what I liked about her.

"I see.." I focused on Lungile's laptop. I opened the folder of the information he wanted to present. He wanted to extend the company and he wanted investors.

"So how does it feel to be a minister's child? A corrupt minister's child?" I moved back from the laptop then took my notepad and walked to the lift. I pressed a button summoning it.

"It feels good."

"It sure must. What exactly are you looking for here?"

"Here? Ohh I was setting up the boardroom for Lungile's meeting. It's my job after all."

"You mean Mr Mokwena?" I chuckled as I walked inside the lift then pressed 15.

"Lungile.. He prefers Lungile. See you around." And the elevator doors closed. I took a steady breath as the elevator steadily rose. Getting back to my desk I quickly answered the telephone, it was Puleng.

"Puleng.."

"Hey.. A call for Mr Mokwena. It's Mrs Charles. She's upset. Says she tried calling you and you didn't answer." I laughed.

"She's always upset, hold on..." I pressed a button for Lungile's telephone. He picked up almost immediately.

"Rocky?"

"I have Mrs Charles."

"How's her mood."

"She's upset as usual. She tried calling but I was at the boardroom so plus her normal being upset.. She's more upset."

"Great! Let her through."

"Ok.." I hung up then went back to Puleng.

"Let her through directly."

"Yes!" She then hung up. I fixed my things for the meeting that was due in five minutes. It had been a week since I started working at the company and everyone was generally nice but of course expect Nandi.

I usually hang out with Puleng and Kelly during lunch. When I told Vince I was quitting he wasn't too pleased, perhaps maybe he thought him and I could be something more now that I was working with him. He produced the contract I had signed and it said I was to quit after a month notice. Lungile took care of it in a second and Vince immediately released me. I still had my evening two hours with Cathy and I also managed to get MJ with me. We were going to have a two hours work out every Saturday. I looked at my watch, two minutes were left till the meeting started. I walked towards Lungile's office then opened the door slightly. He was still on the phone with Mrs Charles. She was going through a divorce and from the divorce she wanted a lot. He looked at me. I tapped my wrist indicating that it was time up. "Two minutes.." He mouthed. I closed his door then took my things and walked to the elevator. I was pretty sure everyone was at the meeting. I had to go and keep things in order till he came. Arriving there as suspected everyone was already sitted. Business women and men. I smiled as I sat down on my chair that was besides Lungile's. This was the first meeting I was

attending with him, usually I didn't but because he wanted notes, I had to be present.

"Mr Mokwena will join us in a minute." I said smiling. All the faces looked new to me. They were too serious it wasn't even funny. I wondered if it was a rule to look angry if you were a business person. I made a mental note to ask Lungile some time.

Just then he walked in. Unbuttoning the jacket of his navy blue three-piece suit. His face had completely changed but he didn't look angry.. Just.. phlegmatic. I watched him as he got in the business mood. He was so impulsive and witty, at least he didn't infuse boredom. He kept everyone at arm length through his whole presentation. The way he answered questions which were fired to him was just appealing. When the meeting was finally over I stood up with everyone. No doubt he was going to get investments.

"That was just off the hook!" I exclaimed when everyone was gone.

"Thank you. We will see when they invest."

"I'm sure they will."

"Yeah.. Am I done for the day?" I looked at my watch. It was just after four.

"Not exactly.. You are having dinner with Ms Londiwe Mkhize at six."

"Ok.. Anything else right now?"

"No.. You are free."

"Ok.."

We walked to the elevator. It didn't take long to come. Arriving at his floor I went straight to my desk as he walked to his office.

Before I could get my computer to full function I noticed my phone ring. I took it and it was Cathy.

"Cathy.."

"Hey.. I tried calling but you were not picking up."

"I was in a meeting, what did you want?"

"Ohh.. I just wanted to tell you I'm going out today so don't come."

"Ohh.."

"Yeah.. I will see you on Monday."

"Ok.. Don't forget not to let food defeat you."

"Yes!"

"Ok.. Have fun!"

"Bye.." I then hung up. I had no plans, I had been ignoring Gail for a while now. I couldn't deal with her. I packed all my things then sat down and went on internet since I had nothing to do now. I decided to catch up with witches of the east end from where I last watched. I managed to watch only two episodes of season 2 before I was interrupted by the office phone ringing. I sluggishly answered.

"Mokwena law firm hello?"

"Hey.. It's me."

"Jes?"

"Yeah.. How are you?"

"I'm good. It's been time."

"I know.." Jessica was one of the friends I had though she was completely the opposite to what I was used to. She was quiet. More of an indoor person than outdoor. I met her at a library in Durban some time ago.

"Still in Durban?"

"Yeah.. Still in Durban."

"I see. I hope everything is well." She stayed with her mother and two brothers.

"Yes. Everything is well. I just thought I would just check up on you. See how you are doing."

"Thank you and I'm fine."

"Ok.."

"Wait.. How did you get in touch with me with the office? I don't remember telling you where I work." I heard her laugh.

"I know.. But remember when I met you.. you were with Gail. I lost your number so I decided to call her."

"Ohh.. It was nice talking to you."

"You too.. Bye."

"Bye." I immediately hung up. Jes was all nice but there was just something weird about her that I didn't understand.

Just then Lungile was walking out of his office with his briefcase.

"I'm done for the day." He said making me stand up while switching off the computer.

"Ok.."

"Still going to see Cathy?" He knew my everyday schedule.. well maybe because it wasn't that much of a schedule.

"No.. She cancelled."

"Any plans?"

"No.. I guess I could watch TV."

"You can come with me to dinner with Ms Mkhize."

"It's good to see you Lungile.." Londiwe said smiling brightly at him while giving him a brief hug.

"You too.. Ms Mkhize." He responded, moving back a bit. It didn't take me long to realize she made him uncomfortable. His smile to her was guarded.

"Londiwe please.. You look well." I looked at her above the knee skirt, her white shirt which revealed her cleavage and the killer heels. She was beautiful but looked older than Lungile. She giggled like a high school girl.

"Thank you. You too.. What am I saying? You always look good. Please.. Let's sit." I probably looked invisible to her because she was talking to Lungile only. I sighed as I sat down then started going through the menu.

"You know I haven't seen you in a while.." She said softly. Glancing at her I wondered if she had kids. Her hand was placed carefully on top of Lungile's.

"Business has been keeping me busy." He said retreating his hand. "But it's always a pleasure seeing you." She laughed shyly, she liked him. I wondered if she knew there was someone called Nandi. I could already see them wrestling and fighting for him. The image in my head made me laugh loudly making both Lungile and Londi keep quiet. I stopped laughing almost immediately wishing to take back my laugh.

"Uhhh.. My own joke." I said looking at them through my eyelashes. I was beyond mortified. I just wanted to die and get my body cremated immediately. Lungile smiled then took my hand into his. The way he looked at me.. He looked as if he was begging me.

"You can share with us the joke babe." I almost laughed but held it. It was tit for tat. It was my turn to help him out from the hands

of a sexy beautiful woman who wanted him.

"No.. It's nothing." Londi looked at our hands. She looked.. shocked but she smiled.

"Ow Darling hi.." She said.

"Hi.. I'm hungry.. Can we order?"

"Sure... Ummh ladies.. Please excuse me." He said standing up and walking away. He couldn't possibly leave me alone with Mrs touchy.

"So.. How long have you been with Lungile? You look young.. Must be 20 if not less."

"27.." I lied squaring my shoulders. She smiled though it was fake. As fake as her lashes.

"So young.. Shouldn't you be focusing on your career?"

"I am. With Lungile by my side though. He's supportive."

"At this age men should be the last thing on your mind."

"Lungile is not men...and I love him. It's an unfortunate he's not interested in older women." She smiled, and she was pissed. I don't know how she managed to smile even when angry.

"Well..-"

"Londiwe my man doesn't like you nor is he interested in you. Stop sexual harassing him, I'm sure he's old enough to be your younger brother. Stop trying to be a pediphile. You can go to jail for that." And just then Lungile was back. She smiled at him more brightly than ever. Maybe I had to tell her about Nandi. Just a little bit drama. She thrust her chest up revealing more of her cleavage. Now I was sure. I had to tell about Nandi. I definitely had to.

The dinner was supposed to be a business thing but it turned to

something else. Londiwe was just touchy and flirty. By the time we left she was tipsy of all the wine she had been drinking. At least she had come with her driver.

"That dinner was lit!" I said as we got in the car laughing.

"I think I have to report sexual harassment.."

"She told me I'm too young for you."

"Honestly something is wrong with the woman." I laughed harder. He looked completely drained.

"I wish I told her about Nandi.. I can already see them fighting." Lungile just shook his head as I laughed. My ribs even hurt. I put my seatbelt on as he started driving. He slowed down as we approached a road block. It reminded me of Mazwi. The police was still looking for him though Lungile had hired a private investigator.

The police didn't stop us though I saw Janine. She was standing at the other side with another police officer. She looked... herself. Sometimes I wondered why she married my father because anyone could see she hated him.

"Are you ok?" Lungile asked bringing me back to earth.

"Yeah.. I'm Good."

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah.. I'm ok.." I could see he didn't believe me but what could I say.. That ohh hey! Look at one of the women my father married. Arriving home I went straight to my borrowed room. I undressed then wore my PJ's. I was going to watch TV but my phone beeping stopped me by the door. Opening the text it was Brian. We never texted each other. Our relation never went that far.

'Wanna land my house tonight?

Havin a party..'

I chuckled. This was the Brian I knew. In other words he was asking to bang. I replied quickly.

Me: 'Nah.. Busy.. Next time schmo'

Brian: 'You can't possibly say no to ya God of orgasm..'

Me: 'You mean the DEMONEEEEE of orgasm??'

Brian: 'DEMONEEEEE? I can bring heaven to you babes..'

Me: 'I know but legit.. I can't.. Sorry Papi B.'

He didn't text back but before a second could pass by my phone was ringing. I laughed as I answered.

"You can't be serious..". He started.

"I am.. Unfortunately."

"What are you doing exactly?"

"Well.. I.. I'm crushing at someone's house so I just can't be..-"

"You don't have to come back tonight. You can sleep over. We can watch TV and drink wine." I laughed.

"Watch TV? Really now?"

"Yes.. Watch TV.. Please. I'm begging you.. Your Papi B is begging you." I took a deep breath.

"Please say yes... It's only us. A party for two."

"Ok.. Though I don't have transport..-"

"Say no more. I'm on my way.. Where are you?"

I looked at my backless flared dress that stopped above my mid thighs. The stockings I was putting on didn't cover anything but it gave me the look I was looking for. After everything I had been through I deserved a good dick.

The ankle killer heels made me look extra tall. I let my curly hair free. I took my night gown then put it on. After that I took my

purse then slowly opened my door. I listened carefully and it was silent. I went back inside my room then took off my heels and grabbed my handbag, disposed everything that was inside on the floor and stashed my shoes in the handbag together with my purse. I felt like a sneaky teenager, I could just walk out but I just couldn't. I didn't want Lungile to think otherwise. Imagine what he will say about you sneaking out all for dick? The voice in my head asked making me shrink. Just then my phone started ringing, I fished my purse out of the handbag then took out the phone. It was Brian. I could cancel but then.. He was already here. I answered.

"Hey.."

"I'm two houses away as you said."

"I'm coming."

"Cool.." He hung up immediately. I took a deep breath before I took my handbag then opened the door slowly and stepped out closing the door behind me. I was going to come back early in the morning.

Slowly I walked downstairs, making sure each step was silent. Getting in the sitting room, the lights were off. Slowly, using the outside light I walked to the door but to freeze when the lights abruptly went on. I have never felt caught before, being caught to a stage of just wishing the ground will just open up.. Just a little bit so that I squeeze in and let it swallow me and take me straight to the hell. I felt so caught, I could even feel it in my blood veins. I turned, slowly wishing for my death and there he was. He looked really calm. Father in heaven.. I prayed inwardly. You can take me Lord, I'm ready to join you this moment right

now.

[Jannie]

"Sir please I'm going to ask you to step out of the car." I said opening the door for him. He chuckled as he got off the car.

"Have I broken the law?"

"Can I see the papers of this car?" I asked him. Now Orlando was standing besides me. I was completely sure the car was stolen but it didn't look like it was from the country. It looked as if it had been imported but stolen. The Ferrari still looked new.

"What paperrrs?" He asked sounding annoyed.

"You know the papers I'm talking about. Produce them or I'm arresting you with theft Mr Maphoto." He laughed a chilly laugh then got back in the car and came out with some papers. I took them from him then looked through them. It was his car according to the papers and the funny thing was that.. they were real.

"You really are smart aren't you?" I said handing him back his papers.

"I will take that as a compliment. Can I go now?"

"You won't always get away."

"See you around.. Lady cop!" With that he got in his car and drove away.

"Damn it!" I groaned.

"Hey.. Next time we will catch him.. As you said.. He won't always get away."

"I should have thought about that.. How could I not think about the fact that he may have papers!"

"Janny you should calm down.."

"I feel like a failure!"

"Janny.. You-"

"No Orlando! I knew he was smart but I acted like a dumb bitch!"

"You are not a dumb bitch! Can you stop?" I felt tears wet my cheek.

"Hey.. Janny.. No don't cry.. Come here.." Orlando said pulling me into his arms. I still couldn't believe King had done a hit and run on me. After everything...

CHAPTER 17

[LATOYA]

"Are you just going to sit there in silent?" Nothando asked.

"I'm watching TV.."

"What's wrong? Things ok between you and your side?" I looked at her.

"My side?"

She flushed. "Your boyfriend I mean." There was just something about her tone.

"You don't like him?" I asked.

"I haven't met him yet but seeing you sad like this because of him makes me not to like him." I sighed deeply as I looked back at the TV.

"Have I always been insecure?"

"What?"

"Nothando.." I gazed at her. "Have I always been insecure in my relationships?"

"No.. You were always into no strings attached things. What's

wrong?"

"I feel so insecure.. Luthando said I am."

"What do you mean?"

"Well when we went to Paris.. It was all nice and stuff but two days before we came back.. He took me with him to some event.. Rich people's event. We arrived there but shortly after.. He left. Said he had to collect something. He was gone for about 30 minutes that I called him. When he finally came back.. His explanation was he bumped into someone he knew and he couldn't avoid her. So I asked.. Who's she? Then he said I was being insecure and it was unattractive and that it made me ugly." She looked at me for a while. She now looked angry.

"So just because you asked who it was.. You are being insecure?"

"Nothando.."

"That bastard!" She stood up. "He doesn't deserve you. He's an asshole!" Her mood had completely taken a dark turn. She was angry.

"Why jump to accuse you of insecurity? If he was innocent then he could have just told you who it was."

"I know but maybe I too came off as-"

"You had every right to ask."

"But it doesn't matter now. We are ok.."

"So all in all.. What you are trying to tell me is that.. You are not supposed to ask?"

"Nono.. I.. I.."

"You..?"

"Maybe we should just drop this." I suggested.

"Drop what? We are not dropping anything! This is how they start. Firstly he's going to accuse you of being insecure.. When actually he's being unfaithful. Next time he will blame you for his cheating. I know his type! They will make you forgive them and take them back when he's nothing but trash."

"Between me and him.. I'm the one who's being unfaithful. I'm the married one."

"He knew you were married when he approached you. That point is irrelevant."

"I think I love him..." I muttered silently. Not believing I had said it out loud. Not even believing I loved him. It had been what? 3 seconds of us knowing each other and here I was. Maybe that's why him accusing me of insecurity hurt.

"What?" Her exclamation from shock brought me back to the world.

"I love him."

"What about him?"

I shrugged. What about him? Did he feel the same too? The same night after he accused me of insecurity we made love for the whole night. It wasn't us fucking-no.. It was us making love and I loved every second of it. It meant something to me but I wasn't really sure if it also meant something to him. He was hard to read. I leaned over and took my mug of wine then swallowed a great gulp of it. She smiled leaving me appalled.

"What?" I asked.

"You love him. That's what! Remember during our third year.. You said if you ever love a man.. No.. Let me quote exactly your words.." She said giggling. "If I ever love a dick, get hitched to

one and fuck for babies... Definitely Jesus will be near arrival!" I laughed with her.

"I remember that!"

"So does this mean you.. are going to get hitched to him and fuck for babies?"

"I don't know. If I get the money maybe."

She stood up. "We are still on that?"

"What do you mean we are still on that Nothando? We have been on that.. Plus either way... The plan is already in motion."

"He's going to kill you Toya.."

"He won't. I know the money is somewhere.. And I know Rocky knows where it is. She might not know exactly.. But her father probably gave her an idea of where it is.. Though she doesn't know it yet."

"Are you listening to yourself? Latoya this is not a movie. This is real life! What you are saying is completely crazy."

"It's not. I'm not going to hurt her. I have someone who's going to befriend her. I just need access to her things."

"So you are going to rampage through her personal belongings and find the secret code to the money?"

"No.. I'm going to dig out where it is hidden. Kevin is a thug under a suit. Him being a minister opened a lot of doors for him to be able to access a lot of money... Steal money. I know it's somewhere in a secret place.. I just need to know where."

"I'm done! I'm done with you! You are just asking for death."

"Stop stressing. I know what I'm doing."

"Do..-" she stopped talking when my phone started ringing. I reached for it on the small wooden table. Quickly I answered

when I saw the caller.

"Luthando.."

"Where are you? I'm at your flat."

"I'm at my friend's house. Ummh I can come back.." I said standing up and trying to locate my shoes.

"Where are you. I will come there.." I didn't hesitate telling him where I was. He hung up after telling me to give him 10 minutes.

"He's coming here?"

"Yes.. I think this is a chance for you to meet him."

"I don't think that's a good idea Latoya."

"No... It is a very good idea. Just relax. He's not that bad.

Where's your sexual confused sister?"

"She went out with some friends. I think she's found a new girlfriend." I laughed.

"Honestly all she needs is a good dick."

"Stop.." She sat down as I put on my shoes.

"How's work?"

"Work is ok. My boss is nice. He's just laid back."

"That's good. I wouldn't want you dealing with a monster of a boss." She laughed.

"I wouldn't want to deal with such too.."

"And your gigs?"

"I have been getting more. I think I might find a recording label. A good recording label."

"That's great. When you are famous and all.. Don't forget me."

"I will never. How's Tamara?" I rolled my eyes.

"I don't know and don't care. Honestly I have had it with those girls."

"Thank goodness. I can assure you.. Those girls are dangerous."
I laughed.

"You can bet on it." I took my glass of wine the finished it off.
After a while we had a car hooter.

"Ok.. I think that's him. Let's go." I said standing up and taking
my handbag.

"Latoya I don't-"

"No.. Let's go. I'm not listening to anything. Let's go." I said
pulling her so that she stands. She sighed as we walked out,
straight to the gate. Luthando's i8 was parked right there..

"Latoya I..-" I cut her short.

"Come. He doesn't eat people." His window was open and he
was staring at me.

"I want you to meet my friend." I said making him open his door
and step out of the car. It was really late. Nono and I were
supposed to hang out and watch a movie tonight since it was
Friday but I was sure she was going to understand.

I moved aside so that she can look at Luthando.

"Babe this is Nothando Dlamini, she's my sister from another
mother since varsity.. The first day. And Nono this is Luthando..

My boyfriend." I introduced. Luthando looked.. Shocked..

Surprised.. I couldn't really read him while on the other hand
Nono was just looking down on her fingers she was fiddling with.

"Ummh.." I earnestly searched for something in my head to say
to get rid of the silence but my thoughts were much more
louder.

"It's nice to meet you." Luthando said making Nono raise her
head and nod.

"Can we go now?" He asked.

"Do you guys perhaps know each other?" I shot back, my heart was beating fast. Luthando looked at me.

"Yes.. I know her. She's the girlfriend I broke up with two years ago. Can we go now?"

"Are you upset?" He asked as he drove somewhere. I didn't even bother asking where he was taking me. I looked at him. I wasn't upset. No.. Somehow I felt numb. I couldn't seem to be able of getting hold of my feelings.

"No."

"You have been quiet."

I forced a smile. "I have nothing to say."

He glanced at me. I could see my silence was bothering him but what could I say.

"You are lying. Say it.. Whatever that it is."

"You used to date my friend Luthando. For good two and half years. She still loves you.. You are the reason she hasn't moved on yet. What exactly do you want me to say?"

"I know how this looks like but your friend and I broke up!"

"You broke up months ago!"

"We broke up two years ago.. The on and off shit doesn't count."

"She loves you!"

"Well sorry for her because I don't give a fuck."

"God!" I said as I buried my head in my hands.

"Toots I really don't get the issue here."

"Imagine if I were to date your friend!" I said taking my hands off my face. He frowned. "You see! I feel like shit!"

"Ok fine.. So what now?" I looked at him.

"I love you." I said softly. "I don't know how but I love you.. I don't even know why I do. It scares me. I have never loved any man. But I love you."

"Then Nothando will just have to live with it toots because I love you too ok babe?" He said taking my hand into his then brought it to his lips and kissed my knuckles. I nodded though deep down I didn't believe him.

Just then my phone started ringing. He released my hand so that I take it from my purse. I shut my eyes tightly. Kevin couldn't call now. This was worst timing ever. I knew Luthando was probably looking at me. How could I answer? I took a deep breath then answered.

"Sweetheart.." He said.

"Hi.."

"How are you?"

"I'm fine. I'm good." I stole a glance at Luthando who was concentrating on driving.

"I miss you sweetheart."

Oh God! I inwardly groaned.

"Me too."

"I bought you a car. It's arriving tomorrow."

"Thank you very much. I can't find the right words to thank you with."

"Are you ok?"

"Yes.. Yes.."

"Do you need more money? Look.. Don't worry about it. I'm going to put money in your account. You can go and shop wherever you want. Matter of fact.. I'm going to buy you a shop.."

So that every time you need clothes you run there." This was the moment where I giggled shyly just to make him feel good about himself. I cleared my throat then forced a laugh. That seemed to have worked because he laughed too.

"That will be very thoughtful."

"I know. I will put money in your account tomorrow. Lot's of it. I like to keep my baby happy."

"I know."

"Ok bye.."

"Bye." He then hung up. I quickly put my phone back in my handbag.

"Who was that?" Luthando asked making me laugh while deep inside my heart was threatening to leap out from my chest.

"Don't even think about lying. Who was it? Your old man?"

"He was just checking up on me. Nothing much.."

"Did you talk to your lawyer?" I blinked a couple of times.

"Yes," that was the truth. I did speak to him.. But not about a divorce. Finding a lawyer had been so easy.

"And what did he say?"

"He says he wants to meet me in person. Tomorrow. So that we can discuss it in full detail." That too wasn't a lie. I was meeting my lawyer tomorrow.. but not because I wanted a divorce.

"Ok.. Hungry?" I almost sighed too loudly but I held it. I don't know why but I felt so guilty for lying to him. I could see traits of possessiveness on him and telling him that I hadn't talked to the lawyer about the divorce yet was just going to make him angry.

"Yes.. But not for food." I said making him look at me with a smug pasted on his face.

It didn't take me long to realize we were going to his double storey.

"Is there property in that house?"

"Yes. Enough property to lie you down." I chuckled.

"When am I going to start working on the house? It's renovation?" I asked.

"Whenever you want to."

"What's the budget?"

"The budget is there's no budget." He said smirking.

"Great! You are going to love it after I'm done with it."

Arriving at the house it still took my breath away. It had an ancient kind of design but I was pretty sure after the renovation it was going to look exactly like a palace.

"You really like this house don't you?" I smiled. "I do. I wouldn't mind staying here."

"You can come and stay after your divorce is finalised."

I smiled. I liked the idea. Immediately after I got my money I would definitely divorce the bastard.

"I would love that.."

"The house is even big enough to even cater for your siblings." I quickly turned and looked at him. How did he remember that I had siblings.

"You would want my siblings to move in? With you?"

"They are part of the package babe. Whatever makes you happy.. I would do it." He said as he got hold of my waist.

"Who was the lady you talked to?" I asked. I just couldn't seem to forget about it. To forget about the lady. The lady he bumped into. The lady I asked about so that he tells me I was being

insecure.

"It was Julie's friend. She likes me but she knows I have you." I felt my heart cringe. She couldn't possibly like a man with a girlfriend.. Or maybe she could.. But not my man. She could like anyone else not my man. I smiled as I wrapped my arms around him.

"Next time give her my number. Maybe she needs me to explain it to her." He chuckled then picked me up with ease. I was grateful for the flared dress I was wearing. Slowly he walked with me up the stairs and to the bedroom. When I entered the room the first time, it was empty and now it had a bed. A huge bed covered with blankets. That was the only thing I could see.

"So you bought a bed?"

"Yeah.." He said placing me gently on it. "It's of great use." I laughed. Yes, great use of sex. He took my left leg then took off my sandal easily.

"Is your sister still home?" I asked as he took off my right shoe. I wanted to ask him about the girl his sister thought was best for him but rather I held my tongue. A lot had happened in a few minutes. All I wanted was his body on mine. I just wanted him to make love to me so that I forget all my worries.

"No.. She went back." I slowly nodded as his hand skimmed under my dress, trailing his fingers up my hipbone up till my inner thighs. "Don't worry about her. She's always been like that." He added. Maybe that was meant to ease me up but it didn't. It didn't because there was nothing to ease up. I really didn't care if she liked me or not. The same way my mother didn't care if my father's family liked her or not. I still had

memories of when I was around 6 years old. Some were not clear.. The shrink had said my brain was trying to bury away the painful memories. Maybe it was a good thing that I didn't remember most of what happened but what I remembered fully was the day the police officer told my Aunt that my parents had passed on. He had tried to whisper it but his whisper was just as good as him saying it loudly. I blinked a couple of times, blinking the emotions away. I let my mind focus on the sensation of Luthando's fingers rubbing me through my lace panties. He could take my mind off things that threatened to rip me apart. He took off my panties quickly then pulled me by my legs so that now I was lying at the edge of the bed. He opened my legs wider, exposing me fully. My toes curled as he gave me a long lick. In a few minutes I was screaming out of pleasure. This nigga could give it with his tounge. I closed my eyes as I tried to just calm my racing heart down. I was trying to calm down from the mind blowing orgasm I had just gone through. I felt his hands on my waist pushing me up the bed. My eyes slowly opened as I felt him rubbing my entrance. He was already naked. I ran my fingers on his torso then looked into his burning eyes.

"I know the garage is a cover up for all the money you have." I muttered quietly. I don't know what brought me to say it but I did.. and I didn't regret it. And my feelings towards him didn't change.

"It's good that you know.." He whispered against my lips then kissed me slowly while he slowly sunk in me. The feeling was heaven. Everything got washed off with his slow deep thrust. Every doubt in my heart. I wrapped my legs and arms around

him and let him rock my body. I didn't care about anything else.. Expect him and I.. Just us. I felt it build up slowly as he went in and out, swerving his waist. He was good. So good I didn't even know what to do with myself. I dug my nails into his bare back as I lost myself in him.

CHAPTER 18

[JANINE]

I walked inside my house feeling tired. Emotionally drained. The feeling made me feel sick.

I took a bottle of water from the fridge then drank almost all of it. After that I walked upstairs. The clothes King had bought for me were still on the floor in the bedroom where I dumped them the day after I read his poem and the message he had left for me. I ignored them then walked to the bathroom. My reflection stared back at me as I walked inside the bathroom. I looked at the stranger that was staring at me. I had to accept that I had been played. The most funny thing was the fact that.. that I didn't even know anything about him. Not even his last name. All I knew was that his name was Kingsley. I felt stupid. There were signs. He was just too perfect. I felt used. Very used. After a while I had decided. Love was not for me. And I had been so stupid to believe I could love and be loved too. Stupid for believing I could actually give, stupid for believing that maybe.. just maybe I had something to give when actually I didn't. When actually I didn't have anything. Stupid enough for believing I could be brighter. I walked back to my bedroom, looked for a scissor then walked back with it to the bathroom. I started

cutting off the weave. It wasn't me. I took a while to remove it completely from my head. I looked more like myself when I was done. After that I walked back to my room then took the shopping bags. I was going to donate them to the orphanages tomorrow so I took them downstairs so that tomorrow early morning I could drive to an orphanage. I felt more relieved now that I had made a decision. King could go to hell for all I cared. I finally changed into my shorts and vest then sat in front of the tv and started watching Mayday. I liked the show, besides X files I liked Mayday. It was late but I didn't feel sleepy. I knew sleeping would result in me thinking about him. I didn't want to think about him-ever!

Today's quest had ended up as a fail, We got a call yesterday from a stranger telling us about Maphoto. Thing about him was that.. He didn't steal any cars. He didn't steal local cars. He stole exquisite fast cars or luxury cars from the international countries. He didn't steal of tempering with someone's car and running away with it, no.. He stole more than 20 per time. New cars. From the manufactured places. The farrari he had, it was the new invention. If he sold it, he probably got more than a million for it. I still wondered how he got the papers for it and how he managed to do it all alone. If I could catch Maphoto, I could catch big daddy but Maphoto was just extra smart. He was too damn smart. Catching him was going to hard. He could hack any system he wanted because he was an IT guru. Thinking about him frustrated me more that I even started going through the channels till I came across a movie. Friends with benefits. I settled for it. I could watch a romantic movie than

stress about someone who wasn't even thinking about me. Just for tonight I could.

"Thank you so much. We hardly have people donate to us." Mme Lesedi said. I smiled politely.

"How long have you been running the orphanage?"

"For 4 years now. I decided to open it up after my husband passed away. It really helps a lot of kids."

"How many kids do you take care of?"

"Right now I have 40, we are a big family." She smiled. She seemed like a very good lady. "This are all my children. Yes some days can be hard but.. They understand. We are just one big happy family."

I smiled looking around. They all stayed in a five bedroom house. They squashed in the house because they were too many. She had from little toddlers to teenagers. I took my phone from my pocket which had just beeped. It was a bank alert. Kevin had put money in my account. He never bothered to call me and I was glad.

"I'm going to donate money to you." I said as I viewed the amount Kevin had given me. It all could go to good use. Mme Lesedi needed it more than I did.

When I finally left the orphanage I felt more relieved. I liked giving back to the community. I drove straight to the police station from there.

"This is your day off." Orlando said as I walked inside our office. He was by his desk looking at some file.

"I can't stay at home doing nothing. I will probably end up dying. I just can't.." He chuckled.

"I give up on you."

"What are you looking at?" I said as I approached him. He was looking into Khanya's file. Her case was still running though now things looked good on her side because she was the state witness.

"Khanya.. This girl is not telling us something Janny." I looked at the file then at him.

"I know. But she will. It's only a matter of time."

"You think so?"

"Yes.. I'm not a ruthless someone but we have to pressure her to talk. And the only way to do that is make her little sister disappear for a while." He looked at me, I could see he was considering it. He finally smiled. His you-are-a-genious! smile.

"But what about Sibeko?"

"He doesn't have to know.. Plus if he ever finds out after we catch Big Daddy I think he will let me go." Orlando laughed.

"Yeah.. I think we can do that."

"How's Cassandra's case?"

"I think I'm finally getting somewhere. We tracked all her mother's calls. The ones she made and the ones that came in. There's someone called Richard she kept calling. I managed to track this Richard and Richard seemed dodgy. He panicked and was all over the place."

"And what about Cassandra? Is she saying anything?"

"No.. but the will has been read. They got everything. Its funny how they are the only ones who got something."

"I don't think Cassandra was being raped."

"I don't think so too.. and I don't think Cassandra is his

daughter." I took a deep breath. He didn't need my help on it, he certainly seemed to be handling everything fine.

"Ok.. I just came to check on things." He chuckled.

"Well things are ok. You look good.. with your lil afro." I sighed. I looked more myself. The usual me. The everyday me.

"Yeah.. Let me get moving. I'm from an orphanage. Have been donating."

"That's great, a little action makes a whole load of difference."

"I know. A little action does make a difference." He looked at me for a while, he opened his mouth but then closed it.

"Ok.. I will get going."

"Ok bye.." I started walking out but to only to stop when he called my name.

"Yeah?"

"Nothing.." He quickly said. "Have fun at home.. and I hope you are ok." I smiled then walked out. He was being weird but maybe it was the case. I got in my car then started it. When my eyes fell on the dashboard I saw a paper. I knew the paper. It was the first poem King gave me. I ignored it then reversed. As I drove home my phone started ringing. I sighed as I answered it annoyed. It was my Aunt. I had been ignoring her all week. She had gotten the money she wanted.

"Aunty.." I said, failing to hide the irritation.

"Mathogonolo.. I have been trying to call you."

"I have been busy. Is everything ok?"

"Your father.. He passed away. If you hadn't been so caught up you would have known. But no.. Now you think you are too special for us.. Because you have a rich husband. Your father

dies as you squander money! What kind of a person are you?" Everything else fell on deaf ears. I couldn't grasp anything she had said. Her shouting bounced back, feeling like a tennis ball. Nothing made sense, nothing could make sense no matter how much I tried to acquiesce. I lost my ability to feel. To feel the pain. I knew it was there, in a heap it was but the feeling to feel the pain was gone. It now all felt like.. Tasteless agony. Tasteless pain for it couldn't seem to get hold of where it had to be.

"What?" I managed, in a whisper which I wasn't sure if it was audible or not. Maybe she was joking with me.

"Your father passed on! He woke up dead. The doctor says he left you a letter." She said, her voice not changing tone. Still loud. I felt warm tears fall down my cheeks, gliding down slowly like viscous lava. Everything started going in slow motion. Everything. And then the numbness finally started fading off. Slowly, taking me with. I felt my tears, uncontrollable tears flood my face. The pain. I felt my heart concede to it. It was painful, the emotional pain was physically strangling me. I felt it clutch my heart. It was so painful. The pain was too much it crushed me completely. Flattening me. I felt myself shrink at the pain. It caught my soul bouncing it off because just like that.. He was gone and never coming back. I heard a car hooter though the sound felt so distant. So distant I couldn't manage to even trace where it was from. The loud bang brought my head up in panic. My eyes quickly assessed the situation and I was in the wrong lane headed straight towards a bus. Before a second could pass I felt a strong force surge me forward, slumping me to the steering wheel painfully. I felt intense pain erupt from my chest

in a violent manner. All I could think about was what I was doing when my father died, leaving me. Maybe that was when I was busy gallivanting in the streets of Jo'burg. Or maybe it was when I was having the best time of my life under King's hard body screaming his name. Or maybe it was when I was brooding and sulking because I had been used. My father was dead. And I didn't even know about it. I felt myself fall gently into the darkness. I could smell blood. My blood. Maybe it was about time.

[NOMPUMELELO]

I walked inside the restaurant holding my African print handbag and straight to his table. He was drinking water. I sat down across him then put my handbag down.

"Hi." He said with a small smile on his face.

"Nicholas," I responded as I took off my sunglasses. "Hi."

"Thank you for coming.."

"I was around but either way.. I have a feeling it's important. Where's Siya?"

"Siya is ok and yes it's important."

"Ok?" I prompted wanting to know what he wanted. He had called me early morning saying he wanted to see me.

"I have an issue.. It's really serious. Salina went to my mom." I blinked. Confused. So what now that she went to his mom?

"Oo..k?"

"Yes. My mother is very fond of Salina. She loves her. They have a strong mother-daughter relationship." I smiled. I knew what he was talking about.

"So? She's upset?"

"Very. I want you to join us for dinner tonight."

"That wasn't part of the deal."

"I gave you Morris." I glared at him. Of course he was going to say that.

"And what if she doesn't like me?"

"As long as she sees that I'm with you.. I'm fine." I sighed.

"Ok fine."

"Thank you. Want breakfast?"

"I'm not hungry." He chuckled.

"Have you ever tried to be a model?" I stared at him.

"No.. No."

"I think you are a natural."

A titter escaped my lips.. But not of delight or glee but of shock.

"You want to draw me.. naked?" Nicholas drew very good portraits of women. Naked women.

"We can take it stage by stage.. But one day I hope I do." I laughed.

"You are nuts."

"You should think about it."

"I don't pose naked.. to be drawn."

"I know.. That's why I said think about it." I looked at him. He was being serious. I mentally kicked myself. I couldn't possibly think about it. Posing naked wasn't me. I sold naked paintings of other women.. Not me posing naked. No.

"Thank you.. For the breakfast.. Though you shouldn't have."

"You are very welcome Miss Sikhosana." I stood up taking my sunglasses and my handbag.

"See you tonight."

"Can I pick you up?"

"No I'm fine Mr Dumisa, but thank you. Please, pass my greetings to your brother."

"He's too young for you." He muttered making me laugh out loud.

"Age is just a number love."

"It's not.. Leave him."

"I will think about it. He's mighty fine." He rolled his eyes making me laugh. "Bye." I said walking out already putting my sunglasses on. I walked to my car which was a few blocks away. I was from the library when I went to see Nicholas. Couldn't separate me from my novels.

I got in my car but before I could start it, my phone began ringing. It was an unknown number. I answered hesitantly.

"Speaking hello?"

"Is this Nompumelelo?" A female voice asked.

"Yes.. How can I help you?"

"Miss Janine Adams have been involved in a fatal car accident. You have been mentioned as her next of kin. We would like you to come and identify her body."

"Excuse me.. What?" I asked, not comprehending. It couldn't be her. Not Janine. Not her.

My hands shook as I parked the car in front of the hospital. I knew what was coming. It felt like a storm was just preparing itself. The moment I got out of the car I felt my legs weaken. Tears tickled my eyes. I reeled as I forced my legs to move forward. My tears silently fell to my cheeks. My heart was

beating so hard on my chest as I walked, trying to convince myself it was all a misunderstanding. I tried to remain hopeful as I approached the receptionist.

"Good afternoon Mam, how can I help you?" The receptionist asked. I clumsily wiped away my tears then took a deep breath.

"I'm here for Janine.. Janine Adams." I said in a whisper. My voice was failing me.

"Ohh.. The accident lady." The way he said it made a huge lump get stuck on my throat. 'The accident lady!' I nodded at him. I was at the verge. The verge of just breaking into small pieces. I just needed to see her. To see her serious face. To see her being herself. That's all I wanted.

"The doctors are still with her.." That wasn't what I wanted to hear. I put my hand on my mouth trying to push away the surging sob that wanted to erupt. I couldn't cry. She wasn't dead. She was going to be fine.. I chanted to myself.

The receptionist ushered me into some room. Nothing is painful as sitting not knowing and awaiting verdict. Hours passed. Each minute I wondered what was taking them so long. Janine was so strong. I convinced myself that she was probably fighting for her life. After hours which felt like years and centuries a doctor finally came out. I managed to stand up with my weak legs. They felt so wobbly I held on to the wall for support.

"Things are not looking good. She's lost a lot of blood. We are trying our best." I had only heard those words in movies. I never expected myself to hear them in a real life situation. His words had me seething in anguish. Unbearable anguish. Had they lost hope? I felt myself get tired that I fell to the ground. I couldn't

bring myself to open my mouth and say anything as my vision blurred with tears. Warm fresh tears. I was trembling like a leaf. I was still in denial though the feeling was still there. So strong. I knew the verdict already.

Pulling myself back on the bench I started counting. Counting seconds. Counting minutes. I was losing myself and nothing could hold me back. As I sat there, I realized the depth of my care for Janine. For Latoya. It was so deep. I felt so numb, I sat there. Again. Waiting. The doctor's words played over and over again in my head.

"Things are not looking good."

"She's lost a lot of blood."

"We are trying our best."

Over and over again they played like a mantra. Tears kept streaming down my face. I wondered what she was thinking when she had the accident. Was she thinking of catching a criminal?

Maybe she was thinking of.. of being happy.

Or maybe.. maybe..

My brain frenzied as I tried to think of what she was thinking.

Maybe she was hungry.

I stood up again when the door opened again and the same doctor walked in. The look on his face.. I knew it. I tried to brace myself for what was coming. The tremor.

"We have done our best. Her vital organs are in good shape. She had an internal bleeding that we managed to stop though she lost a lot of blood. Right now she's under intensive care." He said. I nodded. And I waited for it. It came as a violent eruption.

So violent it led me to the ground. It was a tremor but of relief.

CHAPTER 19

[ROCKELLE]

I took a deep breath as I stood by the gate. I was trying to get myself together though the embarrassment that was rushing down my blood veins was enough to hold me stagnant. In.. Out.. In.. Out. Deep breaths really didn't help. All I could really think about was last night. I could still hear his voice.

"Going somewhere?" He asked. I bit my lip looking for a hole to burry myself.

"Ummh no.. Yes. To see a friend." His eyes went down to my exposed thighs.

"She's not feeling well." I added. I bet he wondered if my friend being sick was the reason for my being almost naked.

"Ok.." He finally said then walked away.

I knew what he was probably thinking though I ignored it convincing myself that staying with him didn't necessarily mean I should stay indoors everyday. Visiting Brian as always was worth it. I liked our relationship. It was a no strings attached thing and besides that he had a girl. I wasn't sure if she didn't knew she was dating the biggest whore of all time, king fuckboy or maybe she just chose to ignore it though I doubted that. Brian was always over the magazines, all over the social tabloids. She couldn't exactly not know what she was dating though rumors had said she was a church girl. The down to earth type. The kind not believe in rumors.

I took a deep breath then pressed the intercom. I couldn't keep

on standing outside the gate or soon enough someone was going to call the police on me like "there's a mad coloured girl outside someone's gate. I think she wants to do something illegal though she looks like a prostitute."

I couldn't be surprised if the neighbours did call security, they were white folks anyway.

That moment I even regretted the dress I was wearing. The stockings made it all worse. The gate opened as I looked around, trying to catch if anyone was looking at me. Quickly I walked inside bracing myself for the humiliation feeling that was coming. The feeling which was going to just make me sick.

Walking to the door I tried to pull down my dress though it was just short and no pulling down could make it long.

I opened the door then walked in the house. I didn't even take long to notice him because he was in the lounge with a man. A man who looked like the elder version of him though he couldn't possibly be his father.. Or could he?

They stopped talking and looked at me. The way the man looked at me made me uncomfortable. There was just something about his eyes that scared me.

"Hello." I said though unsure of my voice. The man smiled, a chilly smile that made me want to run.

"Hi.." He answered back. My eyes fell on Lungile. He looked angry. So pissed. I had never seen him like that expect the incident with Mazwi. The same look he had that day was the look he had that moment.

"Won't you introduce us brother?" The man asked. He was the brother though Lungile never mentioned him to me.

"No and leave my house right now!" His voice was calm, serene and firm but so menacing.

"You are sending your own brother out of your house?" The brother asked.

"You are not my brother. I have no brother. Leave my house!"

"After taking you to school this--"

"I said leave my house!" Lungile said pushing him. Lungile was taller and more buffer than the brother. If it had to get down to hands no doubt Lungile could take him down.

The brother started laughing. That irritating wicked laugh.

"You might hate me but you and I.. We are the same. There's no difference between us." He said after he was done laughing.

"I'm nothing like you!"

"We are birds cut from the same cloth. You are bad as me. We are the same." I could see Lungile seethe in anger.

"You fucken bastard! I said get the fuck out!" And with that roar followed a punch. A punch that led the brother straight down to the floor. Lungile was breathing hard but the brother on the other hand.. Looked calm though the tension between them was palpable.

The brother stood up and now he was bleeding from the nose. He placed one hand up as the other held his nose.

"Fine. I will leave.. But don't forget what I said. We are birds of the same.. Cloth." And with that he walked out though I didn't miss the wink he gave me. I looked at Lungile who was now walking away. He was going to his bedroom obviously. I felt like an intruder, like what happened was not for my eyes. I forced my legs to move straight to my room. I undressed then walked

straight under the shower. I opened the cold tape. I didn't even mind the cold water that was painful on my body. All I was thinking about was what I had just witnessed.

After the shower I changed into my shorts and vest then just sat on the bed. I contemplated between if I should go to him or not. I mean.. If it was me he was obviously going to comfort me. I stood up finally then started walking to his room. That's what siblings did for each other, they comforted each other.

His door was closed. I knocked, a couple of times. There was silence. I knocked again but the silence remained. It made something just pang my spine in a non good manner.

"Lungile.." I called out softly as I knocked one last time. I sighed as I walked away. Maybe he needed some space. I couldn't possibly deny him the space especially after what had just happened. I walked to the kitchen. I could start cooking lunch. It was just 45 minutes before lunch. I started working in the kitchen. About an hour and half later I was done. I walked to his room again. This time after knocking and not getting response I opened the door slowly with my breath held. I throat clogged as I looked at Lungile lying on his bed with a bottle of whisky on the floor. It was empty. I opened the door wider then walked in. I had never been in his bedroom before. His room had dark colours. Smocky black and grey. From the walls till the floor. Only dark colours. It made me wonder if this is how he saw himself.

I walked straight to the windows and opened them to give the room some light. After that I decided to run him a bath. Just watching him there, unconscious due to alcohol made me feel useless. The ensuit too had the same colours expect the

painting that was on the wall. A painting of a woman. Her eyes were so dark but I could see the tears in them. It felt like she was right there, watching me. Staring at me. The intensity in her eyes couldn't elude me. I let my eyes fall from the painting and to the bathtub. I closed the taps then added some salts and form bath. They all smelt manly. I walked out then went to the bed and shook him a bit.

"Lungile.." He just lay there. I shook him harder raising my voice.

"Lungile!"

Slowly he opened his eyes. Something in his eyes disarmed me immediately. Something in his eyes broke my heart. It was like he was in pain. Physical pain. I never knew emotional pain could make you feel like that.

"Hey.. I ran you a bath." I said though he just kept starring at me. My heart swelled. I wished to just take in some of his pain. To just take in some of his burden. I just wished there was something I could do to make him feel better. He was a broken man and I wished I could just fix him.

"Come.." I said helping him up. Besides the pain in his eyes he looked lost. I pulled him till he was standing up. Alcohol was still in his system. I walked with him to the bathroom trying to keep him steady.

"Ummh I will leave you to bath. You will be fine right?" I asked staring at him. He let out a slight nod. It made me not want to leave him. With the way he couldn't even stand upright I highly doubted he was going to be fine.

"Are you sure?" He let out a lazy chortle.

"I'm fine." He whispered.

"No you are not.. and I'm worried."

"Don't be.."

He lost balance then stumbled back. Quickly I rushed to his side then held him.

"Ummh maybe you need to.. sit?" I sighed as I held him trying to see what I could do. I could undress him but not leave him naked. I could leave him in his briefs or boxers or whatever that he was putting underneath his jeans.

"Let me help you undress." I said then stood right in front of him. I held the hem of his T-shirt then pulled it up upwards. I let out a small smile as he got his hands on it and took it off making me step back. I don't know why I felt nervous.. maybe it was because I didn't look at Lungile in that kind of manner and definitely he didn't look at me like that. Seeing him half naked didn't make me feel comfortable. I blinked a couple of times. He had no tattoo. He was just clean. I swallowed my imaginary lump that was stuck on my throat. I shook my head a couple of times, trying to physically get rid of my thoughts from my mind. He leaned against the wall for balance. He was really struggling. I walked closer to him then with my shabby hands I unbuttoned his trousers. Something was just telling me to stop and walk out because i was going to regret it but the other part was telling me that there was nothing wrong in helping him out. That's what siblings did. He looked at me as his sister, nothing more nothing less and there was no reason for me to feel uncomfortable. I pulled his zipper down before I finally pulled the jeans down. I stepped away from him again as he stepped out of his jeans. I couldn't help my eyes but they slowly rised from the sexy hairy

legs up till they stopped there. I could easily see how blessed he was. He very blessed. I looked away then cleared my throat.

"Ummh you can bath. The water is warm." I said pointing at the bathtub. My breathing pattern had changed. My breathing had hitched. The atmosphere had changed. To me anyway.. to me it had changed from depressed tension to something else. Every instinct in my body told me it was wrong. That it was way beyond wrong but something just kept me grounded to where I was standing. Perhaps it was his eyes. There was something in his eyes now expect for the pain and looking lost.. There was fire in his eyes. I walked towards him slowly, gauging his facial expression. His eyes were stuck on me and didn't move away as I closed the gap between us.

I held his hand then started leading him to the bathtub.

My heart was beating hard against my chest. I let go of his hand. My job was done. Definitely he could bath himself. He didn't need my help.

There was this electricity between us that was so intense though something told me I was the only one feeling it.

His eyes were still on me. I wondered what he was thinking.

Without taking his eyes off me I felt his hands on my waist. I inhaled sharply at the feel of his hands on me.

Tell him to stop! Get out right now! A voice in my head screamed but I completely ignored him and relished on the feeling that was brought on by his hands on me. I looked at him and his lips were parted slightly. I gently crushed my body into his. One of his hand moved from my waist up till my neck and with no gentleness he crushed his lips into mine. For a second there was

a clash of teeth till I followed his lead. He was rough. The way he was squeezing my waist.. It was painful but I couldn't complain. I didn't want to complain. His lips on mine felt good and I didn't want him to stop. I could taste blood in my mouth though I wasn't sure who's blood it was and I didn't care. I could feel him growing on my tummy as he assaulted my lips.

I let him take control of my body. He pushed me till I was against the wall. In a speed of lightning my shorts and panties where on the floor. He picked me up and automatically I wrapped my legs around his waist and my arms around his neck. Without mercy he rammed into me hard. I let out a scream. It was painful.

Painfully weird. His breathing was ragged. He slowly pulled out then was back in again hitting me hard. He was like an animal. This was the side of him that I had never seen before. And again and again he started moving. He was rough. Maybe too rough but as soon as my body started adjusting to his moves, growing familiar to him.. My toes curled. It was painfully so good. My nails dug in his skin as he showed no mercy on me. He groaned deep within making something spark in me. My body stiffened as he continued with his hard thrusts, on and on. It felt so good as he hit the sweet spot. And with so much violence I felt my orgasm reap me into small pieces. He stopped then pulled out and started walking with me. I was breathing hard. I had been with Brian last night but his game couldn't compare to what I had just experienced. I had never came like that before. He closed the toilet seat with its cover then placed me on top of it in a kneeling position. I placed my hands on the toilet cover and now I was bending. He held my waist then slowly he eased into

me. It didn't take him long to start his punishing drives. I moved one hand from the toilet cover and placed it on the toilet tank for support. Moans and screams escaped my lips from time to time as he hit me hard. He was unrelentingly thrusting into me. My head started spinning. And without warning my body fell into climax. He started going harder and deeper and a few seconds later he groaned loudly releasing into me. I could feel my eyelids give up on me as he withdrew slowly. I was vaguely aware of anything that was going on as he picked me up. I let my eyelids win though all I was thinking was the fact that we didn't use a condom.

And that he had released in me.

I opened my eyes slowly. It was dark. My eyes prowled around taking in my surrounding. I was in my room. I sat up straight making the blanket that was on me move exposing my nakedness. I bit my lower lip as my mind started playing what had happened. I could still feel him on me. Slowly I got off bed then walked to the ensuite. I looked different as I looked at my reflection on the mirror. Besides the hickeys that were splattered all over my chest there was just something shining in my eyes. I had never imagined sex with Lungile but God did it feel good! I got under the shower ignoring the soreness I felt. The soreness couldn't compete to the best sex I had just being given. With the way he moved I knew he was greatly experienced. I took a quick shower then walked back to my room. I put on my pyjamas before I fixed my hair. I don't know why but I suddenly cared about how I looked to him. After that I walked to the lounge. I took a deep breath in as I looked at him. He was handsome. And

mature. It made him look so sexy. He turned and our eyes met. I didn't like what I saw in his eyes. Regret.. I didn't regret our moment of pure bliss. It hurt that he did.

"Hey.." I said, trying to figure out what was going on.

"Hi.." He couldn't look me in the eye. I inhaled then exhaled before I started walking towards him.

"Lungile I..-" he cut me short then stood up.

"Rockelle about what happened..."

"Yes?" I wanted to tell him I enjoyed it but I held my tongue in place.

"It shouldn't have happened. I shouldn't have taken advantage of you like that. Just because you are staying in my house.. It doesn't give me the right to...-"

"Lungile.. It's ok. I'm an adult. If I didn't want.. Or if I didn't feel.. Comfortable.. I could have stopped you. I don't think..-"

"Still.. What happened shouldn't have happened. It was.. the worst mistake and I'm so sorry. I'm not some pervet.. I.. I'm..-"

"It's ok. I don't think you are a pervet.. You are a very nice person. And I guess what happened.. has happened. It's done."

"I know and I highly regret it." I nodded slowly then blinked.

"It's ok.. Really.. It's ok."

"You are so young I feel like a pedophile.."

"It's ok." I said softly. "Want food?" I asked as I walked to the kitchen. I tried holding back my tears by taking a deep breath but something was just choking me. I shut my eyes tightly.

Crying was not for me. I was Rockelle Robert!

I sighed then opened my eyes. My vision was blur.

See! You should have left! He never wanted you and still doesn't!

The voice in my head screamed.

CHAPTER 20

[NOMPUMELELO]

I put on my grey bondage dress then my nude heels and lastly took my handbag. I felt somehow numb. All I was thinking was Janine. Seeing her lying there, lifeless moved something in me. At least nothing happened to her face. I had left her with Orlando, her workmate. I took my phone from my handbag which was ringing. It was Nicholas.

"Hello.."

"I'm here.."

"I'm coming." I said then hung up. I took a deep breath before I walked out. Getting outside his car was right there. I got in.

"Hey.. You look good." I gave him a weak smile.

"Thanks. Your mom is already there?"

"No.. Siya went to pick her up from the airport." He said as he started the car.

"Ow.. Where does she stay?" I asked out of curiosity.

"Capetown though she's from Denmark right now." I just nodded then looked ahead as he drove.

"Are you ok?" I looked at him.

"Yeah.. My co-wife got into an accident and I'm worried."

"Shouldn't you be happy?" I chuckled.

"No.. I don't hate them."

"Why?"

"Because I don't have a reason to."

Arriving at his house I took a deep breath. I could pretend..

There was nothing wrong with it but I just felt somehow that I was busy with pretense while Janine lay there lifeless.

Nicholas took my hand then led me to his flat.

Getting inside it was quiet, an indication that Siya wasn't back yet. I looked around the house. It still had the bad combination.

"The design of this house is honestly.. bad." I muttered. He turned and looked at me with a smile on his lips.

"I know.."

"I wonder what your mother is going to think."

"She really doesn't care about all that."

"Great! Minus one problem." I sat down on the couch. I just wanted to sleep and block out everything. And be free. As I sat there my phone started ringing. Quickly I took it out and surprisingly it was Rockelle. It had been a while since I last saw her or talked to her. I answered.

"Rockelle hunny.." I heard her sniff.

"Hey.. Are you ok? Is everything ok?"

"I'm such a fool.." She said though her voice was strained.

"Sweetie what's wrong."

"It's a long story.."

"You want to meet?"

"I just need someone to talk to."

"I'm here. Where are you? We can meet somewhere in about.."

Ummh.. An hour and 30. How's that?"

"It's ok..."

"Ummh let's meet at that Mexican restaurant you like."

"Ok.." She then hung up. Nicholas was just looking at me.

"My step daughter.." He chuckled.

"You are something.." Just then I heard voices. I looked at Nicholas then stood up. Some lady walked in with Siya. I swallowed as I looked at her. Why did she look so young? I smiled in shock. She could be best friends with Lana. I could see they were in same class. The type of old ladies who still wore body clutching dresses, a matching jacket with really long heels. She had dreadlocks that were styled in a very unique manner.

"My love!" She said smiling then walked up to her son and hugged him. "You look so good!"

"Thank you mom." She let go of him then looked at me.

"Oh Darling.. Aren't you pretty.." And next thing I knew I was in her arms. She smelt good. She was lovely. "Siya has told me so much about you.. He wasn't lying about you being so beautiful. Son.. This one is for keeps I tell you." I smiled. I liked her already. There was just nothing to hate about her and her character. She looked around then slightly frowned.

"The design combination of this house makes me sick to my stomach. I know that Sally girl had bad taste.. Darling you should do something about this.." She said taking my hand. "This house looks disastrous." Siya winked at me as their mother led me away. We all sat down in the dining room. Everything was laid there.

"Anyways.." Nicholas started. "Mom this is Nompumelelo Sikhosana. She's my girlfriend and babe this is my mother.. Lydia Dumisa."

"It's nice to meet you Ma.."

"No no no.." She said shaking her head.

"Ma makes me feel so... Old. I'm just 48." She said smiling. "I had

Nicholas when I was 16.." She was still smiling. "Call me Lydia.."

"Ok.. It's nice to meet you Lydia."

"You too Lelo.."

"We can dig right in.." Siya announced as he took a dishing spoon to dish for himself.

"Ah ah! What are you doing? We don't eat without saying grace."

"I'm sorry.." Siya mumbled.

"Are you religious Lelo?" She asked.

"Yes.." Though I rarely go to church. I finished off in my head.

"That's great. Let's hold hands and say grace.." We all held hands then closed our eyes.

"Heavenly father.." Lydia started. "We thank you for this day. We thank you for your love and care. Lord as we are about to eat we ask you to bless the food before us. I cover it with the blood of Jesus. With that.. Amen."

"Amen." We all repeated after her. She was a carefree someone. We laughed as we ate.

"Honestly I'm so glad that Sally girl is gone. Now I can freely wait for my grandchildren. I know they are coming. Lelo is a very good girl." She said after we were done eating. I just smiled as I cleared the table.

"I think we have to walk before we can run mom." Nicholas said looking at his mother.

"Lelo is a mature girl. She's not like that celebrity of yours. There's nothing wrong in planning for the future. Anyways Lelo.. Where are your parents?"

"Ummh.. My mother stays in New Zealand."

"Oh Wow! And do you have siblings." I was so glad she didn't

ask about my father.

"Yes.. A sister." I wasn't going to mention my brother. Or the fact that he resided in Durban.

"That's nice.. I only have two children. All boys." Something told me she loved her children so much. They were one happy family.

"Desert anyone?" Nicholas asked standing up.

"Yes please.." Siya said.

"When are you going back Siya?" She asked her son though I didn't stay to listen. I walked with Nicholas to the kitchen.

"I have to go.." I said in a whisper. He turned and looked at me.

"To your step daughter?"

"Yes.."

"Ok.. Take my car. I think I will pop in tomorrow morning to pick it up."

"Thank you."

"No.. Thank you. My mom loves you." I smiled. "I love her too. There's just nothing not to love."

"I know.." I helped him with the ice cream bowls back to the dining room.

"I love ice cream!" Siya commented.

"You love food baby.." Lydia replied.

"Ummh.. Lelo has to go. She's meeting a friend."

"Ohh.. It would have been lovely if you stayed but.. I'm sure we will meet again when you visit their father and I.. Richard will love you."

"I can't wait." She stood up then opened her arms. I walked straight into them. She let me go after a while.

"Ok.. Siya..bye."

"Bye.." He was already dishing some ice cream for himself. My eyes fell on Nicholas, I could see Lydia was looking at us. She probably expected to see some action.

"I will escort her.." He said taking my hand. I took my handbag then let him lead me out. Getting in the lift I sighed.

"That went well.."

"I know. My mother is just easygoing."

"Yeah.. She really loves you guys."

"I know.. We love her too." And just then the doors opened. We walked out and went straight to his car.

"See you tomorrow.." I said smiling.

"Yeah.." And with that he gave me the car keys. Getting inside the car I took a deep breath then started the car. I had 20 minutes to arrive at the restaurant. I sped the whole journey. Getting there I parked the car then got out. As I walked to the door my eyes fell on Luthando. He was sitting on top of his sports car across the road. He wasn't alone though, he was with some guy and they were smoking. I destroyed the tight bun then let my hair fall down. I took a deep breath before I started walking towards him. The guy he was with was the first one to notice me followed by him. The way Luthando's eyes skimmed my body made my skin hot. I was grateful that I had decided on the bondage dress. My whole figure was exposed. I smiled as I approached them.

"Hello.." I said feeling unknown confidence sink in me. Luthando smiled. His charming smile that had me blushing.

"Even though I gat a girl you are my side chick
I call you my girl never might be!" He sang make me blush even

more. He got off his car then threw his cigarette away. "It's good seeing you."

"I'm glad it is.." He hugged me briefly then stepped away from me.

"Skhu this is.. Lelo.. Beautiful and sexy Lelo.. And Lelo this is my homie.. Skhu.."

"Nice to meet you.." I said to the friend before my eyes fell back on him.

"You owe me breakfast."

He looked at me. "Breakfast?"

"Yes.. Breakfast. You refused the last time.. When you told me about your girl. Now that I remembered.. I think you owe me breakfast."

"Should I bring her along?"

"Just how possessive is she?" He chuckled.

"Very.. I think she will lose it."

"Well maybe it should only be us then.." I whispered but enough for him to hear. He nodded slowly.

"I don't think that will be a very good idea."

"Let me know when it's finally a good idea.." I said then winked at him. Walking back across the road I felt his eyes on me.

Getting inside I spotted Rocky. She was sitting at the corner though she wasn't alone, she was with some girl. I walked straight towards her as I listened to the song that was playing.

Bittersweet ecstasy

that you got me in,

Fallen deep I can sleep tonight

Yet you make me feel like

Imma lose my mind
But its alright
Its alright
Its alright

[LATOYA]

"So you came here?" I asked him. "What if someone is following you?"

"No one is! Look they have been questioning my wife!"

"Who?"

"She said some lady.. I need to get out of country."

"How am I supposed to help you now?"

"I need money. At least to fly out with my whole family."

"How much?"

"I need 50k.."

"You are useless Mazwi! All you had to do was convince her otherwise not lay your dirty filthy hands on her!"

"She wasn't going to listen."

"Did she listen after you hit her now?" He kept quiet.

"I will send someone with the money tomorrow. I will communicate the details."

"Thank you.."

"Mxm.. Leave!"

"I know who she's staying with and where she's working."

"I know where's she's working."

"She's staying with her boss. Lungile Mokwena."

"What?"

"Yes.."

"Are you sure?"

"100% sure." I nodded.

"Ok.. Now leave." He walked out. I sighed then took my phone.

Dialing his number he didn't take time to answer.

"Toya!"

"Jimmy.. How far?"

"Jes is with her though the other wife has joined now."

"The other wife?"

"Nompumelelo.."

"Ohh.. I know where she stays. I need access to the house."

"Where's she staying?"

"She staying with Lungile Mokwena.. I need access to the house."

"Look I will see what I can do.."

"Ok bye."

"Bye.." He then hung up. I walked to the picture frame I had. My family picture frame. It was me Latisher and Latifar. I was doing all this for them. I put the picture down. I didn't want to be tied to Kevin for the rest of my life because me being tied to Kevin made my siblings being tied to him. I didn't want that. I didn't want anything happening to them too. Who knew what could happen to them if I didn't pay back the money.

I put the picture frame away then put on my gloves. I took the gun with shaky hands. I was visiting Mr Tshekedi. The gun felt heavy in my hands. This wasn't me but I had to do it. I wasn't perfect. Maybe Lelo was.. But not me.

I put the gun in my handbag together with the musk then walked outside to my car. My heart was racing as I reversed out

and my hands got shaky.

I pressed on the accelerator. I got more scared as I took a turn to the hotel he was in. Parking my car I took my black cap then put it on covering my face. I gathered myself together then took my handbag and walked out. I kept my head down then walked inside the hotel. My handbag suddenly felt heavy, it's like I was carrying a dead person. I gave the receptionist a nod before I went into the elevator. I wasn't alone, I was with four other people. On the second floor I walked out. I had a spare entry card to his suit. Getting at the door I unlocked it without hustle and walked in. He wasn't in. I liked Keneilwe. The receptionist. Enough money got her talking. I closed the door behind me then took out my gloves. I got into searching. There were some documents he had. Some documents Kevin had given to him. I searched through each and every belonging that belonged to him. And just then I came across his laptop. I took it, I was going to give it to Jimmy. He knew computers more. I continued with my search, carefully trying not to make a mess out of things. A wide smile invaded my face when I finally came across them. I took them then shoved them in my handbag. I took his laptop with before I walked out. I didn't use the elevator. I didn't want to be caught on camera twice. Down the stairs I went and straight to the back door. The moment I got in my car I rang Jimmy.

"Toya?"

"I have Kevin's partner's laptop. I want you to look into it."

"Where are you?"

"I'm headed home right now."

"Your boyfriend?"

"He's not coming today.. He's mom isn't feeling well."

"Ok.. Give me 30."

CHAPTER 21

[LATOYA]

I looked at her. It had been a week of her just being like that. Lifeless. The doctors were sure she was going to be fine but the fact that she wasn't waking up made me feel hopeless. Strict hag didn't deserve to be lying there. She was way strong to be lying there lifeless. I held her cold hand.

"Hey.. It's me.. again." I said feeling ridiculous but the doctor had said sometimes she could hear. "I know it's probably getting annoying.. me coming back here everyday. I'm really sorry about what happened. You know.. that colleague of yours.." I giggled.

"Orlando.. He really cares about you making me wonder if that's all he does. You should wake up and ask him though I'm 100.1% sure he's really into you." I took a deep breath then squeezed her hand. "We are worried about you. I know we are not best friends but.. I'm really worried." I placed her hand down then stepped away from her. I looked at her one last time before I turned and walked out. I felt my legs get wobbly as I continued to walk away. I hated seeing her like that.. Or feeling the way I did. Lelo had called me last week telling me about what had happened. Somehow I couldn't believe it till my eyes fell on her connected to a lot of tubes. Lelo had found out a few days ago that Janine's father had passed on and was already buried. I felt angry, how could they just bury him in Janine's absence. I knew it was going to break her knowing that her father was buried at

her absence. I held my bag tightly as I walked out. The emotional wave that had hit me was too much. I sighed as the fresh air hit me. I regained myself then walked to my new car. I looked around as I opened my car door. I felt as if someone was just watching me. I quickly got in the car then drove away immediately. I was grateful for the tinted windows of the Bentley. I felt safe behind them. I panicked at the sound of my phone ringing which made me place my feet on the breaks immediately bringing the car to a stop. I held my breath ignoring the car blows I got from other drivers. I stepped on the accelerator steadily and the car gracefully started moving then took my phone and answered.

"Luthando.."

"Hey I'm back, where are you?"

"I'm on my way back home."

"Can you stop by the garage?"

"You want me to come to your garage?"

"Yes.. That's what I said."

I chuckled. "You want me to get robbed?"

"Robbed? By who?"

"I don't know! By thugs!"

"Are you listening to yourself?"

"Yes. I can perfectly hear myself perfectly."

"That attitude of yours is a total turn off. Don't be acting like a coconut."

"Excuse me?"

"You heard me. You are just being extra for no reason. It's annoying. Have you ever been robbed this side?"

"There's a first for everything. Why can't you just come?"

"You know what? I'm hanging up. This conversation is useless. I can't be talking to coconuts. Nxla!" And with that he hung up. I put the phone away then sped straight to Jimmy's house. I tried by all means to block Luthando from my mind. The whole week he was out of country and was in Brazil. He was probably going to come around. I pressed the hooter when I stopped my car by his gate. The gate opened after a while and I drove right in.

Jimmy's house was located near the outskirts. I still didn't understand why he stayed so far from everyone. Before I got out of my car he was already outside in only his shorts. The tattoos that were all over his body made me cringe. Getting off the car he started clapping his hands.

"Wow!" He said. "Bentley Bentayga SUV! Wow!"

"Stop! How far are you with the laptop?"

"Look let me praise the car!" He walked around it looking at it carefully. Kevin had gotten it for me. I liked it but not enough to leave me happy. I didn't want any car. I wanted the money and I was running out of time.

"Jimmy!"

"Look.. I managed to get my claws on the laptop.." He said walking from the car.

"And?" I prompted.

"And there's nothing expect his own things."

"What do you mean..? His own things?"

"If we wanted Mr Ian Tshekedi's money.. We could have gotten it. That's what I mean."

"So there's nothing linking him to Kevin?"

"Nothing." I puffed out my cheeks. I almost expected that but I had hoped otherwise.

"Ok.. How far is you getting me access to Lungile's house?"

"I'm going there today.. As the electrician. I'm going to try and find a way inside the house without being caught."

"Great."

"You look beautiful." He complimented. I smiled. I was putting on a T-shirt with my name printed on it together with jeans and my new red bottoms. There was really nothing beautiful about my outfit.

"Thank you. Look I have to get-"

"Still with your.. Boyfriend?"

"Yes." He nodded slowly as if he was trying to process it. "Well.. Ok."

"Yeah.. Bye!"

"Bye." I walked to my car then got inside. Since now I had nothing on the agenda I decided to drive to the garage. I missed Luthando so I figured maybe being stubborn wasn't really worth it. I maneuvered the car down to the garage. I increased the volume at the song that was playing. After about an hour I was driving straight to the garage's gate. I was surprised I didn't get lost though I hadn't avoided the stares for the car. I pressed the hooter as soon as I stopped the car by the gate. I waited for a while till it was opened. There was a guy already standing by the door when I got out of the car. I smiled brightly at him, returning his own smile.

"Hi.."

"Hello Mam.. How can we help you?"

"Ummh.. Where's Luthando?"

"You want to see Luthando?"

"Yes.. Is he in?" I asked looking around. I couldn't spot the i8 anywhere.

"Yes.. But if I may ask.. What business do you have with LT?" I smiled.

"Don't worry about it. Where exactly is he?"

"Come.." He said already leading the way. "By the way I'm Zulu." He said opening the door. "Ladies first." I smiled then walked in.

"I'm Latoya. And it's nice to meet you Zulu."

"The pleasure is all mine Mam." We walked in through what looked like a foyer till we were at some door.

"In you go!"

"Thank you Zulu."

"You are welcome." And off he was gone. I took a deep breath before I knocked slightly. There was silence that made something deep in me wake up. I took a deep breath before I opened the door slowly walking in. I stopped on my tracks when my eyes fell on him. They slowly darted back to her then him. What was he doing with her?

"Babe.." He said standing up. I walked in then placed my handbag on his table. My eyes fell on her again. I felt my blood begin to boil.

"Hi.." I said looking at her. She smiled as she wiped her oily hands with a toilet paper. They were eating fresh chips and fried chicken.

"Hello."

"Were you helped?"

"Very."

"I see.. Then I guess you were about to leave?" I asked with my eyebrow raised. She still didn't know how to put on makeup. My eyes fell on her cleavage. It was all out there to be seen.

"No.. Unfortunately."

I chuckled then looked at Luthando who was just sitting there in silence. "So she wasn't about to leave?"

"Latoya, Motlatsi is my friend and-"

"My nigga hold up! I asked question.. It's simple as.. So she wasn't about to leave?"

"So much insecurities.." Motlatsi muttered. I felt like banging her head against the wall several times till she was quiet.

"So much whoreness in the air!" I spat back.

"Takes one to know another."

"You probably mean your mother bitch!" She stood up immediately throwing her box of chips at me that I ditched but a few chips did land on my T-shirt. As she charged up to me Luthando was already up and was standing between us. That's when I noticed how short the dress she was wearing.

"I will beat this thing! You think this is your mansion?" The bitch screamed.

"If this is how the mansions at your house look like I really pity you."

"Can you close that mouth of yours?!" Luthando roared at me. I chuckled in disbelief. He wasn't probably talking to me like that in front of his whore.

"Motlatsi we will talk.."

"Ok.." She moved back then took her cheap handbag before

walking out. Her wig was now messed up.

The moment she walked out he turned to look at me. I could see he was pissed.

"The fuck was that?"

"So you now hang around with your cheap whores?"

"What whores? You have started!"

"What whores? The whore that just walked out and what do you mean.. I have started?"

"Motlatsi is my friend! Your insecurities are really getting on my nerves!"

"Well then leave. It's simple.. If you can't deal with me then fucken leave!"

"Uya bona wena!" He said pointing at me with his finger! "You are going far."

"Well then I will leave you in peace. You can call Motlatsi back." I said grabbing my handbag and walking out of his office. My T-shirt was ruined. Getting outside I unlocked my car.

"New car huh?" I didn't even realize he was behind me all along.

"Yes!"

"He bought it for you?" I turned and looked at him.

"Yes! He bought it for me while you are busy inviting whores to ya office!"

"But why gotta be acting like a thot?"

I laughed, laughed away my tears. That hurt. It really did.

"Maybe because I am one! I'm a whore! A fucken prostitute! Your mom knows this too so why gotta act new? Huh? My nigga you can go to non-thots. You are free. Matter of fact you should have said this sooner because now I'm fighting over dick looking

like a lunatic. A dick that thinks I'm a whore on top of that."

"Latoya.." His voice was now soft.

"No! Don't call my name nigga! I don't fucks with you no more! You shouldn't fuck with no thot either way. You never know what I carry.. I might have thrush or syphilis."

"Babe..."

"Yeah.. One more thing.. I like my car!" I turned and continued walking to my car. That's when I finally realized the fresh tears that were falling from my eyes. I wiped them away hastily. I just knew the relationship was doomed from the beginning. Before I could open my car door I felt myself being carried up and hauled on the shoulder.

"Put me down!" He smirked me hard on my ass that I let out a yelp.

"You are making noise." He walked with me bag to his office then placed me on the table.

"You drive me mad!" He said. I rolled my eyes.

"Why are you hanging out with whores?"

"She came with lunch and-"

"Next time you tell her you are good.. Probably Zulu might be hungry." He laughed making me smile.

"I will tell her next time.."

"Good."

"We good now?"

"Yes.." He kissed me gently but the gentleness soon faded and were replaced with roughness. After a while I heard his zip opening. My whole body was now subjected to him. I didn't want anything else expect him and him only. All the argument we had

a few seconds ago were already forgotten. The sex was different from the usual. It wasn't rough but slow and so intensely full of emotions. I listened to him as he whispered sweet nothings in my ear while pounding unto me again and again slowly. He kissed me hard swallowing moans as I came all around him and he soon followed after me, emptying himself deep in me.

CHAPTER 22

[ROCKELLE]

"You may come in tomorrow at 12, Mr Mokwena will be ready to see you." I said while supporting the phone with my shoulder as I packed my bag frantically.

"Ok, thank you so much."

"You are welcome Mr Radebe."

"Sandile please.." I stood up putting my handbag on my shoulder.

"Yes.. That. Bye." I said then hung up. I ignored the fact that he sounded unprofessional but then.. He probably just thought he could get anyone he desired because he owned a telecommunication company. I hadn't met him personally but from the cockiness of his voice one could just figure it out.

I fixed my skirt as I hurried to the elevator. Lungile was going to be out in a while. I was just going to update him about Mr Radebe tomorrow. The moment the elevator door opened I quickly made my way inside. Things between Lungile and I had been off. He was trying to be his normal self but the feeling of rejection had already accomodated it self deep in me. Getting out of the elevator I waved at Puleng as I rushed to the door. My

cab was already outside. I quickly got inside, I was seeing Cathy. My phone rang after the cab started moving. It was Gail.

"Gail.." I answered.

"Hey.. So I did look for a house. A nice suite. You will love it."

"How much monthly?"

"Well.. 15k plus security."

"What?"

"That's all I could get."

"15k is a lot. I need something reasonable!"

"Rocky the house you explained to me to want doesn't go for anything less than 12k. Houses are expensive. How about you just get a bachelor pad. It will be much cheaper.. Or even better.. There's some girl.. Her name is Rachelle. She's looking for a housemate. You can share."

"A bachelor pad? I know I'm broke but... A bachelor pad?"

"You have to settle for what you can afford."

"I need a car. I.. Can't you negotiate for me?"

"I did. The house was 18k at first."

"15k is a lot.. Right now I can't really afford it."

"Then why not settle for what you can afford?"

"Ok.. Check out the bachelor pads."

"Ok.."

"Please can it least be nice."

"Rockelle.. You can't be demanding such things. First of all you don't have the money."

"I know! You keep reminding me every chance you get."

"It's not about me reminding you everyday! You just don't understand do you? Rockelle I'm not your slave!"

"Excuse me? Why didn't you say that when I was still loaded and maintaining your fake life?"

"Fake life? I don't run a fake life. And I never asked for anything you ever did for me. You did it because you thought I needed it! Stop talking as if I'm a gold digger!"

"Look I don't want to argue with you. Just get me the house."

"After this.. I don't think you and I can still be friends."

"I don't remember us being anything more than acquaintances."

She chuckled. "Well I'm glad to know. Bye." She immediately hung up. I took a deep breath wondering how the conversation about finding me a suitable house ended up in a fight. I sighed as I buried my head on my hands. Arriving at Cathy's house I quickly switched off my phone. Cathy had given me the spare keys to her house. I pressed on the remote and the gate automatically opened. Walking inside the house I just felt tired. Emotionally tired. The whole week I had spent it wondering what exactly was wrong with me. No body ever rejected me..

Especially after sex. Maybe I was wack. I unlocked her door then walked inside the house. Most of the time she was at the gym. I quickly walked inside the house and went straight to the gym. I let my bags fall to the ground when my eyes fell on Cathy's body which was on the floor. There were pills besides her body.

Smashed glasses. Everything was upside down. My whole body froze as I stared at her. There was no sign of her breathing. With my heavy legs I walked to her body. I fell to my knees besides her as my tears fell. With my shaky hands I tried to feel her pulse but it wasn't there. She was lifeless. She was dead.

"Cathy.." I whispered trying to shake her. My tears were now

uncontrollable.

"Cathy.. Wakeup. Let's go for a run." I said shaking her again. My vision was now blurred. "Cathy please.." I begged with my tears streaming down. She could have not been dead. She could have not killed herself. My eyes fell on the pills again.

"No!" I screamed.

I kept on screaming till some man got inside. He pulled me from Cathy's body forcefully as I screamed. It couldn't be her. Not my Cathy. Why?

"So you just found her laying there?" She asked again though I had been saying that ever since I arrived. I was getting tired.

"Honestly I'm tired of this! I found her lying there. I didn't do anything. She killed herself!"

"There's a substance that was found in her blood. A poisonous substance. And besides that.. It looked like there was struggle.. Like she was fighting for her own life."

"Detective Bosele.. I think it's time I call my lawyer. I did not kill Cathy. She committed suicide or was murdered but it wasn't me."

"How come you had her keys?"

"Because I'm her trainer!"

"A trainer with no qualification? You might have not killed her.. Personally but you might have pushed her to that point."

"Excuse me? What on earth are you insinuating?"

"I'm not insinuating anything Rockelle.. I'm just trying to put one and one together. I'm trying to understand." I looked at the late thirties lady. She was totally different from Janine. She had braids that were tied into a ponytail. Slacks and a blazer. She

didn't look like a detective at all. She looked straight into my eyes.

"Rockelle what did you do? Tell me.." There was a knock then followed by the door opening. It was another police officer but behind him there was Lungile. The black suit looked good on him. Everything looked good on him. His huge body was made for the suits. His new haircut made him look more hotter.

"Ahh!" The detective said. "Mokwena."

"Sindiswa.. You have no right to interrogate my client."

"I'm not interrogating her. It's just a few questions. The normal procedure."

He frowned. "Definitely doesn't look like it. I seek immediate release of my client."

"If she's guilty I will catch her." She said looking at me though my eyes were on Lungile. He looked so collected. So calm. I closed my eyes as I shivered. I was cold. More than an hour of interrogation wasn't child play.

"Release my client."

After a while I was walking out of the police station with my hand in his. Just that was enough for me to feel warm deep inside. I had his jacket on my shoulders. It smelt him. His cologne and just him. I wanted to hold the jacket to my nose so bad and just keep on breathing in his cologne. When did this happen? Getting to his car he turned and looked at me with his hands placed on my arms.

"Are you ok?"

"I'm fine."

"You should have called me."

"I didn't want to bother you."

Confusion ran into his beautiful eyes. "Bother me?"

"Yes.. Bother you. You are already doing a lot for me. I..-"

"Hey..." He said cutting me short. "Nothing you can ever do can bother me. I told you before.. Siblings help each other at need." I shut my eyes tightly for a second trying to keep my tears at bay.

"I don't want to be your sister Lungile." He blinked a couple of times then took a step back.

"Rocky..-"

"No. I.. I don't want to be your sister. I want you.. But not as my brother. I love you."

He chuckled making me bite my lip. "You what?"

"I love you." I repeated without hesitation.

"You love me? Rockelle are you.. What makes you love me? Is it the sex? I told you that shouldn't have happened." That was like blow straight into my heart. I felt a tear escape my eyes.

"I don't regret our sex. Lungile just everything makes me love you."

"I don't feel the same way Rockelle." I smiled as another tear fell.

"It's ok. You don't have to feel the same."

"Shit!" He swore as he rubbed his eyes. I wiped away my tears as I took rejection as a big girl.

"We can go home." I said getting in the car. The air I was breathing suddenly became thick, suffocating me. I tried so hard to remember the words my dad used to tell when I was a little girl. The words that kept me going even at my lowest but I couldn't locate them. He got in the car after a while then started it.

"Are you hungry?"

"No.. I'm fine." I said then looked outside through the window. I tried to remember the last words Cathy had said to me or to remember if she was upset or not but she was happy. She had even suggested we go shopping the previous weekend though I had turned her down. Maybe I should have agreed. Maybe she had wanted to talk and she had no one. Or maybe I should have arrived earlier. Arriving at Lungile's house I was the first one to get off. I held my handbag tightly letting the cold air hit me. I could still see her lying there. Lifeless. I could still hear the paramedics as they announced her death. I felt my heart twist in a painful manner. Lungile unlocked the door. I got in the house followed by him. I walked straight to my borrowed room closing the door behind me. I took off my heels then looked around. I sighed as I pushed my bag which contained my personal things like my journal and diaries. I didn't remember putting it on the bed in the morning but my mind had been all over the place in the morning. Possibly I had forgotten it there. When I pushed it a book fell on the floor. I took off Lungile's jacket then picked up the book. It was a novel. Dad had bought me the novel when I was 13. I took years reading it but after I was done I felt different. I opened the first page of the book but then immediately closed it. I wasn't in the mood. I threw it back on the floor then lay on the bed. I shut my eyes tightly trying to sleep everything off. I heard a knock on the door followed by Lungile's voice.

"Rocky.. Can I come in?" I sighed before I let out a croaked yes from my lips. He walked in. He was still dressed. I sat up straight on the bed. Sitting besides me he took my hand into his.

"I'm sorry.. I.." I cut him short.

"It's ok. You don't have to explain yourself."

"No.. I.. Rockelle you deserve better than what I can ever give you. You deserve so much better."

"Lungile. I know you don't like me that way. I knew from the first day and it's ok. There's no need for you to say all that.. I-"

"You've got it all wrong. You really have got it all wrong." He took my hands into his then kissed them. "I too have been thinking about our time together. I felt.. I feel so guilty that I took advantage of you like that. You deserved better than that. I keep telling myself that it wasn't meant to be because.. I have to many of things shoulders. I come with a burden. A huge burden. This is not the kind of man you-"

"It doesn't matter." I got up then sat on his lap cupping his face.

"It doesn't matter. I love you like that. I don't care about the burden."

"You should care." He whispered. "I'm a monster."

"No you are not. You just a broken man. Let me fix you. Please.."

He looked at me for a while. I could see I had just disarmed him.

He looked so lost it pained me. I brought my lips to meet his.

Slowly he responded as he wrapped his arms around me.

Everything felt right. Every moment felt right.

I opened my eyes slowly. The sun was already shining bright in

my room. I quickly got up. I was late. I had to get to work. Just

then the door opened and Lungile walked in holding a tray. He

was in gray sweatpants only. My eyes fell on his muscles. I

looked away realizing my own nakedness and quickly sat back

on the bed pulling the sheets on my body. He smiled as he put

the tray on the dressing table. It wasn't Saturday the last time I checked. It was Friday.

"Why are you not dressed? You are going to be late. You have an early meeting with Mrs Mkhize in the morning plus a meeting with Mr Radebe that—"

"I took the morning off. Puleng will handle things." I looked at him as he smiled. I couldn't help it but smile back. Was he really mine now? I knew some part of his heart was still hung up on the woman from his past but I was ready to help him move on. Ready to hold his hand. Just the thought made me so happy.

CHAPTER 23

[NOMPUMELELO]

"Nancy, hi," I said as I passed her walking to my office.

"Hi.. There's a message." I stopped then turned to look at her. She was wearing bright today. Maybe just a bit too bright.

"A message?"

"Yes.." I walked back to her then held my two bags with one hand stretching my hand out to take my message. She gave me a piece of paper.

"Morris called. He said he wants to talk to you." She said as I read through. Morris had called and so had Tracey.

"And lastly Tracey Nia. She says she's in South Africa and she would want to talk to you."

"She's in South Africa?" When Patricia had suggested her, I was pretty sure there was no way she was going to agree. I had talked to her Agent, Macy and since then they had promised to call me back.

"Yes. I told her I would call back when you arrive."

"Forward the call please.."

"Ok, you look beautiful by the way.." She said. I laughed. I was only wearing my grey Slakes, a white shirt tucked in with a jacket and black heels.

"Thanks." I walked to my office. Tshidi was out, she was trying to sell one of the paintings we had.

I put my bags down then sat down. I took a deep breath. Nancy had cleaned my office and the windows were open. I inhaled the fresh air that skimmed through my office. I had just woken up in a good mood. I felt happy. Natural happiness radiated throughout me. I took out my laptop then opened it. The gallery was making good sales. The artist I had were very good for business. Nicholas had to deliver one of his works on Monday. I was eagerly waiting for it because something told me it was going to be so good. I decided to quickly take a look at my social media accounts when my laptop springed to life. I hardly was on social media, it just somehow wasn't my scene. The moment I got into Instagram I saw Latoya. She had just updated her profile picture. It was just her. I liked it when it was just her. No make up. No filter. Just her. She had flawless skin. It was so flawless it made her whole face glow. Her plum lips were not applied anything. Her lashes were not long, they were short but they suited her. She even had her natural brownish hair combed into a huge afro and the picture had a caption.

'Keeping it real. Doing me. Loving me.'

I smiled, she hadn't held anything back. She was even smiling on the picture and she was glowing. Just then my office started

ringing. I took it and answered.

"Nancy?"

"I have Tracey.."

"Ok."

I waited for a few seconds till I was connected to her.

"Miss Nia.."

"Tracey. Please call me Tracey." She had a foreign accent and it definitely didn't sound American. I had done my research, she was based in Nigeria but she stayed in America most of the time. Originally she was from Tanzania.

"Ok, Tracey. I'm glad you finally called back."

"Ohh.. Patricia said you would do wonders on making my name."

I smiled.

"That's right. I heard you are in South Africa."

"Yes. I was hoping we would meet."

"That would be good. That would be very good."

"Yes, I can come to the gallery around lunch. How's that?"

"That's fantastic. Ummh do you know the way?"

"No but I will arrive."

"Ok. Great!"

"Yes, see you."

"See you." She then hung up. I put the phone down. Everything was just going well. Maybe that's why I had woken up in a good mood. I looked back at my laptop. I was still on Instagram. I quickly typed 'Luthando Maphoto' then searched. His profile appeared. I looked at his pictures, his recent pictures. There was one picture which caught my attention. He was with some girl though the girls face was blurred. All I could see is that she

was wearing a red dress with pleats. The fact that it was a mirror selfie enabled me to see her body. She had beautiful legs. I felt a pang of jealous scratch me but then I had no right to feel jealous. He had told me about his girlfriend. I sighed as I closed down the Instagram and started going through my emails. As I went through all my emails, ignoring the less important ones my phone started ringing. I took it and answered without even letting it ring.

"Hello?"

"Lelo.." I stopped reading the email I was going through.

"Mayra?"

"Yeah.. Hey!"

"Hey.. How are you? How's school? Is everything ok?" She laughed but I probably knew she was rolling her eyes.

"Really? I'm fine. So is school. I just missed you. Mom told me you called and I wasn't around."

"Yeah.. I miss you too."

"Then visit us."

"Soon sweetie. Soon."

"Maybe it's time we killed Kevin." I laughed. "Yeah.. How's mom?"

"She's fine. You know how she is."

"Yeah.. Look after her."

"Yeah.. I want to talk to you about something."

I laughed. "I knew it!"

She giggled. "Knew what? Listen.. How old am I?"

"What?"

"How old am I?"

"22.. Where are you going with this."

"I'm.. I want to travel Lelo."

"Travel?"

"Yes. I want to travel. I want to travel the world."

"But you are still at school."

"I'm doing my last year Lelo plus right now I'm on a holiday." I took deep breath wondering where all this had come from.

"Where do you want to go exactly?"

"I want to go to Spain."

"Why?"

"Ummh.. Because I have always wanted to go there."

"Really? That's a lie now. Why Spain? I can't help you if you are not truthful."

"I just want to visit Spain Lelo."

"Why? What's going on Mayra?"

"Nothing. I just want to go there."

"Until you tell me then I guess I can't help you. I'm-"

"Ok ok... Please try to understand ok?"

"Ok. Tell me."

"I.. Well I met this other guy. He.. Well he was this side this other time when we met.. He.." I heard her sigh. I waited patiently to hear it. Mayra had never been interested in relationships before.

"Well we started talking. I thought he stayed around but to later find out no. We.. Well we started dating. I want to visit him."

"So he stays in Spain."

"Yes." I bit my lower lip. I definitely hadn't expected the revelation she had just made.

"What does he do?"

"Well he studied industrial design.. But he plays soccer."

"He's a footballer?"

"Yes. And I love him."

"How long have you been dating him?"

"For a while now."

"And you already want to be chasing after him the whole word?"

"Lelo I said I love him. It's only for a week. It's not like I'm going forever."

"You have a bright future to be chasing after boys Mayra."

"He's not a boy! He's a whole man."

"How old is he?"

"Old enough."

"How old is he Mayra?"

"25."

"I don't think-"

"It's a good idea?" She asked cutting me short.

"Yes! I don't think it's a good idea."

"Then let me learn from my mistakes."

"I don't want you to get hurt Mayra."

"It's life Lelo.. At some point in life we all have to get hurt."

"I don't want that for you."

"You have to let me grow Lelo."

I sighed. From her voice I could she had made up her mind.

"You can't go to Spain. I'm sorry. Let him come there if it's that serious."

"Lelo please.."

"I'm sorry honey."

"I'm sorry? No.. I'm the one who's sorry because I'm going!" Her

voice was now raised.

"Mayra!"

"I'm going! Honestly I'm just sick and tired of being told what to do, what not to do. "No don't do this Mayra" "No! This is wrong Mayra" "No! Do the right thing Mayra!" Let me be! I'm tired. I'm my own person! You can't even tell me where my father is!" I stood up. Things had gotten out of hand.

"What does your father have to do with you going to Spain to a man who might kill you there?"

"Where is my father?!"

"He's not here! He's never going to be here! Accept that! Mom took care of you alone! She raised you! Stop being ungrateful."

"Was I adopted?"

"Mayra.."

"Was I?!" She screamed. "Was I?! Tell me!"

"No. No you were not adopted."

"You think I'm stupid? I don't look like you or brother or even mom! Why are you lying to me? If my own parents ditched me I deserve to know Nompumelelo! You have no right to keep me in the dark! You have no right to keep the truth from me!"

"We are not lying to you. Please calm down."

"You are lying to me. Not even coloureds look like me. I'm white! I have no curly hair like mixed races. I have real white hair! Where are my parents Lelo?" I wiped away my tears then stood by the window. "Please.. I deserve to know. Where are my parents?" I could hear she was crying but I didn't even know what to say to her. How could I tell her that mom just came back home with a white baby? How could I tell her that she wasn't one

of us.

"Mayra sweetheart.."

"Lelo I'm begging you.." I shook my head. This couldn't be happening. Somehow deep down I knew the day was going to come but I never suspected it was going to be like this. I could never find the right words to say.

"Mayra.. I don't know where your father is. You are Mama's child. You didn't take any of her physical appearance but you took her character. She loves you. Hearing you accuse her of adopting you will kill her. She gave birth to you and loved you even after your father left. I'm sorry maybe what we give you is not good enough. I'm sorry. You can go to Spain. It's fine. I will put some money in your bank account."

I heard her break down. I bit my lower lip trying to hold in my cries. Tears though kept streaming down. How could I just lie to her like that? She deserved to know the truth. She deserved to be put in the light.

"I'm sorry.." She managed through her sobs. "I'm sorry.. I just.. I'm sorry.. I'm really sorry..."

"Sweetheart it's ok. Don't cry. You make me want to cry too. Don't please.."

"I'm sorry. I'm really sorry."

"It's ok. Just don't ever say that again. Not to Mom at least. It will kill her."

"I won't." It took her while to calm down. By the the time she was calm so was I. I had collected myself. She could go to Spain but that meant more security of cause.

"You can go to Spain. It's fine."

"If you don't want me to go it's ok."

"No.. You are right. We have to let you grow. I will talk to mom."

"Ok bye."

"I love you Mayra."

"I love you too."

"Ok bye.."

"Bye." She then hung up. I walked back to my chair and threw myself on the couch. I was tired, emotionally. I dragged myself back to work. My mind fell at peace when I regained my focus on work.

"So it's sold?"

"Yes. All finalized."

"Good job Tshidi."

"Thanks.."

"I'm thinking of expanding."

"The gallery?"

"Yes.. I want to expand."

"That would be a really good idea."

"I know. I'm glad you agree with me."

She smiled. "You know that..-" she was cut short by Nancy peaking her head in.

"Tracey is here."

"Ohh!" I hadn't realized time was gone. When Tshidi came back she had been updating me on her progress.

"Well later ok?" Tshidi said standing up.

"Yeah." She walked out with Nancy and just then Tracey walked in. I swallowed looking at her. She wasn't exactly what I had in mind. She was pretty or maybe even beyond. She walked in then

smiled. She was wearing a dress. A pink dress that looked like a night dress but it was a dress and it followed her curves exposing them. She had a jacket in her hands, there was something about her. Something I couldn't seem to shake off. Her eyes fell on me. For a while there we just stared at each other. It felt strange but quickly I shook my head then stood up smiling.

"Tracey.." She smiled, brighter as I walked towards her.

"Nompu-me-lelo.. Am I saying it right?" I chuckled. "Yes.." I gave her a handshake. It was brief though she did squeeze my hand when it made contact with hers.

"Please seat." I said walking back to my chair. I could feel her eyes on me. Sitting down I exhaled.

"I hope you didn't have hustle getting here."

"No.. I didn't. Such a nice place you have."

"I try but thank you."

"Patricia told me about you.. I need to set up a market here."

"And you are definitely in the right place." I said trying to fish my confidence. It didn't take much time to get in tune with my pitch to Tracey. She watched me the whole time as I talked. Her eyes burning. She listened attentively in total silence.

"Any questions?" I asked when I was done. She smiled.

"No. I think this gallery is perfect."

"Thank you."

"And I wouldn't mind doing business with you."

"I assure you.. You won't regret it."

She stood up making me stand up too. But before I could start walking towards her she was already walking towards me.

"Have you.. Ever tried to be an artist's model?" I stared at her, shocked of her question. The way her eyes shined made me blink. I quickly recollected myself and smiled.

"No. I don't do that. I sell. That's what I do."

"I think you would be perfect for it." She said trailing her figure on my face. "You would be really perfect." I took a step back as I chuckled out of discomfort.

"No.. I don't think so."

"Think about it." She was serious. For a while her eyes remained on me then she finally walked out after taking her handbag. I threw myself on my chair then let my breath out that I had been holding. Before I could let myself come back to normal the door opened and this time Nicholas walked in.

"Hey.. Brought lunch!" He said raising the bag of MacDonald he had. The past week we hadn't been talking. Maybe it was because there was nothing to talk about. My job of pretense was done too.

"Nicholas.."

He frowned. "You look flushed."

"Something weird just happened." He sat down opposite me, on the chair Tracey had been sitting on.

"What is it?"

"Why do you think you can draw me naked Nicholas?"

He looked confused. "What?"

"Why do you think I would be perfect for being drawn naked."

"Well it's not only naked. I think you would still look good dressed. You have the perfect eyes. The perfect face. Even the vibe you set.. It's just.. Mysterious yet so perfect just like your

eyes. It makes me wonder what you are hiding behind those eyes."

I swallowed. "Draw me."

He looked at me, lost. "What?"

"Draw me naked."

CHAPTER 24

[JANINE]

I felt heavy. My body felt heavy. It was as if something heavy was placed on top of me. Loads and loads of stones. It was as if I was captured in an intense fog that refused to let go. I couldn't move, not even a finger though I could feel pain. Pain on my chest and head. It was so intense though I wondered where I was. I could hear sounds but I couldn't make out the sounds. Slowly the fog began swallowing. Swallowing me to complete oblivion.

[LATOYA]

I hesitantly answered the call.

"Hello?"

"Hey.. You have forgotten us."

"I have been busy Tamia."

"I know.. Wanna meet up for lunch?"

"I have plans maybe next time."

"Ohh.. Ok."

"Yeah bye," I said then quickly hung up. I wasn't in the mood for her or Terry. I looked numbers that I had written on the piece of papee. They were definitely short to be a bank account number.

Maybe they were to a secret place. I took the forms I had stolen from Mr Tshekedi's office. There was a clue. Mr Tshekedi knew where the money was. He knew what number was but he wasn't going to talk. I had to find a way to get him to without having Kevin suspecting it was me.

I took the letter and the file then placed them in my safe box. I was close to getting the money. I placed the box in the closet. No one would ever suspect anything because initially it was my makeup box.

I walked to my phone which was ringing after leaving the box. It was Nothando. We hadn't talked ever since the revelation.

I didn't even know what to say to her. I wanted to be upset but maybe she didn't know either. Nothando loved Luthando. I never met him when they were dating though the relationship did go for a very long time. It still surprised me how I never met him. There had been times I wanted to meet him but Nono always came up with excuses. I was with her most of the time when she cried over him. Ate chocolate with her when he had made her upset. I was there with her when they broke up the final time. She had been so hurt. I looked at my phone ringing. She loved him but so did I. I loved him so much. I wasn't even thinking about leaving him.

"Nono.." I said as I finally answered.

"Toya.. Hey."

"Hi." I could almost taste the distance between us. It was so much it threatened to choke me. This was my best friend. This was the first time things had ever felt like that between us. The silence grew between us. I wanted to say something though I

couldn't seem to be able to let any words out of my mouth.

"Toya.. I miss you." She said.

"Me too.."

"How are you?"

"I'm fine. You?"

"I'm good. I feel lost.. Am I losing my best friend?"

"No.. Nono I love him."

"I know and I'm happy for you. I wish nothing but happiness for you two. I would never stand in your happiness Latoya. You are my sister from another mother. Please don't let this break us.."

"You love him too."

"No. Luthando and I have been long over. I moved on. You deserve to be happy and if he makes you happy then be with him."

"He used to make you happy too." I added, it was the truth. She loved him that everything he said was a yes. She always ditched me for him. I remember the first day they met. She couldn't wait to tell me. It had been raining and she had refused a lift from him so instead of leaving her, he stood in the rain with her till she got transport. When she told me the story, she was just beyond..

Taken.

She had liked him then.

"It's the past."

"I know how you feel about him Nono.."

"I used to love him at some point. I won't lie.. I used to love him so much. I used to love him beyond anything but it didn't work out and I accepted that. I made peace with it. Loving someone doesn't necessarily mean you are meant to be. Luthando and I

were never meant to be. Our relationship wasn't stable. It was never stable. The only reason I held on was because I thought that because I lost my innocence to him we were meant to be. We were not. It took me a while to realize that and now I do. I don't love him. Not anymore but I used to."

"Why did you always come up with excuses when I suggested to meet him?"

"I knew you wouldn't like him."

"What do you mean?"

"You didn't like him already before meeting him."

I sighed out of relief. Maybe that was really the reason but something in my head told me otherwise.

"Ok.."

"Yeah.. Lunch?"

"Yeah."

"Ok.. Our normal place."

"Ok.. Want a lift?"

"No.. I'm ok.. Let's meet up in.. An hour?"

"Yeah. That's ok."

"Ok bye.."

"Bye." She then hung up. I put my phone down then walked to the bedroom. I had to dress up. After I was dressed I finally walked back to the sitting room. I took my phone but there was a text from a number I couldn't recognize. I opened the message. *I'm still waiting for my money. Time is running out baby.. Tick. Tock. Tick. Tock. Think about your beautiful siblings.*

I held my breath as I read the message. My whole body froze. I took a deep breath then looked around. I couldn't see anyone.

Suddenly I felt scared. All the braveness I had ever managed to hold flew out through the window. I tried to calm myself down. Kevin wasn't here. No one could ever protect me. He could kill me. He could kill me without second thought. The way he had killed Sarah. The way he had killed Steve. I was next and I knew it. I had to get the money. I had to get the money quickly. I jumped when my phone started ringing. I looked at it with shaking hands. It was Luthando. With shaking hands I answered. "Lu-Luthando.."

"Are you ok?"

"Yeah.. Ummh I.. You.." I took a deep breath.

"Latoya are you ok?"

"I'm fine babe.. How's work?" I said changing the topic.

"Why are you whispering?" I let out a forced laugh.

"Don't worry about it.. I.. I have to go."

"Where are you? I'm coming there."

"No.. Please.. I'm meeting Nothando."

"Toots what's going on?"

"I'm fine Luthando. But you can come over tonight."

"I said I'm coming now. Stay there." I put the phone away when he hung up. I was gone and this I knew. I was completely in hot soup. Big Daddy wanted his money but I knew even after I gave him the money he was still going to kill me. That's why I had met up with lawyer. I needed to have a will. In case of my death.. My siblings had to have something. I sat on the couch feeling the coldness creep on me slowly. My mind completely just zoned off. I had no plan. All I knew was that I was scared and the last thing I wanted to do was drag Luthando in my mess. It was too

much tangled. I heard the hooter after a while. Slowly I took off my heels then opened for him. I waited a few seconds and then I heard the car engine die followed by the door opening and closing. I sat still on the couch till he walked in. He walked in and sat besides me, pulling me into his arms but a few minutes later I was straddling him and holding him tight. How was it possible that I was able to love him so much without having to try hard. I buried my head on his neck. He smelt good but also he smelt nicotine.

"Toots you can tell me anything. Tell what's wrong." I held tighter.

"Nothing."

"You look frightened. Tell me.. I don't mind dumping a body in a ditch." I giggled on his neck as I kissed him softly.

"I love you." He stood up with me then lay me on the couch so that now he was looking at me whilst of top of me. I loved the warmness of his body against mine. I loved that I could feel his biceps through his T-shirt.

"And I love you too. Now tell me."

"Let's make love."

"Toots.. Tell me what's wrong?" I looked into his eyes. He wanted to know but could I tell him I was lying to him all along? That I didn't meet up the lawyer for a divorce, that I wasn't planning to leave Kevin till I had the money I wanted so to repay back my debt, that I had stolen gold from Big Daddy, a very dangerous man. Could I tell him that I was going to die?

"I feel like someone is watching me." I said. I could tell him that and it was the truth though now I knew who was having me

followed. "I'm scared." His face softened and a wave of concern gracefully swum into his eyes.

"Don't be. I will take care of it." I nodded then wrapped my arms and legs around him.

"Now let's make love." I whispered as I cupped his face. Our lips met after a while.

CHAPTER 25

[ROCKELLE]

I sipped on my cocktail as Kelly continued to tell us her story.

"He's so.. Handsome! He's beyond handsome. I just.. I really like him." Puleng laughed. "It's really sad to have a crush on your neighbour."

"Yeah I know and his girlfriend! She's beyond the word hot. She has this hour glass body. She's tall. She has the best sense of fashion ever. He will never notice me."

"I'm really sorry Kelly.. Maybe one day. If you ever get married to him I will say my speech like " she used to like him even as a neighbour and even when he had a girlfriend. She's a loyal crush holder!" Then I will step down." They laughed with me. "I'm telling you. You will remember this.." I continued.

"Definitely. And you?" Puleng asked.

"What?"

"You and the boss? Honestly I can see the way you guys look at each other. The eye contact and the smiles. You keep denying it but you know I know."

"Nothing is going on between Lungile and I. I admit we did stay in the same house a while ago but as friends. We are friends.

Plus he is my lawyer with Cathy's case."

"The way you keep trying to defend yourself! You can tell us."

Kelly said as she picked a kebab from our dish. "He is good looking so we can't possibly blame you." I sighed.

"Ok. Something is going on." I said unable to keep my smile away. "We are just trying it out." Puleng screamed making me laugh.

"Yes! Nandi has no chance."

"Lungile was never interested in her to begin with." I said, this days the looks were worse. I swear she just wanted to kill me.

"She's ugly. Anyways I'm happy for you. You guys make a really cute couple."

"Thanks Puleng."

"How's the sex?" I looked at Kelly.

"What?"

"Tell us!" She pressed. I laughed standing up.

"No! I'm not discussing my sex life with you guys." I said walking to the toilet. After I peed I stood in front of the mirror washing my hands. Cathy's case was closed and I was off the hook. They were security cameras in her house. She had killed herself but the reason was what I didn't understand. Something told me it had something to do with her body. The body shaming that went on nowadays was enough to drive someone to suicide. Were you thick, they had something to say. Were you thin, they still had something to say. After I was done washing my hands I started walking out but only to bump into Latoya by the door. I hadn't seen her ever since Daddy left. She was wearing the best vintage wear I had ever seen. A vintage dress, the design was

that of the dresses worn by the beautiful rich woman in the late 50's though hers was flared and had a vent. With the dress, she wore a gold above the knee heel boot. It's goldness matched the gold details on the her dress. She held a gold purse at her other hand while she wore goldish sunglasses. One would think her dressing was dramatic but it suit her so perfectly. She smiled.

"Rocky.."

"Latoya."

"It's nice to see you around." I smiled. She was still spending my father's money and it didn't even bother her. How could it bother her either way? She was a gold digger and she was doing what she knew best. She was pretty. From all the women she was the prettiest with the perfect slim thick figure that she managed quiet well. She had the smoothest skin I had ever came across. What came with her was a gold digging profession.

"Yeah. Still spending his money I see.." She kept her smile. She never got affected by my words. She smiled through the harsh insults.

"Yeah.. How are you? Long time no see."

"I'm very good thank you." I said then walked away. Walking back to the girls they were talking about her.

"Did you see her?" Puleng asked as I sat down.

"Saw who?"

"That lady! I swear God took hours working on her. How can someone just be that pretty!?" She continued.

"Yeah.. More drinks?" I asked, I didn't want to talk about Latoya. I still hated her. When she came she really tried to make friends with me but what I didn't understand was how she expected me

to love her after she wracked my parent's marriage.

"Yes.. I can't believe we are drinking like this but it's just Tuesday." Kelly said trying to change the topic but at the same time making Puleng laugh.

"Everyday should be Friday."

"I agree. You can order Rocky.." I raised my hand to call the waiter. He came after a while and we ordered. My eyes fell on Latoya when she walked out. She could possess anything. She was like a goddess and as she went she managed to grab attention from every angle. It wasn't her dressing, just her. Even in her pyjamas I swear she could still manage to gobble attention. My eyes were on her till she walked out and was out of my sight. I sighed then looked back at Kelly and Puleng who were still staring.

"Who's her boyfriend?" Puleng whispered. "I can turn lesbian for her." Puleng continued as our drinks were placed before us. Kelly giggled. "You are too ugly for her."

"Mxm.. Guys I-" Puleng was cut short by her phone ringing. She took her handbag and took it out then smiled standing up. Kelly and I just laughed as she walked away. It was probably her boyfriend.

"How's the gym?" I asked Kelly.

"Well it's good though I'm looking for another job. I'm thinking of starting my own thing though."

"What do you want to do?"

"I don't know.. Maybe a saloon."

"That's good but you need money."

"I know.. I'm going to draw up my business plan and forecast

then try to fish some investors."

"That can work."

"That lady.. The beautiful one.. Your father's wife.. No offense but Rocky I don't think there's any reason to hate her. See today your whole mood is spolt because of her, because of someone who doesn't even care about you nor think about you. You need to start focussing on yourself rather than on hating other people. You will be happy then." Just then Puleng was walking back towards us with a goofy smile.

"Ok ladies I have to go." She said as soon as she approached us. I gulped down my cocktail then stood up taking my handbag.

"Me too.. I will see you guys."

"Ohh.. Ok. Tomorrow?" Kelly asked. I smiled. Obviously I was going to see her tomorrow. We practically stayed together.

"Yeah.. Bye guys."

Walking out I didn't bother turning. I knew she was right but I couldn't help it. I took out my umbrella then took out my phone as I walked away. I quickly sent a text summoning an uber. I was getting a car next week. A second hand Kia. First before getting home I had to go have my shot. At this stage I couldn't afford a baby. When the uber finally came I quickly got inside. I directed where he should take me. Pulling up by the hospital I hurried inside. I had already set up a meeting with Doctor Watson. Getting in her office she was already waiting for me. She did her normal procedure. I first tested for pregnancy then after that she finally gave me the shot. I left the hospital immediately after that, Lungile had a late meeting with one of the shareholders. Mr Peters. It was a meeting at the office.

I got back in the cab then it drove me straight to his house. As soon as I got off I pressed on the remote and the gate opened. I closed it behind me then walked straight to the door, unlocked it and walked inside the house. It was just the way it was two days ago. I put my handbag on the kitchen counter then started cooking dinner. In two hours I was done preparing my dinner. Quickly I rushed to his bedroom after I was done cooking with my bag. I took a quick shower after I shaved off my pubic hair. I wore the lingerie I had bought yesterday and my maroon dress with the heels. I fixed my hair quickly before I went back to the dining room to set everything up. I knew he was going to arrive in a few minutes so I put up the flavoured candles, lit them then switched off the light. It had been two weeks since we started going out, officially though we were keeping our relationship private. Lungile was what a lot of women out there wanted. He had his flows in communicating his feelings but besides that he was just perfect. He listened to me talk. Even if I was just being a bitch he would listen, he drew out my feelings, my emotions and my desires. It's like he had located the real Rockelle that I had no idea was even there. He didn't know how to communicate his feelings but when he did he gave me total control over him. Made me feel like I owned him though sometimes I did feel he didn't give all of him. A part of him was missing. I stood still when I heard the gate opening. He was home. I walked over to the door and opened it but to only wish I hadn't done that. He wasn't alone, he was with another man and they were laughing. I inwardly pinched myself. I should called him before I came, like a normal person should. The fact that he gave me the keys didn't

give me the right to come uninvited to his house. I stood by the door and just waited. He smiled when his eyes fell on me. There was just something about his smile. It captured me completely. The moment he approached me he buried me in his arms in a big bear hug. He smelt so good. For a while there everything had just disappeared expect him. Finally, after a while he let me go and now we were both staring at the man.

"You didn't tell me she's white dawg!" The guy said making me smile. "Babe hi, I'm CJ you are?" I chuckled.

"Rockelle.."

"Ohh damn baby girl! Beautiful name for a beautiful girl. So I see you have a boyfriend.. When you need a husband.. Let a nigga know!"

I laughed. He was funny. "CJ relax your balls. Ok babe this is my friend.. CJ and CJ.. This is my girl.. Rockelle."

"It's nice to meet you." I said stretching out my hand. He took mine and kissed it.

"The pleasure is all mine." Lungile took my hand from CJ.

"Stop scarring her with your ugliness."

"What ugliness? My nigga I'm the shit."

"Just because your mother says so doesn't mean you are. Come baby." Lungile said as he took my hand and walked inside the house with me. CJ was behind us. Lungile stopped as we passed the dining room. Well the candles and lights off stopped him making him stare at me.

"I thought we could have a romantic night." I whispered to him. He blinked a couple of times.

"You should have told me. I wouldn't have brought the idiot with

me."

"I heard that!" CJ screamed.

"It's ok. I'm sure the dinner is enough for everyone."

"You are such a good person. You are beautiful in and out. We need more people like you on earth." CJ said dragging me from Lungile. "You are so kind, you deserve to be an Angel. Baie dankie die here.(Thank you lord.) Such a kind person." I just smiled.

After a while we were all sitting down eating. The candles were still on though. CJ and Lungile were talking about soccer. I listened as they talked though I didn't understand anything. After dinner CJ left, he was giving some shorty a round.

"Your friend is nice." Lungile took my hand and pulled me unto him.

"Yes he is. And also is stupid."

I giggled. "Yeah.. How was your meeting?"

"It was ok.. And your time with the girls?"

"It was fine till I saw Latoya." He led me to the couch then we sat down besides each other though he made me rest my head on his broad chest.

"What did she do?"

"Nothing. She was looking her usual."

"So you just hate her?" Lungile knew about my Father's wives.

"I know it's stupid but yeah.. I don't want to talk about her." I said as I relaxed in his arms. Just then we heard the intercom ring. I raised my head and looked at Lungile.

"Expecting someone?"

"No.." He stood up then buzzed the person inside. I followed

behind him after discarding my heels. He stood by the door as some car drove in. My jaw dropped straight to the ground when Nandi got out of the car holding a casserole. What was she doing here?!

CHAPTER 26

[JANINE]

Slowly I walked to the door. The crutches were irritating but at the same time I knew my leg wouldn't support itself. It was too painful. When I finally managed to walk inside the station Lukes's eyes were the first ones to fall on me. I smiled as he looked at me in shock.

"Janine.." He said making Officer Molefhe turn to look at me. "Hi.. Morning." I said looking around. There was some lady by the reception talking to Officer Molefhe. Barefooted, and she looked as if she had fallen. She was even crying. "Feels good to be here."

Luke smiled. "We all missed you. Even Sibeko."

I chuckled. "Stop lying. I know he was wishing I die."

"No.. He missed you. How are you?" Officer Molefhe asked.

I smiled. "I'm fine. I'm good."

"That's good."

"Yeah.. Is Orlando in?"

"Yes.. In the office." I gave them polite nods before I started walking away. My chest still hurt and the headaches I had were unbearable too but nothing could beat the pain that attacked my left leg.

Somehow when I heard the accident I was sure my death had

arrived. When I finally opened my eyes two weeks ago I was just lost. How had I made it?

Slowly I opened my eyes but only to close them immediately. The bright light was just too intense for my eyes. I opened my eyes again, slowly this time. I was trying to be cautious. Slowly they adjusted to the intense light. I looked around, trying to gauge my surrounding. The constant beeping made me turn to look for the origin of the sound. That's when I finally noticed the oxygen mask. I pulled it off my face. I was in hospital and that very much I could tell. Slowly my mind began playing the reason I was here. Like a movie it played.. My father. He was dead. I tried to sit up straight but the intensity of the pain on my chest had me prisoned to the bed. I wanted my father. Tears began streaming as the beeping sound became faster. One moment I was screaming for the nurses to let me go and the next I was losing touch with the world.

Opening my eyes again I wasn't alone. Latoya and Lelo were there staring at me. Latoya smiled as I fully opened my eyes. "Welcome back." She said smiling. Lelo took my hand and gave it a squeeze.

"Yes, welcome back Janine."

I slowly walked inside the office and there was Orlando. He was busy on some file and was frowning. As if he could tell I was standing there he raised his head. A smile ran on his lips as he stood up.

"Hey.. You are here.." He said walking towards me and giving me an awkward hug. "Shouldn't you be resting? Your leg is not fully healed. You shouldn't be here."

"I'm going crazy at home. I hate having to do nothing."

"I know but this is for you to recover. If you needed anything you could have called." I smiled then walked towards my chair. My table looked deserted it broke my heart. I sat on my chair then placed the crutches down.

"I miss work."

"Yeah.. I know. You will be fine soon enough and then you will be back."

"I know.. How's Sibeko?"

"Don't even ask!"

"Still an asshole?"

"No.. He's worse than that." I slowly nodded as I looked around. This was my home. This was where I felt more happier at.

"How's Khanya's case going?"

"She got 2 years, but she will serve one year. Big Daddy hasn't killed her yet."

"I wonder why he's stalling. And Cassandra?"

"The mother murdered the husband. Cassandra wasn't his daughter. They wanted money and unfortunately they got it because the will that was read out.. The husband is the one who wrote it and signed it."

"So the family got nothing?"

"Yes but they are going to jail for a very long time."

"At least.. And the Maphoto guy?"

He sighed. "He's too smart. He never leaves loose ends behind."

"Don't worry." I encouraged. "We will catch him. Might not be today but we will."

"Yeah.. So..-" he was cut short by Sibeko walking inside.

"Adam! I heard you are here." As you can see bastard. I looked at him.

"I came to visit my fellow colleagues Colonel.."

"It's good to see you. Get well.." He said then walked away.

Orlando smiled then took my hand.

"Don't worry about him. So what have you been doing at home for the past two weeks." He teased, he knew I had no one but myself. No friends no nothing.

"Keeping up with the Kardashians. I can't live this life anymore." I said as I rubbed my face. "I want to come back."

"As soon as you recover. I heard about your father.."

"It's ok. I'm over it. He's already buried. There's nothing left."

"You are the strongest person I have ever seen."

"Life will teach you how to be strong the hard way. I have to go." I was now standing up.

"What did you come with?"

"My car. I will see you." I was already walking out by then. He followed behind me till we were standing by the car.

"So you just drove with your injured leg?"

"I don't drive with the injured leg. I use my right leg."

"I will come and see you later." Orlando said opening the door for me. I didn't want anyone at my house. I was tired of people feeling pity for me. I hated it.

'No.. It's ok. Go home. I will be fine and either way one of the wives will be there." He smiled.

"Ok." I got in the car then threw the crutches at the backseat. Orlando was just looking at me. What he didn't understand was that no matter how many times life knocked me down, no matter

how hard it could have been I always stood up and continued with the race. I was my own hero. It's not like the world ever stopped because Janine was knocked down. It continued so instead of crying I continued with my race because to me.. It was on again. If God couldn't see my struggles, if he couldn't hear my cries then I had to be my own God. I always got up, found my way back and owned my life. I started the car ignoring the pain on my chest and slowly I reversed out.

I drove straight to my house. Arriving there, my eyes fell on my Aunt who was standing by the gate. After everything she still had the balls! The liver to come to my house. I felt rage radiate throughout me. My blood was boiling. After everything she was here? I stopped the car by the gate, grabbed the crutches and got out of the car. The pain on my chest worsened but I didn't care, not that moment.

"What are you doing here?!"

"Matlhogonolo.. We need to talk. It's a family matter. We did you wrong to bury your father while you fought for your life in hospital but we didn't have money for the body to be kept at the mortuary. I-"

"Don't worry! Since now that he's dead.. We don't have any relation between us. My father's death cut that off. I don't know you and you don't know me. I'm an orphan now."

"Matlhogonolo don't say that. Your mother wouldn't..-"

"Don't you dare! Don't you ever dare open that mouth of yours and talk about my mother. Who do you think you are? Get out! I'm calling security!" I said as I hurried to my car or at least tried to hurry. Getting inside I quickly opened the gate then drove in. I

limped out of the car. The crutches were slowing me down so I limped to the house, took out my house keys from my pocket and unlocked the house. Getting inside I pressed the emergency button a couple of times. She had followed me inside the house. I knew she was going to go back and tell the whole family but I didn't care. She could tell anyone she wanted. Slowly I sat down as the pain worsened. It felt as if I was suffocating. After a while the security arrived but then I could barely hear anything. All I could hear was my heart beating fast.

"Mam are you ok?" The security guy asked though his voice sounded distant. I pointed at my Aunt trying to say he should throw her out but words failed me and so did my eyelids.

"You shouldn't strain yourself. You are still healing, you need to allow yourself to heal." The doctor said.

"Ok. Am I going home?"

"We contacted your next of kin. She said she will hire a private nurse for you. I think that will be very good. You need aid at home." I closed my eyes. I had made Lelo my next of kin due to my assessment at work. I didn't know who else to write.

"Whatever.. I just want to go home." Just then Lelo was walking in.

"Do you ever listen?" She asked.

"No."

"I think you need to see a therapist." I looked at her in shock.

"Excuse me but I think there's connection problems. What did you say?"

[LATOYA]

I looked at myself on the mirror for a while. I looked like I had grown 10 years more. I moved away from the mirror and walked to my bed. I felt tears wet my cheeks as I threw myself on the bed.

I heard the door opening making me raise my head. Luthando was back.

"Hey how are you feeling?" He said as he sat besides me.

"I think I'm going to die."

"I think maybe we need to go to the hospital."

I shook my head. "No. No!"

"Toots.."

"No. I'm not going to no hospital. If I die I die."

"You are being stubborn for no reason."

"I'm not going to the hospital finish and Klaar! I told you I'm allergic to mushrooms."

"Dress up so that we go to the pharmacy. They will give you something." I got off bed then walked to the bathroom. From young mushrooms never went well with me. I always had reactions but this time it was worse and not only because of mushrooms. The other reason made me wish to die. How could I have been so careless? I stood under the shower after stripping naked and putting on a shower cap. I opened the cold water. After about 15 minutes I finally walked out. My body was numb because of the cold water but I didn't care. I grabbed my towel then wrapped it around my body and walked out.

Luthando was sitting on my bed busy on his phone. He raised his head as I walked in. I could feel his eyes as I walked to the closet. I took out my denim dress shirt and some sneakers.

Luthando's eyes never left my body as i dressed up.

"We can go.." I said after brushing my new Peruvian. He stood up then walked towards me and placed his hands on my waist pulling me against him.

"Have you talked to your lawyer?" I smiled then wrapped my arms around his neck.

"Yes.. He's doing the paperwork."

"Are you sure?" I let out a chortle trying to control my heart which was beating hard against my chest.

"Yes. Louis is on top of it. I trust him."

"It's not your lawyer I don't trust. I'm just wondering if you did speak to your lawyer." I unwrapped my arms around his neck then took a step back.

"What?"

"Did you speak to your lawyer recently? Or ever?"

"What are you trying to say Luthando?"

"Did you or did you not speak to your lawyer?"

"I told you I did."

"What if I find out that you never did?"

"Feel free to find out then. You can call him. I can give you his number right now."

"I'm going to believe you but I swear to God, if I find out that you lied to me Latoya...." He gave me a stern look but I held my head high and looked straight into his eyes.

"I'm not lying. I have nothing to hide. It's good to know how much we trust each other." I said walking out after grabbing my handbag and phone. I silently prayed as I went down the stairs. Lies were the most evil act on earth because thing with lying

was that.. You would cover a lie with another lie. The circle never ended till you were caught. Getting outside he was right behind me. He unlocked the car then opened the door for me. I didn't know how long I could keep up with the lie till he found out but something told me I didn't have much time. I walked to the car and got in. The whole journey to the pharmacy he was quiet. I wanted to tell him I didn't mean to lie. That I loved him but my mouth kept shut.

"Take.." He said handing me his black card. I didn't want to argue with him so I just took it and walked inside the pharmacy. I walked straight to the receptionist.

"Hello.." I said making her look at me with a smile.

"Good morning Mam, how can I help you?"

"I want a pregnancy home testing kit."

"Ok.. Wait here." I looked behind me as she walked away. He didn't follow me. I was late for my periods and lately I had been feeling funny. My heart was beating fast as she returned with it. I couldn't be pregnant. Not at this stage at least. Kevin would kill me.

"And I'm.. Allergic to mushrooms. I ate some and I need something for it."

"Ok.." She walked away again as I took out my card. I was going to pay for the pregnancy home test kit with my card and the medicine for my allergy with Luthando's. Walking back to the car I was only holding the medicine while the pregnancy home test kit was in my purse. Getting in the car he was just looking at me.

"Ok.. We can go."

"Latoya do you see a fool when you look at me?" He asked with

an even voice. I looked at him.

"Luthando what's wrong?"

"No.. Answer me. Do you think I'm a fool? Or maybe possibly I look like one. Huh?"

"What are you talking about?"

"All along you have been lying to me. I asked you if you talked to your lawyer and you said yes knowing damn well that you are lying!" My heart leaped in my mouth. I was now shaking.

"Luthando..-"

"The only time you saw your lawyer was when you were fixing your will. So I'm going to ask you again. Did you or did you not speak to your lawyer about the divorce?" I looked into his eyes. He was burning with rage. He was angry. "I'm talking to you! Did you speak to him?!" I felt tears wet my cheeks as I tried to remain calm.

"Luthando.. You don't understand.."

"I don't understand?! I don't understand?!"

"Please calm down.." My tears were uncontrollable now. "Let me explain.."

"If you enjoyed being a whore why lie about it then? You could have said so the first time!"

"Luthando.. Please let me explain.. I can explain.. Please.."

"Busy acting so insecure but whilst you stringing me along!"

"I love you... I.. Let me explain. I want.. I want money to pay some-"

"If it was money you wanted why didn't say so!? And here I thought you were different but no.. You are just a typical whoring slut."

"Luthando you don't understand. I need the money or else I'm going to die. I was going to divorce him I swear I-"

"Get the fuck out of my car."

"Luthando.. Babe.. Please.. Please.. Just listen.. I love you." I said trying to hold him.

"Get your hands off me! I'm busy letting real woman go, thinking you are worth it. You are a disgrace to all woman out there. Get the fuck out of my car." I shook my head still crying. I wasn't leaving till he heard me out.

"No.. Till you listen to me."

"Latoya I'm warning you. Get out of my car."

"I just want to explain. Let me explain."

"Sisi I said get out of my car! Get the hell out of my car before I slap the whoreness out of you." I shook my head. Before I know it my whole cheek felt hot. Like it was set on fire. My brain couldn't register what had just happened. I was confused. Slowly I held my cheek. He had just slapped me.

"I'm not going to tell you again." I took a deep breath then opened the car door and stepped out with my things. He didn't even wait for me to close the door but just sped away as soon as I stepped out. I tried to keep calm, trying to fight the lump that was on my throat. I looked around to see if anyone saw but nobody had so I fished out my sunglasses from my purse and put them on.

"Don't let anyone know. Don't let anyone know. Don't let anyone know." I chanted to myself as I began walking. I kept my head down. "Don't let them know. Don't let them see. Don't let them know. Don't let them see." I held my bag tightly and kept on

walking. I didn't stop walking as I took out my phone. Quickly I called Jimmy.

"Toya!"

"Hey.. I need you to come pick me up. I'm stranded."

"Ok.. Where are you?"

"Thanks."

"Anytime.. Are you sure you are good?"

"Yeah.. I'm fine. We will talk." I said as I got off his car. I walked inside the flat locking the door behind me. I took a deep breath, trying to keep it under control. Big girls didn't cry. Big girls never cried. Big girls were fighters. Big girls were strong enough for anything.

"Nice place you have here.." A voice said. A voice I knew so well. I felt all blood drain from my face. Slowly I turned and there he was. He wasn't alone. He was with some man. His guard probably. I took off my sunglasses.

"Big Daddy.." I managed.

"Baby.. You are still beautiful I see." He said as he slowly walked towards me. Fear crept in my heart shaking my whole body.

"You.. I.."

"Don't worry.. We are just going to talk.. We are just going to talk sweetheart. Don't worry." I swallowed hard. I was doomed.

"Relax.. Let's sit." He said sitting down. "Asseoir (sit)."

Slowly I sat down opposite him. The man he had come with was still standing.

"Now.. Where's my gold.. Or better yet.. my money?"

"I.. I am getting it." He laughed. That wicked laugh.

"You are getting it? Time has run out sweetheart. Time.. Has run

out. I want my money and I want it right now."

"I just need a bit of time.. I'm.. I.. I'm getting it tonight I swear."

"Latoya baby I gave you time... It has run out. Unfortunately." He stood up making me stand up too then walked towards me. I had nowhere to run to.

"I want my money.." He said as he ran his finger on my face gently. He then stepped away and a resounding slap landed on me which led me straight to the floor.

"I want my money you bitch!" He roared making me shrink. "Who the fuck do you think you are? Stealing from me? You are going to regret it!" And with that came a kick on my stomach that made me scream. I rolled my body into a ball. I couldn't let him kill my baby.

"I'm going to teach you a lesson you will never forget." After a while I felt a belt come in contact with my skin. I screamed at the pain. "You dirty bitch!" I shut my eyes tightly as the belt landed on me again. "You fucken fucken dirty little bitch!" And again it struck me. Soon my body was just numb. I felt numb. I couldn't feel the belt anymore. He finally stopped and he was breathing hard. I opened my eyes slowly and he was staring at me.

"Don't worry baby.. This is just the start. You are going to regret ever messing with me." He said then nodded at the man he had come with. The man immediately walked towards me and that's when I finally noticed he was holding a knife.

"Please.." I begged for my life. "Please.."

"Don't worry. He's just undressing you. We are about to have fun." I started shaking my head. He couldn't do that to me. He couldn't force himself on me. The man quickly sliced my dress

shirt followed by my pantes then bra. I was completely naked before him. I had been through a lot but rape was never part of it.

"I'm going to show who has the power," I found myself asking God to help though I knew he was never going to. God hated me. The same way Luthando did. The same way every person out there did. No one cared about me. My whole body ached. Big Daddy unzipped his trouser while his worker held my hands.

CHAPTER 27

[NOMPUMELELO]

"So who's buying it?" He asked.

"Not that it matters.. But a European man called Gavin Steward. His house was announced best artistic house earlier this year. He's into art and he understand the meaning of art pieces so well."

"Ok.."

"Yes Nicholas. When am I getting my painting?" I asked cautiously.

"I will drop it later today.. Is that ok?"

"At the office?"

"Yes.."

"Ok.."

There was a bit of silence. Awkward silence. I had let him see my nakedness so to draw me. At first I highly felt uncomfortable but I soon relaxed when I didn't see lust in his eyes. His eyes didn't twinkle from seeing my nakedness. My eyes never left him as he painted me. My heart which had been beating hard against my

chest slowly relaxed. His face had completely changed as drew me. He was completely into business.

"I will wait then."

"Yeah.. Bye." I put my phone down when he hung up. I continued to look at Tracey's drawing. She had mixed paint and oil pastels and the piece made me feel as if I was part of it. It was a Jaguar in the forest. I looked up when I heard a soft knock.

"Come in.." I said. Nancy walked in.

"Lelo.."

"Hey.."

"Are you busy right now?"

"No.. Sit." She sat down opposite me.

"Ok.. We are almost one year old. I was thinking maybe we can celebrate our one year anniversary. We can also use the celebration to market the gallery." I smiled.

"I hadn't thought of that.. When is it again?"

"In two weeks." I slowly nodded then looked at her.

"Run with the idea. I like it. Send me the budget and the rest is in your hands."

"Really!?! You.. You agree?"

"Yes. I like it."

"I thought you were going to say no." I laughed.

"I like it so much. Plan it. Give me the budget."

"Ok.. Thank you."

"No you thank you. I like creative people like you."

"Thank you.. Ohh there's a parcel for you."

"Bring it." She stood up and walked out. Coming back she was holding a huge box. I stood up to assist her.

"It's not heavy.."

"It's not?"

"Yeah.." She put it on my table. The box had a very wide width but thin.

"Ok.. Thank you."

"Ok.." She walked out leaving me looking at the box. I opened one of drawers and took out a scissors. I removed the sticky tape that had sealed the box. Opening it, I took out what was inside. I sucked in my breath as I looked at a painting of me. I looked beautiful. I looked untouchable. I ran my fingers on it. I couldn't believe it, it was beautiful. Beyond beautiful. I knew he had sent before the phone call. I felt a bit forward for having to have asked about it. I shoved it back in the box when I heard my phone ring. Quickly I took it, it was an unknown number.

"Hello?" I answered.

"Lelo.." I held my breath as I heard his voice. It couldn't be him. I took a steady breath.

"Luthando?"

"Still wanna go out for breakfast?" He asked. I smiled as my heart started running it's own marathon.

"Where's she?"

He chuckled. "Where's who? Want breakfast or not?"

"It's way past breakfast time but I think I can improvise."

"Good. Where are you?"

"At work.."

"You own what again?"

"I own a gallery. NK gallery."

"Impressive. Beauty with brains."

I giggled. "Thank you. It's around lunch.. I think we can do lunch."

"Ok.. Where?"

"I'm a very mean cook! I do wonders in the kitchen. You can come over to my house."

"Great! Send the directions."

"Those tomatoes should be cut at the right proportion.. Not like you are cutting meat." He gave me a look making me laugh. "Let me show you.." I said taking the knife from him. I started cutting the tomatoes while he stood behind me watching.

"You do it like this.. Not the way you are doing it. We women love men who can cook. There's just something about a man who knows how to cook."

"Look I know how to cook. It's your knife." I chuckled then turned to look at him. "I love men who know how to cook." He smiled and I swear to God.. That smile was just enough for me to fall all over for him. He pressed me against the kitchen counter.

"It's a good thing I know how to cook." He whispered. My whole skin felt hot. "Don't you think so?"

I nodded quickly. "Mhhmm.."

I stood on my toes then kissed him wrapping my arms around him. He didn't take time to respond. He kissed me back grabbing my body roughly. I had waited for such a moment my whole life. He suddenly picked me up and placed me on the kitchen counters making my skirt roll up. I wrapped my legs around his waist as he continued kissing my lips. I felt his hands rub my thighs then after a while one hand down and got inside my panties. He started rubbing me making a slight moan escape

my lips. He was mine finally. He wanted me. He dipped one finger inside me. I threw my head back making him access my neck easily. After a while I heard the opening of his zip. My panties were long discarded by then. He rammed into me making me cry out of pleasure.

He knew what he was doing. Knew how to drive me insane. I screamed his name loud as he hit that spot. My whole body vibrated as my eyes rolled back. I felt tears wet my cheek as my orgasm teared me apart. Never had I ever experienced such an immense orgasm that rippled through me like an earthquake. He came violently after me filling me up. I couldn't even feel my legs. He pulled out then helped me down. My legs felt wobbly. I could feel his cum glide down from my pussy.

"Can you stand?" He asked with a smirk. I blushed.

"No.."

"Askies.. I think you-" he was cut short by his phone ringing. He took it out then frowned. The phone slipped from his hands as he answered it then fell. Somehow he might have pressed the loudspeaker by mistake because I could hear the person at the end of the line.

"Luthando what did you do to her!?" She screamed. "What did you do to my friend!?" He picked the phone then placed it on the counter as he fixed his pants.

"The fuck are you on about? Your friend is the liar!"

"So what did you do to her then? You killed her?" The lady who was talking was hysterical. I could hear she was crying. "Huh? So you killed her?! Where's her body?"

"Nothando you are getting on my nerves. The fuck are you

talking about?"

"There's blood all over her sitting room and she's missing! What did you do to her! Luthando what did you do to her! She loved you son of a bitch! You ungrateful bastard! You never appreciate the good things you ever have in your life, nor the good things people do for you! You always have to fuck it! Are you that much cursed that you can't hold down a fucken good thing!? You never deserved her. I swear to God I'm going to kill you if you did anything to her!"

"What? There's blood all over her house?" I could tell he was panicking. He was now looking for his car keys. He took them from the floor.

"Yes.. Luthando where's she?"

"Don't worry. I will find her." He said now taking the phone. The lady hung up.

"I have to go.." He was already walking away. I followed after him.

"What about lunch?"

"Nompumelelo! My girlfriend is missing and you are talking about lunch? Are you well?"

I chuckled in disbelief. "Why didn't you remember your girlfriend when you were busy between my legs?"

"Don't act as if you didn't want this. You were busy throwing yourself at me. I gave you what you wanted.. What more do you want?" He said unlocking his car.

"Luthando you gave me an impression that you wanted me too.. I love you.. You can't just leave."

He laughed as if I had said something funny. "First of all, I love my girlfriend so much. Secondly I love her and her only. Thirdly

I'm not going to leave her. I'm never going to. I'm sorry if I gave you the wrong impression. And lastly.. This was sex. It remains as just sex." And with that he got in his car and immediately sped out. I chuckled. I couldn't believe I had just been used. Just like that, I had just been used.

I walked back inside the house. I could smell the pasta which was burning. I walked to the kitchen and switched off the stove and sat on the kitchen stool. I had just had sex with a man I loved but only for him to tell me he loved his girlfriend. I reached for my phone which was ringing. It was Julie. I sighed as I answered.

"Julie..."

"Hey.. Guess what! I have been promoted!"

"I'm happy for you babes.. Shine!"

"Hey what's wrong? You sound down.."

"I have just been used Julie. I feel.. I feel sad. I'm heartbroken."

"Who used you? What are you talking about?"

"I should have known.. I guess he really loves his girlfriend."

"Who? Tell me.."

"Your brother. He was here. Had what he wanted only to tell me he loved his girlfriend so much and was never going to leave her. He made me feel so cheap Julie."

"You slept with him?"

"Yeah.. And you know I thought he was finally giving us a chance. I guess the joke is me."

"Don't say that. He will come around. He's going to leave her.."

"I don't think so. He loves her. I could even see it in his eyes. He loves her."

"Did you use a condom?" I clutched my forehead.

"No.. I forgot. I will get some pills."

"You know Luthando will never abandon his child."

"Stop!"

"He will love his child. He will love you too."

"Julie stop! I'm not about to trap him. No!"

"I was just saying. It looks like you love him. Are you just going to walk away?"

"His girlfriend is missing! I can't be doing that to him on top of everything else. I respect myself."

"Ok fine. I'm sorry he used you. Go get pills. I'm sure you will be fine after letting your love go." I briefly closed my eyes.

"Julie I can't trap him with a baby.. What if Kevin doesn't get back with Lana? He will kill me."

"Stop playing with yourself. They are going to get back together. He loves his wife you know it. But then.. It's your life. It's not my business."

"Will he love me if I get pregnant?"

"Yes.. He was ready to wife his ex girlfriend after she said she was pregnant."

"What happened then?"

"She lost it."

"I don't want to be stuck in a loveless relationship with a child. I have too much value than that."

"Then why are we discussing this.. Look let's discuss my promotion. I can now finally buy a car." I got off the stool and started walking when I felt his liquids glide down from my vagina.

"You could have seen Nametso. She's so jealous but I'm now her boss."

"I'm happy for you. You can now take us out on a vacation." She laughed.

"Yes.. We can go to Capetown.."

"Yeah.."

"Look mom misses you. I think you should go and say hi sometime."

"Who's Luthando's girlfriend? Her name."

"I don't know her name.. What do you want?"

"To see my competition. I really sound pathetic right now. I'm going to regret this and I know it."

"She's trash. She's probably not missing but just went off with the next richer person in line."

I laughed. "Look I'm going to bath. I'm stinking sex."

"I wish we can discuss how it was but no. I'm good."

"It was awesome!" I screamed. "Best sex ever!"

"Stop it! How's Nicholas?"

"He painted me naked."

"What?"

"He painted me naked."

"Are you fucking with him?"

"What? No! I don't even feel that way for him."

"Good. Luthando is a bit possessive. He doesn't like sharing."

"Luthando doesn't even love me. All he sees is a sex toy."

"It's only a matter of time."

"Look I have to go.. Bye." I said then hung up getting in the bathroom. I stripped naked then sat in the bathtub till the water

filled up. As much as I denied it, I had been throwing myself at him. Maybe he would love me if I was pregnant but could I really stoop that low?

CHAPTER 28

[ROCKELLE]

I fixed my skirt as I packed my things. Lungile had just walked out with Kuhle, he worked at the HR. After I was done packing I started walking out but only to be stopped by someone grabbing my arm. I turned and came face to face with the lion itself. She was angry I could see.

"Your dressing is inappropriate for work." I looked down on my skirt. It was just above my knee.

"Excuse me what?"

"Your skirt.. It's inappropriate for work." I laughed.

"Well the boss hasn't complained yet.."

"Let me tell you something about Lungile.. He doesn't go for cheap disgusting little girls like you who are full of immaturity."

"Nandi we are at work and as a professional I don't discuss my personal life at work because it's inappropriate but.. Lungile is mine. Not ours. He can never, and never will be yours. Stop embarrassing yourself. You are someone's sister, act like it." She laughed.

"Lungile is yours? Did you even get this job fairly or you used that thing between your legs? Women like you who don't know the struggle are the most stupidest women of all time. Even a housewife is better than you."

"Women like me? Women like you who are too bitter are the

reason why some good woman out there never succeed, you are full of negativity. And you know the funny part is that.. All this insults is because of a man. A man who doesn't even love you. Nandipa at some stage in life you have to love and respect yourself."

"This.. It will not last. I swear to you.. You are just the next in the line. Lungile can never love you or anyone else. He's unable to love. The-"

"You will not.. You will not talk about him like that you you hear me? I will step on you the next time you talk about him like that. The only thing that is unable to love is you because you are a disgusting bitter wretch!"

She laughed. "Me? Wretch? Please. I have to open your eyes. I will do it for free."

"Ohh dit is baie gaaf van jou." I said walking away. I didn't need to hear more. I was upset. She had made Lungile sound so cold. I got in the elevator then let it take me back to my working spot. An annoying thought crept in my mind no matter how much I tried to discard it. What if she normally brought Lungile food at his house? What if something once went on between them? I shook my head as the elevator doors opened. Yesterday she had left before she even got in the house. She claimed to have just brought Lungule food but the way Lungile looked at her I knew he had been annoyed. I didn't even ask anything after she left. I put my things on my desk then sat down. It was almost time up. I started printing the documents Lungile wanted for the meeting he had tomorrow. Puleng showed up with Samantha after an hour.

"It's time up. Are you..?" Puleng asked looking at me.

"I'm not sure.. Let me check." I stood up then walked to Lungile's office. I knocked then peaked in. He was on a call swinging his chair. He looked frustrated. I smiled then mouthed "should I go?" He put the phone away.

"You are done already?"

"Yes.. Should I go?"

"No.. I'm almost done. I want to take you out." My smile widened.

"Ok.. I will be by my desk."

"Ok.." I stepped out closing the door behind me. Walking back to my desk where Samantha and Puleng where still waiting I pulled an impassive look.

"No.. Lungile wants the document for tomorrow fixed and emailed to all shareholders. Seems like I will be stuck here for a bit." Puleng gave me a knowing look.

"Before you came Mr Mokwena had two personal assistants. You need to look for someone to help you." Samantha said.

"But she's managing just fine." Puleng responded with the mind-your-business-voice.

"I was just saying. It will help with the work load. You are the only one who addresses Mr Mokwena with his name.. You guys must be so close." Samantha's comment didn't sit well with me. It made me wonder about what other workers thought of me. "On the job description for all us, it was specifically written that we don't wear skirts that go above the knee." She continued. Samantha was your average girl.

"First of all Rocky is not everyone. Stop comparing yourself with her. Mr Mokwena hasn't said anything about her dressing but if

you have a problem with it.. How about you set an appointment with him and discuss the issue? Stop being so nosy, why can't you just mind your own business? Nxla.. Rocky babes we will talk. Wena a re tsamaye!" Puleng said. I smiled and gave her a wink. Samantha's jaw was probably on the floor. Puleng pulled her and they walked to the elevator. I sat down then took out my nail polish that was in my handbag and started painting my nails. It was time I got a manicure but I hardly got time. Carefully I painted all my nails trying not to smudge.

I started blowing air on my finger nails to get them dry quickly. I was too much engrossed on getting the nail polish to dry up that I didn't even notice Lungile when he walked out from his office but only when ran his finger on my nails, ruining the whole drying process and smudging the nail polish.

"Lungile!" I screamed as he laughed.

"Look at what you did!" He didn't stop laughing, no.

"Askies babe."

"I'm going to catch you."

"I love you."

"I'm not talking to you." He came round to me then pulled me up.

"I'm sorry.." He said then slowly captured my lips rolling my skirt up.

"No.." I whispered against his lips. Ignoring me, he stepped away then turned me around and pushed me by my back so that my hands land on my chair.

"Lungile someone will-"

"Shhh.." He pulled down my panties. I stepped out of them as he pressed my back down leaving everything all out there for him.

"This is going to be very quick.. Don't let go of that chair or move out of that position do you hear me?" I nodded but only for a slap on my butt to be received. I let out a yelp at the shock.

"That's what will happen when you move do you hear me?"

"Yes.."

"Good!" I held my breath and waited for him.

I put on my panties as he watched me. I smiled.

"What?"

"You are pretty. That's what."

I rolled my eyes. "Where are you taking me?" I was now up and packing my things.

"Out for dinner. My friends and I always go on a vacation every year. It's kind of a.. Tradition."

"You have more friends apart from CJ?"

"Yeah.. I have four more."

"Wow! You guys must be close."

"We are.. Anyways it's a one week vacation."

"Ok.. I wish I had friends like that."

"You have Kelly and Puleng. You might not be that much close but in the future you will be."

"Yeah... So when are you going?"

"On Saturday. This time it's a road trip. We are going to Victoria falls."

"I'm going to miss you but you do deserve a little break. Should I cancel all your appointments for the following week then?"

"Yes."

"Ok.. I will do that first thing in the morning."

He got off my desk where he had been sitting all along then

pulled me onto him.

"You are coming with."

"What?"

"You are coming with me. We are going."

"No.. It's a private thing Lungile.."

"Everyone is bringing their girlfriends.. What's stopping me?"

"You want me to come with?"

"Yeah.. Please.."

[JANINE]

I sat down looking at my board. Nothing had changed so far. It was as if I had hit the rock. I was stagnant. Nothing frustrated me even more than the fact that more girls kept going missing everyday only to be sold to other countries for money. This made me wonder if that's how human life didn't matter to other people or was it females only. Was our value as females that much low that being sold for sex didn't matter? I stood up with my crutches when I heard my phone ringing. Reaching for it then answered though I was annoyed. I got that maybe Lelo cared but it was already enough with the nurse already.

"Lelo.."

"Hey.."

"I'm fine if this is why you called."

"I'm glad. I hope you are not giving nurse Veronica a hard time."

"I'm not. Look there's a call coming, I have to answer this.."

"Ok bye."

She hung up giving me a chance to answer a call from Orlando.

"Hi.."

"Hey.. Arrived home safely?"

"Yes. I'm fine stop stressing."

"That's great. I have to go, I just got a case of suspected abduction."

"Ohh who?"

"Some lady.. Latoya. Apparently she's missing and there's blood all over her sitting room floor. The friend is the one who reported."

"Latoya? Latoya who?"

"Samuel if not Samuels." I shut my eyes tightly as I struggled to keep calm. My heart was already beating fast and hard against my chest. It couldn't be her.

"Latoya Samuels missing?"

"Yeah.. I hope we will not be too late. Mostly at such cases, it's so much rare for the woman to make it out alive. They must have tortured her for a while. It's either she was resisting or they just wanted to hurt her."

"Orlando come and pick me. I want to come with."

"Janine you are supposed to be healing not chasing after thugs." He chuckled. "I know how eager you are on—"

"Orlando I said come and pick me up. I'm coming with."

I looked at the scene. There were too many blood spots that made my skin cringe. Nothing was broken. Her handbag was on the couch. I stepped away as more pictures were taken.

"When did the friend call?" I asked Orlando.

"Just after four. She had just arrived.. She was visiting her because they hadn't talked in a while."

"Where's the friend?"

"There.." He pointed at some chubby thick girl who was crying. With the aid of the crutches I walked towards her.

"Hi.." She looked at me.

"Hello." Her voice was strained.

"What's your name?"

"Nothando."

"When you arrived where the doors locked?"

She shook her head as she fought her tears away. "No.. The gate was open and so were the doors. I panicked because that's so unlike Toya. She always locks the door and the gate. Getting inside the house that's when I met the blood."

I nodded. "Who do you think might have hurt her?"

"I don't know. She's never had enemies but.."

"But?" I prompted. Orlando was besides me now.

"She.. She was.. She wanted to steal money from Kevin.. Your shared husband. I told her it's dangerous but she refused to listen." I wasn't surprised that she wanted to steal money. Money was her middle name. All I failed to understand was that.. Was all this just for money. Was it Kevin?

"Besides you does she have any other friends?" Orlando asked.

"Yes.. Tamia and Terry. Though she wasn't friends with them anymore.. Do you think it's Kevin?" She asked looking at me.

"Did she manage to steal the money?"

"Steal what money?" A voice said making me turn.

"Mr Maphoto.. This is a crime scene. You can't be here." I said hastily.

"I'm not going anywhere. What money did she want to steal Nothando?" He asked staring at Latoya's friend. I was now

confused. How did he fit in all this?

"I don't know Luthando.. She wanted to steal money from her husband because she said she wanted to be happy.. That she wanted to move.. That you moving with her would make her happy but I always suspected there was another reason. There was a time in varsity when she used to get threatening messages but she always brushed it off."

"Excuse me.. Nothando.. What's his relationship with Latoya again?" I asked trying to put in the blank spaces.

She sighed frustratedly. "He's her boyfriend."

"Ahhh interesting." I muttered. "Very interesting."

"What texts did she receive Nothando?" Luthando fired ignoring me.

"I don't know ok!" Nothando screamed. "I don't know. She said someone was playing a prank on her but that's when Steven died. That's when Sarah died."

"Who's Steven and Sarah?" Orlando chipped in.

"They were our friends. We were all friends."

"Who's Jimmy?" Luthando took over.

"Our friend."

And with that Luthando walked out. "How long have they been dating?" I asked still amused.

"For over a month now."

"And how stable is the relationship?"

"They are so in love. They love each other. At first I didn't trust Luthando but I can see it in his eyes.. He really loves her."

"Why didn't you trust him?"

"Because he once hurt me..- I mean he-"

"He once hurt you?" I asked.

"No look..-"

"Nothando.. He once hurt you?"

"Well we used to date and it didn't work out so..-"

"He's your ex?"

"Yes but we have long been over."

"So when Sarah and Steve died.. What did she say?"

"That's when we moved from Durban."

"You were friends with her starting from when?"

"Since first year varsity. We were roommates."

"So maybe she was running away from someone?"

She nodded wiping her face.

"And Jimmy?"

"He's my friend. From my previous work place."

"And he's friends with Toya?"

"Yes."

"I see.. That's all for now." I said then walked away from her.

Orlando was still besides me. That moment that's when I realized there was a lot I didn't know about Latoya that I thought I knew. So much that was buried.

"What do you think?" Orlando asked.

"Latoya is the center of the issue. Latoya went to varsity in Durban. Latoya meets Nothando. Latoya and Nothando meet Sarah and Steve. Latoya receives threat messages. Sara and Steve die. Latoya runs away. Latoya meets Jimmy through Nothando. Latoya marries Kevin. Latoya wants to steal money to be happy. Latoya meets Luthando, Nothando's ex. Latoya goes missing."

"There's a lot missing."

"What did Latoya run away from? How did Nothando feel about Latoya's relationship? Did Kevin find out about Latoya wanting to steal his money? Did Luthando hurt her because of a fight maybe? There's a lot missing."

"What about Jimmy?"

"Jimmy is connected to Nothando. We need to do a research on him."

"So there are lot of suspects?"

"Yes but the biggest is.. What she ran away from and Luthando with Nothando."

"Nothando has a motive."

"She does but so does Luthando. Maybe it was a set up since they used to date."

"But why?"

"For money maybe. We need to talk to Luthando.. But also.. We need to go to Durban."

[NOMPUMELELO]

I pressed the hooter as I took a deep breath. The gate opened and I drove in immediately.

I didn't see his car and somehow I was relieved. Getting out of my car I walked to the boot then took out the plastic bags of grocery I had bought. I lifted my long dress then walked to the door. Getting at the door she was already standing there smiling.

"Hawu nkos'yam!" She exclaimed making me blush.

"Ma.."

"Is this all for the old woman?"

"Haibo Ma! You are not even that old." She laughed then helped with the plastic bags inside the house.

"Unjani?"

"Ngiyapila Ma.. How are you?"

"I'm fine. Umakoti has arrived!" I laughed as we placed the plastic bags on the kitchen counters. It looked so clean.

"I brought you a few goodies.. I don't know if you will like them or not."

"I will like them because you bought them my girl. Let me pour us juice. It's a good thing you came after I had just finished baking my scones."

"I would love to taste them."

"I used my secret recipe." She said pouring us juice. Seeing her just reminded me of Nicholas's mother. They were two different people.

"You need to tell me the secret."

"I will.." She handed me the plate of scones as she took the juice then we walked to her spotless sitting room. Everything was just shining.

"So where are your parents?"

I sipped on my juice. "My mother stays in New Zealand."

"And your father?"

I cleared my throat. "I don't know where he is. He left."

"Useless men! MaDlamani.. My prayer partner.. Her husband left her for a mistress! The devil is really destroying this beautiful land of God." I nodded then took a bite of one scone I had picked up. They tasted so good.

"This is so nice. Ma you need to tell me the recipe you used."

She laughed.

"One day. I'm so happy Julie has a friend like you. You are such a good girl and..-"

"And then?" A voice said making my whole body freeze. I took a deep breath then stood up. Looking at him I could see he was so pissed. I took a deep breath to steady myself because I was shaking.

"Luthando.." I started.

"What the fuck are you doing here?" My intestines knotted. He really didn't want me.

"Mind the way you talk in my house Luthando!" His mother said standing up. "This beautiful proper girl came to see me. These are the girls you should go for not that prostitute you brought here!"

"I don't care how you see her what remains is that she's mine.. Not ours and she's here to stay."

"Let her be yours then because I will never see her as my son's wife!"

"Then you say you go to church!" He muttered as he walked away. I followed after him immediately. I caught him when he was getting in his car.

"Luthando.. It's not what you think. Julie asked me to check up on her." He turned and looked at me.

"I don't love you and never will I. You are a good girl but I don't love you. I will never love you. The sooner you stop with all this drama just because of a fuck the better." And with that he got in his car. I felt warm tears wet my cheeks. I wiped them off as he drove off. Walking inside the house his mother was still sitting

down.

"Don't worry about Luthando. He's stubborn like his father." I smiled.

"Ma I have to go. I'm not feeling well.. I need to pass by the pharmacy." My mind was made up.

CHAPTER 29

[LATOYA]

I shut my eyes tightly, trying to stop the chattering made by my teeth. The coldness on the floor was at first unbearable but as time went my body slowly became numb. I couldn't straighten my fingers so I lay there, frozen into a ball. Though through all the cold, all the torture, I held on for my baby. For my baby I kept my eyes open. For my baby I fought my soul into staying. It was the second day and I was still locked away. I wasn't that worried about my siblings. I had that taken care of. If anything had to happen to me they were not going to suffer from poverty. I heard the door opening. Slowly I raised my head and again he was back.

"Baby.." He said. His voice didn't make me cringe anymore nor did it make stop breathing for a while.. There was no need anymore. I wasn't scared of death. No. If my fate was to die then there was nothing I could do about it. He kneeled before me and caressed my face. His wrinkles were all out there though he acted as if he wasn't 55.

"Look what they did to you.. Next time when you think about betraying me.. Next time.. You will think carefully. I'm going to break you so bad that when you leave here.. You will kill

yourself." I laughed through my rattling teeth. "Break me? No one can break me." I whispered. "You see.. I'm unbreakable. No matter how many times you force yourself onto me I will not break. No matter how much you enforce pain on my skin I will not break. No matter how much you curse and point out hurtful words at me I will not break. Nothing can break me. Not death itself. Even if you sell me.. Like you are planning thinking you are breaking me.. You won't succeed. See.. I'm beyond the word strong itself. No matter what people may say about me.. I don't break for they don't know my struggle. We can be at the same place at the same time but how we got there would be totally different. No one knows my struggle. No one knows my pain. No one knows what I have lived through. No one knows my journey. Today if I die.. If I die today I don't want people to cry for me because sweetheart.. I died for something. I died for a reason. And I didn't die out of giving up.. I died fighting. I fought. And guess what.. I won!"

He chuckled. "You think you are smart huh?"

"Smart? Maybe but that's not what I entirely think. I think I'm outstanding. Don't you think so?" He stood up then started kicking me. I laughed a breakable laugh as my tears streamed.

"Pain can't.. It-.. It can't break me!"

"You bitch!"

"Nor can words. I'm made of steel." He started pulling by my hair. I didn't make a sound. I wasn't going to give him any satisfaction of having to deprive a hurt feeling from me. God protect my baby. If my baby isn't meant to be then I will take whatever that happens to me but Lord if my baby is your

blessing then protect it. I prayed inwardly as he continued to pull me. He pulled me up then dipped my head in water. I kicked trying to break free. He pulled me out.

"I have the power!" And back he dipped my head again. I felt my lungs give up on me as I suffocated in water. He pulled out.

"I have the power!" He said then banged my head against the wall several times. I could feel my soul fight it's way out of my body.

"I have the power to break you! I can break you and I will break you!" He threw me on the floor. I winced at the pain. The raspy sounds I made as I tried gasping for air made me know what was coming. If this was the way I was supposed to die then there was nothing I could do. My hand made it's way to my belly. As my eyes closed I felt the world closing in on me.

[ROCKELLE]

I looked at Lungile as he laughed at his friend with CJ.

"I can't believe this." He said between his laughter.

"Ahh dawg! You.. Not you." CJ backed Lungile as they laughed at the good looking guy who who was smoking. Lungile had introduced him as Luthando but they called him LT. He was one of his friends. Now I was left with 3 more.

"You are laughing while my girl is missing?" LT asked. I could see he was annoyed. The dark circles under his eyes told me he hadn't slept for a while.

"No.. We are not laughing because your girl is missing. We are laughing because for once! Just for once you have fell in love!" CJ said making Lungile laugh harder. "And top of that.. With a

married woman. Just how hot is she?"

"I swear I'm going to kill someone." LT said as he took a swing of his alcohol. There was just something about him that told me he was serious.

"Ok.. Jokes aside. What happened exactly?" Lungile asked now calm.

"She lied to me about her divorce. I was upset so I slapped her. Then kicked her out of my car. That was the last time I saw her." He explained.

"You slapped her?"

"I was upset CJ! She just kept lying to me every time I asked."

"That's no reason for you to lay your hands on her."

"Ehh ntwana Lungile I know and I regret it!"

"When the police finds out they are going to make you a prime suspect. You hit your girlfriend then an hour or so later she's missing. There are blood stains in her house. I'm telling you this so that you know."

"And on top of that.. She's your ex's best friend. I'm not a lawyer guys but won't that add too?" CJ asked looking at Lungile.

"It will. How far are you with finding her?"

"I have managed to track down every call she's ever made.

There's this guy called Jimmy she kept calling. He knows something but thing is that he's missing and I can't track him down."

"Jimmy who?"

"Jimmy Ngcobo."

"What if it's her husband who's responsible for her disappearance?" CJ asked making me chuckle.

"Then he's going to regret it."

"CJ dawg shut up! LT What else do you have?"

"That she owes someone money. And that she wanted to steal money from her husband."

"No offense LT but.. Is she a.. Well one of those girls?" CJ asked cautiously. I could see they didn't want to upset LT even more.

"No! She just gets misunderstood."

"How did you track down her calls again?" LT gave Lungile the are you dumb or just stupid look. "So you got her phone from the police behind their backs. Ok. Firstly I think we need to-"

Lungile was cut short as LT's phone rang. He answered with a confused look. I was safely sitting besides Lungile with his arm draped around me. From my understanding of the conversation it looked like LT was having an affair with a married woman who was abducted two days ago. I snuggled closer to him making him look at me smiling as he drank his alcohol.

"Want some?" He asked making me roll my eyes.

"No. I'm good." I whispered.

"What do you want then?" I couldn't miss the mischievous look in his eye.

"Stop!"

"I'm just asking. I missed you today." He had spent the whole day out of the office. Gently he kissed my forehead then turned his attention back on LT.

"What?" LT exclaimed standing up. "No thanks. Keep digging." He then hung up.

"And now?" CJ went back at it.

"I just found out something. I have to leave. We will talk." He said

already walking away.

"LT wait!" Lungile called out. "Did you check her messages?"

"I'm getting a printout of them today because they were deleted."

"Ok.. Call me when you have them."

"Ta!" He got in his i8 then started the engine. I sighed as he drove out. There was something so heartwarming about the way LT loved his girlfriend.

"He really loves her. I can't believe this." CJ said as he watched LT's car drive away. "When he told me about it I knew he loved her but I never suspected it was to this extent. So what now?"

"We make sure he doesn't go to jail for murder he's about to commit and hope she's alive." Lungile said and gulped down the remains of his beer.

Later that day I lay on the couch watching TV or at least trying to. I couldn't get Luthando and his missing girlfriend out of my mind. The whole thing just disturbed me, it felt as if I connected to the whole incident. I wondered where she was if she was still alive or where her body was if she was dead. Maybe she was laying in a ditch somewhere dead. I wished to call my dad. I knew he would find a way to rescue the poor girl but something just told it was the worst idea I had ever came up with. I focused my eyes on the TV.

"Are you ok?" Kelly asked as she sat besides me. Gail had found me a bachelor pad and I was ready to move in till Kelly told me about her suite in Sandton. Her parents paid half of the rent and the other half her house mate paid but then her housemate had moved out. The suite was beautiful and the rent was just ok. I

had a lot to save at the end of the month. Sharing with Kelly wasn't bad. We connected as time went on.

"Yeah.. Just worried about some lady who's missing."

"Ohh.. Want to pray for her?" I looked at with a skeptical look.

"My mom always says prayer is key. Come.. Let's kneel and pray for her." She made us kneel down. I had never prayed a real prayer in my life. I didn't even know where to start.

"I don't know how to pray." I said staring at her.

"Let me teach you." She took my hands and held them. "What's the lady's name?"

"I don't know."

She chuckled. "You have a big heart. Ok.. Its fine. Close your eyes." I closed my eyes and listened.

"Father we kneel down before you as your kids thanking you for your love, for your mercy, for your blessings. We thank you for blessing us today with this day. We thank you for being with us the whole day. Father we put your daughter who is missing in your hands. We don't know what her future holds but father may it be full of your will. Father I ask the holy spirit to be around her this moment, may the holy spirit protect her. Lord wherever she is have mercy on her. Wherever she is lord strengthen her. Hold her heart father and raise her up from the swallowing mud she is in. In the name of Jesus Christ I pray.. Amen." I opened my eyes and looked at her she looked back at me.

"She will be fine. All is well with her."

"Thank you."

"It's fine.. What are you watching?" She asked as we got up from the floor and sat down.

"Steve Harvey." She laughed then started browsing through the channels.

"Really now?"

"Yeah... How was work?"

"Vince was just being so annoying. Today I told him straight up that I'm quitting. Sometimes I forget he's not the owner of that gym. He's just holding on for his friend."

"Who owns it?"

"Some guy.. I met him only once."

"So you are quitting?"

"Yes. I can't anymore."

"How's the business plan going?"

"Well.. Why?"

"I want to invest."

"Really?"

"Yeah.. I wasted a lot of time with my life. And one more thing.. I have decided to go back to varsity. I'm going to unfreeze my semester and go back. Law is not that bad." She laughed.

"Because uMr hunk is a lawyer huh?" I laughed as I hit her playfully.

"No! No.. I think it's about time I take charge of my life. Life is a journey. One never knows when it will end so I'd rather make sure I live before I die."

"Yes girl! That's the spirit! I think we can come with some business ideas though I dotted down a few."

"Ok.. I'm up for it." I reached for my phone which was ringing. I smiled standing up as I answered.

"Miss me already?"

"Yah.. Honestly I'm hungry and I don't want to eat alone. Can I please come and get you. I will return you after we eat."

"I'm with Kelly."

"Just an hour then you will be back."

"Lungile I..-"

"Pretty please.." He begged making me roll my eyes.

"Ok. One hour only!"

"Great. I'm outside."

"What?"

"Come.."

"Is LT ok?" I asked as he started driving.

"Yeah.. He will find her. I know he will. It's just a matter of days but I hope he won't be late."

"Kelly prayed for her." He glanced at smiling then took my hand into his.

"You are such a wonderful person."

"You bring out the best in me." He smiled then kissed my hand. He drove for a while till he parked in front of debnnairs pizza.

"Let's go." We got out of the car and walked in. Getting to the door we bumped into Janine and some guy, her colleague. I felt tension build up as Lungile and Janine stared at each other. Was she the one?

[JANINE]

I felt all the emotions that had long been hidden fight their way out. All the memories that I thought were long hidden surfaced. My ears rang as I looked at him. I felt light headed as tears streamed down my face.

"Janny are you ok!?" Orlando asked but by then I was gasping for air. "Shit Janine!" The fear in Orlando's house made me shriek.

"Janine.." He said. My name on his lips crushed me even more. I wanted to scream, to scream so loud but my voice had deserted me. This was the man I had once loved wholeheartedly. A man I could hold on to at my weakest point so to let him rub my back. This was the man who destroyed me beyond repair. The man who broke my trust. This was the man who hurt me beyond.

"Janine.." He said again taking a step closer to me. I raised my hand holding him on his tracks.

"You.. You.. You.."

"Janine.." Now it was a whisper.

"Why?" I asked one question I had always wanted to ask.

"Why?.. Lungile why?"

"I'm sorry.. I'm so sorry.."

"Why.. ?"

"I was scared too.."

"You were scared? You were scared!? You let me get destroyed because you were scared? You watched me die because you were scared?"

"Janine he was going to destroy me with you but that doesn't justify what I did."

"No.. You are right.. It doesn't. You watched me die a slow painful death because you were scared he was going to destroy you."

"Janine I..-" I smiled.

"But It's ok. You have told me your why. That's all I wanted to

know. Thank you." I said as I begun walking outwith the help of my crutches.

"Janine, wait.. Please." He begged. I clumsily wiped away my tears.

"I think we are done. You finally answered the one question I have always wanted to ask. Thank you for you helped me figure everything out."

"Janine I wish to take back everything. Please tell me what I need to do to make everything right."

"You don't have to do anything but I have to move on.. Move on from the pain that I went through. Move on and get on with life. That's what I need to do. It's not like there's something left to do.. Besides moving on is there something else Lungile?" I asked.

"I loved you. I swear I did. I was also scared. I was only 19.. He threatened me."

You are right. There was nothing you could do. I now know."

"There was! There was.. I could have stopped him. I could have stood right by your side when you needed me. And I didn't..

Janine what to I have to to make this right.."

He was now down on his knees.

"I'm sorry." And with that I walked to my car. Before I could get inside I felt arms around me. Orlando's arms. For the first time ever I cried. I cried for all the times I held it in. I cried for my silent cries. I cried for all the pain that I didn't deserve but was dished out to me raw. I cried because I was a broken person.

[NOMPUMELEO]

I stood behind the couch as I came face to face with the beast. My heart was pounding as my whole body vibrated in fear.

"I don't know where she is Luthando.. I swear.."

"Stop with the crocodile tears! What did I do to you?" I shook my head as I placed my hand over my mouth forcing back the cry that was on my throat.

"Why are you crying then? First of all.. You throw yourself at me after I told you I had a girlfriend. You didn't seem to care at all. Is it because you knew my girl was your co-wife?" He asked still pointing the gun at me.

"No.. Luthando I swear I didn't know Latoya was your girlfriend. I swear. I swear on my life."

"I'm not leaving till you talk." I went down on my knees.

"You can kill me.. But I really don't know.. I swear.. I don't know where she is.. I care about Latoya as my sister. If I knew she was the girlfriend I wouldn't have come after you like that."

"You didn't have a problem with sharing a man with her before."

"Luthando.. I love you. I love you.. And I swear I want you to choose me and love me only. But I swear I would have held myself if I knew you were with Toya.. I don't know where she is."

"Seeing we are not ready to talk.." He said as he cocked his gun. My heart leaped in my mouth.

"Luthando please.. Luthando.. I'm begging you. I don't know what happened to her. I don't know where she is. I swear I don't know where she is.." I could see death in his eyes. This wasn't the Luthando I knew. From his eyes he was ready to kill me. His eyes were so cold.

"Ohh well.. Tell that to God." I closed my eyes tightly.

"Stop!" A voice screamed making me open my eyes. My fear multiplied as my eyes fell on Nicholas. What was he doing here? If anything I didn't want Nicholas dying too.

"Ohh.. The more the merrier.." Luthando said taking a step back.

"You can join her there." I looked at Nicholas who looked confused but the coldness in Luthando's eyes had him moving towards me.

"Luthando he has nothing-"

"And who asked you? My game my rules."

"What's going on?" Nicholas asked but just then Luthando's phone rang. He took it out from his pocket then answered looking at us. Nicholas slipped his hand into mine. I couldn't understand the sign he was trying to send to me because I was too much engrossed on my fear.

"Hello?" He answered. There was silence for a while. The moment he put his phone away he looked directly at me.

"Today is your lucky day.. Burn incense and thank your ancestors." And with that he was gone. Nicholas hugged me tightly as I cried. Him holding a gun at me didn't hurt me more than knowing that he loved Latoya to the point of killing for her.

CHAPTER 30

[JANINE]

"Hey.. Are you ok?" Orlando asked. I smiled feeling so stupid for acting the way I did. I felt disappointed in myself. For some reason I felt as if I could have handled it all better. I could have just walked away.

"I'm fine.. I'm fine."

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah.." I put on my seatbelt and started my car. "We can go now."

"Ok.." As I reversed my car that's when I realized Rockelle running towards me. She ran towards my window with her hands put together. I opened the window and looked at her.

"Janine.. Lungile really-"

"Rockelle.. Please. I have to go." I said cutting her short.

"You don't understand.. I get that what happened happened. You were hurt. Lungile hurt you.. I understand all that. But for how long will you hold it in your heart? For how long will you stay with a heavy heart? Just for how long will you hold on to this? You both were young. It's been years Janine and this still affects him too. This still kills him too."

"Rockelle.. I will see you around." I said closing the window.

Driving away I felt something just chock me. Threatening my tears. I opened the window a bit and let the cold air hit my face.

"Talk about out of the blue things." Orlando commented on the harsh rain drops that were hitting the windscreen. I silently thanked God that Orlando knew when to talk and when not to talk. It had been 2 years since we started working together. The first time he came I thought Sibeko was trying to get rid of me. He had been trying anyway but then Orlando was not a male chauvinist like him.

"I forsee a storm." I responded looking at the sky through the windscreen.

"Yeah. So about Jimmy Ngcobo.."

"28 year old male. In and out of jail a couple of times. Quit

college when he was 24. His final year. I think he knows. How can he go missing the same day as Latoya. We are missing something."

"That maybe he has her?"

"Yes. That maybe he does have her. If he has her then we are going to find him. What time do you think we will arrive in Bloemfontein?"

"With the rain I think we might take longer than normal though I still feel you need to stay because of your leg." We had managed to locate Jimmy's family. His grandparents were still alive and they stayed in Bloemfontein. They were the only people who could know where he was. I stepped on the accelerator and let the car push forward ignoring his comment on my leg. I could walk without the crutches though it was painful.

Before 45 minutes could pass my phone started ringing. Since it was connected to the car so it was much easier to answer it.

"Hello?"

"Janine it's Luke."

"Hey.. Is everything ok?"

"We just received a call from the police station in Polokwane. They have found a body and they suspect it's Latoya Samuels Robert." I pressed on the brakes then looked at Orlando.

"What?"

"Yes.. The body was found at the side of the road near some abandoned house. She was badly wounded, she was beaten up. Also apparently she has sustained serious head injuries. They have sent her to a hospital here. Her condition is very critical." I felt something stir up something deep in me giving me an

unsettling feeling. I blinked away my tears then cleared my throat.

"Which hospital is she in?" I asked trying to keep the emotions out of my voice.

"We are waiting for the swelling in her brain to go down. It might take her a few days. She has one broken rib but all in all everything is ok."

"Can we see her Doctor?" Orlando asked as I took rapid deep breaths.

"Yes but for a while though she's with someone right now."

"Someone who?" I asked.

"Some man. I think it's her boyfriend."

"Doctor show us where she is."

Quickly or at least we tried to quickly to walk behind the doctor as he led us to her room. Getting inside as suspected she was with Luthando. Somehow I knew as much as we were looking for her, so was he. We did talk to his mother though we didn't get anything much. She was those church ladies.

I walked inside and there was, laying lifeless with a bandage on her head and arms.

"What happened to her arms?" I asked the doctor.

"They were cut with a knife."

"Cut?"

"Yes though they were not deep. At least it was not her face."

Her face was badly bruised and swollen.

"Luthando.." I said as my eyes fell on him. He raised his eyes and looked at me for a while. He didn't say a word but just kissed Latoya's forehead and walked out.

My eyes fell back on Latoya. I wasn't going to rest till I found who was responsible for the state she was in that moment.

"Orlando.. Tomorrow morning we are going to Bloemfontein. We have to find Jimmy."

"Ok.."

"We have to find Jimmy before Luthando does Orlando because if Luthando finds him first.. I don't think he will ever be found ever again."

"Janine sweetheart how are you?"

"Why are you calling me Kevin?"

"I want to tell you something sweetheart. I really care about you and your sister wives. I would do anything to make you happy."

"Kevin first of all no one really cares about what you do. I don't! Lelo doesn't and let me tell you something.. Toya doesn't also. Why can't you just let us go!? Why? Is it so nice to stay with people who hate you?"

"Sweetheart you are right."

"I know."

"And that is why I have decided to finally let you go. You see, Lana and I talked. We have decided to raise Rocky together." I laughed.

"Raise Rocky together?"

"Yes and therefore divorce papers will be served to you tomorrow but not to worry.. I'm giving each one of you 1 million as compensation and you get to keep the flats you are staying in together with the cars and everything I have ever bought you."

"What?"

"I know this is not the right way to do things but honey can you

all please sign it by the end of the week. I'm getting married to Lana immediately after you sign."

"This must be a joke!"

"Ok.. 1.5 million each."

"No love even if you don't give me anything it's fine... You.. You are finally letting me go. You.. You are letting us go?"

"Yes. I'm doing this for my family and-"

"I can't believe this. Finally!"

[NOMPUMELELO]

I opened my eyes slowly. I was sleeping on a comfortable bed but..

"Morning." Nicholas said making me look at him. "I didn't want risking him coming back so I thought coming here would be best." I sat upright taking in my surrounding.

"Not only is your kitchen and lounge hideous but so is your room. How do you survive?" He laughed as he sat at the edge of his bed.

"Maybe I really need a new start." I smiled nodding. "Yeah.."
Yesterday's events still played vividly in my mind. I closed my eyes for a while wiping away my tears. It hurt so much. Luthando and I never got in a relationship but that moment we had together meant so much to me. For a while there I thought finally he was mine. Just for a little bit while there.. I thought he finally felt the same. It might have meant nothing to him but it meant so much to me.

"I'm still trying to understand what happened." I took a deep breath.

"I'm sorry I dragged you into my mess Nick and-"

"I just want to understand what happened."

I forced a laugh then swallowed hard. "It doesn't matter."

"It does. He was going to kill you. Of course it does matter."

"Nicholas let it go!"

"Nompumelelo Sikhosana I said what happened? Tell me now!"

He said then wiped away my tear.

"I was stupid. So stupid.. I thought he would love me... I thought maybe just maybe.. Just a little bit.." I chuckled rubbing my face.

"I thought he would love me. He hates me. I saw it in his eyes yesterday. He hates me. Why did he chose her? Why not me!?"

Why does he love her! Not me? Why not me?"

"Hey.." Nicholas said pulling me into his arms just like yesterday. I broke down.

"Why not me!? Why..?"

"Shhh baby.. Shh.. Don't cry.. Shhh.."

"I love him. I.. I.."

"Hush baby.. Don't cry.." He said rubbing my back gently.

I inhaled deeply then chuckled as I got out of his arms. "I'm sorry.. I can't believe I'm crying over a guy. This is just not me."

"There's nothing wrong with crying. We all have been through that. When I was in high school I dated my crush for two weeks but only to find out it was a bet."

I laughed wiping away my tears and nose with my T-shirt.

"Yeah I guess it happens."

"Just what's so special about him? Those tattoos that makes him look like a thug or the fact that ohh well.. He is a thug. You wanna be thug wife?"

"He's not a thug and the tattoos are not that bad."

"Ohh please.. He looks like he has been in jail for 20 years and while he was at jail they had to throw him at a lunatic asylum here and there."

I laughed. "That's just not true. He's so..

I can't even compare him."

"Then maybe you are the ugly one." I gave him a look making him smile. "I'm joking. You are beautiful. So beautiful. If he doesn't see the Angel in you then well.. He's blind." I chuckled.

"He's a fool not to see the beauty in you."

"She's too pretty. She's beyond beautiful. You know.. She has the perfect body. Slim thick. She's..." I smiled. "Remember when we went for the fruity treat in Paris.. The lady you said I was gawking at."

"Ohh that one!.. Hey.. Sometimes it's what is in the heart is what matters." I laughed so hard my ribs hurt.

"That was so wise." I said laughing making him rub his shoulders.

"What can i say.. I'm a wise man."

I rolled my eyes. "Oh please!"

"But hey.." He said taking my hands into his. "Sometimes maybe he's just not the one. Sometimes there's just someone else for you out there. Love shouldn't be forced. Not that I'm trying to hurt you or something but.. If he doesn't love you Lelo then he doesn't. He will never will. Sometimes you just have to accept that."

"I know.. I guess.. Well.. I guess my Prince Charming is still out there."

"He is.. Now coffee?"

"Yes please.." I got off the bed but that's when I finally realized I was wearing a T-shirt that was not mine.

"Is this yours?"

"Yeah.."

"Oh my God.. And I wiped my nose with it."

"It's ok. You can keep the T-shirt." We got in the kitchen, it was dirty. It looked like a dustbin. A dumping site even.

"What on earth?" I whispered in shock.

"I have been feeling lazy to clean." My eyes fell on the dishes that were threatening to fall off from the sink. The dirty counters. The rotten stove. The floor which looked like toddlers have been playing on it. It even smelt like something was rotten. I held my nose.

"Holy marry.. You need help! You need serious medical help." He laughed then switched on the kettle.

"Are you ever going to tell me what happened yesterday?"

I sighed then let go of my nose. "He thought I did something to his..-" I was cut short when I heard my phone ringing.

"That's my phone.. Where is it?"

"Bedroom by the hairdresser." Quickly I rushed over to it. Getting to it I answered without even checking the caller ID.

"Hello?"

"Hey.. It's Kevin."

"Kevin, hi."

"I'm sending divorce papers today."

"What?"

I gave him a plate to rinse. "I can't believe this is finally

happening."

"I'm happy for you. I'm sure you are so happy."

"I am. I can't believe it. He's not even taking the gallery or anything."

"Well.. New start I guess?"

"Definitely. How's your mother?"

"Dramatic as usual. I wonder how Dad does it."

"That's rude. She's a lovely lady."

"I don't think you know her. You need to stay with her just for a week."

"Finally!" I said giving him the last plate to rinse and dry.

"I'm going to sit down and watch TV. You can finish off." Getting inside the lounge I threw myself on the couch wondering if Kevin was playing some game because I just couldn't believe it. It didn't even feel real.

"Lelo.." Nick called out making me look at the kitchen.

"What?"

"I'm sorry but.." The next thing I know flour was all over my face and Nick was laughing. I stood up slowly.

"You Nicholas Dumisa.. You have messed with the wrong girl.."

[ROCKELLE]

"Lungile I don't think her forgiving you is the solution you are looking for. Her forgiving you will not help heal the wound. Maybe it will ease some pain but it won't heal you. No.. No it won't because you know what.. You need more than her forgiveness.. You need your forgiveness. You need to forgive yourself." I said as I rubbed his back gently as the morning

brightness filled the room. "Forgiving yourself will help you heal. You letting go will help you heal. Nothing will help you heal more than you forgiving yourself."

He put me on the bed then stood up and walked to the bathroom. I got up then picked his T-shirt from the floor and put it on. My legs felt wobbly but I pushed myself to follow after him. The moment I got in the bathroom I heard the shower. I took off the T-shirt then stepped inside the shower behind him.

He had been quiet ever since we bumped into Janine last night. I hugged him from behind and held him even tightly when I felt his body tense. We stayed in silence under the cold water. I could feel my body numb as I started shivering. He closed the tap suddenly making me take a deep breath out of relief.

"I can never forgive myself for what I did to her."

"Let me in.." I said with a shaky voice. "Lungile.. Please let me help you heal. Let me help you heal.."

He turned then looked at me. "I love you." I smiled as I stroked his wet face.

"I love you more Lungile.. I love you so much. I want to help you heal. Let me." He pulled me closer and kissed me. I wrapped my arms around his neck ignoring the soreness between my legs then kissed him back.

"This is Rockelle, Mr Mokwena's PA.."

"Oh hello.. It's Saturday how can I help you?"

"I'm calling you to inform you that Mr Mokwena will not be at work for the whole week. All appointments have been canceled."

"Ohh..thank you for alerting me."

"You are welcome." I hung up then put my phone away.

Cancelling Lungile's meetings wasn't as easy as I thought, especially his meeting with Londiwe. With the way she was angry I knew she had really expected to see him.

We were leaving for Victoria falls later today though Luthando wasn't coming with. Lungile had informed me that his girlfriend had been found and she was in a critical condition.

I stood up then continued packing my bag.

"I'm going to be very lonely." Kelly said walking inside my room.

"You won't be very.. Lonely. You have the hot neighbour."

"Please.. Have you seen his girlfriend?"

"No.. Nor have I seen him but hey.. Since you are a loyal crush holder. Keep it up."

"Mxm.." She said then laughed. "I hope you really enjoy this get away. If you need anything.. Call."

"I will. Puleng's date was cancelled today. Apparently this guy has a child and the baby mama is crazy so she's coming here." She laughed. "She told me, says they fought. Honestly.. At this stage the baby mama might come after us because Puleng in the middle if the fight mentioned that her friends are going to deal with her."

I laughed as I put my summer dress inside the bag. "I can't fight."

"Who can? We are just going to die."

"She will be fine."

"Honestly.. You and Lungile are goals!"

I gave her a look. "Stop. I-" I took my phone as it rang then answered it walking out.

"Hello?"

"Rocky honey.."

"Daddy! Daddy.." I screamed.

"Honey.. How are you?"

"I'm.. I.. I'm fine."

"Honey I know all this looks like we-"

"It's ok. I understand."

"I want to tell you something.. I.. Ummh.. Your mother and I.. We are getting married again."

"What?"

"We are getting married again."

"Wow! What about....-"

"I'm divorcing all of them."

"What?"

"Honey.. Your mother and I think that it's best we be together. Be as a family."

"That's.. I'm speechless."

"Your mother and I love you sweetie. We love you so much and we will be-"

"Dad.. I'm happy for you I guess and.. I will ummh be there for the wedding I guess."

"That's great. Your mom and I have also decided that we all stay together you know.. And also that.. You go back to school.. You can study fashion as you want."

"Dad I.."

"And we will give you everything back. I guess we took it a bit far with cutting you off so we are giving you everything back. In a week it's your birthday. Your mom and I bought you something you would love.."

"Dad.. I met someone."

CHAPTER 31

[NOMPUMELELO]

I stroked her bruises gently. Whoever had kidnapped her wanted nothing but to hurt her. The person sought pleasure in hurting her. It had been three days now. The doctors had removed her from ICU because she could breathe on her own and her brain was no longer swollen. They had run some tests and according to them she was fine except for her hands and face which were going to heal eventually. She was a fighter. I had bumped into Luthando a few times in the hospital. The way he looked at me I knew he didn't want me anywhere near Latoya but what he didn't know was that I could never hurt her.

"Hey.." A voice said making me turn. I smiled at Latoya's only friend.

"Hi.."

"How's she tonight?"

"She's fine I guess. She's a fighter."

"You know people misunderstand her.. They.. They have these opinions about her. Opinions that do not even match her." She said standing at the other side of the bed looking at her friend.

"They think she's all money driven. That.. That she's selfish. That's she's a gold digger.. A slay Queen. They never want to look beyond that. They actually never want to look at the big picture she's painted before us. All these years she has tried to paint out the picture to communicate with me but I failed. I failed because.. I'm still lost. She knows me like the back of her hand

but I don't know her no matter how many times she has tried to teach me her."

"Sometimes it's not that you couldn't see the picture painted before you. You saw it. You continued to see it everyday but you just failed to understand it. You just failed to see the real meaning of it. Latoya is a closed off person. She may smile, laugh and talk non stop but she's a closed off person. You have to try and understand what she tells you. What she shows you. There's a lot to her that we don't know." She smiled then wiped away her tear.

"I guess you are right."

"I want you to give Toya something when she wakes up." I said taking out the letter from my handbag and handing it to her.

"Ok.."

"Yeah.. I will see you around I guess." And with that I took my handbag and walked out. Getting in my car I took a deep breath. I could finally see and understand my own picture that had been painted before me. It had took me a while to understand.

Kcacilda's words ran in my head. "Be cautious of your heart." She was right. She had been right. If only I had listened to her. I started my car then started driving home. Somehow I knew the death she had seen was Latoya's and luckily it didn't happen. As I drove home I turned the car suddenly. There was someone I needed to see first.

I knocked again holding my breath. Maybe he wasn't around.

"Hi.." He said but from behind me. I quickly turned and looked at him.

"And here I was.. Thinking you were inside." He chuckled then

unlocked the door.

"I went out for a run." He said opening the door wide. "Ladies first." I rolled my eyes then walked in. I looked around the house. There were boxes all over the place.

"And?"

"I'm moving."

"You are moving?"

"Yeah... I can't stay in such a house. Like you I need a new start too. All the hurtful memories are in this house. I need to move on."

I smiled. "Me too. Her husband is ugly."

He looked at me in confusion. "Who?"

"Sally's husband. I saw the magazine. He looks like a drug addict.. Or maybe he is one." Nicholas laughed.

"Yeah.. I'm glad she's finally found the one."

"Me too.. So where are you moving?"

"Somewhere quiet and nice."

"I'm going to KZN. There's some resort there. I.. I need some fresh air."

"When are you going?"

"Tomorrow. I'm driving there so.. It will be a very long journey."

"You are driving?"

"Yeah.. I really need this break. A lot has happened. I feel as if I'm losing hold of my own life."

"I understand. It's far and you will probably get tired while still driving. I think you need a helping driver."

I laughed shaking my head. "So you want to tag along?"

"No.. But I want to help you drive." I chuckled.

"Well I guess there's nothing wrong with having a helping hand."

"Yeah.. Are you.. A free unmarried woman now?"

"Yeah.. I'm free. Finally."

"I'm happy for you."

"Yeah.. Ummh let me go and pack. We will use-"

"We are using my new car. It's a beast."

"Ok. Come pick me up in the morning."

"Ok.." I walked out of his house then got inside the elevator though I wasn't alone.

"Hi.. I'm Kelly." The lady said. I smiled. "Hello. Nice to meet you."

"You are beautiful."

"Thank you so much Kelly." And just then the elevator door opened and I walked out. Getting in my car I couldn't help the smile that was on my face. I shook my head as I started my car and started driving home. Getting home I answered my phone which was ringing. It had been Julie. I had been ignoring her for a while now.

"Julie?"

"Hey.. I'm so sorry. I know you are upset about Latoya-"

"How could I not? You kept pushing me while deep down you knew Latoya was your brother's girlfriend. I know you hate her but to this extent?"

"I don't hate her. I just.. You and Lathando you..-"

"There's no me and Luthando and never will there be me and Luthando. Julie your brother and I will never be. Please just accept that."

"I understand. I'm really sorry for everything. I just.. It would have been nice to have you as my sister in law." I laughed shaking my

head.

"Yeah.. But it can't happen. Please understand that."

"I understand. I guess I have been pushy lately."

"You have!"

"I'm sorry.."

"It's ok. Look I want to pack so we will talk later ok?"

"Packing? Where are you going?"

"On a private vacation."

"Really? Where?"

"I won't tell you. But.. I think it's going to be fun."

"It's not like I will send my brother there.. Just tell me."

"No.. I wasted my time chasing after stones leaving diamonds. Now I'm finally chasing after a diamonds. Let me be!"

"Ok.. Ok... Don't forget to call me ok?"

"Yeah.. Bye."

"Bye.." I hung up then walked to my room. I took out my suitcase then started packing. I stopped packing after a while then hurried downstairs. I connected my phone to my sound system then started playing some songs. I laughed as I flew up the stairs back to my room. I had completely forgotten how it felt.. To be happy. To be.. Just me. It felt so good. Being happy felt good. Being free felt good.

[JANINE]

"My condolences to anyone who has ever lost me,
And to anyone who got lost in me,
Or, to anyone who felt they took a loss
With me.

My apologies for the misunderstanding
Or the lack of relief,
I'm sorry you missed the God in me,
And I'm sorry you missed the light.
I'm sorry you forgot the way I arose like
The moon.
Night after night with the burden to
Forgive.
Eager to feed you everything.
See, I'm a holy woman,
I know what it's like to give life to being
Without needing to press skin against one another.
I've practiced how to hold my tongue long enough,
I'm afraid I forgot to say goodbye,
I'm afraid you're under the impression
That I was made to please you.
I was under the impression you understood better.
The truth is, I'm a super woman,
And some days I'm an angry woman,
And some days I'm a crazy woman,
For still waiting, for still loving harder
Even if I'm aching,
For still trusting that I'm still worth
The most,
For still searching for someone to understand me better."
I held the piece of paper to my chest as tears fell from my eyes.
It still hurt. I could still remember the way he looked at me. The
way he made me feel. The way he held me. His tousled hair. I put

the poem away then got off bed. I went to the balcony and looked over other houses. I wondered if something was wrong with me. I ignored the voice in my head that screamed yes then walked back inside the house but before I completely got back inside the house I heard screams. Quickly I limped back to the balcony and looked around. The screams continued and that's when I realized it was my neighbour. Quickly I tried to rush back inside my house but just then I heard gun shots. I took a deep breath. This was my life. This was who I was. I enjoyed being a detective. It made me happy. The sooner I made peace with the fact that love was not for me the better. I limped downstairs after grabbing my gun. I legit tried to run to my neighbour's house with my painful leg. The gate was open so I just went through. I held my gun with both hands as I slowly walked closer to the house. I opened the door which wasn't locked and walked inside the house. I looked around then walked further inside the house. I couldn't see anyone at sight. I took the stairs gently. I stopped on my tracks when I saw a body. A body right on the floor lying in a pool of blood. There was a girl besides the body crying.

"Detective Janine Adam.. Mam please step away from the body." I said still holding my gun. She stood up still crying. I walked closer to the body.

"Damnit! Shit!" I cursed as I looked at the man I had been hunting after. Jimmy Ngcobo. No doubt Luthando had killed him and he had done a clean job.

"Did you see the face of the man who killed him?"

She shook her head still crying. "No.. He was putting on a mask. He kept asking who kidnapped her."

"Did Jimmy answer?"

"Yes.. Said big Dad or something then.. Then he killed him." I closed my eyes tightly. Maybe I had underestimated Luthando's smartness. He was like a ghost.

"And did he say the location?"

"Yes.. Said a warehouse or something."

"Warehouse?"

"Yes.. Can I please call the ambulance."

"Yeah.. Don't touch anything." I said as I hurried down the stairs. Getting to my house I took my other gun and my phone and hurried to my car. Getting inside I started the car as I called Orlando. He answered after a while and I was already driving to the warehouse.

"I know you are on a date right now but-"

"I'm at home. She's not my type. She was already asking for money." I laughed briefly.

"I'm going to the warehouse. The warehouse. Please come and send someone to my neighbours house. Luthando killed Jimmy."

"Shit what?"

"Yeah.. I doubt he left anything behind. He's on his way to the warehouse. I need to get there before him. I need big Daddy alive."

"Be careful.. I'm on my way." I hung up then pressed on the accelerator crossing my speed limit. My heart was beating so fast my palms were even sweating.

I felt like the car was just going slow somehow.

Parking the car in front of the warehouse I took the guns and got out. My car was the only car in front of the warehouse. I held

both guns in my hands as I walked inside. It was so quiet. I walked to some door looking out for any movement.

I opened it slowly then walked inside. My heart stopped when I heard voices. I followed after the voices slowly. There was another door and the voices were coming from there. I took a deep breath, it was now or never.

With my painful leg I opened the door and got inside with my guns in my hands ready to fire if needed be.

"Hands up and step away!" They all turned and looked at me. There were up to five man together with Big Daddy. I smiled because they looked surprised. They were not expecting me. I had the old man at last.

"I told you.. I would catch you."

"You see Janine.. You-"

"You are under arrest Pablo Tejera for the distribution of cocaine," I said looking at the cocaine that was on the table.

"Anything you shall say will be used against you in the court of law."

"You think this is over?"

"No.. It's not. For a 55 year old man.. I'm going to make sure you rot in jail."

"We will see about that."

"I'm surprised you are not dead yet. If I were you I would be careful.."

Just then I noticed his bloody thigh. It looked like he had been shot. I had a feeling Luthando was going to not just kill Big Daddy but he was going to make sure it was painful.

"You are going down.. For the drugs and for the girls!"

"I wonder what Sibeko is going to say." Orlando said laughing.

"Yeah... I can't believe I finally caught him."

"I thought Luthando was going to kill him."

"He just shot him. I don't care what happens to Big Daddy as long as I know where the girls are."

"But will he talk?"

"No.. He won't talk but someone will now that he is no longer a threat."

"Yeah.." I took my phone which was ringing from my sweatpants pocket and answered it.

"Hello?"

"Detective, it's Doctor Theo.. I'm calling about Latoya Samuels."

"Is she ok?"

"I think you need to come this side."

[ROCKELLE]

I looked at Caroline as she stretched her arms.

"Honestly I'm so tired."

"We are here.." CJ said opening the boot of the quantum. My feet felt sore together with my butt. I looked at Lungile as he took out our bags only from the boot.

"I want a full day at the spa tomorrow." Akhona said stepping out of the quantum with Nkosi. They were just a weird couple.

Akhona was just non stop talkative, forward and the list went on while Nkosi was so quiet and humble. It was safe to say he was laid back.

"Tell me about it!" Tanyaradzwa agreed as she also got out of the car after them. Now this one was a mental case. She was

just crazy. She said what was on her mind and never held back. "You guys instead of thinking of exploring you are thinking about spa.." Trevor said stepping behind his crazy fiancé.

"It's not crazy. We are tired honestly." Teboho argued with her scratchy voice. She looked like Rachel Kunutu in Skeem saam, she even had freckles like her. One could swear they were sisters only Teboho was taller. She had an attitude for days and according to Lungile, she was CJ's temporary fuck.

"Want a massage?" Collen asked stepping out of the quantum lastly and holding Caroline by her waist. Out of everyone who was with us they were the only normal couple. They were so in love it was evident in the way they looked at each other from time to time again. One could swear they had just recently got married but surprisingly it was five years now and they even had three kids and she was pregnant. "Yeah.. But after viewing this beautiful place!" Caroline responded sounding so excited. My eyes fell on the house. It was a beautiful huge house surrounded by the forest. It was so serene I knew my stay here was going to be worth it. Nkosi and Akhona took out their bags from the boot and walked right inside.

"Babe.. Are you ok?" Nicholas asked making me chuckle.

"Yeah.. Just that.. There's a lot of people."

"They are.. But we are not complete. Initially two more people are missing." He said rubbing my shoulders.

"I know.. Luthando and his girlfriend.. I think it's going to be fun though."

"It is.." He said as he kissed me.

"Haai! Get a room!" CJ's voice interrupted us making Lungile

raise a middle finger at him. I took one bag as Lungile carried most of them inside the house. Trevor and Tanya were behind us.

I sighed as I looked at the undeniable beauty. The design was just.. Exquisite. It had this nature theme I couldn't understand but at the same time made feel part of it.

"This house is beautiful! Did you.. Rent it for the holiday or something?" I asked Lungile gently making sure no one heard me. Everyone was scattered all over the place viewing the house.

"No.. It's mine."

"What?"

"It's mine. Wanna see our bedroom? It's the main bedroom."

"I can't believe it's yours."

"It is.. Come." I walked behind him as he led me up the stairs. Walking into the room, the most hugest room I had ever came across the first thing I noticed was the pool that was at the balcony. I could see it through the glass walls. I looked at the huge bed that was in the middle of the room. It was so huge, about 10 people could fit into it. The natural theme continued giving the room life. Something his room back at his house didn't have.

"Do you like it?"

"Yes.. It's beautiful."

"Ok.. There's the bathroom there." He said pointing at the door. I walked over to it and opened the door. The bathroom was just another world.

"I wanna try out that spa tub." Lungile chuckled behind me.

"I thought you would want to try out the bed." He said with his hands on my waist while nibbling on earlobe.

"Lungile I told my dad about us." He momentarily stopped what he was doing.

"You what?" His voice was soft but surprised. I turned and looked at him.

"I told my dad about us.. About you and I.."

"Ok... And?"

"As long as I'm happy.. So is he." I said, not mentioning the way he didn't like the fact that he was way too old for me and how reluctant he sounded.

"That's good?"

"Yes..". He nodded then walked to our bags.

"I think you should be happy.. My dad approves our relationship." He looked at me then gave me a sketchy smile.

"Who said I'm not happy."

"You don't look happy."

"Because I don't understand how you tell your father about us. We rarely know each other that much. Our.. This.. This thing between us.. It's still new so I don't understand how you tell your father about us."

I chuckled. "This thing? Lungile what do you mean.. This thing?"

"Rocky we are still new. I don't have a label to us right now.. I mean.. How many weeks has it been?"

I smiled away the pain that struck my heart, slicing my heart into two pieces.

"Ok.. I'm going to look around." I said walking to the door.

"Rocky wait.. I don't mean it like that.. I-"

"You said you love me.. But now.. We are a thing."

"No.. I'm just.. Don't you think it's too soon to tell your parents."

"Lungile I love you. Why can't I tell my parents?"

He rubbed his face. I wrapped my arms around his waist.

"I don't want to hide you. Hide us.." I whispered.

"Neither do I but I just thought.. That it was too soon."

"If you don't want people to know it's ok." He cupped my face.

"I love you.. We can tell the world if you are comfortable with it..

Though the media is going to eat us alive." I smiled.

"I don't care." I stood on my toes and kissed him.

"We as girls should go out tomorrow." Teboho said after dinner as we sat in the lounge drinking wine expect for the pregnant couple.

"I'm fine. I want to explore this place." I commented as I sipped on my wine making her laugh at the unknown.

"Sometimes I forget we have the ministers child in our presence. How are you even here? Shouldn't you be in Miami with your friends spending your father's money and bragging about it? Just like the last time.. You know I find it funny how rich kids brag about money... Money they don't even work for."

"Tell me about it!" Akhona agreed. "I mean.. First of all.. Without your parents you are a nobody."

"Not every rich kid is like that." Caroline chipped in.

"Yeah.. But most of them are like that. Most of their parents are just involved in illegal shit on top of that. They are just corrupt. Imagine now their kids bragging with money earned in the most unthinkable manner." Teboho said now sounding more firm.

"I just think this generation is just.. Way too spoiled." I looked at

Akhona after her sentence. I couldn't help it but to feel indirectly attacked. I had been feeling the awkward vibes from the ladies but I had been brushing it off all along.

"You can't possibly blame them." Tanya said after sipping on her wine. "I mean just because you were born in poverty and learnt life the hard way doesn't mean they should also learn life the hard way. They were born in money. They have been taught how to spend money since birth. You can't possibly expect them to behave like a child born in poverty."

CJ clapped his hands. "Thank you! Thank you so much Tanya." "We are not saying they should behave like us just that bragging about money that's not yours is a total turn off." Teboho still continued. "And after that.. Those very same kids go for old men."

"If you have anything to say to me Rachel Kunutu say it." I finally said after having to have heard enough. "If you don't, leave me alone." Trevor and CJ began laughing as Teboho looked at me in shock. She laughed after a while.

"You are too young."

"Too young for who?" Lungile asked sounding annoyed and irritated.

"No offense Lungile but she's.. She's a minor."

"And how's that any of your business? Firstly you don't even know me. Secondly stay in your lane. You are my friend's fuck for a week.. Act like it."

"Shiiiiiiit!" Nkosi said in a low voice shaking his head. "That.. I felt that."

"Guys I don't think there's any reason for us to be..-" Lungile cut

Akhona short.

"Shouldn't you be thinking about how you are nothing but a cheap hoodrat fucking with a married man?" Lungile fired. I looked at Nkosi with shock. He was married? "Busy having the highest voice while you are nothing but a mere cheap mistress. If you were pretty I would actually understand."

"Dawg.. Come on.." Nkosi said looking at Lungile as Akhona walked away.

"She's ugly. It's the truth." CJ responded.

"Mxm.." And with that Nkosi stood up and went after his mistress.

"I would like to apologize on behalf of my wife." Collen said before Lungile said anything to Caroline. "She just happens to not know when to shut up."

"Condoms are not expensive but I think the pills can work. You can't possibly have 4 kids in five years ntwana.. Haai ngeke!"

Trevor said looking so chilled making Tanya laugh so hard.

Caroline stood up and walked away with tears in her eyes.

"Askies.. But all white women cry at such things." Collen laughed as Trevor continued bashing Caroline.

"I have been getting starved majita..." CJ laughed throwing himself on the floor. I just stared at Collen, he was just your normal guy. All fun and jokes.

"Why do you keep having babies?" Trevor asked looking so interested but I could see he wanted to laugh.

"The first child she forgot to take her pill. The second child she doesn't know how it happened. The third child she missed her shot. This time around.. She doesn't know what happened."

"She's trying to trap you. Matter of fact.. You are already trapped." CJ said sitting down on the couch again.

"Mxm.. Rachel Kunutu's boyfriend!" Collen said making everyone laugh expect CJ.

Rixongile Lednah this is for you for your support.

Morning

I have heard some of your cries. People who don't comment are really making it hard for me. I mean we reach 350+ likes but the comments will still not be enough. Why can't you just like then you comment because without you reaching the target I can't post. Like, read and comment. Let's not make each other suffer.

Love

CHAPTER 32

[LATOYA]

"How many fingers are this?" She said as she waved two fingers in my face.

"Two.." I whispered. She smiled then noted something down.

"Great! Everything is ok. Your wounds will heal and fade eventually. I'm going to give you some painkillers for the pain." I nodded then stared at her. We were finally alone. No one had said anything about my baby yet.

"Ummh.. I think I was pregnant when.. when everything happened. Was I..?" She looked at me confused.

"You were pregnant?"

"I thought I was. I'm not sure."

"We didn't notice anything but we can do an ultrasound. We

might have missed it."

"Ok.."

"Ummh wait here... I'm going to see if there's a gynae free right now."

"Ok.." She gave me a polite smile then walked out. Every part of my body was aching. I had thought he was going to kill me. I had no hope of surviving. Waking up two days ago was a pure miracle but what really took me was waking up with Luthando by my side. Seeing him just made me feel all better. The way he looked at me.. It wasn't like the way he had looked at me the day he slapped me. He had looked at me with love, with kind eyes. The look he gave me most of the days. I wanted to hug him and hold him forever and ever but I hadn't been able to. Something held me back. I didn't deserve him. He deserved so much better. So much better than I could give him.

I raised my head when the doctor walked in. She was with a nurse this time around.

"Ok.. I talked to a gynaecologist.. She's free right now." I nodded as the nurse walked towards me. She helped me down. I could walk even though my body was sore.

We walked to the gynae's office.

"You can make her lie there." The gynae said to the nurse as my doctor gave her a nod walking away. The nurse helped me to the bed then left me laying there.

"Hi, I'm Doctor Molokoane. Your doctor explained to me your situation. I guess if they missed your pregnancy it must have been because they were focused on your wounds. How do you feel?"

"I'm fine. I will be fine." She smiled then put on her gloves.

"I'm going to do an ultrasound to check if you are pregnant and if you are, how far. We could do transvaginal ultrasound but with the wounds I will just stick to this. This is going to be a little cold.. Just relax. You can lift up your dress." I lifted up my hospital dress then she put some gel on my belly. It was cold but my body soon adjusted. My eyes were focused on the screen as she started moving some device on my belly. I didn't need to be told, I saw it with my own eyes. I felt tears wet my cheeks.

"There." She said. "Do you want picture?"

"Please..." I whispered. I couldn't process it. I had a whole baby growing inside me. I had a life that was growing inside me.

"After everything this little thing survived. A strong baby for a strong mother." I smiled as she said that. I too had not expected to be still pregnant if I was.

"How far am I?"

"About 9 weeks if not 10 I think. I will have to run a few test just to make sure everything is ok but I'm pretty sure Mommy and baby are good." She said giving me a wiper to wipe off the gel. I took it then wiped it off.

"There!" She said handing me the pictures. Though it was sepia coloured I could see my baby. I was sure Luthando was going to be happy. We needed a new start and our baby was just going to provide just that.

"Thank you."

"You are welcome. I will talk to your Doctor about the tests we need to run on you. I will take you through the do's and don'ts if you want."

"Yeah.."

I listened carefully as she spoke. Some of the symptoms I did experience them though I just ignored them. I was happy, I had signed the divorce papers yesterday. Regardless of the nightmare I had succumbed through nothing more made me happy than waking up to divorce papers. I was finally going to be free. Luthando and I had a chance. I knew the baby was going to fill in the void in my heart. Getting back to my room I couldn't misplace my happiness. I was going to be a mother.

I smiled even more when Janine walked in holding flowers. She looked different. She could walk but she was limping a bit. She still had her short afro and was just dressed as.. Janine. Maybe she didn't need a wardrobe makeover.

"Hey.. How are you feeling?"

"I'm fine."

"I just talked to your Doctor. I think they are going to release you sooner than you expect."

"Father in heaven, thank you!"

She laughed briefly. "So what are you going to do after this?"

She asked.

"I don't have a plan yet.. But I never run out of options. 1.5 million is a lot. I can start something of my own."

"That's great. I really think you..-" the door opening cut Janine short. I smiled as Luthando walked in. I couldn't wait to tell him about our good news.

"Detective.." He said looking at Janine who gave him an annoyed look.

"Toots.. I brought food. The doctor said liquids are the way to go

for now."

I rolled my eyes. "Whatever."

"Hey.. I will see you later ok?" Janine said squeezing my hand a bit.

"Yes. Thank you for the flowers."

"Ok bye.." And with that she walked out leaving me with Luthando. He looked so hot in the three quarter shorts he was putting on. I smiled as I slipped my hand into his. I don't know why but I had forgiven him for raising his hand on me. I had long forgiven him though he had apologized numerous times about it and swore never to do it again. I believed him, after all.. He hit me for a reason.

"I have something to tell you." I said as I failed to hide my excitement.

"I brought some visitors.."

"Some visitors?"

"Yeah.. My mom wanted to see you.. And apologize." I blinked. To apologize? Just then the door opened and she walked right in. The door still intact. She looked just the way I remembered her. I smiled as I sat upright. I looked like a lost kid with my hair all out there. It was just me. No nothing. Just me.

"Ma.. Good morning." I greeted smiling as I stretched my hand to shake hers. I had no nails now. She smiled and did the unthinkable. She smiled then hugged me. I was confused for a while. This was the same woman who accused me of being a prostitute. A gold digger. The same woman who accused me of wanting something from her son. I shut my eyes tightly as an unfamiliar feeling radiated deep within me and all over my body. I

hugged her back as the feeling I had always longed to feel welcomed itself within me.

I blinked away my tears as she stepped away. She had hugged me with so much love.. The way I wished my mother could do at times when I needed her the most.

"How are you feeling?" She asked making me chuckle as a tear escaped my eyes. I wiped it off with the back of my hand.

"I will be fine." She held me hand like any mother would do. A gesture I lived yearning for.

"The people who did this to you deserve to be locked away."

"Yebo Ma.." I didn't know what made her change her mind about me but I was grateful for whatever that changed her heart.

"Please sit.." I said pointing to the chair that was besides the bed.

"Luthando said the doctor said you only eat liquid." She said sitting down. "We bought you a few things." I smiled then looked at Luthando.

"Thank you.. Ummh I-"

"Ma!" A voice said making me shriek. I looked up to look at Luthando's sister. Besides Noxy, she also needed some dick in her life. I could see she disapproved what she was seeing.

"Ma how can you allow this?"

"Julie give me a break! You may dislike her but she is the woman your brother chooses. Stop acting like a child." MaMaphoto said making me smile. I was so glad she had finally accepted me.

"If you don't like her, you can always go back to PE. No one will stop you." Luthando added, I could see Julie was about to burst in anger.

"If you love her so much... Why didn't you think about her when you slept with her sister wife?" I looked at her in confusion. I couldn't seem to understand what she was talking about anymore. I looked at Luthando who was looking at her. I could see he was so pissed.

"He slept with Lelo while he was with you. He doesn't want you. He wants a proper girl who respects herself. A girl who is appropriate." I laughed. She just couldn't be more crazier.

"Look Julie I know you don't like me. For what.. I really don't know. Thing is.. I love your brother. The sooner you accept that the better more especially now that we are about to have a..-"

"He slept with Nompumeleo! Ask him. They even kissed the time you were in Paris with him."

"What?" I whispered. That couldn't be possible. They didn't even know each other. I looked at Luthando who was looking ready to kill.

"Luthando.. What's she talking about? Tell your sister you don't know Lelo." I said softly to him. He looked at me. I hated what was in his eyes. I felt my eyes get moisture as the admission in his eyes stared right back at me. I shook my head.

"No.. Lelo? No.. No."

"It was a mistake toots.. I swear."

"No! You didn't sleep with Lelo because you don't even know her!"

"We met through Julie.. She's her friend." I took a deep breath.

"So you slept.. You slept with Lelo?"

"It was mistake I swear.. Toots I love you."

I nodded as tears fell from my eyes.

"But she's.. She was also married to the same man I was married to. Why.. You.." I couldn't find the right words to say. My heart was beating so fast. I clumsily wiped away my tears.

"I didn't know she was your co-wife.. I'm so sorry..." He said taking my hand into his. I chuckled as more tears springed in my eyes.

"It's ok.. She's ten times better than the woman I am anyways.. I don't blame you."

"No.. Don't say that.." I shook my head as I wiped my tears with my free hand.

"It's ok. She's wife material. She's.. She's everything I'm not. I swear I'm proud of anyone who gets her. She's a wonderful human being."

"Toots.. I love you and you only."

"Sometimes you tell yourself that you love someone when you don't. If I hadn't gotten abducted who knows if you would have been standing right in front of me right now. I'm not even that hurt.. Lelo is a very good woman. She's for keeps. You can't let a real woman go. You will live to regret it." I took my hand off his then wiped away my tears.

"Ma.. Can you give us a second.. And please.. Make sure I never set my eyes on her ever again." He said pointing at his sister. His mother stood up quietly then walked out with Julie. He took both my hands into his.

"Toots..-"

"Don't.. Please.. Please.. Don't.." I said removing my hands from his. What hurt more was that I could never compare to Lelo. She was something I wasn't, something I could never be. "It's ok."

"I love you.."

"I love you too.. But I won't put myself through unwanted heart aches." Just then Janine walked back inside.

"Hey.. I forgot my.. Are you ok?"

"Yeah.." I said cleaning my face with my hands. Wiping away any tears.

"I'm fine. What did you forget?"

"My phone.." She said looking suspiciously at Luthando then pointed at her phone which was on my bed. Luthando sighed then kissed my forehead.

"I will come back later. I love you so much. I know I messed up big time but please give me a chance to fix this. To fix us because I'm not giving up on us. Never.." And with that he walked out. I covered my face with my hands as I tried to hold in my sob. I quivered as Janine wrapped her arms around me finally let it out. It hurt. It hurt so bad. Nothing hurt that much. It wasn't just that he cheat on me. It was who. It hurt because he had chosen Lelo because she was a real woman. Someone who could hold down a family. She grew up in a loving home. She wasn't someone who hustled to get through varsity. Someone who had to sleep with older man to keep things going. To pay varsity fees. She wasn't someone who had to sleep around to get her siblings to school. She wasn't a whore like me. She wasn't damaged goods. She never aborted like me. When she walked by no one labeled her. While I on the other hand.. I was just the opposite. I put my hand on my mouth to shut myself up. When I was finally quiet Janine stepped away from me.

"Crying helps.." She muttered softly. I chuckled as I nodded.

"Yeah.. I need a favor from you."

"Anything.."

I put the picture frame in the bag with my clothes. I had packed just a few of them. I could buy more when I reached there. I closed my bag then placed it down. Nono's sniffs made me look at her.

"Hey... Don't cry. I'm not going forever. I just need some space."

"Then why does it feel like this a goodbye."

"A goodbye? You are my sister. Sisters never part. I know what it may seem like.. But I just need some space. Space from everything. I will be back I promise."

"Promise?"

"I promise.."

She hugged so tightly. I hugged her back ignoring my aching body.

"Take.." I said handing her a letter. "Please give it to Luthando." She took it then took out a paper from her pocket. "Lelo said I should give you."

"Ohh.." I took it then shoved it in my hoodie pocket.

"It's Latisher's birthday tomorrow. I'm going to surprise her."

"She will be so happy."

"I know.."

I stepped back then took my bag.

"I will call you."

"Ok.. I love you."

"I love you too.."

I walked downstairs but getting to the lounge I noticed Kevin's forms. The ones I had gotten from Mr Tshekedi's office. They

were on the small table. I took them. I had noted the number I had gotten from Rocky's book on top of the file. I looked at the numbers for a while then laughed. It wasn't a bank pin cord. It was a location. A geographical location. It all made sense now. Inside the book it had been written 'happy birthday.'

I knew if anything, in order to get the money you needed a password and the password was her birthday.

"What's going on?" Nono asked coming from behind me. I opened my bag then stuffed the file inside.

"Nothing.. I have finally managed to solve the puzzle."

"What puzzle?"

"Don't worry. I have to go.. We will talk."

"Ok.." I walked out of the house. The cab was already waiting for me. Quickly I rushed towards it. The driver put my bag in the boot as I held a folio with my travelling documents in my hands. I got inside the car then sighed. It didn't take Janine long to get me in a plane which was leaving today. Deep down I knew my leaving was going to hurt but at the same time.. My leaving meant a new start for me.

Getting in the plane I had doubts. I could always get off and go back to Luthando but I didn't. I sat down next to some pregnant lady. Looking at her pregnancy made me feel excitement rise in me. I had left the hospital in a hurry, Doctor Molokoane didn't manage to run some tests but she did recommend I see a doctor.

I was going to do everything for my baby. My little Bambino was my priority now. I wiped away my tears as the air hostess told us to put on our seatbelts. I couldn't help it but to think I was taking

a cowardice move because my heart yearned for a man. A man I wasn't sure if he loved me or not. A man who could leave me. A man I loved so much. I hoped he knew I loved him. I hoped he knew just how much I loved him.

As the plane took off, reality started sinking in. I was really doing this. I blinked away my tears. I couldn't start with the waterworks now. I didn't want people in the plane thinking otherwise. My heart ached so bad but there was no going back now. I took out the letter Lelo had wrote to me and opened it.

Dear Latoya

This is weird I know. I usually don't do letters but I thought since I wasn't going to be there when you woke up it was best to leave a letter.

Firstly I know probably now you know about what happened with Luthando. Honestly I didn't know he was yours. I know it was wrong to go after him even after he told me he had a girlfriend but I wouldn't have thought twice about him if I knew you were the girlfriend he was talking about. I'm not trying to justify myself and I really apologize.

Have you ever realized the fact that you are beautiful.. Inside and out. You have a heart of gold just that you don't let it shine. You spend so much time trying to protect your heart, guarding it instead of letting it shine and grow. Instead of letting it mature. In life.. There's always going to be those moments which pull you down. Moments which threaten to break you.. But it's life. It's a road. At some point it's all smooth Toya and some point it's bumpy. At the end of the day everything we go through, the

challenges, they are meant to help us learn. To help us grow. It helps us prepare for next bigger battles. Don't let failure determine the real Latoya and shield you from growing. Don't shut yourself out. Don't shut yourself from people who can love you. Don't shut yourself out from the world because you stand a great chance to miss a chance of experiencing life. Experiences that we go through makes us better everyday. Don't miss the chance of bettering yourself. Without the challenges. The bumpy areas. The failers.. You can't have a chance to know the real Latoya Samuels. So shine. Shine so bright they notice you. Keep walking. Keep going because the journey has only started.

Love

Nompumelelo

CHAPTER 33

[NOMPUMELELO]

"And I really couldn't have done this without the support of those who love me. My family and special friends." I said looking at Nicholas who was at the far corner of the room looking at me. I smiled then looked at the crowd. "Ummh most of the art pieces are displayed for you to view and with that I say.. Welcome to NK Gallery Capetown." People started clapping their hands as I got off the stage. Julie hugged me tightly as soon as I stepped down.

"I'm so proud of you.." I smiled then took a step from her.

"Me too.. You look beautiful." She laughed as she gave me a twirl. She was in a gold very long dress that swept the floor. It was sleeveless and had black details here and there. She looked

so beautiful.

"Thanks.. You too." I was putting on a black dress. Body hugging and was long as hers just that mine had a vent. It was completely backless and the sleeves were lace.

"Thank you for being here to support me."

"I wouldn't be anywhere. I love you so much and seeing you here.. It makes me so happy."

I smiled. "I know. Through all your craziness you are still here. Did you manage to talk to Luthando?" Her smile disappeared.

"No.. He doesn't want to see me. How long will he be angry with me Lelo? It's been years!"

"You ruined his relationship even more. He loved her so much. He blames you for her leaving. You can't possibly expect him to just forgive you just like that."

"I don't but.. He really doesn't want to see me. It's like I'm not his sister anymore."

"He can be angry now but.. I know deep down he loves you.. His heart is just clouded by anger. Give him time."

"I guess.. I wonder where she went."

"Don't. Anyways I -"

"Ladies!" Nicholas said as he approached us. I smiled as I looked at him in his slim suite. He looked so good.

"Hi.." Julie greeted. She didn't like Nicholas but she pretended to. It didn't even bother me if she liked Nicholas or not. If she didn't, that was her issue not mine.

He looked at me then gave me a kiss on my cheek.

"I'm so proud of you MaSkhosana.." I smiled. There was just something about the way he called me MaSkhosana.

"Thanks.."

"Ummh let me go and mingle around." Julie said walking away. Nicholas wrapped his arms around me.

"Mom is coming tomorrow morning."

"Yeah.. She called. I think Tshidi is on top everything. We can go home, I want to prepare her room."

"Great!"

"Give me a sec.." I said walking towards Tshidi who was with some woman. I took her hand as I smiled at the lady.

"Just a minute." The lady gave me a polite nod as I dragged Tshidi aside.

"Everything ok?" She asked.

"Yeah.. I have to go. Nick's mother is arriving tomorrow. I have to make sure everything is ok."

"Ok.. Things are going well.. First your business, your life, and your love life.. When is the big day?" She asked making me laugh.

"He has been talking about family lately. I think he going to propose.." She screamed a bit then hugged me. Of course I didn't tell Julie that. With the way she was, I didn't want her ruining anything. I was finally taking control of my life and I didn't even want anyone ruining it for me. Nicholas and I were friends before we decided to try us out. After the divorce with Kevin I stayed single for a while. Trying to figure myself out. Trying to figure out what I could do. All along Nicholas was there. He was my biggest supporter. I could tell him everything, I was so free around him it even scared me. After a few months, he urged me to try dating. By then he was dating some girl called Neliswa. I

tried it, it didn't work out. Maybe all along I had been so blind that I didn't notice what was right in front of me. Nicholas wanting to propose to this girl made me realize that I loved him. Opening up my feelings to him, I actually found out that he felt the same. Now it was close to two years ever since we started dating.

"So..? Are you going to say yes?" She prompted.

"Yes.. We.. I love him. I think I'm ready. I'm ready to settle down. I'm 30. My business is going well. I'm ready." She smiled.

"I'm so happy for you."

"Thanks.. Look.. I have to go."

"Ok bye.." I walked away from her then back at Nicholas. He was still standing where I had left him.

"Ready?"

"Yeah.." He took my hand then led me out. We walked straight to the hired car. Getting inside he started it then headed to the airport. I was grateful for the private jet he had been borrowed by one of his friends.

"Today really went well.." I said as I relaxed my body. Opening a brunch in Capetown wasn't my plan. Nicholas had suggested it. He said it was part of expansion. Opening a brunch in Capetown had me thinking about opening brunches in other countries.

"I know.. And I'm so proud of you."

"It was all you.." I said taking his hand and placing it on my cheek. "If it wasn't for you it wouldn't have been possible. Thank you."

"I love you."

"I love you more."

I sighed as he parked the car at the airport. He opened my door then we walked right in.

An hour later we were driving to our house as he always said. He liked labeling things as our. I guess that's what a relationship of almost two years did to you.

Getting inside the house I took off my heels. My feet hurt. Just then Kenny came out from no where.

"Nicholas!"

He walked towards Kenny then picked him up. "I'm sorry.. I don't know how he got in."

"I hate that cat!"

"His name is Kenny."

"I don't care! I hate him. Get him out!"

"She hates you.." He said as he walked out with his cat. I walked to our room as I unzipped the dress. Quickly I changed into my shorts and a T-shirt then walked to the guest room. Nicholas walked in as I changed the bedding.

"I thought this was the time we celebrated your success babe.."
He said hugging me from behind. I wiggled out of his hold.

"No.. this is the time we change the bedding."

"Mxm.."

I smiled as I continued fixing the bed. He just looked at me sulking. After I was done getting Lydia's room ready I walked out. Nicholas was still sulking. I walked to the kitchen ready to start dinner.

"Don't cook.. I will order pizza.." He said picking me up and placing me on the kitchen counters.

"Great because I'm tired."

"You really did clean that room."

"Yeah.. Consequences of being a wife to a boyfriend."

He chuckled as he shyly smiled. "We have to fix that.." He said now kissing my neck. I smiled.

"We do.."

"I was thinking that..-" he was interrupted by the intercom. He looked at me.

"Expecting someone?"

"No.." I got off the counters as he buzzed the person inside. I heard a car drive in and that made me walk to the door and open it. Nicholas was right behind me.

The car stopped then the doors opened. I sucked in my breath not believing what I was seeing. My own brother.. My own biological brother was here.. With April Witherspoon. How could he do this? How could he?

[LATOYA]

I fixed my makeup one last time before I stepped away from the mirror. After fixing my afro I took my handbag which was on my bed and my laptop bag then walked out. Getting downstairs I could hear noise from the lounge.

I walked to the the kitchen and smiled as Latisher held Ocean in her hands.

"Morning!" I said as I grabbed an apple.

"Mommy!" Ocean screamed making me take her from Latisher.

"My baby.. Guys are you ready?"

"As ever!" Latifar responded taking her sling bag from the kitchen counters.

"I thought Boston was picking you up today." Latisher said earning a glare from Latifar.

"Mommy!" Ocean said making me turn my attention to her.

"School baby.. We are going to school.. Let's go!" I walked out leaving one of the girls to bring my bags. Getting in the elevator they joined me. Latifar looked annoyed.

"Guys it's too early for moods! Come on!"

"If people would mind their business.. It would really be a good morning." Latifar muttered in response.

"We are sorry. We will never mention Boston again. Can we drop it now?"

"Yes."

"Great!" Just then the elevator doors opened. We walked out and went to the car. When everyone was settled I started the car and started driving. I first dropped Ocean at her preschool. It was actually better for her to be in a preschool than at home with a nanny where she would get bored. She was only two and socialising with other kids kept her going somehow. I looked at her through the review mirror as she sucked her thumb. She had Luthando's eyes. Everytime I looked at her, I saw him in her. I took a deep breath. I couldn't start thinking about Luthando. It was just too early for that. Latisher was on her phone smiling. No doubt she was dating though she denied it. When I left South Africa I had no perfect plan but what I knew was that I wanted to stay with my siblings. Taking them from Aunt Edith was easy because now she could focus on her daughter. It took me a week to come up with a good plan. I moved to New York with my siblings. I had the money from the divorce. The townhouse was

big enough for all us so I took it. I was willing to take Latifar to Harvard but she plainly refused. She wanted to be closer to me. Said she had lived most of her life without me and now that God was finally answering her prayers, she wasn't going to ruin it. I didn't mind her staying. It made me happy. Finding Latisher a good school wasn't hard. The first months of being in New York were hard. The pregnancy was a barrier but soon after I gave birth everything started sailing. Ocean was everything to me. My daughter was my life. I could give anything for her. Latisher and Latifar had named her and I didn't refuse. Ocean was a weird name but what could I do... We were a family after all. Stopping the car in front of Ocean's preschool I stepped out then took her together with her bag. The trouble and cries were about to start. "Ms Samuels.." Her teacher said as we walked right inside.

Ocean was already holding me tightly.

"Mrs Wilson.. I brought your friend."

"Ah ah.. No.." Ocean said clinging unto me. It was always a hustle especially when we were from the weekend. I could see tears in her eyes.

"Bye sweety.. I love you ok?" She started shaking her head as she cried. This was the everyday routine. She didn't like preschool. Not even one bit. She hated it.

"Honey.. Look.. There's Ella.." Mrs Wilson said trying to get her from me but Ocean was really holding unto me. She was now crying loudly.

"Don't cry.. If you cry I will leave you.. Shhh.." She kept quiet though she had hiccups and she was still holding me. Mrs Wilson took out a sweet from her pocket. Everyday we had to

come up with new tricks so that she let's me go.

"Take.. Come take.." Mrs Wilson said waving it at her.

"Sweety go get the sweet.."

"Sweet.." She said looking at me.

"Yes.. The sweet." I carefully put her down. As she walked to Mrs Wilson I handed her bag to Mrs Wilson's assistant and made a run for it. Getting in the car I immediately drove off.

"How did it go?" Latifar asked laughing.

"Well.. We cried as always."

"She really hates preschool." Latisher said putting her phone away. "I don't blame her though. School is a whole load of crap!"

"Tell me about it.. I have gang assignments that need to be submitted."

"If you focus it will become more easier but as for you Latifar.. It's your third year. You are graduating soon. So.. You can't really complain and you Tisher.. Last year in high school. Just a few weeks and you will be done."

"I'm grateful!" Latisher screamed laughing.

"Are you gonna cry too?" Latifar asked Latisher as I parked in front of her school.

"Toya don't forget I have swimming practice after school."

"Are you gonna cry.. Cry cry cry!" Latifar continued making Latisher laugh getting off. As she walked inside, she was joined by two more girls. Her friends probably.

"High school is really nice.." Latifar said smiling making me laugh as I drove out and now headed to Latifar's college.

"Yeah.. So what's up between you and Boston?" I finally asked. Her moodiness couldn't be misplaced last night.

"I don't want to talk about it."

I smiled. "It's ok.. I'm here if you need me."

"I know.. That's why I love you. You are just the best." I glanced at her.

"I love you too baby.."

"Anyways.. Guess who asked about you yesterday.." She said failing to hide her excitement.

"Don't tell it's your lecturer again Tifar.."

"He's so hot.. You guys would make a really cute couple."

I chuckled shaking my head. She was really trying to hook me up.

"I don't like him."

"Why? He's tall.. Dark.. Sexy.. All muscles are all out there.. Those lips.. And that zip.. That chest.. Fawtha Gawd!" I laughed.

"Why on earth are you looking at his zip first of all?"

"First of all! I'm trying to gauge his package!"

"I think I need to give you the talk.."

"I think you need to go out on a date with him. You have been single since forever!"

"Latifar there's someone.. I told you that.."

"Ocean's dad is not here Sis.. We can't keep wishing he will come. I know you love him so much but you have to move on at some point in life."

"Because of me! Because.. Because he doesn't know about Ocean.. That's why he's not here."

"What?"

[ROCKELLE]

I closed my eyes as I held the pregnancy test in my hands.

"God please.." I silently prayed then opened my eyes. There was only one line. I sighed as I sat down on the toilet seat. I couldn't shake off the feeling of something was wrong with me. It was five months since we had been trying for a baby but nothing. I wasn't pregnant. The doctor said it could take long but five months was a whole lot of time.

"Babe.. Are in there?" Lungile asked knocking on the door. I stood up as I wiped my tears away then threw the pregnancy test in the laundry basket. Unlocking the door he opened it and walked inside.

"Hey.. Are you ok?" He asked.

"Yeah.. I'm good. What did you want?" I asked walking out and going to the closet.

"No.. Nothing.. Are you sure you are ok? Your eyes are reddish."

"I'm fine.. Ain't you going to work today?"

"It's a public holiday.." I chuckled as I walked from the closet and threw myself on the bed.

"Ok.. What's going on?"

I smiled. "Nothing.. Since today it's a public holiday.. Why can't we try again?"

He frowned. "Have you been checking if you are pregnant?"

"What? No.."

"Rockelle stop this. You can't keep doing this. We will have a child at God's time. Just relax."

I nodded blinking away my tears. "Ok.."

"I love you.. We will have a baby when the time is right. We are going to that women's organization today."

I wiped away a tear that had fallen. "Yeah.. I almost forgot."

"Yeah.. Let's go eat then we will dress up. Is that ok?"

"Yeah.." He took my hand then helped me up burying me in his arms. I hugged him back as I tried to keep my emotions on check. Being with Lungile made me so happy but not as happy as when we got declared as husband and wife a year ago. Dad didn't like Lungile at first but the more he got to know him, they clicked. Well they clicked just till Lungile found out that my dad was the one who was married to Janine. He found out through Janine. She finally agreed to talk to him so to clear the air. This days he just avoided my family.

"I don't want to lose you.." I whispered.

"You won't.. I love you.." No matter how many times he said I love you, I knew he loved Janine too. He didn't tell me about their meeting when she agreed to talk with him. He only told me after I saw the text in his phone. I wanted to get pregnant. I needed something to hold him with because I knew if anything he would leave me for Janine. Their love and connection ran so deep it scared me.

He finally let go then we walked downstairs. Sitting down on the kitchen stool I watched him as he dished for us. He had cooked breakfast. Just then there was a knock followed by the door opening. I clutched my forehead as CJ and Luthando walked in. "Baby.." CJ said hugging me. I hugged him back then let him go. He was with Puleng now. Their relationship wasn't stable. It was either on or off or even both. CJ was just playful while Puleng on the other hand was a serious person. Luthando hugged me briefly then stepped away. He wasn't a touchy person, he was so

laid back but of cause he had his moments though unlike CJ who's moments were every second.

"Majita it's too early to be in people's houses!" Lungile said as he gave me my plate.

"We have a game today! I hope you didn't forget.." CJ said taking Lungile's plate.

"Shit!"

"I told this asshole would have forgotten." Luthando said as he hooped on the kitchen counters taking out his phone.

"I don't know how I forgot.. Babe.." He said looking at me with begging eyes. I smiled.

"You can go.. I will go with Puleng and Kelly.."

"Great! Majita.. 10 minutes.." Lungile said rushing upstairs. I stared at my food. I didn't even have the appetite. All I kept thinking was the fact that one day he was just going to leave me. That one day he was going to leave me for his first love. If I didn't get pregnant he was going to leave.

"Hey.. Are you ok?" Luthando asked standing besides making me jump and almost fall from the stool. His hands were on me almost immediately, balancing me on the stool. My heart was beating so fast, it threatened to leap out from my chest. "Are you good?"

"I'm fine.. I'm fine.." I said getting off the stool. I took a deep breath trying to just calm myself down. Luthando was still looking at me with worry. "I'm fine.. I just zoned out.."

"Ok.." He stepped away. We were now only two in the kitchen.

"Where's CJ?"

"Making a phone call."

"Ohh.." My eyes fell on the picture that was on the floor.

Luthando picked it up then put it in his pocket.

"Can I see that picture.. The lady... She looks familiar." He looked at me then took it out and handed it to me. My mouth flew open at the surprise. Latoya..

"Wait.. Is this your girlfriend? The one who.. Ran away?"

"Yeah.. You know her?"

"She.. Latoya?" He was now looking at me all serious.

"Yes.. Do you know her?"

I blinked. "Yes.. She is.. Was.. She was one of my father's beautiful wives.."

"She was married to your father?"

"Yes.. Her.. Lelo and Janny.."

"Your father is Kevin?"

I nodded then looked at the picture. This picture was taken as she laughed. Something told me she was unaware when the picture was taken.

After Daddy married mom all the women just disappeared from the surface of the earth.

"How come I didn't get this.." Luthando said but to himself. He shook his head then looked at me.

"Do you know Big Daddy?" He asked.

"Who?"

"Pablo Tejera?"

"No.." He browsed through his phone for a while then finally showed me a picture. A picture of a man who looked familiar.

"Yeah yeah... I know this man." I said as it finally clicked that I once saw him with Daddy some time.

"Who's he?"

"I don't know. I met him only once.. Daddy's friend I guess.. Or business partner."

"Ohh.. Ok.."

"I can't believe Latoya just disappeared. It's so unlike her. With the way she loves money it's just unlike her."

"Let me guess.. You didn't like her did you?"

"I didn't. She was a gold digger."

"So you don't know where she might be.."

"I don't.. Wait.. She has sisters.. Two if not three.. They stayed with her Aunt I think.. In London.. I'm not so sure though."

"Can't you ask for the number of the Aunt from your Dad?"

"Well-"

"What's going on?" Lungile asked as he got in the kitchen. He was now dressed up looking good.

"Your wife knows Latoya.."

"Babe.. You know her?"

"Yeah.. She was my step mother.."

"Do you know where she is?"

"I can try to find out through Dad."

"Great! What are we waiting for? Help my nigga out.."

CHAPTER 34

[JANINE]

I walked in my office then put my bags down. Sitting down there was a knock on my door though the person didn't wait to be told to come in. I smiled as Orlando walked.

"Morning Lieutenant Adams.." I laughed.

"Stop!"

"How did the date go?"

I rolled my eyes. "Firstly it was " I own this.. I own that.. I have businesses in China.. I'm planning to expand my business and opening a brunch in Thailand.. I'm planning to buy shares at some bank.. Blah blah blah.. Then we got to the part of "ohh I'm someone who likes healthy food.. You can't eat that.. It has too much oil. Ohh.. That is not health.. You should try more salads than that.." Then we finally got to "my family is royalty.. I'm a Prince.. I have qualities that are expected from me.. You really look good in jeans but I think dresses will look gooder.."

By then Orlando was dying with laughter. He couldn't contain himself.

"Yesterday was the worst of them all. I swear to God. You and Namhla have the worst taste!"

"Ok.. Maybe you need to take a break. This dating thing is not for you perhaps."

"Yeah.. Anyways did you manage to see Riley yesterday?"

"Yes.. Working undercover is his thing. He's on top of everything."

"Great.. The last thing we would want is to find him dead. This new guy is pretty dangerous."

"He is.. But he's not as smart as big Daddy. We will catch him. It's only a matter of time."

"Yeah.."

After a while I was alone again in my office. I had always prayed for a promotion but getting promoted and taking Sibeko's position was the best thing that had ever happened to me.

Sibeko retired, he looked happy to finally be retiring but deep down I knew he wasn't happy about me taking his position. He didn't see much value in me because I was a woman but what he didn't know was that.. Women held greater power. I took my phone which was ringing and answered it.

"Magosha.." I said.

"Boss.. The new busses have arrived."

"They have?!"

"Yes.." I shut my eyes tightly. I had been waiting for them for a while now. With my money from the divorce I decided to start a transport business. I bought buses which were situated in SA, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Namibia. All the buses traveled to all countries in southern Africa.

"I will come and see them after work."

"Yes boss.."

"Ok bye.." I said then hung up.

Putting my phone down I opened the file of the new big Daddy. We still didn't know him but all big Daddy's operations were taken over by this man. Something told me he had contact with Big Daddy but then Big Daddy was rotting in prison and he wasn't getting out anytime soon.

There had been a report of missing girls and there was breakout of a new drug and as always, it affected the youth more than any age group.

All morning I went through all the cases that were pending to check which ones needed to be closed. It wasn't nice closing a case without justice being served but sometimes when the case was an impasse then it was best to close it and focus on those

which were making progress.

Kevin and I divorcing was the best thing to ever happen to me. I felt free. I had nothing trapping me anymore, nothing blocking my dreams and ambitions. After a few months of my divorce I finally booked myself an appointment with the therapist Lelo had longed suggested. There was nothing harder as coming into terms with the fact that I did need someone to talk to. The first days were irritating. Adelaide was an early forties lady. Her patience was the best thing on earth. If I didn't want to talk she never pressurized me and when I talked she listened. She wasn't judgmental. Having her as my therapist became easier when I realized she wasn't the enemy.

Around lunch I had the cases which needed to be closed and those which needed working on. Walking out during lunch I made a mental note to go and see Mme Lesedi after work. It had been time since I last visited the orphanage.

"Hey.." Orlando said walking out as I unlocked my car.

"Hey... I'm going to collect my lunch. You can wait so that we share mine."

"Ok..." I got inside my car then drove away. Getting to the restaurant I didn't take much time to get my order. As I walked out I bumped right straight into someone. Raising my eyes it was Lungile. I smiled. I had made peace with what happened with Thulani. Making peace with the facts enabled me to forgive him though seeing him still moved something painfully deep in me. Betrayal was just hard to get over.

"Hey..." He greeted smiling. I gave him a polite nod then walked out. I couldn't believe he was married to Rocky but I could see it

in her eyes. She really loved him. She didn't hold back anything. She wasn't the spoilt bratt I knew though I could still see traces of it. She was a matured lawyer. A matured wife. I wondered how Kevin felt with the age difference between his daughter and her husband. He couldn't possibly say anything. After all, who was married to three wives that were old enough to be his daughters?

Getting back at the police station I gave Luke a smile as I walked to Orlando's office. He was now sharing it with Riley, a new detective that was transferred.

He wasn't alone though. I stopped on my tracks as I looked at the dark brown tousled hair. It couldn't be him. It couldn't just be him. I held my breath as I stood frozen by the door. As if he could tell he was being watched he turned and our eyes met. All the anger I thought I had finally let go came back.

"You bastard!" I hissed making him stand up.

"Janine.. Wow!" This bitch! He even had the audacity to say Wow.

"What are you doing here?" I was surprised at the steadiness of my voice. I had always imagined this moment. I had always imagined myself really rearranging him but looking at him, all my energy just got drained. His eyes still had a hold on me.

"I came to see you."

"You are not welcome here.. I'm afraid you have to leave."

"Ummh I will give you space.." Orlando said getting up and walking out.

"Can we talk?"

"Bitch no. Bitch leave. Bitch I don't want to see you again ever.."

He ran his hands in his tousled hair, messing it even more. I hated the fact that he still looked good. That he still looked like a dzaddy only now he had beared all over his face.

"You look good." He said as he closed the distance between us.

"King.. No.. Please.."

"I missed you.."

"You left.."

"I had to.."

"I thought we had something.. I thought..-" he cupped my face.

"We do.. I had to leave.. But I'm back."

"King this is not..-"

"Shhh.. I'm back now."

[NOMPUMELELO]

I stared at Nicholas's father. He still looked exactly the way I remembered him. Just like an elder version of Nicholas and Siya. I hadn't expected him. I only thought Lydia was the one coming but I was surprised when she got out of the car with Richard.

"This breakfast is so delicious. Thank you so much my love.."

Lydia said pushing her plate aside.

I smiled standing up to clear the table. "You are welcome.."

"Thank you Makoti.." Richard said in his deep voice. I smiled though all I was thinking about was Zuko. Him bringing April Witherspoon to this house was the last nail to the coffin. How could he do that knowing damn well who April was. How could he sell his own mother like that? I could still see April's face as she begged me to tell her where her daughter is. I couldn't tell her but something told me Zuko was going to. Nothing could

stop him. He didn't consider us his family anymore so selling his mother out was going to be very easy.

"You see Nicholas.. When I met your mother.." Richard started as I took the plates to the kitchen. His voice was so deep I could hear him clearly from the kitchen. "The first time, I knew she was the one. Within four months I declared her as my wife. I paid bride price for her. But for you.. I wonder what kind of a human breed you are. How do you stay with a beautiful woman as your girlfriend for years?"

I heard Lydia laugh as I placed the dishes in the washing machine.

"Sthandwa.. Leave the kids alone."

"Haaai! I rest my case!"

"Let them be.. They know what they are doing." She backed her son as I walked back inside the dining room.

"Thank you Ma!" Nicholas agreed with his mother.

"I'm going out for a smoke. You babied him too much, he can't even act like a man." Richard said standing up and walking out.

"Ummh babe.. I have to go to the office. I have some documents I have to submit."

"Ok.." He kissed me on my forehead then walked away leaving me with Lydia.

"Nompumelelo.." She called my name in full looking at me sternly.

"Ma?"

"Sit.." I sat down opposite her. "If you behave as his wife. If you let him treat you as his wife.. He will never do the right thing." I blushed then looked down on my fingers. "You cook for him.

Clean after him. Do everything for him. He will become reluctant on doing the right thing. You have placed him in the comfort zone. Don't you want to get married?"

"I do.."

"Then stop. Stop treating him as if he's your husband. He is not. When last did you sleep in your house?"

"It's been time.."

"Come.." She said standing up. "Take me to where your clothes are." I stood up then we walked to the bedroom but approaching the door he was already walking out all dressed for work.

"Everything ok?" He asked looking concerned.

"Yes.. Go to work." Lydia answered. We walked inside the bedroom leaving Nicholas confused by the door.

"Now.. Pack your clothes. You are leaving this house."

"Ma I...-"

"I said pack your clothes. You are leaving. You are not his wife and therefore you shall not act like it. Pack your clothes."

She was serious. I sighed then walked to the closet. Most of my clothes were here. I took out my suitcases and started packing. After a while she was besides me, helping me pack.

Not all my things fit into the suitcases. She took some boxes and the black reusable bag and stuffed my things inside till there was nothing in the closet that belonged to me. Nothing in his house that belonged to me. All my novels were packed.

Everything.

"Now... You are leaving. If he wants you to act as his wife, he will do the right thing." I knew somehow she was right. I had been acting too much like a wife lately. I hoped and prayed what we

were doing the right thing, nudging him in the right direction. She hugged me one last time tightly before I got in my car and drove off.

I drove to the nearby mall. I knew my house had no groceries. Quickly I shopped for the basic things I needed, I made a mental note to do the rest the following day at lunch.

As I carefully put the groceries in the fully packed car, a well pimped Mercedes AMG pulled up next to my car. I quickly looked away when Luthando stepped out of the car. He still looked good, sexy and overly handsome. I stole a glance as he passed me without a word. Just the way he walked, just the way he walked melted Lord! It melted my knees. I looked away then got in my car. I felt a bit guilty of feeling the way I felt about Luthando. I was with Nicholas and the sooner I accepted that, the better it was for me.

CHAPTER 35

[ROCKELLE]

I sipped on the wine as I looked around the restaurant. It really looked exactly how my mother had wanted it to look like. The overly top design. Even the way the waitresses dressed, it was just too exquisite for a mere restaurant but then.. This was Lana Godwill Robert's restaurant. It easily showed. I took another sip of my wine. The wine was already getting to me.

"This is not how a lady should behave! A married woman on top of that!" Mom said joining me while snatching my glass from me.

"Mom! That's my first glass!" I sulked.

"You are a terrible liar. I'm sorry I'm late sweetheart.. Had an

emergency I had to fix."

"It's ok.. It's nothing new to me.."

"And what's that supposed to mean?"

"I'm not here to fight.. I came to see you.."

She sighed then she sipped my wine. Talk about double standards.

"What's wrong?"

"It's Lungile.. I feel like he's going to cheat on me."

"I never liked that boy from the first day.. I knew there was just something about him."

"Mom it's me.. I can't give him kids.. I'm not falling pregnant."

"Pregnant? Rockelle you are only 25.. You are still young for kids honey.."

"Lungile is 34.. He's not young."

"Why are you on pressure to have kids?"

"Because if I don't have a child mom he is going to leave me! He is going to go to her and leave me!"

"Who's her?"

I wiped away my tear. "His first love."

"Rockelle does this man even love you? Because if he loves you why would you think he would leave you?"

"He loves me!"

"But not enough to get him to stay?"

I looked away wiping away my tears.

"Rockelle I'm going to ask you again.. Does this man even love you?"

"He does.. Lungile loves me. I want to give him kids."

"Being stuck with someone who doesn't love you and won't ever

love you will.—"

"Mom! Lungile loves me! He loves me.. He always says it.. He loves me that's why he married me!"

"Honey you put pressure on him to marry you!"

"I did not Mother! I proposed to him.. How is that putting pressure on him?"

"You proposed on your birthday.. In front of everyone.. How could he say no?"

I stood up. "I have to go.. I thought you were going to help me but hey.. Seems like this trip was all a waste."

"Honey.. I'm trying to help you. He might not leave you as you suspect.." She said taking my hands unto hers. "But he will never love you the way you do."

"Why..?" I asked as tears streamed.

"Maybe because he just never did but didn't want to hurt you. Love is fun. It's.. The most exciting thing on earth but look at you.. You have lost weight.. Your hair just looks messy.. Your eyes.. The bright light that once glistened in them.. It has dimmed. You look.. Lost."

"I'm trying to protect my marriage!"

"At what cost Rockelle? At what cost?!"

"I'm not losing Lungile. He is mine. He is my husband. He loves me. I just have to do my duty.. As his wife. I am going back home. To my husband. I shouldn't have came here in the first place." I said then walked away. I had expected some advice but what could I expect from a woman who was never a present factor in her marriage. Maybe the reason why they had divorced in the first place was because she was never there. She was

always busy on business. Instead of mothering me, she gave me expensive gifts. She gave me money just to later claim I was spoilt. I was the way I was because she failed to be a mother! She failed to be my guardian.

I got in my car then drove away. I drove straight to work wondering what I was becoming like. I was becoming that person who goes to work even on a public holiday. I knew someone was there. Parking my car at the company's parking lot I took out my mirror and looked at my reflection. I pinched my cheeks a bit to bring out some colour in them then took out my lipstick. A little colour on my cheeks and lips could work. After the lipstick I took an eyeliner then mascara. I looked better after that. I took a deep breath before I got out of my car with my handbag. I felt funny because of the wine. Walking inside I walked to my desk. It was an open plan company. As soon as I sat down Joy was already standing in front of me. I knew someone would be at work though I was surprised we had a lot of people who came.

"Joy.."

"You can never guess what happened!" She whispered. Joy was my colleague who was always... basically everywhere. She knew everything about everyone. I wasn't going to be surprised if she knew my marital problems. I smiled as I listened to her fill me up in the gossip. At some point it got annoying but I could actually listen to her than listen to the voice in my head.

After filling me up she walked away leaving me to work. I had a case about a 28 year old who was in jail for theft. He stole phones and he wasn't a first time offender. Already he had been

in jail for over six months awaiting his trial. I went through his file and after a while.. I had come up with a conclusion.. It was easier to plead guilty then on his sentence, ask the judge to minus the time served while awaiting trial. He probably was just going to get away with a slap on his wrist. Immediately after work I drove to prison.

The procedure to see him wasn't that long but it annoyed me. When they finally let me in, I wondered how it felt to be in jail. The place certainly didn't look comfortable. He came out after a while. I sat up right as he sat in front of me.

"Hi, I'm Rockelle Zwane.. I'm your lawyer.."

He nodded then stretched out his hand. "I'm Khuzwayo.. I never knew some lawyers work even on public holidays."

I smiled. "Time is money.. I have looked into your case.. I think it will be best if you plead guilty." He looked at waiting for me to elaborate more.

Getting home that evening Lungile wasn't home. He hadn't arrived yet. He was probably still with the boys though I couldn't help the unwelcome thoughts that were flooding in my head. Like was he really with his friends?

I started cooking as I waited for him. After cooking I put our food in the microwave and sat in front of the TV. I wasn't going to call him yet. It was too soon. An hour passed. Then two.. When three hours passed I stood up, grabbed my phone and called him. At first he didn't pick up. Then the second time his phone was off. I felt my eyes moisten.

I finally settled for Puleng.

"Hey babes.." Puleng answered.

"I think Lungile is cheating."

"Haai girl! What are you saying?"

"He is not home yet.."

"Girl you know how it gets when they are with that fool! That dumb ass bitch they call CJ.. Don't cry.. He loves you." Just then I heard the gate opening.

"I think he's here.. Bye.."

She laughed. "Bye girl.." I hung up then threw my phone aside. I quickly fixed my hair then wet my lips. The moment he walked in I smiled standing up.

"Guess what I got you!" He said walking holding a little box. I smiled excitedly.

"What?"

"I said guess!"

"Just tell me!"

"Close your eyes.." I rolled my eyes but then closed my eyes. Silently I waited as excitement radiated throughout me. I opened my eyes when I felt a cold thing touch my neck. I looked down on my chest. It was a necklace. A diamond necklace engraved R&L.

"Ohh my God.."

"I love you." He whispered as he kissed my neck.

[LATOYA]

I put on my sunglasses as I maneuvered the car to the airport. I increased the volume as I sang along with Naakmusiq alongside with Bucie. I was going to interview one of the youngest successful chefs in America. Laura was stated as one of the

best chefs. I looked at the time, I had 30 minutes before the meeting started. I had flown yesterday night to LA. Finding a job as an editor was a miracle. I had went to the Collop magazine hoping to get a job as a journalist. They had no editor and the owner hired me on the spot as their new editor. It had been over a year and everyday I made sure that he didn't regret hiring me. Parking the car in front of Laura's restaurant my phone started ringing. It was my Aunt.

"Aunty.." I answered it while getting out of the car.

"Latoya.. How are you?"

"I'm fine Ma.."

"I received a call from some man yesterday. He says he is from some magazine and they want to interview you."

"A magazine? And they called you?"

"Yes.. He says the magazine is situated in south Africa. I told him you already got a job in New York.. Collop."

"Ohh.. What did he say his name was?"

"Michael Ramotsamai.."

"No Ma.. I don't know who that is.."

"Ok.. I gave him your number though. Just in case.. And your townhouse address."

"Ok.."

"OK.. Bye.."

"Bye.." I hung up feeling confused. Walking inside the restaurant a waiter immediately walked towards me.

"Welcome to Eat with Laura, what kind of a table do you want?" She asked smiling.

I smiled back. "I'm Latoya Samuels, I'm here on behalf of Collop."

"Ohh please come this way." She led me up the stairs till we were standing in front of some door.

"She's in here.."

"Oh thank you."

"You are welcome.." And off she was gone. I knocked a couple of times on the door till a soft voice commanded me to come in. I walked in taking off my sunglasses. She looked exactly the way she was on the pictures. I smiled as she stood up.

"You must be Latoya Samuels.. It's nice to finally meet you."

"Likewise.. It's a nice place you have here."

"Yes.. It is.. Please sit." I sat down on the comfortable couch she had pointed. She sat down besides me smiling, this was her first interview which was going to be featured in a magazine ever.

I set up my recorder then started.

"So when did you realize you had a talent for food?" She chuckled.

"Well.. I used to play house with my sister when I was young. I liked being the mommy and being the one to cook. Growing up, I just realized it was into me. I think I used to cook more than my mom."

I laughed. "Wow.. You didn't study culinary according to my research."

"Yes.. I didn't.. I mean.. All my friends were talking serious degrees.. I didn't want people to laugh but as time went on I realized the worst thing that can actually happen to you is to study something you dislike and most young people do that."

"I know.. It's really sad. How does being..-" I was cut short by my phone ringing.

"Shit!" I cursed as I took it out of my purse then switched it off. I didn't mind because it was a number I didn't know and I never answered unknown numbers.

"Sorry about that.." I apologized.

"It's ok..."

"So.. Your soup that got you here.. What inspired you?" And the interview went on. Laura was an easy respondent, she was free when answering. She even took me on a tour where I managed to get some good pictures. After the tour we went to food tasting. After two hours I was walking out of her restaurant. I had everything I needed. Getting in the rented car I started it then started driving back to the airport. The company's jet was waiting for me. I switched on my phone as I drove. I had more missed calls from the number. For a while there I wondered if it was the preschool.. If Ocean was ok. As I was about to call the number back my phone started ringing with that same number. I quickly answered.

"Latoya Samuels hello?"

"New York must be nice that you have forgotten where you come from huh?" My heart beat palpitated as I blinked. How? 2 years and now I was hearing his voice. "Life must be nice."

"Lu.. Luthando.."

"So you just ran huh?"

"It's not.. You.. How did you..—"

"Does it matter? You are so fond of running away."

"Luthando.." I couldn't even find the right words to say. "I left. I didn't run away from nothing."

"Ohhh.. You left? Latoya so you left?"

"Yes! Yes I left! I fucken damn left Luthando!"

"Eh wena sa ntlwaela masepa obatlo nyela neh?" I took a deep breath. This couldn't be happening. "Don't fucken raise your voice at me after you left with my child! Latoya two fucken years! Where the fuck is my child?"

"What child?"

"My child! When I get my hands on you I'm going to kill. You are going to regret messing with me!"

"You will go to jail if you lay your hands on me!"

"I'm not just going to lay my hands on you toots. I'm going to kill you! Wa ntlwaela! Who the fuck do you think you are?"

"I'm not the one who couldn't keep it in my pants!"

"Latoya you had lied to me! Had me thinking you were processing your divorce while you were just lying!"

"You didn't want to listen to me explain! I wanted to tell you why then you hit me! And either way that's no excuse for you cheating on me."

"So that's the reason why you kept my child away from me?"

"I didn't say that.."

"Otlo nyela kao jwetsa!" I hung up immediately. I refused to be threatened by Luthando, I refused to be threatened by anyone. I increased my speed as raindrops started hitting my windscreen. I had to get home as soon as yesterday. Arriving at the airport it was now raining so hard. I took my phone and called the pilot, Carrick. He didn't take time to answer.

"Hi Carrick, how soon can we leave?"

"Mam they have blocked all flights going out due to the weather. We are going to have to wait till the weather calms down."

"No.. No.. No.. I need to get home. I need to get to my daughter."

"Mam..—"

"You don't understand.. My daughter.."

"Right now there's nothing I can do.. I promise you, as soon as the weather calms down a bit.. We fly out immediately."

CHAPTER 36

[JANINE]

I looked at him as he drove to a place I didn't know. I don't know why I wasn't worried about not knowing where he was taking me. All I was thinking was he was here. He was here with me. He was right in front of me. After almost two years he was here. I looked away immediately when he turned to look at me.

"Braids look good on you.." He said softly but I didn't bother looking at him nor replying. I kept my eyes outside through the window. It was dark, so dark. As dark as my heart. A part of me hated him so much. All the clothes he had bought for me.. The makeover.. He thought I was one of those girls who were into materialistic things. All I wanted was for him to be my angel.

That's all but he had used my vulnerability against me. He had used the love that was beginning to grow between us against me. He had hurt me. I shut my eyes tightly, Adelaide had suggested I move on because the more I kept holding on to the anger, the more I allowed it to rule my life.. But how could I not be angry when people saw me as someone to use.

"Babe.." He whispered taking my hand into his. I didn't even realize the car had stopped moving. I looked around then back at him. He couldn't do this.

"So what? You bring me to this resort.. Huh King?"

"Janine.. —"

I chuckled raising my hand up, silencing him. "You think I'm stupid? I'm not new to this.. I've been through this. It's not my first time."

"I had to leave.. I had to leave and that was the most selfish decision I have ever made."

"No.. That was the best decision you have ever made because.. I learnt my lesson.. Again."

"Janine I didn't want to pull you into my mess."

"You are not worth my tears."

"I love you! I brought you here because I found out that I loved you when I brought you here. Janine my father was going to kill you.. Kill both of us if I didn't leave."

I laughed. "And here I thought I have heard better.. Wow!"

"This is not a joke. He was going to kill you. He was going to kill us. He is ruthless like that. Janine Pablo Tejere was going to take you out!" I momentarily stopped breathing. Pablo.. Big Daddy.. Big Daddy was his father?

"No.."

"I had to leave. To protect you. That son of a bitch is ruthless!"

"No.. No.. Big Daddy isn't your father. He can't be!"

"He is. Thank God you locked him where he belongs."

"Wait.. Wait.. If Big Daddy is your father.. Did he know you and I.. That.."

"He knows everything. He always does."

"Did you know?"

"No.. Till he threatened to kill you.."

"He threatened to kill me?"

"Yes.. It was either I leave or you die.. Or both of us.."

"Wait.. Big Daddy has a son.. You are the son.. You meet me..
And—"

"And I fall for you. But he finds out I'm dating the detective that wants to put him away for good. And so he can't have his son with his enemy because it's betrayal and Pablo doesn't take betrayal that well.. Janine.. I love you. I know you probably don't believe me but I love you baby.. I love you so much."

"So you left... After your father threatened you telling you that.. You being with me is betrayal?"

"Yes.. He is shit scared of you."

"After you left.. I got in an accident. I went to the wrong lane then lost control of the car."

"I know.."

"You know?"

"Yes.. That's why I hired security for you."

"You what?"

He sighed. "I had to make sure you were safe so I hired security for you."

"What security?"

"You can't see them but they can see you."

"Whoa! You hired security to protect me from your father?"

"Yes.. Janine can we stop talking about that thing? Please.."

"Wow! So much revelation in one day.."

"Can we talk about us now?"

"I put him in jail."

"Good! That's where he belongs."

"But someone took over his operations."

"Well.. I don't care."

"You should. Young girls are being sold out there."

"Janine Adam.. Marry me.. I told my mother about you. She said I was stupid and dumb for leaving you because of that bastard. Then I told her I wanted to one day marry you.. She gave me this ring.." He said taking out a ring from his pocket. It was so beautiful yet so simple. Had a few diamond details that sparkled when shone by the moon light. It shone in the darkness. I felt tears tickle my eyes. The ring was the only outstanding thing. I looked at him as tears fell down from my eyes.

"No.. This.. This.. I—"

"When your legs don't work like they used before,
And I can't swip you off of your feet,
Will your mouth still remember the taste of my love,
Will your eyes still smile from your cheeks..—"

"No.. Stop.." I said placing my hand on his mouth as tears fell from my eyes. "Stop.. Stop.."

"I love you.. I want you.. I want us.."

I shook my head as I got out of the car. This couldn't be happening.

[NOMPUMELELO]

"Babe you can't be serious.. Come on!"

"Nicholas go home.. It's late."

"Lelo.. Open the door. Please.."

"I want to sleep." I said increasing the volume. I heard him bang the door. I knew he wasn't going to leave. I stood up then walked

to the door and opened it. He stood there looking at me or maybe trying to read me.

"Hi.." He said.

"Hey.."

"Can I come in?"

"Yeah.." I moved from the door then he walked in.

"I'm sorry.." I looked at him confusion.

"What?"

"Lelo I really love you." He said taking my hands into you his and pulling me closer. "I badly want us to work but I don't want to rush you into anything."

"What are you on about?"

"I don't want it to seem like I'm putting pressure on you nor do I want my parents to put pressure on you. I don't want us to be married tomorrow then you won't be happy. I love you and I want us to work. It happens a lot. I don't want that for you. Yes, I was wrong for maybe treating you as my wife. I'm sorry, forgive me." I wrapped my hands around him.

"It's ok. We will get married when the time is right."

"I love you."

"I love you too.. Did you eat?"

He chuckled. "No.."

"Let me cook. I haven't eaten yet too.."

"Want help?"

I giggled. "Yeah.."

We got in the kitchen and started working on our dinner. After about an hour we were eating.

"I bumped into Salina today.." I looked at him.

"You did?"

"Yeah.. She's no longer with her.. Druggie of a husband."

"Wow!"

"I know.. She said she wants me back." I laughed.

"Well you are no longer in the market unfortunately."

"I told her.." I loved the way Nicholas was transparent. He never hid anything from me. He was a bit obsessed with honesty.

"Thank you.. Tomorrow it's Saturday.. I was thinking maybe we can go somewhere private.." I said rubbing his thigh. He smiled.

"You want to go out?"

"Yeah.. I miss you." My hand went further up.

"I would love that.." Just then there was a knock on the door. I stood up and walked to the door. Opening it I took a deep breath as I stared at April Witherspoon.

"I'm not here to argue with you. All I want is my baby. That's all. I'm begging you." I stared at her. When she came with Zuko she had left after telling me she was going to find her daughter.

"April I..—"

"I know you know where my daughter is. You have no right to keep her away from me."

"I don't know what daughter you are talking about."

"You know. The daughter your mother ran away from. We can do this peacefully.." She said.

"I think I have to call the police. You can't be coming to my house like this. It's.. —"

"I just want my daughter!" She screamed. "I want my child."

"What's going on?" Nicholas asked coming from behind me. April smiled as tears fell from her eyes. "I just want

Nompumelelo to tell me where my daughter is." I looked at Nicholas. He knew, I had told him. The secret was too heavy to carry so I had told him.

"I don't think you are talking to the right person. Lelo is just a child to the woman who you claim stole your child. She doesn't know anything. If you want answers then look for her mother."

"And I hear you. You are absolutely right. I should be talking to the mother not her. All I want to know is where her mother is.. That's all. I will never bother you ever again. Where is your mother Nompumelelo?"

[ROCKELLE]

I walked inside the nursery. It was filled as always. I smiled at the kids who were staring at me before my eyes fell on Kelly. She was holding a baby in her hands. She smiled then gave the baby to some other woman before she walked towards me.

"Hey!" She said hugging me.

"Hey.. It's busy here.."

"Yeah.. I know.. What are you doing here?" She said letting me go and taking my hand. She led us to her office.

"I came to say hi.. Am I not allowed now?" She laughed.

"You know what I mean. It's early morning. You should be at work not here."

"I know.. I called in sick. Plus I'm seeing my client tomorrow so I have nothing to do at the office."

"Lungile?"

"Work."

"Ok.. So what.. Oh my God! Is that.. That necklace is to die for.."

She said looking at it. I smiled. It was so beautiful.

"I know.. Lungile bought it for me."

"I swear Lungile is goals!"

I laughed. "Yeah.. Ummh I need a favour." She smiled as she gave me the look.

"What is it?"

"I want to go to the hospital and check something. I have been feeling weird lately."

"Ok?"

"Yes.. So.. I don't want Lungile to know."

"Rockelle what's going on?"

"I.. I can't get pregnant."

"Rockelle some woman just take long to get pregnant. It's normal."

"I know.. But I don't have time. I want to do artificial insemination."

"What? Do you realize what that requires?"

"Semen.. And they are at the doctor we went to.. When I forced us to go there and see what was wrong with me not getting pregnant. I called him last night."

"Oh my God!"

"Look.. The procedure will be done today. All I want you to do is tell Lungile I went to see your mother in Soweto. She's not feeling well and you couldn't go."

"Rockelle what if..—"

"It will work. Lungile will never know that's what happened but..."

I took a deep breath in excitement. "We are going to get pregnant."

"Rocky are you sure?"

"Yes.. Please." She smiled then hugged me tightly.

"OK.. Whatever makes us happy.."

"Thank you so much.. You are the best."

"Yeah.. So what time is this whole process happening?"

I looked at my wrist watch. "In an hour.. See you."

"Bye.."

I walked out of the nursery and went straight to my car. Kelly and I owned the nursery. I had invested in the business and she ran it. It took a while for it to be fully marketed but right now our nursery was a well known nursery. Getting in my car I took a deep breath as I texted Lungile.

Hey.. Took a sick day off. Kelly's mother is sick. She can't go so I have to go take her to the hospital. Love, Rocky.

CHAPTER 37

[LATOYA]

I stood under the umbrella as Carrick walked towards me.

Sleeping in LA hadn't been part of the plan but the weather had forced the situation. I looked at my watch. It was just after 8 in the morning and it was still raining but not that heavily.

"Good morning Mam."

"Are we going today? Now?"

"Yes... The storm has calmed down a bit so we can fly out."

"Thank God!"

"Mr Thomas would like to speak with you." I looked at him. Mr Thomas was the owner of the magazine. He owned a lot of things, a lot of business so he was not that much hands on the

paper. I took the phone Carrik was handing me.

"Hello?"

"Ms Samuels.."

"Latoya please.."

He chuckled. "I like Ms Samuels better.. Anyways I want to apologize for the delay of your journey. Carrick told me about the weather."

"It's ok Mr Thomas."

"But that's not the only reason I called. I'm in Baltimore, I will be attending a business event later this evening, it starts at seven. There are going to be high class people. I was thinking maybe you would want to catch something for the cover page." I took a deep breath.

"I don't have any preparation for that journey Sir.."

"The company will cover every cost. Even the clothes you might need. Carrik can fly you over this morning. I'm sure this will be very beneficial for the magazine."

"I have a daughter and..—"

"I know.. Ocean right?" I chuckled. It was funny how he still remembered.

"Yes.."

"Don't worry about her. Immediately after the event, we will fly back. I'm also going back to New York immediately after the event is finished. You will see her tonight."

I sighed. "Ok.."

"Great. See you then.." And with that he hung up. I gave Carrik back the phone.

"Baltimore Mam?" He enquired.

"Yes.."

I walked with Carrik to the plane. I couldn't possibly say no to the boss plus we were still in need of the cover page. The new edition was supposed to be released in a week's time. Since Mr Thomas wasn't hands on the company, someone managed it. Ava. Some white blond bitch.

Getting in the plane I closed my eyes tightly. I had to be on my way home but here I was chasing after stories. I took my phone out before the plane departed and sent Latifar a message.

On my way to Baltimore. Duty calls. Will arrive late tonight.

I put my phone away when Summer came to tell me to put on my seatbelt. She was the air hostess. I put on my seatbelt and switched off my phone.

The whole journey I couldn't sleep. All I was thinking about was Luthando. Guilty had settled deep in my heart. I had kept his child away from him. How could I be that evil? Then his threats.. I didn't want my siblings being exposed to violence or better yet my child. Even though I forgave Luthando for slapping me before, I still couldn't shake off the feeling that I had let it happen. That I had given him the platform to think he could lay his hands on me. I took out my laptop then started writing something for my blog. I wrote about the kind of issues young girls faced everyday. Issues of being shamed, of being looked down on. Issues of being abused just because you are a woman. I didn't take time to get in tune with my writing. After I was done I finally fell asleep.

"Mam.. We are here.." I heard a voice say. Slowly I opened my eyes.

"We are here?" I asked Summer as she smiled down me.

"Yes.." I took off my seatbelt then stood up. I was still wearing yesterday's clothes. I needed a bath and a change of clothes. Walking out of the plane I stretched my arms then took a look at my wrist watch. I had a few hours to use looking for a dress. There was a car already waiting for me at the airport. Getting inside the car, it drove me straight to a hotel. The moment I walked inside, some lady was already by my side.

"Ms Samuels?"

"Yes.."

"Mam please follow me." I followed after her. Mr Thomas must have alerted them about my arrival. We got in the elevator which took us four floors up. Getting out she led me to some door then gave me the access card.

"This will be your room Mam. Enjoy your stay."

"Ohh.. Thank you."

She smiled then walked away. I sighed as I got inside my room. It was huge and beautiful, fair enough for an expensive hotel but what caught my attention was what was on the bed. It was an exquisite gown. A black lace gown. I quickly walked towards it and took it in my hands. The fabric felt so soft in my hands. The shoes and the jewellery were carefully placed next to the dress. There was a note which I took putting the dress down.

'FOR THE NIGHT. THE DRIVER SHALL PICK YOU UP 30 MINUTES BEFORE SEVEN.'

It was so unlike Mr Thomas to have been the one to buy me the dress. I doubted that man still remembered my face. Something told me it was all the blond ass bitch's plan. Maybe somehow

she was hoping I would mess up. I put the note down then walked to the bathroom. I needed a well deserved bath and some rest. Sitting in the plane for hours wasn't a joke.

I looked at my reflection on the mirror. The dress hugged my body perfectly exposing everything. The jewellery and shoes went well with the dress. I had spent my whole day putting into words Laura's interview. It was around six. I still had 30 minutes more. I sat in front of the mirror trying to style my weave but to only get disturbed by my phone ringing. I stood and walked towards it. It was Latifar.

"Hey.. Did you get my text?"

"Yes.. Just got it now. I had lessons the whole day. Where are you?"

"I'm in Baltimore. I have an event I'm attending. I will be home tonight but late."

"Wait.. Toya I just arrived home. Latisher is not here.. And Ocean too."

"What?"

"They are not here.."

"No.. Did you try calling her?"

"Yes.. Her phone is off. I called her Friends. The last time they saw her was when she left school. I called the nursery too. She picked up Ocean at the normal time."

"Oh no.. Did you check the neighbours?"

"Rosemary didn't see her."

"I'm coming home!"

I hung up then scrolled on my phone for Carrick's number. I called it immediately as I grabbed my handbag.

"Ms Samuels.."

"Call Mr Thomas.. I can't come to the event. My sister and daughter are missing. I have to get home."

"I will do so."

"Can you please get me a plane home right now.."

"My duty is to make sure you reach home safe. The private jet has been appointed to me by Mr Thomas to make your travelling easier. The driver will be there in a while. He will drop you at the airport and we will leave for New York immediately."

I sighed as relief washed over me. "Thank you.. Thank you so much." I rushed out from the room. I didn't care about what I had left behind. All I wanted was to get home. Getting in the elevator my phone started ringing. It was a number I didn't recognize. Somehow I suspected it was Luthando. I answered as anger sunk in me.

"Luthando I want my kids!" I said answering.

"Latoya.. It's Mr Thomas.."

"Ohh sorry.. I'm sorry Sir but I have to leave. My daughter and—"

"Carrik explained to me. It's ok. I can get the best investigators on finding them or maybe you happen to know who might have taken them?"

I took a deep breath as I walked out of the elevator. "I know it's my ex. He called threatening me yesterday. I know he is the one." I said unable to control my tears. Luthando had no right to take my kids! They didn't do anything to him.

"Your ex? Look let me make a few phone calls. We are going to find your kids. Don't worry.." Stepping out of the hotel I felt like just breaking down. I had worked so hard to get where I was

today for Luthando to just think he could break me. My kids were my weakness. Ocean, Latifar and Latisher were my life. After about 20 minutes I was sitting in the car as it drove me to the airport while talking to Latifar.

"I'm on my way back right now. I will be there in two hours tops. Mr Thomas said he will look for investigators for me."

"Thank God. I'm scared."

I wiped away my tears as I tried to hold it in together. "They are fine wherever they are." The call dropped. I took my phone from my ear and looked at it. The battery was dead. I felt like just dying. If anything happened to my kids I wasn't going to survive it.

"We have arrived Miss." The driver said making me climb out of the car. Carrik was already standing a few feet from the car but then.. He wasn't alone. He was with Mr Thomas. I walked over to them wondering what he was doing here.

"Mr Thomas.."

"Latoya.. I have managed to call a few people. They are looking for your daughter and sister." I smiled uneasily. It seemed surreal that my own boss, the boss I only saw when I got hired, the boss I always saw in the magazines, Miguel Thomas was standing right in front of me, telling me he called his people to search my child and sister.

"I don't know why you are doing this but thank you so much."

"Let's go.." He said taking my sweaty hand. I wished to pull away my hand and just cleanse it first. I swallowed as we walked to the private jet. This was the first time I had ever gotten close to him. All I kept wondering was why he was doing this. Getting in the

plane he sat opposite me, looking at me. I felt uncomfortable, I didn't deserve to be sitting next to millionaire. A well respected millionaire who had a very strong influence all over the world.

"Mr Thomas and Ms Samuels.. We will be leaving in 5 minutes. I'm going to ask you to put away your mobiles as we get off ground and also to put on your belts." Summer said smiling her best smile. I didn't blame her, not with Mr Thomas here I couldn't blame her. I put on my seatbelt then waited. I just wished I was home already and everything was just a dream. A horrible horrible dream.

"Don't stress Latoya.. We will find them but if I may ask.. Why do you suspect your Ex?"

I looked outside through the window. "I met him when I was still married. Had an affair. Was kidnapped then I was found. I also found out I was pregnant. I was going to tell him but then I found out he cheat. I didn't blame him. I wasn't even angry. I mean.. He cheat with someone who was better than me in million ways. She was everything I wasn't. So I left for a new start.. Without telling him about the pregnancy. He recently found out."

"That's a whole load of mess."

"It's my baggage I guess. Maybe I deserve it."

"No.. No one deserves such."

"Mr Thomas I don't think you..—"

"Miguel.. Mr Thomas sounds too.. Somehow." I laughed.

"Well.. If you're Mr Thomas then you are Mr Thomas."

He chuckled. "Call me Miguel."

I kept quiet as I felt the plane start moving. After a few minutes we were stable in the sky. Summer was back.

"Would you like any refreshments Mr Thomas and Ms Samuels?"

"Yes.. My usual Summer.." Miguel answered then Summer looked at me.

"Water is fine thank you."

"I will get it right away." She then walked away. I wondered if she was paid to always have a smile pasted on her face.

She was back after a while with my water and Miguel's brandy. I drank my water then handed the glass back to Summer. Taking a deep breath I tried thinking positively. Like maybe Latisher had just taken Ocean out. Maybe they were ok wherever they were.

"Shouldn't you be attending your business event?" I asked after a while.

"No... In life I prioritize. Your daughter and sister missing come first before the business event."

"But you don't even know me. I'm just a mere employee."

"You are a recognized editor in the magazine industry so I know you. You are one of my most valued employee.."

"Ava should be your most valued employee.. Not me."

He frowned. "Why?"

"Because she runs your company."

"Her running my company doesn't make her a valued employee, either way.. It won't be long till she's out."

"Thank God!" I exclaimed absent mindedly.

"Are you always like this?" I looked at him confused.

"Like what?"

"Saying what you feel when you want to?"

I smiled then looked outside the window though I couldn't really see anything. There was nothing I could really see. "No.. But I'm

glad the blond bitch is going." He laughed.

"Wow!"

The whole journey we kept having small talks here and there. I found out he had 2 twin sisters and parents who stayed in Toronto. I also found out that he was 34. When Summer came again telling us to put on our seatbelts because we were landing I felt like screaming. Landing I got out with Miguel.

"Thank you so much Mr Tho.. Miguel.."

"Don't stress.. Come. There's a car waiting."

"Oh no you don't have to.. I.—"

"Come." He said taking my hand and leading me to the car.

Getting inside the car, he got in the drivers seat while I occupied the passenger seat.

"Where do you stay?"

I held my breath as he parked the car in the garage. I didn't wait for him to say something, I jumped out of the car and ran to the elevator. I pressed my floor then let it carry me upwards. Getting out I rushed to my door and opened it. Surprisingly it wasn't locked. I wondered if Latifar was here or if I had seen my car downstairs in the garage.

"Latifar!" I screamed as I walked into my house. Getting in the lounge I took a deep breath out of relief.

"Oh my God!"

"Mommy!" Ocean screeched as she tried running towards me. I walked towards her and picked her up holding her tightly. I felt tears stream as I held my baby.

"Latisher?" I called out.

"Right behind you." I turned and looked at her.

"Oh my God! Do you know how much I was worried? Where were you?"

She pointed behind me with her eyes. Slowly I turned and my eyes fell on him. My breath caught. How..

"What are you doing in my house?" I asked.

"Warasa! Now I know where my daughter takes her loudness from."

"How did he get here?" I asked turning to look at Latisher.

"I met Ocean's father here when I came back from the preschool. Him and Ocean connected automatically. It was so cute watching. I even took some pictures."

"Daddy!" Ocean screeched again as she tried to get me to let go. I gave her to Latisher then looked at Latifar.

"I couldn't possibly keep him from his own daughter. It's just wrong." She mumbled looking at her phone.

"Can you all just leave us for a while?"

Latisher started walking away with Ocean who was now tearful. Latifar walked up to me.

"You can't keep him from his own child Latoya. Two years was long enough. He deserves to become a father to his daughter. Don't make Ocean grow up like us. Maybe the reason we turned the way we are is because we lacked a father figure."

I smiled. "I said excuse us." She sighed then walked away.

"I'm starting to wonder who's the big sister between you two."

Luthando said standing up from the couch where he had been sitting comfortably. I looked at him. "That was a joke.."

"What are you doing here?"

"I'm here for my child."

"Luthando..—"

"You can't keep me from my child Latoya!"

"I'm sorry. I was wrong for keeping her away for this two years but I didn't want to complicate your life with a baby."

"Complicating my life? Complicating my life how? All you did was decide that I didn't deserve to be a father."

"That's just not true.."

"It is.. I bet if I didn't find out then I was never going to."

"I was going to tell you someday. I wanted to tell you the day I found out you cheat on me."

"So was this punishment? I want my child!"

"You are not taking my child from me. I'm not going to stand between you and Ocean but you are not taking her."

He chuckled the mocking chuckle. "Who do you think you are Latoya?"

"I'm Latoya Samuels and I'm that woman who don't let men step all over her. That Latoya you were used to.. That Latoya you used to manipulate into thinking she was insecure while you were just an asshole.. That Latoya that you could slap and get away with.. She's gone! She's dead! She's not here. I'm not fazed by your threats. Nothing can break me. I have been through the most.. But guess what.. I'm still standing!"

"How were you connected to big Daddy? Don't even think about lying because I know the truth."

"Then why are you asking?"

"I want to hear it from you."

"My parents died in a car accident. I was 10. We stayed with Aunt Edith, my father's sister. All of us till I was 17. Aunt Edith

couldn't take care of us anymore because she had lost her husband so I had to move while Latisher and Latifar stayed behind. I stayed with my mother's youngest sister. Shelly. She was a hustler. She used her body to keep going. After I finished my matric she taught me how to fend for myself. So yes.. I was a prostitute before. I used to go to bars, find a man to sleep with so to fend for myself because Shelly was tired of having to do everything for me. I didn't have money for varsity and I knew no one was going to pay for my fees so I did what I had to do. I managed to raise my tuition fees for the first semester. That's where I met Nothando. She was my roommate since I didn't stay in campus. I lied to her. Told her I had a brother who was paying for my fees. I made up a lot of things because I didn't want her to look at me somehow. So I stayed. During the day.. I was a student.. During the night I was a prostitute. Nothando found out about my lies when I didn't manage to raise tuition fees for my second semester. She became my sister. She started taking care of us but you know.. It was never enough. I had siblings. Aunt Edith was complaining. I had to continue hustling for my siblings. That's when I met Sarah.. We became friends. She introduced me to Big Daddy. Got me a job as a mule. It was easy.. A few trips outside the country transporting drugs. I got a lot of money from that. I sent most of it to my Aunt then I kept the rest for my fees, and rent and transport.

"Somehow.. I.. I fell into a hole and nobody could fish me out. I was given gold.. I had to go and collect it in Thailand. Big Daddy gave me money upfront. I went there but when I arrived in SA.. I got robbed. They took everything. I was scared so I managed to

convince Nothando that we move to Johannesburg. It wasn't safe for me in Durban anymore so I moved. Then I met Kevin. He was divorcing his wife. Yes. Maybe Kevin's money did catch my attention. I will admit to it.. Maybe his money did catch my attention. But that was not all.. Kevin was.. He was as dangerous as Big Daddy and I knew being with Kevin meant I was protected. It meant my siblings were protected. That's why I said yes when he said we should get married. He protected me and my siblings from Big Daddy but I didn't want to stay tied to a man I didn't love for the rest of my life.

"I couldn't give the money Kevin gave me to Big Daddy because he was going to know then. I couldn't just sell my cars.. He was going to know so I decided to steal.. So that I pay Big Daddy and so that I can leave Kevin. I did it for my siblings. For me. For you.. For us! I tried telling you! I tried and you slapped me. You didn't want to listen to me. You called me names. So I got kidnapped.. Got beaten. Got raped. I lost a huge part of me but I didn't show it. I fought for my baby. I held on.. And when I was found.. I thought.. I thought maybe it was God.. That God wanted us to be but no.. No.. I guess not. Threaten me all you want. You can beat me if it will make you feel better.. I won't retaliate. But you are not taking my baby from me! Not as long as I live. I will not let you." He rubbed his face.

"You could have told me this Latoya before I found out that you lied. You could have told me! I could have taken care of the issue."

"I didn't want to drag you in my mess but what happened happened! I can't change it and neither can you." He sat down.

He looked more hurt than frustrated.

"Goddamnit Latoya! You could have told me! If I was partly the reason you wanted to steal money then you could have told me. I fucken loved you! I could have done anything for you! I was prepared to do anything for you!" His voice was steady now but it was laced with pain. "You could have told me! You could have told me about that. You could have told me about my child! I messed up.. I know.. I'm not going to deny it. I messed up. I slept with Lelo vut I didn't sleep with her because she was a better woman than you. I was frustrated. I said a whole lot of things because I was angry. But I deserved to know about my child." "And it's ok. It's in the past. It happened. We can't change anything."

"If you didn't want me anymore at least you could have told me about my child. I wasn't going to abandon my child. I understand why you did what you did with Kevin. With the lies.. I understand now but you keeping my child from me Latoya was selfish." I wiped away a tear that had fallen. "I'm sorry.. I'm sorry. But I'm not letting you take my daughter from me."

He stood up then walked towards me. He took my hands into his.. "I still love you, I love you so much.. I love you more than anything but I understand that a lot happened between us. I understand I hurt you. But you have to give me a chance with my daughter.."

"Latoya.." Miguel said walking inside. I got my hands from Luthando and wiped away my tears. Luthando looked at me then Miguel.

"Mlungu? He is your boyfriend?"

"Miguel is..—"

"And if I am what's the problem?" Miguel asked.

"Ehh wena uyanya nou nou! Latoya I want my chance with my daughter. 50/50 custody.. Let's do it peacefully. I get my 50% with my daughter and you get the other 50%. I don't want to fight with you over my child. You kept him from for too long."

"Ocean is still young. She can't be moving up and down the continents."

"Then move back home. If not.. Then there's nothing I can do."

"You are delusional. You can't come from nowhere and think you can command her around. She's not your wife. Just because you are her daughter's father, it doesn't mean you have the right to think you can rule her." Miguel said taking my hand into his.

Luthando laughed. "Mlungu let me tell you something. Latoya, Ocean and I.. We are a family. We are a whole family."

"Just because you share a child doesn't mean you are family. Don't make me test your intelligence."

"Mlungu Latoya is my girl. She will always be my girl. She's the mother of my child. You have to choose what's better. You leaving or her leaving you. She's mine and mine only.. And I don't share! Toots.. We will discuss a way forward for our family." He said then kissed my forehead before walking out.

"Hey are you..—"

"One more thing!" Luthando walked back in. "I don't want him anywhere near my child uyangizwa? Ocean is my child. My semen alone.. If I see you anywhere near my daughter I will castrate you with your small dick." And with that he was gone.

CHAPTER 38

[JANINE]

My whole body stiffened then I came all around him as I grabbed the sheets. He came behind me, collapsing besides me. As I tried to get my breathing to normal he pulled me into his arms and held me tightly.

"I love you.." I just held him in silence. I wasn't going to reply to that. This time around I had to be careful. I couldn't always get burned. "And I'm not going to stop till I die."

"I think you need to sleep." I said trying to wiggle out of his hold but he tightened his arms around me.

"Till you say yes.. I'm not going to stop."

"I'm not saying yes to anything. A lot happened. You can't just come back and say you want me to marry me."

"I can.. And I have."

"King you.—"

"I messed up. I'm ready to take responsibility of my actions. I'm willing to fix us."

"I see being white is really messing with your head."

"I love you. That's what's messing with my brain. I know you are upset or maybe confused but I love you. I will not stop till you believe me."

I closed my eyes. All I wanted was to sleep. I could see the rest later. Slowly I fell into the fog then let it consume me.

The loud bang that erupted made me open my eyes immediately. My heart was beating fast as I looked around. The sun was already out. Slowly I got off bed, taking the sheet with me. I wrapped it around my naked body then walked to my

closet and took my gun. Slowly I walked from my room to the kitchen where I could hear some movements with my gun in my hand.

"What...?" I said putting the gun away, sighing out of relief.

"Hey.. Woke you up? I broke one of your plates but I'm sure you will be fine."

"King... God!" I sat on the kitchen stool then put my gun on the table.

"I'm.. I'm kind of phobic of guns.. Can you take it away.." I looked at him with my jaw on the floor.

"What?"

"I have fear of guns babe.. Please.." I blinked as I realized he was actually being serious.

"Sorry.." I said getting off the stool and taking my gun.

"It's ok... I'm making breakfast." I smiled as I started walking back to my room. I put the gun back in the closet then walked to the bathroom. Something about waking up and finding him inside my house made me smile. It just wasn't the fact that.. He was back but also that he was with me. That he wanted me. That he wanted us. I took my toothbrush then brushed my teeth before I went back to the kitchen. I found him already dishing up.

"French toast?"

"And bacon.. That's all I know how to cook."

I chuckled. "It's ok... It's better than nothing."

"I know." He sat besides me the we started eating.

"Do you have any plans for today?" He asked after a while.

"Yes.. I have to go and see my new buses. I couldn't see them yesterday."

"New buses for your transport company?" I looked at him failing to hide my surprise.

"I'm sorry.. But I know."

"It's ok..."

"Can I come with?"

"No."

"Ok.. Besides that, what else are you doing for today?"

"I don't know.. Maybe I was going to hang out with Orlando.. Or something."

"Orlando?"

"Yes.. My friend and also my colleague."

"The one who likes you?"

I looked at him. "Are you out of your mind? Orlando doesn't see me like that.."

"He is head over heels for you! Even a blind person can see that."

"Something is just wrong with you."

"It's ok if you don't want to believe me.. It's ok.. But I was thinking maybe we could spend the day together."

I stared at him. "King just because you—"

"Just today only.. Please.. We will spend it indoors and go out if you want."

"No. The last time you did that.. You made me look like one of those girls.. Those gold digging girls who are only after money. You made me feel cheap. Made me feel like the clothes and everything you did for me was payment for the sex. You made me feel as if money made me happy. That because you bought me things, I should have been ok with it for you to just use me

and toss me away. So no. You can keep whatever plan you have to yourself because I'm not interested."

"Janine.. I didn't buy you those clothes because I thought you were a materialistic person. I bought them because I just wanted to. And I'm sorry if you thought I used you.. I know that's what it may have looked like but it's not like that. It was never like that. I made love to you because I loved you. And I know you don't believe me.—"

"You are right. I don't! You are just like any other man I have been with but I really don't care. I'm finally doing well for myself. My life is looking good. You can go back to whatever hole you came from." I said getting off the stool and walking to my room leaving him there.

I sighed as I let the cold water hit my skin. A part of me told me I was doing the right thing but another part told me I stood a chance of losing him forever with the way I was dealing with the situation. Maybe I needed space to think everything through. After bathing I changed into my black sports tights that reached my ankles, a black sports bra and lastly my black jacket and black Nikes. Walking out I was putting on my cap. Getting in the kitchen everything was cleared up. I looked around and I couldn't spot King anywhere.

"King?!" I called out then walked to the lounge looking for him. I sighed as I realized he wasn't here. He was gone. Walking back to the kitchen the ring caught my attention. It was placed on the kitchen counter with a note. Slowly I walked towards it. Taking the ring it felt so delicate in my hands. So heavy. It still looked beautiful. I took the note.

"It's not a poem. I love you. I'm willing to take a leap of faith and invest myself in us fully. I'm ready to commit myself into our love. To devote myself in our love. I'm willing to give up everything for us. Please say yes.."

I held the piece of paper chuckling then placed it in my jacket's pocket. I walked out after grabbing my phone and car keys. Getting in my car I started it then drove to Namhla's house. With the way she was lazy I knew she was still sleeping. Namhla and I got more close after the whole Kevin saga. She was there, as always but our friendship grew much stronger. Together with Orlando we made a mean team.

After a while my car was parked in front of her house. She had finally found a job at some event's company.

Getting out of my car I went straight to her door and knocked. She took her time to come to the door and when she did she looked half asleep.

"Some of us are still sleeping Janine!" She groaned as she opened the door for me.

"You are just lazy. It's around 8.."

"Yes! Exactly! It's still in the morning." She closed the door then she walked to her sitting room. I loved her house, it was small and intimate. It just fit her lifestyle easily.

"What is it?"

"King is back?" I said as I sat besides her on the couch. She sat upright, looking awake as ever. She blinked a couple times. She could see I was serious.

"What?"

"He is back."

"The white guy you told me about. The one.. You thought you loved just till he left."

"Yes.. King."

"Oh my God!"

"I know.."

"So what now?"

"He proposed."

"Nooo!"

"Yes.." I said taking out the ring from my pocket. Namhla took it from me with her mouth wide open.

"It's so beautiful."

"He explained why he left."

"What was the reason."

"There was this other dangerous man I was chasing after when we were dating. So this dangerous man is his father. Now.. His father told him that.. Him dating me was betrayal and if he didn't leave me then well.. He was going to kill me. Though after King left, he still tried to kill me."

"Shit! That's.. Wow!"

"Yeah.."

"And he couldn't tell you because you were going to say he is lying."

"Look that doesn't matter.. What matters is—"

"It does Janine! If it didn't then why isn't the ring on your finger?"

"Because he just can't come back then just propose. It's.. It's crazy!"

"Is it? Janine this guy loves you. If he didn't then why is he back?"

"I don't know."

"You love him and so does he. There are other girls out there. Imagine if someone just noticed him? They are going to snatch him girl! And you will just be there. Go to him right now. Fly if you have to. Tell him what you feel. Go get your man!"

"You think?"

"You love him right?"

"I think so.."

"Who are you trying to lie to? You know you love him."

"Ok.. If this goes wrong then I'm blaming you."

"Can I please be your best girl?"

I chuckled taking the ring from her. "What?"

"I will start with the wedding preparations. You should thank God you have an event planner as your best friend. Girl go get your man before they get him!"

I hurried to my car. I closed my eyes tightly as I realized I didn't even know where he stayed. Which hotel he was in.

"Dammit!" I cursed.

I started my car after a while then drove to the resort. That was the only place I could guess he was. If he wasn't there, then there was nothing I could do till he came to my house. Arriving at the resort I walked straight to the receptionist. That moment I wished I had brought my ID. They always corporated with the police. I smiled when I got by the reception.

"Good morning Mam." The receptionist said with a fixed smile. Morning.. My husband is staying here.. I forgot the room he said he booked for us."

"Your husband?"

"Yes.. Ummh King.. King Tejera."

"Give me a moment." I stood there as she did something on the computer.

"Kingsley Tejera?"

"Yes.."

"We are going to have to call him just to make sure you are really his wife." I smiled.

"That would ruin the whole surprise but ok.." She looked at me for a while as I put up my best disappointed face.

"Ok.. You can go in. Room number 12."

"Oh great. Thank you love." I said walking away.

My heart was beating so fast as I walked to room number 12. Getting by the door I gently knocked. I couldn't back out now. It was a relief that he was staying here. I pressed my lips together as I took out the ring. When the door opened I felt like running. What I was doing was just not me but that's what made it more exciting.

"Janine.." He only had a towel wrapped on his waist and was just wet. It seemed as if he had been bathing.

"Hey.. Can I come in."

"Yeah..." He opened the door wider for me. I walked in then stood in front of the bed.

"Is everything ok?" He asked looking worried but he looked more worried when he noticed the ring in my hands.

"I'm not giving up even when you say no."

I sighed then walked towards him.

"King.. When you left.. You really hurt me."

"Babe..—"

"Shh.. I'm not done.. When you left you really hurt me. I won't deny it. I felt cheap and used. I thought.. I thought a lot of things. I'm willing to put that aside and give us another chance."

"You are? Does this man you are saying yes?"

I nodded while smiling. I loved how his eyes beamed before he enfolded me in his arms holding me tightly then picking me up and swinging me making me giggle.

"You can put me down. I know I'm heavy.. I'm a big girl."

"I can pick you up."

"Look.. I'm a whole size 36. Put me down King!"

He put me down finally then kissed me gently.

"I'm so happy babe.."

"I'm scared."

"Don't be. You are safe with me."

"I'm going to trust you."

"Good." He took the ring from my hand then slipped it on my finger. It was a perfect fit.

"It fits.."

"Yeah.." He Kissed me again but briefly.

"I have something to tell you but just so you know.. We are already engaged. We are a real couple. There's no leaving." I blinked.

"What is it?"

"I was married."

"You what?" I screamed. "You were married?"

"Yes."

"You better start talking or I swear to God! I swear on my mother's grave I'm going to stab you to death."

"No need to threaten me.. Look.. So I went back right? And then.. Well.. I had no choice but to marry Gina.. She was the woman my father wanted but our divorce is being finalized. It's almost over."

"So you are divorcing her?"

"Yeah.. It's being finalized."

"You better be telling the truth."

"I am. I have no reason to lie."

"Ok.."

"So I heard here you guys pay.. Bride price.. Ummh what do you call it... Ummh ohh.. Yeah.. Loboulah."

"Lobola.."

"Yes that babe.. So do you think they are going to charge me a lot of money?"

"Since I don't know my mother's relatives.. My step Father's relatives are going to charge a lot because you are white then squander the money."

"It's ok. I will pay it."

"You have to bring your uncles."

"I do have a few uncles on standby."

"Great!"

"I heard you got promoted. I'm so proud of you baby.." I blushed.

"Thanks."

"Let me change.. Then we can go out.. If you want."

"Does your wife know you are here?"

"She doesn't have to. It's non of her business."

"King I don't want to have problems because.. —"

"Can we not discuss her Janine?"

"I'm just trying to ensure that I don't face problems in the future."

"There won't be no problems.. Don't worry.." He said kissing me.

I kissed him back though at the back of my mind all I was

thinking was him and his wife. I wondered what she looked like.

She was probably white with long legs, long hair and tall. The

thought of him being with someone twisted my heart in a painful

way. What also occupied my kind was the reason behind the

divorce. I ignored the voice in my head as he deepened the kiss.

Of cause I had the right to be jealous. I was his fiancé after all.

Without warning he picked me up making me wrap my legs

around his waist.

"Don't drop me.." I said giggling.

"Never baby. I can never drop you. Trust me."

[ROCKELLE]

I put on my black bondage dress and blazer. Lungile was sitting on the bed staring at me.

"What?" I asked staring at him through the mirror.

He smiled his shy smile making me chuckle. "What is it?"

"Can't I stare at my wife now?" I rolled my eyes.

"Are you not going to work?"

"No.. I have plans." I turned and looked at him.

"Plans?"

"Yes.. Plus I'm meeting up Luthando."

"What was wrong with him yesterday?" I asked as I reached for my handbag.

"He found her."

"Really?"

He nodded. "And they have a child that she's kept from him all along."

"That's.. Just unlike Latoya.. But then.. He cheat with her sister wife. I don't blame her. No woman wants to be stuck with an unfaithful man. It just brings about insecurities every moment."

"Yes but still.. It was cruel for her to keep the child away and now on top of it.. She's in a relationship with a white man."

"What about that girl he is dating? What's her name again?"

"Nikiwe? Nikiwe is not a factor. She was a once fuck too for that matter."

"He is staying with her."

"No, you just found her at his house after they fucked. He doesn't even love her."

"No offense but your friend is an egoistic bastard. Yes, maybe Latoya shouldn't have kept the baby from him but she left after finding out he cheat. He can't possibly expect Latoya's life to revolve around him. She must have left to have a fresh start."

"For someone who just found out a week ago when LT came back.. You are too quick to judge."

"All along I felt sorry for him because I thought he was the victim. If I had known what really went on I would have never told him about Latoya's Aunt. And why can't she move on? Latoya is pretty. She's hot! Between her and Thando, he is the beast and she's beauty. Luthando is not God, especially not Latoya's God." Lungile laughed as he walked towards me and wrapped his arms around me.

"You are so smart.."

"And I love you.."

He kissed my forehead then let me go.

"How's Kelly's mom?"

"She's doing well. Thanks.." I said then hurried off. I was late already. Consequences of partying on a Sunday were coming back at me. I had spent the entire night hosting our friends. Puleng was in her moods. Apparently CJ was messing around but though him messing around she wasn't leaving. At this point I was tired of giving advice. It was not like she was going to take the advice. Getting outside I got in my car then drove straight to work. I answered my phone as my mother called.

"Mom.."

"Rocky your father is inviting you and and your husband for dinner on Thursday since Friday it's the anniversary ceremony. You rarely visit this days."

"I will call you later to confirm."

"Honey are you upset with me?"

"No. No I'm not."

"Rockelle you haven't spoken to me in two weeks. Baby I didn't mean to hurt your feelings."

"It's ok."

"Ok... We will talk later."

"Yeah.." I hung up as I increased my speed. Arriving at work I quickly rushed in then settled by my desk. I got a few smiles as everyone was just busy on their desks. I opened Khuzwayo's case. His case had started last week. So far everything was still looking good.

"Zwane.." A voice said making me look up. I closed my file when I realized it was my boss. He was probably my father's age mate.

"Sir?"

"I have this case.." He said placing a file on top of my desk. "The client specifically asked for you. It seems like you are doing noticeable work out there. You are making the whole company proud. Look into it then tell me what you think."

"Yes Sir.." He then walked away. I opened the file. It was about a 57 year old man. He had been in prison for two years so far and he was in for the possession and transportation of illicit drugs, human trafficking and lastly two murders in jail. I blinked. Pablo Tejera. Such a case was going to be beyond complicated. It was either going to make me or fully destroy me. This man was just in for a lot. I was going to discuss it with Lungile when I got home but there was nothing wrong in trying to see this Pablo Tejera personally.

I stood up then walked to my boss's office. His office was the only office enclosed. I walked gently on his door till he commanded me in.

"Zwane?"

"Is it possible if I talk to the client?" I asked.

He smiled nodding. "Anything is ok."

"Thank you.." I walked out then went back to my desk. After collecting my things I dashed outside then got in my car. This Pablo Tejera was in a tight security prison, the kind of prisons they only put hardcore people. The kind of prison where no life mattered. Getting inside I swear the way the guard looked at me as I waited for Pablo was a warning look. I sat down fiddling with my fingers as I waited for Pablo. When he came out my mouth went dry.

"Pablo?"

"No baby.. Call me Big Daddy."

CHAPTER 39

[NOMPUMELELO]

"She's going to find you. Ma you can't keep doing this. The truth always has a way of coming out."

"She's going to take my baby from me."

"You knew this was going to happen. Honestly you need to tell Mayra the truth before she finds out."

"She's going to hate me. She's going to hate us."

"We will deal with it when we reach that. Right now tell her the truth. Explain to her what happened. It's better hearing from you before April brainwashes her."

"I did all this for her. They were not going to love her." Her voice was strained. I still didn't know why she stole Mayra and I never asked before.

"Why? Why did you take her?"

"Because she's my baby Nompumelelo! She's mine too. I volunteered to be her surrogate when I was working for them as a maid. April can't have kids so they asked me. Though April didn't want the child. She didn't want a baby but her husband, John, he wanted a child so he asked me. The day I gave birth to her I knew I just couldn't leave her. I knew April was going to mistreat her. Mayra is my baby."

"All along I thought.."

"That what? I stole her? I can never steal someone's child Nompumelelo. I don't know why she doesn't have my genes but

she's mine. She's my baby. We can run DNA tests to prove it."

"Then you have nothing to be worried about. tell Mayra the truth."

"I don't want my baby to hate me. It will kill me." I sank back on my chair. My head was buzzing. Mom telling Mayra or not wasn't going to stop April from finding them.

"Can I tell her? For you?"

"What if..—"

"I will explain to her.. Let me tell her."

I heard her sniff making tears prickle my eyes. I knew she was right, we stood a great chance of Mayra hating us. After all the lies we had been feeding her I knew she was going to hate us.

"Ma don't cry.."

"How much more do I have to suffer? All I wanted was my child.."

"Don't cry.. Everything will be fine."

"Nompumelelo it won't be fine. What kind of a mother have I been to my kids? Zuko is there.. My own son hates me. My nine months. He hates me. Then you.. I watched you get married to a man who didn't deserve you. I threw you to the wolves. And Mayra... What kind of a mother am I? I can't even protect my own kids."

"Ma don't say that.. Sometimes life throws us in the darkest pits of all but at the end we have to get up and keep going. We have to go on. You did your best as a mother. I love you so much and I will always love you."

"How's Nicholas?"

"He's ok."

"I remember there's a time you once told me about a boy you

loved.. That one.. The one who was dating your sister wife.."
"Luthando is in the past Ma.. Soon enough Nicholas and I will be getting married."
"Hawe Ma! Did he propose?" I laughed shaking my head.
"No.. But he's going to. He has been talking family for a while now."
"I'm so happy for you my baby. Finding love is always hard."
"Thank you Ma.."
"Call me when he proposes. We will have to inform your uncles."
I chuckled. "Yes.. I have to go now. I will talk to Mayra.."
"Ok.. She's still at that trip with her friends."
"Where did she go again?"
"Fiji.."
"Ok.. I will talk to her."
"Ok.."
"Bye.." I said then hung up. I put the small phone away then focused on my laptop. The gallery in Capetown was doing so well. It made me smile. Just then I heard a sound ping from my laptop. It was an email. I quickly opened it and surprisingly it was Lana.

From: Lana Robert

To: Nompumelelo

RE: Anniversary Ceremony

Good day Nompumelelo, I would like to invite you to my anniversary ceremony with my husband that will be taking place in two days to come. It would really be an honour if you avail yourself. An invitation card will be sent immediately after confirmation of you coming.

Take care

Lana Robert

I blinked a couple of times before I reread the email. I didn't know if me going was a good idea or not but what I knew was that the media was going to be on a look out. I smiled as Tshidi walked in my office making me close the email icon.

"Hey.."

"Hey... I hope I'm not disturbing anything."

"No it's ok.. What is it?"

"I was thinking about getting our name on magazines."

I looked at in confusion. "What do you mean? Our name has been featured a lot of times in magazines."

"No.. I mean magazines out there. Magazines like The tour or Collop." She suggested making me chuckle.

"Tour can maybe consider us but it will stupidly expensive but as for Collop... Forget."

"You never know.. Plus you know the editor so you can.. You know.."

"I know the editor?"

"Yeah.. It's Latoya." She said cautiously.

"What?"

"Yes.. I recently found out when I bought the magazine online."

"Latoya is the editor of Collop?"

"Yeah.. And she was seen with Miguel Thomas a couple of times. I think they are an item."

"No!"

"I'm telling you.." I looked back at my laptop immediately then

went to goggle. With shaky hands I typed her name.. Latoya Samuels.

The first thing that came out was her blog. The Fight, Keeping It Real. It had so many followers. It was safe to say she was a successful blogger. After that, her being an editor came up. Senior Editor, Collop.

She was rated to be one of the best editors especially for Nelson McDonald's car launch. A few pictures of her springed up. Her hair was long and she looked.. Beautiful. I stared at the recent pictures for a while, searching if there was any flaw but there wasn't. Her pictures with Miguel Thomas also springed up. The other one they looked like they were at the airport and she was in an exquisite beautiful gown that followed her curves. She had gotten a bit thicker that now her figure was fully exposed. He was holding her hand as they walked.

"I think we stand a chance of being featured in the magazine." I looked at Tshidi.

"We.. We had a fall out. She won't agree."

"Just try her.. You may get surprised."

"I will try.."

"Ok.. I'm going out for lunch.."

"Ok.." She walked then left me staring back at Latoya's pictures. There were two others where she was with two girls which I believed were her sisters. I knew she wasn't in the country but I had never suspected wherever she was, she was a well known person.

I closed Latoya's tab then went back to Lana's email. There was nothing wrong with making a tiny public appearance.

From: Nompumelelo Sikhosana

To: Lana Robert

RE: Anniversary Ceremony

Thank you for the invite and yes, I would love to come. Will wait for the invitation card.

Nompumelelo Sikhosana

I took a deep breath in. Now I needed a dress. I knew a few designers to call but before I could call them my phone began ringing. It was Nicholas.

"Baby.."He said.

"Hey.."

"Lunch?"

"I can't.. I want to try and meet up with one of my designers."

"For?"

"Ohh Lana invited me to her anniversary ceremony, if I don't show up you know what the media is going to do to me."

"Lana?"

"Kevin's wife.."

"Babe.. I don't think that's a good idea."

"It is.. Let's go together. I just want to show that I have finally found a man worth it." I heard him chuckle which made me smile.

"Ok.. When is it?"

"In two days.."

"That's like on Friday.."

"Yeah.. We can meet up at the designers office together. We need to come up with a theme.." I said standing and packing my

things.

"Ummh babe remember I'm going to Capetown on Friday.."

"Ohh.. I forgot. I'm sorry.."

"It's ok.."

"I will go and stand in for you too.."

"Ok.. We will discuss this further today at home.."

"Ok.."

"I love you.."

"Love you too.." He then dropped the call. I took my bags and walked out dialing Derrek's number. He answered after a while as I unlocked my car.

"Hey sweetie.. Long time.."

"Not really but yeah.. Look I have been invited over to Lana Robert's anniversary ceremony.. I need something to wear. Something eye catching, something... Classic and elegant."

I heard him giggle.

"Something out of this world neh?"

"Yes.. But.. Not something out of this world kind of embarrassing."

"Don't worry love.. I got you. Sooo.. When is it?"

"In two days.."

"Two days is a short period of time but hey.. What do they call me? Come over for measurements so that we start working on something."

"Great.."

[LATOYA]

The reviewed edition that was going to be released on Monday.

It was set. I sighed then reached for my office phone and dialed Sandy's number.

"Sandy hey.."

"Latoya.."

"Is Ava in?"

"Yes.."

"Ok thanks.."

"Ok.." I hung up then stood up. I walked out with the sample of the Monday edition going to her office. Getting in the elevator I sighed as I let it take me to her floor. I looked at my reflection on the elevator walls. Quickly I fixed my pencil skirt and my hair before the elevator doors opened.

I couldn't notice Sandy anywhere, Ava's PA. I walked straight to her door then knocked gently. I heard her voice summoning me to walk in. I walked in with the sample in my hand. Getting inside my eyes met a man and Ava. She looked her usual though she was smiling.

"Ohh that's Latoya.. She's our editor." I smiled trying to figure out what she was doing now. "Latoya come.. Meet Jackson. He is here on behalf of Mr Thomas." I kept my smile intact.

"It's nice to meet you.. Uhh I brought the sample for the Monday edition. I went through it and I think it's ready to go the printers."

"Oh great! Run with it."

"Uhh you are not checking it?"

"I trust you.. Run with it."

"Ok.." I said then walked out feeling extremely confused.

Wondering what that was. Getting back at the office I send the copy to the printing company before I took out my lunch. As I

started eating all I was thinking was Luthando. He was right. I couldn't keep his daughter away from him. I felt extremely guilty for keeping her away for so long. God knew I didn't do it because I wanted to punish him. I had done it to avoid complications. In his life, in my life. I wasn't entirely comfortable with another woman raising my child but for two weeks I had been thinking about it. I wasn't just hurting Luthando but I was also hurting my own daughter in the process. She deserved to have a father in her life.

I put my sandwich aside then went to my emails. I quickly replied to Lana's email which was sent yesterday.

From: Latoya Samuels

To: Lana Robert

RE: Anniversary Ceremony

See you then..

Latoya Samuels, Senior Editor, Collop Magazine

After replying to her email I somehow felt as if I was doing the right thing. I continued to eat my lunch as I watched a slideshow of Ocean's pictures. She had the Maphoto ears. They really made my baby look funny. I could still hear Luthando's words ring in my ears. Somehow the fact that he considered us a family made me smile. I couldn't deny the fact that I still loved him but if we were ever going to get back together a lot had to change. A lot that I doubted he could change. I didn't want to settle for less than I deserved. I didn't want to settle for what was below me but my heart wanted what it wanted. I loved him and it hurt like a bitch.

The day continued to drag. Planning for another edition was just another story but I was glad my work break was starting on Friday. It ran for two weeks in every 3 months. Immediately after work I drove home. I felt as if my life decisions could affect my siblings and I didn't want that. Arriving at home they were all home watching the Kardashians.

"Hey guys.." I said walking in and picking up my daughter who was playing with her doll.

"Mommy.. Back.." I smiled.

"Yes honey.. I'm back.." I said sitting besides Latifar. "Can we talk?" Latisher looked at me.

"Yeah.."

"I have thought about this and.. I realized how selfish I'm being. I can't keep Ocean from her father.. It's wrong." Latifar smiled then took my hand and gave it a squeeze.

"I'm glad you realize it."

"Yeah.. So I have decided to maybe try to fix things.. I don't know if it's too late but.. I guess there's nothing wrong in trying. I'm going to discuss Ocean's custody with my lawyer."

"I'm going to miss my baby.." Latisher said taking Ocean from me.

"Me too.. We are leaving.. Tomorrow.."

"What?" Latisher gasped.

"Whaa.." Ocean tried intimating.

"Yeah.." With that I stood up then went upstairs. Somehow the thought of leaving my baby brought tears to my eyes. I felt my heart break into small pieces. Ocean was the reason I kept striving everyday. She was the reason I smiled. She was my life.

Getting under the shower I let it out as I sunk to the floor. After a while I was sitting on the shower floor feeling numb. By the time I finally managed to collect myself I stood up then made my way to my bed. I pulled the duvet over my head then shut my eyes tightly and gave in to the darkness as I let go of the soring reality.

I felt hands on me followed by giggles.

"Mommy!" A scream forced my eyes open. They met with Ocean who was wide awake. She was on a holiday and this days she was always happy. Latisher was done with high school too. All she was waiting for was her prom which she couldn't wait to attend.

"Hey baby.."

"Wakey wakey!"

"I'm awake.." I sat upright then got up with her. I put her on my back as I walked to the bathroom. Looking at myself on the mirror I looked a mess. My eyes were puffy and reddish.

"Mommy looks a whole mess baby!"

She giggled as she wrapped her tiny arms around me.

"Ok.. Let's call work first then.. We start packing." Reality was all there to be felt. I walked out then took my handbag which was on the floor. Taking it I put Ocean on the bed then searched for my phone. Getting it I sighed as I searched for Ava's number. She couldn't possibly fire me. I had done everything I had to for the week. She picked up after a while.

"Ava hello?"

"Good morning, it's Latoya.."

"Latoya how can I help you?"

"I wanted to ask if I can start my break today. I have an emergency to deal with."

"Ok.." That wasn't the reaction I expected but I was relieved.

"Thank you." She hung up immediately after that. If there was anyone I couldn't handle, it was Ava. She was a whole bitch. I gave my phone to Ocean who was just staring at me. I knew my phone would keep her occupied as I tried to pack our clothes. I took out my big suitcase then started packing carefully. Almost all Ocean's clothes were in my room. Some were in Latisher's room because that's where she slept most of the time.

By the time I was done packing Ocean was long gone. She was probably doing the most wherever she was.

I picked my phone which she had left on the floor then started looking for any flight which was flying out today. The only flight that was flying out was departing in five hours that meant I still had time. I called my lawyer and discussed my issue with him. I was to pick up the custody documents after two hours.

Everything was just moving so fast but it felt so right. I had taken two years to do the right thing.

"Hey.." Latifar said walking in my room as I dragged the bag out.

"Hey.."

"Are you ok? We thought we could give you some space."

"I'm fine.. Ocean's holiday is just one and a half month. She will be back before we know it."

"I know you are putting on a brave face.. This is really hurting you."

"It's the right thing.. I can't keep Ocean from her father."

She walked towards me and hugged me tightly.

"I love you Sis.." She whispered.

"I love you too." She let go then sat on my bed.

"I know this issue is sensitive but.. Where did you get that man! Here I thought the professor was hot but no damn.. I don't know nothing." I chuckled.

"You are crazy.. It's official."

"That man.. He is the definition of a real man. Bruhh I was gone I swear. His voice. His voice! I just can't! And that walk.. That walk will have a bitch falling."

My ribs hurt from laughter. Latifar was just crazy.

"And those muscles. Those tattoos... Shit! I can't. That kind of hottness is illegal. Where did you get him?"

"Leave my man alone!"

"Damn Sis! And that mustache.. Shit! He's a whole three course meal. He's starter meal.. The real meal and desert all combined.!"

"Stop! Help me with this bag. I'm meeting my lawyer in two hours.." She laughed as she helped me with my bag. Getting downstairs surprisingly Miguel was there with Latisher and Ocean.

"Hey.. Going somewhere?"

CHAPTER 40

[JANINE]

King walked with our bags inside the lodge. I walked behind him admiring the beauty that was before my eyes. Being in that beautiful place made feel like I should have agreed sooner.

"It's beautiful isn't it?" King asked as he put our bags down.

"It is.. I think you were right."

He chuckled taking my hands into his. "Of cause I was."

He had suggested that we visit Botswana a week ago. I had refused when he first mentioned it, I couldn't leave for recreational purposes while criminals still roamed around. I had agreed three days ago when he kept bothering me. Looking around I certainly didn't regret being here.

"I'm so tired. I want a bath.. And a bed."

"Wait here.." He said walking to the bathroom I guess. I threw myself on the bed then took off my shoes. Chobe game Lodge was beyond beautiful. For a weekend away I didn't mind staying in the beautiful laid back lodge. The welcome we had received was so warm, it felt as if we were family. They picked us at the airport. The way they had been treating us so far was beyond what I had expected.

"King!" I called out as I sat up right in the bed. He came back after a while.

"Come.." I sighed as I got off the bed then walked towards him.

"We are about to have a long bath.." He said unbuttoning my shirt. I let him undress me though I still felt a bit uncomfortable. If we were not having sex, King seeing me naked made me feel uncomfortable. I never felt fat before but before his eyes I felt as if all my imperfections were all out there for him to see. It wasn't a nice feeling. After I was completely naked he kissed my forehead then my nose then my lips.

"You are so beautiful.." He whispered against my lips. "So perfect." I swallowed as I blinked a couple times trying to get rid of the thought which kept telling that there was nothing perfect

about me.

He trailed gentle kisses from my lips, my neck then chest. When he reached my breast he looked at them as he cupped them though they were too big for his hand.

"So beautiful.. Why are you so beautiful.." He whispered though it wasn't a question. I swallowed as harsh words rang in my ears.

'You are fat! You will never be anything!'

'You are disgusting to look at!'

'You can never amount to anything with your fatness!'

'You look like a whale!'

I closed my eyes trying to keep the voices away. All my life I had tried by all means to block them away but now they were too loud.

'You are a Jojo tank!'

'Fatcake!'

I could feel King's kisses trailing down my belly then my bellybutton.

"So perfect.." He whispered.

'You can never get married!'

'You ugly fat thing! '

I felt tears stream down.

"King.." I whispered. He continued kissing, going to my thighs.

"King.. King.." He stopped immediately. After a while I was in his arms sobbing silently. The harsh insults about my weight had started when my mother passed on. I had to deal with insults at home and at school. After a while I was in his arms on the floor. I found solace in his arms. In his arms I knew I was home.

"Babe?" He called out. He probably thought I was asleep.

"I'm awake.." I whispered.

"I love you ok.." He said tilting my face so I look at him. I smiled then nodded.

"The divorce has been finalised."

"Ohh.."

"Yes.. Can I now tell my uncles about you?" I giggled on his chest.

"Yes.."

"Thank God.. And when can we get married?"

I huffed rolling my eyes. "Right now."

"That can still do if you say we pay bride price after the wedding." I raised my head from his chest then looked at him.

"What? I was just saying.. We have to plan the whole lobola process. Get my family together then your uncles pay bride price. After that then we can start planning for a wedding."

"So how long do we need? To finally tie the knot?" He said pulling unto his chest again.

"Well I don't know.. Six months?"

"Six months is a lot of time! No!"

"Then five.."

"Four.."

"Five!"

"Four and half.."

"That's not..—"

"Four and half. No more negotiations."

"Ok.. So you are moving here?"

"Yes. I want us and I'm choosing us."

"What about work?"

"Don't worry.."

"Let's go bath.." I whispered as I started feeling fatigue sink in me.

King stood up then helped me up. We walked to the bathroom. The bathtub was full of water and I couldn't miss the lavender scent that filled the air.

"Come.." King said motioning me to get inside the tub. I got inside then him behind me pulling me into him so that I rest my upper body on his chest.

"Your colleague with a crush on you doesn't like me."

"King Orlando doesn't see me like that."

"Well it's either he likes you or he's gay." I laughed.

"You are sick."

"Babe I'm telling you.. It's either he likes you or he's gay.."

"I'm not going to listen to you.."

"Ok.. You will ask me one day in the future and I will remind you of this day."

"You are crazy.." He started massaging my shoulders. I relaxed my body.

"After we get married, would you want us to have kids baby?"

"Mhmm."

"You would?"

"Yeah.."

"Me too.." He continued massaging me making me close my eyes and take in the whole feeling. After a while I felt his hand between my legs.

"King.." I moaned as he rubbed my clitoris. A whole thought slithered in my head as he dipped in his finger.

"King.." I whispered..

"Yes baby.."

"Your ex wife.. Did she..—"

"Shhhh.." He whispered gently as thrust in two fingers in me making me let out a soft whimper. I closed my eyes tightly.

[ROCKELLE]

We sat on the table, four of us. I could tell Lungile didn't want to be here. I had forced him to come with.

"We are so glad you guys are here." Mom said smiling her best smile. Dad took her hand and kissed it. They looked so in love.

"You know how she gets but we did miss you. How's business son?" Dad asked Lungile who smiled a fake smile. There was no doubt he hated my father, all his friends hated my father.

"Business is going well.. The expansion process is coming up well together."

"That's great.. I was even telling some of my colleagues about you a few days ago.. People like you are the future leaders."

"Honey.. It's dinner time.. We should be eating and chatting business free conversations."

Dad laughed. "Ok.. This woman sometimes!"

Lungile just chuckled. Dorrin after a while was placing the dinner before us.

"Thank you darling.." Mom said thanking her. She had been my mother's maid since high school.

"This smells delicious!" I said trying to break the silence that had fallen. I didn't want my parents to notice Lungile's attitude.

"Ummh so is everything ready for tomorrow?" I asked dishing for

myself.

"Yes.. Everything is set.. Oh I can't wait. Your father and I have never been happier.." I smiled as they gave each other adorable looks. They looked so in love. I guess nothing could beat true love.

After a while we were eating. The food was so good. Mom never ate low grade food, she always opted for the best. We engaged in small conversations here and there though Lungile was hardly saying anything. After dinner Dorrin cleared the table as we got up.

"Son.. A cigar?" Dad offered to Lungile. It was funny how Dad adored Lungile while Lungile loathed him. I had never said anything about his hate for my family but today I wasn't going to keep quiet. Why couldn't he at least try loving them for me? Lungile excused himself when his phone started ringing. I had a feeling after that call he was going to want to leave. When he was completely out of sight I looked at Dad.

"He's stressed about a case. You know he doesn't like losing." I said trying to cover for him.

Dad chuckled. "He reminds me of myself when I was young. I know the feeling." I smiled with relief. At least he believed me. When Lungile came back he smiled.

"Sorry about that."

"It's ok son.. Up for the Cigar?"

"Yeah.." They stalked off leaving me with mom.

"Hey sweetie.." She said hugging me. I hugged her back before she led me to the couch. I loved the house they stayed in. It was so big and free.

"How are you sweetie?" I smiled.

"I'm fine."

"Still trying for a baby?"

"No.."

"Ohh.." She smiled. "I didn't think you were going to listen to me."

"Well.. Lungile and I have decided to wait a bit."

"Thank God! Now you can focus on yourself. I'm so proud of you." I smiled, I wasn't going to tell her that I had tried for artificial assimilation but then decided IVF was much better and that the process was going to take place during the weekend.

"Yes.. So how many people are coming for the ceremony tomorrow.. I hope you don't mind but I invited Kelly and Puleng."

"No.. It's ok. They are your real friends. A quite number of people are coming. Your father's associations will be there too. I just hope the ceremony won't turn into a business conference."

I laughed. "I think you need to pray.. You know how dad can be."

"I know.. I'm just worried. But.. I know everything will go well."

"Yeah.. Don't stress." A few minutes later Dad and Lungile were back laughing at something though even a blind person could see that it was forced.

"You are done?" Mom asked standing up. I stood up too then walked towards Lungile.

"Yes.. Lungile and his wife have to go now.. He has a game to watch."

Mom laughed before she hugged Lungile and I.

"We will see you guys tomorrow."

"Yes Mrs Robert."

"Lana please.." Mom said smiling. Dad hugged me then kissed my cheek.

"Ok bye.. Mom will see you tomorrow. You too Daddy.."

"Ok sweetheart."

Lungile and I walked out of the house. I was seething in anger, I was boiling. Getting in the car he started it then reversed out.

"Lungile why do you hate my father so much?" I asked on our way home.

"Who said I hate him?"

"You do!"

"Rockelle I don't want to fight."

"You hate my family! If you can't deal with my family then why are you married to me?"

"I don't want to fight!"

"And the attitude you were giving my father? Really? Honestly I'm sick and tired of this! Lungile you just can't hate my father because of your ex girlfriend! She got married to my father because she wanted. He didn't force her!"

"Rockelle.. I don't want to argue with you because hurtful words will be exchanged between us."

I laughed. "Hurtful words such as? Such as you not loving me and being stuck in a loveless marriage?"

"Rockelle drop it!" I took a deep breath then kept quiet. I opened the window then let the cool air hit my face. I couldn't cry. Arriving home I got out of the car then walked towards the house. Quickly I unlocked then walked inside. He was following behind me.

"Lungile if.. If this marriage.. If it's not working for you please tell

me. I won't force you to stay with me. I will never do that to you. The worst thing that can happen is you being with me but not loving me. Besides it making you suffer, it will hurt me. I'm really trying to be the best wife you can ever get but clearly it's not working. Please.. Please.. If you can't do this anymore say it. I know you don't want to hurt me.. Like you hurt Janine but trust me there's nothing that hurts more than being stuck with someone who can't love you the way you would love them." I said looking at him. My heart was beating fast as I tried to keep my tears at bay. He walked towards me then took my hands into his.

"It's not I don't love you.."

"Don't lie.. Just say it. Please.."

"Rockelle honestly I feel as if we rushed things. Our marriage was rushed."

"Lungile do you love me?"

"I.. I do. I love and care about you."

"But? Say it.. You won't be hurting me. You will be setting me free. Setting you free. Setting us free from the bondage."

"But as a sister. I am really trying to learn how to love you."

I nodded then smiled wiping away my tears. My lips were shaking as I tried to be strong.

"Thank you. A lot of people would rather just keep quiet so that they can cheat. You are a wonderful man Lungile. Whoever that you will end up with.. I hope she realizes it." I walked over to him and hugged him. I was quivering with emotional pain.

"Thank you." I let him go then walked upstairs. With each step I felt dizzy. With each step I took I felt my heart get heavy. I

walked past our bedroom door then walked to the guest room. Getting inside I locked the door behind me then took a deep breath before I let it all out. It hurt. My knees felt weak. My whole body was shaking. I sank to the floor and cried. It hurt. It hurt more than anything. I never knew emotional pain could hurt physically. I cried because it hurt. From there, I didn't know if I still had a road to still walk on.

[LATOYA]

I looked around the hotel room. It was going to do for tonight. "Mommy.." Ocean muttered softly. She looked beyond tired though she still kept her eyes open.

"Honey let's go bath then sleep right?" I said taking her off my shoulder and placing her on the bed. She didn't bother sitting up straight and playing like the usual. She just lay on on the bed.

"Sleep.." I smiled at her tiny voice.

"Yes.. Sleep." I kneeled down on my suitcase then opened it. I took out my pyjamas and Ocean's changing clothes together with our toiletry bag.

"Come.." I said reaching over but she was already sleeping. Her tiny thumb was in her mouth as she sucked gently. I walked to the bathroom then filled the tub. After filling the tub I went back to the bedroom then undressed her before taking her with me to the bathroom. I had to bath her skillfully and quick so to put her to bed. She opened her eyes lazily when she felt the warm water on her body. Her birthmark which was on her neck was not hard to notice. It was purplish. A huge purplish circle. It was funny how she didn't take her thumb out of her mouth. I bathed her

quickly then dried her up before dressing her up and putting her to bed. I took a deep breath as I got inside the tub and let the warm water cover my body. I was tired. Traveling with a child was just too much work. When I wanted to sleep that's when Ocean was awake and in full active mode. When she was asleep I had to keep an eye on her. I let the water sooth my aching muscles. After a while I walked out of the bathtub then changed into my PJ's. I didn't know if I needed to call Luthando or not but the thought of him maybe being with a lady had me reaching for my phone. I still knew his number by head. I had long put in my South African sim card. I held my breath as his phone rang but only to drop it immediately when I realized I was being that woman I hated. What he did with his life was his own issue. I was too mature for such games. I was only going to call him to tell him about Ocean. That was the only thing that connected us. I got in blankets besides my daughter then tried to sleep but only for my phone to start ringing. He was calling me back. I looked at it as it rang and when it stopped I switched it off then slept.

CHAPTER 41

[NOMPUMELELO]

I looked on the mirror and stared at myself. I looked beautiful if I said so myself. My hair was styled and my dress was just too beautiful. For something that was made in hours it was too beautiful.

"And?" Derrek asked.

"It's beautiful.. I look beautiful."

He smiled. "You look gorgeous sweetie.. Beyond. Now.. I think you are good to go." I smiled as I continued to stare at my dress from the mirror.

"Yeah... I'm already late. I'm sure they are done renewing their vows."

"Oska ba hemisa wena girl!" I laughed then retreated from the mirror. We were at his boutique. I took my matching purse then walked outside straight to my car. Getting in my car I took a deep breath before I started it. I maneuvered the car into the road and started the journey to the anniversary's venue. I had received my invitation card yesterday. I couldn't help it but to feel this was all a bad idea. As much as I wanted to make a public appearance I felt as if I was making a grave mistake. Parking the car at the venue's parking lot I took my purse then stepped out. My royal blue dress was long, maybe even extra long. I held the hem exposing my Gucci heels with sparkling blue details. The dress didn't expose my figure but it left one trying to estimate how my body was shaped. I walked to the red carpet with my curls bouncing on my shoulders. My hairstylist had curled it. Stepping on the red carpet I let go of the hem then started walking towards the entrance. A few pictures were taken till I got inside. I held my breath as I looked at around. The design. It was beyond beautiful. It was extraordinary. I smiled at the servers who were holding glasses of wine then passed them. Suddenly I felt nervous. Too nervous that I clutched my purse a little bit too tight. Tables and chairs were arranged in a formal manner, each table hosted about 8 people. They were a lot of people but I knew it was still going to be filled. The decorations

were to die for but after all.. It was Lana. She was known for only and only I repeat.. wanting finer things in life. We could start of at the fact that she looked 25 while in fact she was just 45.

I looked around the crowd earning myself smiles and nods. As I looked around my eyes fell on Rockelle. She was wearing a maroon dress, her hair styled in a mess bun. She was holding a glass of champagne standing with two girls. One of them looked familiar but I didn't dwell on it.

"Lelo!" She called out making me smile walking towards her. The crowd was growing with each second.

"Hey.." I said hugging her. She smiled then held my hands.

"Wow! So beautiful.."

I let out a slight laugh. "Thank you. You too.."

She rolled her eyes. "Oh please.."

"Hello girls!" I greeted her friends. They all returned warm hellos accompanied by smiles. "Anyways I will see you around Rocky.."

"Yeah.."

I walked away from them. I looked around now searching for business. I had my business cards safely in my purse. At events like this, business was likely to be on fire. I smiled as I noticed Nadia, she was the CEO of some dialogue group. As I walked towards her my eyes fell on Luthando. He could not be missed in his white shirt, maroon jacket and pants. The bowtie and the silver watch finished his look. His low fade made him just extra hot. I walked towards him, summoning my confidence. He was looking around as he sipped on his champagne though I just wondered what he was doing here.

"Hi.." I said making him turn to look at me. He stared at me for a

while, his eyes moving down my body then back to my face again. He smiled making me blush. That smile of his was dangerous.

"Lelo.."

"Fancy seeing you here.." I said as I grabbed a glass of champagne from a server who was passing by us.

"Well.. I'm here for business. What are you doing attending your ex husband's anniversary." I let out a slight laugh. "Can't I support him? We are not enemies plus Lana invited me."

"I see.." His eyes skimmed through the crowd again. It was officially filled up and people were all over the place dressed in beautiful gowns and suits.

"Are they done with the vows?" I asked smiling.

"Yes.." He was still looking around. Turning following his eyes Kevin came into view. He was with Lana by his side and two men. Lana was smiling brightly showing her white teeth and her dimple. The way Kevin laughed was so carefree. I had never seen him laugh like that.

"It was nice seeing you around.." I said attempting to walk away but that's when my eyes fell at the entrance. The purple dress she was putting on caught my attention. It was purple and it hugged her fully developed figure, her full curves and narrow waist were exposed. The dress was sleeveless though it didn't expose much of her cleavages. It stopped below her knees exposing her beautiful legs. With the matching purple shoes she had in her hand a gold with purple details purse. Her feathery small hat made her look more elegant. I wasn't the only who has noticed her, a lot of people had. She was just beautiful with her

caramel flawless skin.

"Shit!" Luthando muttered besides me. I looked at him as Latoya walked right in the crowd with a smile on her face. "The fuck is she doing here?" He asked himself though it was loud enough for me to hear.

"She's probably here because Lana invited her. She looks beautiful."

"Dammit! Lelo I want you to do me the biggest favour. I know you don't really like me but.. Please.. I want you to take Latoya out of here now. Take her outside.. I will come after you guys."

"And you obviously think she's going to want to talk to me or even let me take her away? After what happened?"

"You know what.. It's fine.." He said walking away, headed to the direction she went. I smiled, they did make a cute couple. Luthando was not mine.. His attitude was just on another level. He needed girls like Latoya who could tame him. I was glad I had realized how him and I could never be earlier. I straightened my shoulders as I walked towards Nadia. My mind was all business.

[LATOYA]

"I'm fine thank you." I said to the lady who had greeted me. I didn't know her but she knew me.

"I'm the biggest fan of your blog online." I smiled.

"Thank you for supporting me, it really means a lot."

"Thank you for taking your time to teach us about life.." She gave me a brief hug before letting me walk away. I now had a glass champagne in my hands though it tastes like cardboard. For someone like Lana I had expected something more

sophisticated. I looked around, it was so filled making it hard for me to spot anyone I knew. I had arrived late because I couldn't get hold of Nono. I regretted not alerting her that I was coming before hand because I needed someone to babysit Ocean.

When I finally got hold of her, I had to pick her up from her work place then finally change. Since Ocean was just trouble, they were outside in the car at the parking lot. I had left her crying.

"Latoya.." A voice called from behind me making me turn. I smiled at Terry. I didn't expect to see her here. She didn't look different. I wondered who's father she was with today.

"Terry.."

"Wow.. I'm speechless."

I smiled as she hugged me. "How are you?"

"I'm fine.. And I can see that so are you.."

"Yeah you..—"

"Evening.." A voice said making me sigh before looking at him. Suits looked good on him but they didn't match his character. Not even by one bit though he did look smoking hot. Terry blushed as she looked at him. If only she knew the monster in him.

"Toots can we talk?" He asked now looking at me though I doubted it was a question.

"I'm still busy with—"

"It will be quick.. Come on babe.. She will be back just now." He said to Terry who just nodded. To avoid drama I let him take my hand and lead me outside. We walked further to the entrance heading to the cars.

"Wait.. Where are you taking me?"

"What are you doing here? Where's my daughter if you are here?"

"Don't you ever! Ever in your life address me like that. I'm not your friend. My being here is non of your business secondly and lastly, Ocean is fine where she is." I said trying so hard to keep my anger on check. He rubbed his hands looking frustrated but at the same time all sorts of hotness.

"I'm sorry." He apologized. All the anger immediately got dissipated as I felt my face soften. "I'm really sorry. You are right I have no right to ask you such. Askies babe ok?" I swallowed then nodded. It felt good to have put him in his place.

"It's ok.." I whispered.

"So where's Ocean?"

"I came with her so—"

"You came with her?" His voice was steady though there was some edginess in it.

"Yes because I realized I was being selfish. You also deserved some time with her so I brought her here for the holiday." His eyes softened as he took my hands into his.

"You brought her for me?"

"Yes.. Because it's the right thing to do."

"So is raising our daughter together."

I gave him a look. "We will raise our daughter together but without us being together. I don't think you and I can ever be together. We are incompatible."

He chuckled. "That's crazy. Says who?"

"Says the reason why we are not together right now."

"You know that was just a fucked up situation Latoya.. Our

relationship didn't have a strong foundation. It was all lies and secrets. Now that everything is out in the air.. We can make it work."

"Now that everything is out in the air? You still have the attitude you had before. I don't want to be in a relationship with someone who makes me feel insecure and someone who manipulates me."

"Look.. We will discuss this another time. I want you to do something for me.. Who is with Ocean?"

"She's with Nono in the car."

"Dammit! Here?"

"Yeah.." His face creased as frustration took over. "Is everything ok?"

"Yeah.. Please.. I'm begging you.. Can you sit in the car for a while.. Please.."

"No.. Why would I—""

"Latoya.. Babe.. Please. Just for a while. Where's your car?"

"Luthando this is what I'm talking about. I'm not going anywhere to please you."

"I'm begging you."

"Keep begging then. I'm going back." I said attempting to walk away but he grabbed my hand.

"Just for 10 minutes only. Please."

"Why?"

"Latoya!" I could see he was beginning to lose his cool.

"Bye." I said moving away from him but only for him to grab me and kiss me. My whole body stilled at realization of what was going on. I kissed him back taking in the taste of the disgusting

champagne from his tounge. He grabbed my butt then pushed me against him making me moan in his mouth. I felt all kinds of emotions all once as he kissed me harder. He stepped back abruptly.

"Latoya you drive insane! Fucken tell me where your car is!" He asked, his voice so deep and husky. I was breathing hard as I tried to understand what had just happened.

I meekly pointed at it. I had rented it in the morning. He let go one hand then walked with me towards the car.

"Loving you is with worst punishment God has ever given me!" He mumbled as we walked.

Getting there he opened the door. It wasn't locked, he then peaked inside. My heart didn't settle with having Luthando and Nono in the same place. I heard Ocean scream Daddy. He took her then held her for a while.

"Babe.. Get inside." He said moving from the door. I looked at him confused.

"Luthando.. —"

"Toots.. Please.."

"Toos.." Ocean mimicked in her father's arms. I sighed then got inside the car besides Nono who just had an impassive look.

"Take.." He said handing over Ocean to me. I took her from him then looked at him expectantly.

"I want you to wait here for me ok?"

"What?"

"Toots wait for me here. I'm coming." He said then closed the door and walked away. I blinked a couple times trying to understand the situation. I knew something was up, he was up

to something.

"Is everything ok?" Nothando asked. I smiled then looked at her.

"Yeah.."

"He really loves his daughter."

"I know.. I feel guilty for keeping her away."

"He loves you too. He looks like a puppy in love." I shook my head. Luthando and I could never be. Our relationship had been toxic from the start.

"You can fix things you know..."

"With Luthando you never know. What happened between you two again?" I asked, now more curious. She had never really told me the story expect that it was complicated.

[ROCKELLE]

I was feeling light headed and dizzy. I knew it was the champagne but I couldn't seem to stop myself from drinking it. It made me feel better somehow.

"Rocky maybe you should sit." Kelly said trying to balance me. Puleng had went to the restroom.

"I'm fine.." I said though my speech was slurred. My vision was starting to blur. I blinked a couple times trying to get a clear vision.

"You are not.. Come." she said leading me to the table. People were mingling waiting for dinner to be served. The anniversary had went well. My parents were undeniably happy but here I was.. Drowning in alcohol.

"Rocky what's wrong?" I laughed at Kelly's question. What was wrong? I laughed more as tears made their way out. Couldn't

she just figure it out?

"Everything is wrong.. Everything." I muttered. "Everything is just wrong. My life.. My marriage.. Everything." I continued.

"What happened?"

"Lungile doesn't love me." She took my hand into hers.

"Lungile loves you so much Rockelle.. Everyone knows this."

"It's a lie.. A whole damn lie.. He wants Janine.. Not me.. He doesn't love me." More tears streamed down my face.

"Rockelle.. Don't—"

"He told me! He told me yesterday.. He told me he doesn't love me. That he cares about me as a sister. That.. That.. He doesn't love me like I do."

"What?"

"He hates me. He hates my family.."

"I'm sorry.." She said hugging me. I held her tightly as the pain continued to rip me. I thought maybe after sleeping it of it would feel better but it didn't. In the morning when I woke up he wasn't home. I guess he couldn't stand me no more.

"All this time.. All this time I tried so hard to please him.. To make him happy.. But guess I was the fool."

"I'm sorry baby.."

"What did I do to deserve this? What?"

"Hey.. Don't cry." She said wiping my tears away.

"It hurts.. It hurts so bad. It hurts..."

"I'm sorry. Know that I'm here. I got you.."

"It hurts.. It hurts here.." I said putting her hand on my chest. "It hurts."

"Rockelle!" My father's voice said making a cry escape my lips.

He quickly hugged me while getting me up from the chair and leading me out. A few people were looking.

"Daddy.." I sobbed trying to control it.

"Come.." He said as he tried to lead me away from the crowd. It reminded me of the time I was in high school. During prom. My prom date had embarrassed me leaving me in tears. Daddy had just walked right in there then took my hand and led me outside. He was always there. Like now.

As we walked towards the entrance I heard a sound. Bang! Bang! Twice. It was so loud it brought both dad and I to a stop. I knew that sound so well. It was a gun. There was silence. Total silence in the crowd as people tried to understand what had just happened. I felt dad's hand slip away from mine slowly followed by him falling to the ground in a loud thud. A few screams erupted from the crowd as I looked at my father on the ground frozen. His white suite was bloody on his chest and blood oozed from his mouth.

My knees felt so weak that I fell to the ground besides him. With shaking hands I held his hand ignoring the crowd that had gathered around us. I felt tears fall from my eyes as I stared at my father.

"No!" I screamed. Screamed out of pain.

"Daddy..." I cried as I shook his lifeless body. He couldn't be gone. I still needed him. I still needed my hero. I heard a voice screaming someone should call on ambulance. Another voice screamed someone should get me away from him but it all sounded so faint in my ears. I felt myself die as everything in me broke.

CHAPTER 42

[LATOYA]

I heard commotion as I sat in the car with Nono and Ocean followed by gun shots. My heart stilled as I held my startled baby tightly in my arms. My heart was beating so fast it was threatening to leap out from my chest.

"Latoya maybe we should go." Nono suggested.

"No.. Luthando is inside.." I said panicking. I knew with the way people were screaming someone had been shot. I couldn't help it but to get worried.

Nothando chuckled making me look at her.

"It's not him. It can never be him."

"And how do you know this?"

"Because I know him! Probably he is the one that fired. I think we should leave. Look at Ocean.. She's already crying." I looked at her for a while. Her comment didn't sit well with me. Not that I didn't believe her but the part of her making a comment about my man as if he was hers. I handed her the baby then got out of the car. Just then I saw him walking towards us. His jacket now unbuttoned. I looked at him for a while trying to read him but I wasn't getting anything.

"You can't just do as you are told can you?" He asked making me look at him, carefully analysing him.

"What's going on?"

"It's nothing.. We should get going." I stared at him for a while then stepped back.

"No. I'm going home."

"Home?"

"Nono.."

"You can't be serious. You just—" he was cut short by his phone ringing. He took it out then answered it with a frown.

"Ya?" He was quiet for a while while his expression changed to a completely worried one. I had never seen him like that before. "Is she ok?" He asked though his voice was so strained. I wanted to know what was going on. He hung up after a while. I could almost pinpoint the pain on his face.

"Luthando what's going on?" I asked as Nono stepped out of the car without Ocean.

"I have to go. My mom had a heart attack." He said walking away.

"Wait.. I'm coming with."

He turned and looked at me. He looked so defeated, I hated seeing him like that.

"Go home with Ocean." He then continued walking away. I got inside the car immediately then took Ocean together with her bag then ran after him without reluctance. He didn't stop me this time around. No.. He opened the passenger door for me. I got in with Ocean in my hands. He was quiet the whole way. I wanted to assure him that I was here but I was just tongue tied. By the time we arrived at what looked like the hospital Ocean was asleep quietly in my arms.

"I'm coming." Luthando said then got off. I sat still in his car as I watched him disappear inside the hospital.

Somehow I just had a bad feeling. The same feeling I had gotten when my parents were not back at the usual time only to be told

they had passed on. My heart bled for Luthando. No one deserved losing their parents. It hurt. My mind raced back to the gun shots I had heard. I was going to ask at the right time. After sitting in the car for about 20 minutes I finally decided to follow after him. I took Ocean's small fleece from her bag then covered her before I walked out of his car. After taking a few steps from the car I walked back, opened the drivers seat and took the car keys from the ignition. Walking away I locked the car and held the keys as I walked inside the hospital. I didn't need to know where to go, immediately when I walked in my eyes fell on Juliette who was in her brother's arms on the floor crying. Her cries pieced through my heart painfully. They broke something deep in me that no matter how I bit my lip to stop them from quivering tears still fell from my eyes. She looked so defeated, so done as she cried. I knew how it felt. I knew exactly how it felt to be in that position. I knew how painful it was.

Slowly I walked towards them as Juliette's cries continued to painfully clench my heart.

As much as I knew I had no right to be there with them that moment I couldn't help the way I yearned to just take in some of their pain. The atmosphere wasn't so subtle. It was so hard to breath, it was filled with nothing but sorrow. It was filled with woe. I stood besides them for a while till Juliette's cries turned into a silent sob. A sob that held great pain and grief.

They stood up as she tried to clean up her face. Everyone was now staring, I could see pity in their eyes. Sympathy. She looked at me after a while. Her eyes moved from Ocean to me then back at her brother.

"What's she doing here?" She whispered.

"Julie I know what you are going through I.. —" she cut me short and that's when I realized that perhaps that had been a wrong move. A very wrong move that I wished to take back because the hostility, the anger that reflected in her eyes accompanied by pain threw me off.

"You don't know anything! You don't know anything so shut up! You are a whore and that's all you know! You are nothing but a slut and you don't deserve to be here!" She screamed startling Ocean. "My mother is dead and you tell me you know what I'm going through. Besides opening your legs what do you know? Besides being a prostitute what do you know? I feel very sorry for that child you are holding. I wonder how she will feel when she realizes she's a product of whoreness!" I took a deep breath. I could see she was saying all that because of grief.

"I'm sorry. My parents passed on too when—"

"I don't blame them. Having to be alive and having you as a daughter is worse than having to be dead."

"Julie it's enough. Let's go." Luthando said grabbing her sisters hand and walking out. As much as I knew she was just hurt that was why the hurtful words I couldn't help but being hurt too over her words. They had just hit deep within. I watched them as they walked away. Ocean was now awake looking ready to cry. I walked to a bench then sat down. That's when I realized I was holding the car keys. As soon as I sat down I noticed Luthando walking back towards me.

I stretched my hand with the car keys as he approached me.

"Let's go.." He said taking the car keys from me.

"I don't think that's a good idea."

"Latoya you can't be serious.. Julie is just hurt. We just lost our mother."

"I know.. And I'm so sorry. I'm really sorry.. But how do you think Julie would feel? She's hurt. She doesn't deserve to deal with me on top of everything. She needs your undivided attention. Times like this are the worst of them all. She needs you so much right now more than ever. You need to be with her, holding her not trying to anger her more. You are the only one she has now." I stood up as he stared at me. "I need Ocean's bag. I will sit here and wait for Nono. She will come pick us up after I manage to call her. I'm staying at Palazzo hotel. You can come and see Ocean tomorrow and whenever you are free."

He was silent for a while as he looked at me then he finally took Ocean from me.

"Luthando..."

"You are my family. You, Our daughter and Julie. She might not like you but I love you. I'm not about to lose you again. Please let's go." He begged. I could see he wasn't letting this go. I blinked away my tears then let him take my hand and lead me out. Getting outside we found Julie standing by the car and staring into nothing. Luthando unlocked the car then opened the door for me. I reluctantly got inside then let him hand me my baby. After handing me Ocean he closed the door then took Julie's hand and opened the backseat for her. She got in silently. I could see her mind was far away.

"Shhhh.." I shushed Ocean who was starting to cry. "Don't cry.. Big girls don't cry." I hushed her as Luthando got inside and

started the car. I made her seat on my thigh then took out her bottle with juice from her bag which was on my feet and gave it to her.

"Jush?" She prompted making me smile.

"Yes.. Juice.." The moment she started drinking silence fell in the car. Heavy silence. Arriving at his house, it was the same house we had chosen two years back. The very same house. I never thought he was actually going to move in. He opened the gate with the remote then drove right in. Parking the car he got out and so so did Julie. She was just silent, she wasn't even sniffing. Luthando opened the door for me then took Ocean from me gently before helping me out. I took Ocean's bag before walking after him to the house. Opening the door he switched on the lights. I couldn't help it but to notice the cleanliness. It was so spotless that I wondered if he had a maid. Such cleanliness he couldn't have done it alone.

"Babe you are home!" Some lady screamed coming into view. She was only dressed in a short see through night dress. She had a very cute short afro and she was beautiful. Her smile faded as she looked at us. Her eyes skimmed over to Julie then Luthando and lastly me.

"Julie hey.." She said hugging silent Julie then her eyes were on me. She smiled brightly.

"Hi.. I'm Nikiwe, babe is she your cousin?" She asked looking at Luthando.

[NOMPUMELELO]

I swallowed as they carried him out. He had already been

announced dead. Somehow I still couldn't understand what had just happened. All I remembered was talking with Nadia about my gallery then next thing I heard was gun shots followed by screams. I now had my shoes in my hands. Rockelle had been taking to the hospital, she had collapsed. She had left with her broken mother. Slowly I forced myself to move and walk outside to my car. For some reason I just felt so numb. I felt.. Defeated. Exhausted. Getting in my car I started my car. My hands were shaking as I held the stir wheel. Just then my phone started ringing. Slowly I took it from my purse. It was Nick. I picked up with my vibrating hands, it wasn't fear. No.. It was.. the feeling of being so overwhelmed by events.

"Babe.. Hey!" His voice cut through the phone. I couldn't breath as tears left me silently. "Babe are you ok?" He asked. His voice had grown a little louder and concern burst into it.

"He.. He's dead.." I said or more like whispered. I still couldn't believe it. He was dead. He was gone forever. "He is dead.." I whispered again.

"Who?"

I put my hand over my mouth to mufle my sob.

"Babe who? You are scaring me.. What's going on?"

I shut my eyes tightly. I still couldn't erase the image of him being carried out my paramedics covered up out of my head or the image of Rockelle being carried out to the ambulance from my mind. She wasn't going to survive this. It was going to break her so bad I knew it in my heart it was going to be very hard getting up from there.

"Lelo.. Babe talk to me."

"Kevin.." I whispered finally. "They killed him. They short him. He is dead."

"Dammit!" He cursed. "I'm sorry you had to witness that. I'm coming back early morning. Siya called. He said he's here. Go home, stay with him. I will be there in the morning."

I nodded. "Ok.." At that moment I wished he was besides me comforting me but then he had errands to run to. Business had called. "Just relax. Drive home then sleep."

"Ok.." I whispered.

"Good girl. Drive home now.."

"Ok.."

"I love you MaDumisa.. Uyangizwa? I love you Sthandwa.." A smile escaped my lips.

"Love you too.." A few minutes later I was driving home. Nick had been right. All I needed was a bath, and a bed. Arriving home I parked my car then immediately got off. Walking inside the house everything looked the way it was when I had lefr. I looked around for a sign of Siya but it didn't even look like there was anyone. I walked to the kitchen wanting water but that's when I heard giggles in the guest room that was downstairs.

"Siya!" I called out. There was silence but the voices had stopped talking.

"Siya come out. I missed you.. Come out." I said looking around. Boys were always going to be boys. I smiled for a moment then put my purse down and walked to the door.

"Siya?"

"Just a sec!" He said making me roll my eyes stepping back. I sat on the couch as I took off my heels. Gently I massaged my foot.

My mind raced back to the anniversary party. I hadn't seen Toya when I left. The last thing I remembered was seeing her walking out with Luthando. It was hard not to notice Luthando's controlling tendencies. I wondered how the relationship was because Toya was the uncontrollable one. I heard the door opening which made me turn and look. I smiled as he walked out pulling down his T-shirt.

"Mr footballer!" He laughed as he walked towards me. He gave me a brief hug then sat on the couch opposite mine. He hadn't changed that much. He was just our Siya only now with muscles. "How are you..? We missed you. You like it so bad in people's countries huh?"

He chuckled. "Askies.. I was going to call but then decided to just come." I laughed.

"So is she just going to sit in there?"

He chuckled. "Who?"

"Her.. Tell her to come out. I want to see her."

He stood reluctantly. "Please be nice to her. I really love her." I laughed so hard.

"Siya go get her.."

He walked away then went inside the room. I waited patiently on the couch. When the door opened again I didn't bother turning.

"Ummh Lelo this is Mayra.. And babe this is my second mother, my best friend and best sister in the world Lelo." I looked up but only for my jaw to drop right on the floor.

[JANINE]

I took a deep breath as I looked over the chobe river from the

large patio. The view was so beautiful and so serene. It was just before dawn and the reddish to orange skies were so beautiful. Last night has been wonderful. If I had said I didn't love King or said I thought I did, now I knew for sure that I did. A naughty smile ran on my lips.

"Enjoying the view?" King asked hugging me from the back. I relaxed my body in his arms as I continued staring at the river.

"It's beautiful."

"Not more than you though." I smiled then turned to look at him and wrapped my arms around his neck.

"Thank you.. For bringing me here. I love it."

"Whatever makes you happy. I know we will face challenges. I know this journey won't be all smooth but I'm willing to let us hold hands and be together till the last day."

"I.." I sighed. It was the little things which made me love him more. The little things he did. "I love you.." I whispered.

"I love you more." He leaned over and kissed me. He groaned as the kiss deepened then stepped away.

"If we continue doing this we will stay here the whole day.. I have plans for us."

"Plans?"

"Yeah.. Let's go. Breakfast first then we finally go and see what they have for us." I smiled then entwined my hand with his. We walked back inside then went to the bathroom.

After a barely innocent bath we changed. I was so grateful that King had carried along two digital cameras.

Getting to the breakfast area the waiters were so nice and kind. Such warmness was just needed for the day that was coming

up. We ate our breakfast with other tourist. We even made friends with a couple. They were from Kenya. Florence and Sam. It wasn't their first time here. They were regular visitors and they didn't mind telling us their secret corners. Besides being lovely they were just a funny couple. We were going to take our morning cruise with other tourist. I put on my sunglasses when were leaving. We had a guide, Oarabile, though he said we could call him OB. Getting inside the van, we were with Florence and Sam and more other people. Our cameras were ready for action. OB took us through the do's and don't's in cases of emergency. When he finally started driving King wrapped his arm around me.

"I want us to be regular visitors too." I said making him smile. "Damn babe look at that!" He said pointing somewhere where everyone was looking now. It was a group of elephants. I took out my camera and snapped a few pictures. I knew my being here was exactly what I needed for a break. Nothing could beat a safari weekend away.

CHAPTER 43

[NOMPUMELELO]

I stared at her not even knowing what to say. She had been sitting on that couch crying for a while now.

"So you are just going to cry?"

"I love him." She whispered.

"I gave you money to go to Fiji with your friend. You are supposed to be in Fiji. Is this Fiji?"

"I'm sorry."

"I don't know what you are sorry for Mayra. You.. You just lied to me. Lied to Mom. You have been lying to us!"

"It's not that.. I was scared you wouldn't accept him."

"So you lied?"

"I'm sorry but.. Things are what they are." I laughed. I couldn't believe my ears. Yesterday I had just lost all energy and went to sleep without a word leaving my lips. Today when I woke up, all I wanted was answers.

"Wow!"

"If you had let me live a free life then I would have told you."

"I don't even know what to say to you.."

"I'm sorry I have been doing this behind your back but Lelo.. I'm a whole grown woman. We can't keep doing this."

"Well then how about you start funding your trips since you are a whole grown woman now?" She looked down on her fingers. She had cut her hair. It was now just shoulder length. "I'm sorry Mam but grown ups support themselves financially. I don't have time for this so I'm going to my house. It's not like you are here to visit me. You are here with your boyfriend. Bye." I said standing up. I grabbed my car keys then walked to the door.

"Lelo.. It's not like that.. Please.. Wait.." She said as I opened the door but opening the door I came face to face with April Witherspoon.

"I'm sorry for coming to your house..—" April was cut short by Mayra who was still pleading with me.

"Lelo please.. You can't.. —" she soon stopped talking when her eyes fell on April. "Ummh I will give you space." Mayra said stepping back.

"No wait!" April was now trying to hold Mayra but I stood between them.

"April!"

"That's my daughter isn't she?" She asked.

"No. You don't have a daughter like her because you are infertile. You are baren. You can't have kids. And never will you." Before I know it my whole cheek was hot. She had just slapped me.

"Lelo who is she?" Mayra asked looking between us.

"She's the woman your father was/ is married to."

"I'm your mother darling.."

"Did you give birth to her?"

"You.. I'm warning you."

"After this going to report assault."

"Lelo.. What is she talking about?" I could hear that Mayra was getting emotional. I pushed April out then closed the door and locked it.

"Your father and Mama slept together and made you but she was a surrogate. April was going to mistreat you because she didn't want you so mom took you with."

"So my father is out there?"

"Yes.."

"But you said.."

"That was to protect you."

"So you have been lying to me all along? Every time I asked you lied to me?"

"What did I lie about?" She chuckled as she wiped away her tears.

"Let me speak to her.." I took I deep a breath.

"I won't stop you from going after your father. Mom won't too. All I know is that she did what she could, like any mother would have done. She has loved you. Given you everything. Not a day would pass without her worrying about you. She cried for you. Stayed up at nights you were not well. If you want to go.. It's fine Mayra. Mom will be hurt but.. Hey. You are a whole grown woman. So.. It's ok. We didn't lie to you, we didn't say he was dead. So.. You can go." I said moving from the door. I walked upstairs to Nick's room then threw myself on the bed. My heart felt so heavy. I had never felt so hopeless in my life.

[LATOYA]

I put on my shoes then took Ocean's bag and her at last. She was awake playing on the bed with her doll.

"Let's go.."

"We goin'?" She asked with her eyes more open. I smiled.

"Yes. We are going home."

"Tisher!" She screamed. I walked out with her from the guest room. I could smell food being cooked. Walking inside the kitchen Nikiwe was busy cooking. She turned and looked at me smiling brightly. I was surprised she was still here after last night.

"Oh my God! You are awake. I'm making breakfast." I smiled back. She wasn't that bad, she was better than Motlatsi at all levels. Yesterday I had been so upset. How could he just bring me to the house he stayed with his girlfriend. I had immediately wanted to leave but I didn't want to cause drama and become one of those baby mamas. So instead of saying anything last

night, I had just smiled. My mind was made up. There was never going to be Luthando and I. I had to get rid of the thought of him and I becoming a real family.

"That's nice. Thank you for the warm welcome."

"Thando's family is my family too.." She said giggling. I blinked a couple of times. I still wondered where she had slept.

"Wow! I didn't know you guys were this serious." I said trying to control my heart which was beating so fast.

"You know how your cousin is.. Honestly he is just confused but we have been together for a while now. And.. Please don't tell anyone. I haven't even told him too.. I'm scared." She said excitedly.

"What is it?"

"We are pregnant." She said in a whisper. My heart momentarily stopped beating as I stared at her.

"What?"

"I know.. I'm two months pregnant now. I know this may look somehow but I'm so happy. I know we are going to be wonderful parents. I have a few baby names in mind.. I know he's going to be a wonderful father." I forced a smile.

"Wow!"

"I know.. He is going to be a wonderful father. Your baby is so cute. But what can I say.. Having a beautiful mother like you will result to cute babies." I chuckled but my mind was still caught up on what she had just said. "You are so beautiful. If you weren't his cousin.. I swear to you.. I wouldn't even had let you inside the house." I smiled.

"Can you please borrow me your phone. I need to call someone."

"Ohh.." She took it out from her pocket then gave it to me. I put Ocean's bag on the kitchen counter as then dialed Nono's number. She picked up almost immediately.

"Hello?"

"Nono.. It's me.. I—"

"Oh my God! I was worried. Are you ok?"

"Yeah I'm fine. I just..—" I was cut short by someone snatching the phone from me. I took a deep breath then turned. Luthando stood there holding the phone in his hands while hanging up. He was wearing a black T-shirt that exposed all his muscles with sweatpants.

"I said I will drop you off yesterday didn't I?"

I smiled then looked at Nikiwe who was looking at us. "It's Saturday. You should spend the day with Nikiwe not dropping me off." He looked.. Just like Luthando. Still hot and sexy. No doubt Nikiwe still didn't know what happened with Luthando's mother. That moment I wondered if Luthando's mother approved Nikiwe or if Nikiwe and Luthando shared the bedroom last night. Yesterday he had been so hostile to Nikiwe when she came into view asking her what she was doing in his house. The poor girl had been embarrassed but then.. It was Luthando we were talking about. Seeing him talk to another woman like that made me finally see everything wrong in the way he talked to his women. When I was still with him it may have appeared sexy and acceptable but yesterday's events told me there was nothing acceptable about that behavior.

"Latoya I said I will drop you off." He said, his voice steady. I took a deep breath and smiled. All I wanted to do was leave but I

wasn't going to give Luthando the chance to treat me like a child.

"Ok.. Can you drop me off now?"

"What about breakfast?" Nikiwe asked making me flash a smile at her.

"I will eat at home. I'm going to my friend's house."

"But I am almost done."

"You are so kind Nikiwe but next time." Luthando took Ocean from me then kissed her cheek. She giggled.

"Hi princess.." He whispered to his daughter.

"Mommy..." She said pointing at me before Luthando started tickling her. She started laughing so hard shaking her head. Nikiwe was just staring with adoration in her eyes. She probably imagined Luthando with her unborn child.

"She will vomit if you keep tickling her.." I said looking at Luthando.

"Let's go.." He was already walking out. I took Ocean's bag from the kitchen counter.

"What's her name?" Nikiwe finally asked.

"Ocean.."

"So cute.. Take my number. We can meet up some time." I gave her a polite smile.

"Yeah.. You can get it from Luthando. Bye.." And with that I walked out. Getting to the car my door was already open. I got inside then he handed me Ocean before closing the door for me. Getting inside the car he started it. Somehow I could finally breath. Nikiwe's presence somehow just suffocated me.

"Take me to Nono's house." I told him as he drove out from his

house.

"Ok..." He switched on the radio and Holly Rey deeper started playing.

Deeper I keep it in

The more it grows inside

Chasing your love again

Seaching for the hi

I'm falling deeper,deeper,deeper

deeper to your love

I'm falling Harder,harder,harder

harder than before

I'm falling deeper,deeper,deeper

deeper to your love

I'm falling harder,harder,harder

harder than before

I kept my eyes on the road as Ocean played with my phone. I didn't say anything the whole way. I was thinking of a way to approach the issue at hand with maturity. If anything, the last thing I wanted was us to be fighting each other from time to time again. When he finally parked in front of Nono's house I knew exactly what I had to do.

"Last night.. I didn't appreciate you taking me to a house where there was another woman.. Your girlfriend without even alerting me."

"She's not my girlfriend, we just having sex." There he went. Always denying.

"It didn't look like it to me. The fact that she's staying in your house says a lot. For someone you are just having sex with as

you say, she does a lot." He looked at me with a frown. I wasn't going to be intimidated by him. He wasn't my boyfriend, just my daughter's father.

"And what's that supposed to mean? I told you.. We are just having sex. That's all. We are not even friends and lastly I don't know what she was doing in my house."

"She loves you."

"I don't give a fuck. Why are we even discussing her. You are right.. You meeting her in my house.. Was not nice but I didn't know she was going to be there. I'm sorry. Can we now discuss us?"

"I'm not upset anymore that you took me to your house where she was. Luthando I'm not even blaming you for moving on. It will be unfair if I expected to find you still waiting for me."

"And who said I moved on? I'm trying to be honest and you trying to get me to lie. It's just sex. I'm sleeping with her. I'm not going to deny it. I'm fucking her. She knows there's no relationship between us. I don't know what she was doing in my house. I didn't move on. I love you. I love you so much and you are the only one. Why is it so hard to understand Latoya?"

"All I'm trying to say is that.. I will not be an obstacle in your life. I came with Ocean for you. My lawyer and I discussed an arrangement. I keep her during school days and you are with her during holidays though you can always come and visit her. Till she's 21 that will be the arrangement."

"Latoya I want us together. As a family. This.. arrangement is suitable for us. It's ok.. But think of what we will be putting our child through. It's not healthy. I know this trust me!"

"Then what do you want me to do? Luthando if you expect me to drop my life and come running to you.. You've got it all wrong. That's not going to happen!"

"Is it because of that white man? What is it that you want exactly? Is it money? I can fucken give you all that."

"You bastard! I'm not all about money. See.. What you do.. The way you act that's what I don't need. I don't fucken need your money. And that is my boss! He was just trying to help me out. One of the reasons we are not together is that attitude of yours. You are disprectful Luthando. You don't respect me." He looked at me for a while. I don't know what he was thinking but all I knew was that I was fed up with him. I was fed up with the way he treated me.

"Can I see the documents your lawyer came up with?"

"They are at the hotel."

"Can we go get them. I want to see them."

"It's ok."

"Please leave Ocean behind. I don't want us to argue in front of her plus I'm dropping you off immediately after you give them to me. I have to start planning my mother's funeral." I didn't say anything but just got off the car with her bag. Walking inside the gate I took a deep breath. Arguing with him wasn't going to get me nowhere. I felt guilty for even having to argue with someone who had just lost his mother but damn! He always pushed it. I knocked a couple of times on Nono's door. She opened after a while.

"Hey.." She said hugging me then took Ocean from me. Ocean was now familiar with her because on normal days my baby

would have started crying.

"Hi.."

"You look.. Exhausted."

"I'm going to collect the documents for Ocean's custody arrangement. Luthando wants to have a look at them. And maybe crash here for a while with you." She smiled.

"You are always welcome. Come take your purse." I walked inside the house with her. Getting inside the sitting room she took my purse which was on the small table then gave it to me. I put Ocean's bag on the couch then sighed.

"I have to go. He is dropping me off."

"Ok.." I kissed Ocean then walked out. His car was still parked in front of the gate. I got inside with my purse in my hands. He didn't say anything but just started the car. After a while of driving he finally decided to speak.

"Can we please pass by a friend's house. I want to pick something up. It won't take much time." I looked at him.

"Luthando I.. —"

"Please. It will take two minutes I swear."

"If this is some sort of plan I.. —"

"It's not. What can I possibly do to you? I just want to pick up something."

"Ok.." He immediately turned on another road. I didn't even know where we were going. I relaxed as he drove into the suburbs. At least he wasn't taking me to the ghetto.

He parked in front of some house and the gate automatically opened. I looked at him when he parked besides the gold BMW i8.

"Luthando why are we here?"

"I'm collecting something Latoya. What do you think? I'm here to kill you? Do I look like a serial killer and besides all that.. Why would I want to hurt the mother of my child. I know you hate me but you are taking it far." I pressed my lips together for a while.

"I'm sorry."

"Come.. I will show you what I'm collecting." He said getting off the car. I could see he was annoyed but he sounded more brusque than annoyed. I put my purse on the dashboard then stepped out of the car and followed him.

[ROCKELLE]

I opened my eyes slowly. The beeping sound was the first thing I heard. I looked around and my eyes fell on Lungile. Slowly everything came back to me. Everything. I felt tears warm my cheek as an image of my father on the floor bleeding ran across mind. I wanted my father. I noticed the drip that I was connected to. Without thinking twice I removed it ignoring the pain then got off bed. I was still wearing yesterday's clothes. Just then Lungile opened his eyes and looked at me. He stood up almost immediately.

"Babe where are you going?" He asked as I headed to the door. I ignored him then opened the door.

"Rocky.. Wait." He said grabbing my hand. I wiped away my tears and looked at him.

"I. Want. My. Father." I said, putting much emphasis on each word. I wanted my father and I wanted him now.

"I think the doctor needs to see you first."

"Lungile where is my father?"

"In the hospital.. Babe just relax."

"Stop lying to me!" I screamed. "I want my father."

"Ummh ok. Let me go and call the doctor. Sit.. Wait for me." He said pushing me to the bed. The moment he walked out I stood up and walked out. I wasn't wearing shoes and the floor felt so cold on my feet. I walked through the passage ignoring the stares I got from the people. They looked at Mr as ifi was crazy. I didn't even realize my mind was so far away till I bumped into someone.

"Fuck!" A voice cursed making me look up. The man I had bumped into looked so annoyed as he tried to wipe off the coffee from his white shirt. "Damn lady!" He said but when his eyes fell on me they softened. I took a step back as warm tears streamed down my face. I could hear my own heart beating so fast. I could hear a lot of voices at the same time.

"Ummh are you ok?" The man asked. I stared at him feeling so lost. "Hey.. Hey.. Breath. Take a deep breath in." He said holding me in his arms. "Take deep breath in.." He said softly as he enfolded me in his arms. "Take a deep breath in.. And out. Slowly.. It's ok. You are safe."

Slowly I relaxed in his arms.

"Ok.. We will do this. I'm Siya.. You are?" I looked at him then blinked. I still wanted to go to my father.

"Look curly hair.. Help me so I help you. I'm Siya.. Siyabonga Dumisa you are?"

"Rockelle.." I whispered.

"Wow.. Unique name.. How do you write it.. R O C H A E L?"

I shook my head no. "R O C K E L L E.. Rockelle."

"Wow.. Ok.. Where are you going?"

"I want my father."

"Ok.. Your father.. He's here?"

I shook my head as I bit my lower lip. "They shot him."

He rubbed my shoulder gently.

"Ok.. So you were looking for him?" Before I could answer I heard Lungile's voice followed by his arms around me.

"Babe where did you go? I said wait for me."

"Lungile I want my dad.. Take me to him." He looked at me with pity. I didn't need to be told. His eyes sold everything away.

"I want my dad.." I whispered. "I'm going to kill myself.. I want my dad. I want my dad."

"Shhh baby.." He said pulling me into his chest.

CHAPTER 44

[LATOYA]

I looked around the house. The theme was all black and dark grey. The floor was charcoal black and the walls were grey. The property too had the same colours but it married the interior design perfectly. I walked behind further inside the house passing the wide open plan kitchen. We walked into what looked like the lounge. It was a bit warmly in the lounge but what really had my attention was the huge TV that was mounted to the wall. From the lounge it was another lounge but with no TV only black couches with a black rug on the floor. There was also a firepit by the corner. We got on the stairs then went up. It was a black glassy spiral staircase. Whoever that had designed the house

deserved a round of applause. From the staircase we passed two doors then finally we got in the room that was on the far end. He opened the door then walked inside. Slowly I followed behind him. Unlike the rest of the house, the floor was woody. There was a huge bed on the center of the room then a huge mirror. I stared at myself on the mirror. My purple dress was so wrinkled. I looked away then focused on the room, taking in each detail. There was a bookshelf. I almost laughed but held it. If it was Luthando's house then what was he doing with books? He didn't look like the type to read. He disappeared somewhere leaving me standing alone in the room only to come back after a while but holding nothing.

"Did you get what you wanted?"

"Not yet. Come sit down." He said pointing at the bed.

"You can't be serious. Luthando I want to leave."

"I want us to talk. Like adults."

"We are done talking! All we should be discussing is Ocean."

"And I know that. Come sit." I sighed then walked to the bed and sat down. He sat besides me.

"I know I haven't been the best person on earth."

"You have never been to begin with."

"I know and I'm really trying to change." I laughed. "That's the most funny thing I have ever heard."

"I don't want us to raise our child separately. It's emotionally draining to our daughter. Even besides that, the moving up and down is not healthy."

"We don't always get what we want and Ocean is still young. She will adjust. She's only 2."

"I think we deserve a fair shot. Our first try was fucked up. I know along way I messed up but you also played a role on our relationship not working. We both played a role in it not working and as you have said.. What happened happened. We can't change it but we can try to make things work this time around. We can even go see those counselors to council us. I'm all up for it. All I'm asking is for you to give us a chance. To give our family a chance. We deserve a second chance." I took a deep breath as I blinked a couple of times.

"I don't think there can ever be you and I." I whispered. "I love you so much but.. A lot has changed."

"What has changed? Toots baby nothing has changed expect the fact that we have a plus one now with us. That plus one is the best thing that has ever happened to us. Ocean is the best thing that has ever happened to us."

"I know.." I wiped away my tear. "But you have Nikiwe."

He took my hands then brought them to his lips. "Nikiwe is not my girlfriend. She's nothing to me."

I shook my head standing up making him let my hands go.

"She's not nothing. She's a part of you. If I can't get all of you then I'd rather get nothing. I'd rather get nothing at all." He stood up then stood in front of me. He looked so frustrated.

"She's nothing. I swear. We are not even in a relationship. She.. —"

"She's pregnant." I said but then to only wish I hadn't said it. He looked at me for a while then chuckled.

"What?"

"I think you have to drop me off. Ocean is probably wondering.."

—"

"What did you say Latoya? She's pregnant?"

"Yes! That's what happens when you have unprotected sex. You make babies Luthando now drop me home." I said trying not to sound hurt. I was hurt. He couldn't just put on a condom at least!

He looked so confused. "But I have always used a condom.." He muttered to himself.

"Look drop me off. I think we have talked."

"She told you she's pregnant?"

"Yes. She's pregnant and she loves you. She's not nothing. She's a huge part of you."

"I have always used a condom. Every single time. That pregnancy is not mine.."

"The condom is 99%..—"

"I'm telling you...that pregnancy is not mine. That baby is not mine. I have always used a condom. Every time we had sex. You have to believe me.."

"Luthando you..—"

"I have never hit it raw with her! Never.. I have always used a condom. Toots you have to believe me. Until we can prove that the baby is mine.. I think it's not an issue."

"Well it is. We will talk when you have finally proven that the baby isn't yours.. But for now.. No. I'm not taking you back. This will give you ample of time to work on yourself." I said walking to the door. I tried opening it but it was locked. I didn't even understand what time he had locked it.

"Luthando! Come open this door right now." I said looking at

him.

"Not until we.—"

"I don't want to talk or discuss anything with you unless it's about our daughter. You go around making people pregnant and you think I would settle for that? Do you think I would settle for something less than I deserve? You don't deserve me Luthando! You have never deserved me! You think you can control me? Fuck you if that's what you are thinking!"

"Can you calm down?"

"Come open this door before I call the police for attempted abduction!" I screamed. He looked at me then laughed.

"Go ahead." All my energy got drained as I stared at him. I was so angry. I was beyond angry. I wanted to stab him a million times then leave him to die. He probably knew I had left my phone in the car. I felt so stupid.

"Luthando open this door."

"Toots —"

"You fucken asshole! Open this fucken door! Do you think I'm playing with you? Do I look like Nikiwe or Motlatsi?! I hate you!" He sighed then walked towards me and just looked at me, whatever he was thinking wasn't going to change my mind about him. I wanted to go and never come back. He clearly was still the same Luthando he was back then. Abruptly he pulled me unto him and kissed me.. Hard. My brain was overworking as I tried to understand what was going on. The moment my brain caught on what he was doing I tried to push him away but that gave him a chance to force his tounge in my mouth. I instinctively sunk my teeth into his lower lip hard but that didn't stop him. He just

groaned and deepened the kiss. I could test blood in my mouth. My body was completely betraying my brain as desire and lust instigated itself in my blood down to my groin. The way his tongue explored my mouth I felt like just exploding right there and then just till Nikiwe came back forcefully in my mind. "Luthando.. Stop.." I said against his lips but he still had a good grip on my neck. I knew exactly what he was doing. He was using sex to get me to agree. "Luthando.. Please.. Stop.." I begged as I tried to push him off but I wasn't winning. I knew it. He wasn't going to listen. In his mind I knew he knew what he was doing to me. This was not the way I wanted us to get back with each other if at all we were ever going to get back together. This was not what I wanted. I wanted nothing to do with his arrogant and disrespectful ass. He pulled my body against his making my body yearn for him. I sighed then relaxed in his arms as tears fell from my eyes. Tears of knowing I wasn't going to win, tears of him making Nikiwe pregnant, tears of me still loving his undeserving self, tears of me still letting him hurt me over and over again. His kiss slowed down as he moved his hand from my neck to my waist. I wrapped my arms around him as I lost myself in the kiss. I let my emotions run wild in the kiss. I wanted to make him feel how much i loved him. I wanted to make him feel how much he hurt me. He unzipped my dress with his lips still on mine. He wasn't giving me a chance to even think about stopping him but then, at the stage things were, there was no way I was going to change my mind. I wanted him and wanted him so bad. I wanted him to fill the void that was in my heart because he was the only one who could. I wanted him to

show me how much he loved me. He moved his lips from my lips to my neck. I let out a moan as I felt my vagina muscles clenched. He pushed my sleeveless dress down and it fell on my feet. The moment I stepped out of the dress he picked me up making me wrap my legs around his waist. My lips found his lips again as he walked towards the bed with me. He lay me gently laid me on the bed then opened my legs and came between them.

"I love you.." He whispered softly in my ear as he nibbled on my earlobe. "I love you so much.." He whispered again as he moved his hand down then cupped my breast. The previous day I hadn't been wearing a bra because the dress held my breast up. He squeezed my breast gently as he sucked on my neck. I moaned as my head fell back. I was dripping, I could feel my panties get wetter. His mouth left my neck then went on my left boob and started sucking. My toes curled as pleasure shot down to my groin. I moved my hips up so I rub against him. That earned me a deep groan from him that threatened to rip me apart. With his other hand, he moved it down and went straight to my panties. He pushed them aside then pushed in a finger. I closed my eyes tightly as he moved in and out while rubbing my clit with his thumb.

"Oh God!" I moaned moving my hips trying to match his rhythm. With his fingers on me and nipple in his mouth I unraveled around him in screams and moans, calling out his name. He pulled his hand away as I lay on the bed panting with my eyes closed. I could feel my panties being slid off me. I opened my eyes slowly and came face to face with his sexy naked body. His

tattoos still completed him. He looked like a sex goddess. He got on top of me pushing my legs apart much further. I put my hands on his chest as he slowly sunk in. I felt a sharp pain as he tried to work his way in.

"Be gentle.." I whispered as I pushed him a bit with my hands. He took my hands and held them prison on top of my head then whispered "Askies.." while kissing me. Gently he sunk in deeper till he was buried to the core. I felt so full. Slowly he pulled out then rammed in back. I let out a yelp from pain. It felt like I had never had dick before but I knew it was a while since I had last helped myself.

"Slowly.. Thando slowly.." I whispered out of breath. He held my hands with one hand then put the other one under my waist then withdraw till the tip before he slowly went back in. A few of the slow strokes I couldn't help the moans that were escaping my lips. I shut my eyes biting my lower lip as he continued with his deep slow strokes. I could feel myself get more wet as he moved in and out.. Then again and again. I tightened my legs around him as he gently hit my g-spot. I let out a scream as he continued hitting that very same place till I fell into a mind blowing orgasm. Just then he pulled out then went down on me. His soft tounge on me made me curl my toes. He started flicking his tounge on my clit as I shook beneath him. I rolled my eyes pushing his head against me as he inserted his tounge in me. He went deeper and my breath caught followed by my body convulsing. My whole body was shaking. He then took my legs and placed them on his chest pulling me unto him. He sent me straight to heaven. I wanted to cry at the shocking intense

pleasure, to scream so loud. My brain had completely shut down as I completely submerged into the numbing pleasure. I felt myself tense making me dig my nails unto his back. I screamed his name as I came all around him feeling the most powerful climax rip me over and over again. I heard him roar as he thrust in uncontrollably before he released deep in me. He collapsed on top of me. After a while I felt him kiss my wet cheeks. I didn't even realize my tears."Please give us a chance. We deserve it." He said kissing my swollen lips softly. My throat was sore. "I love you so much.. Please.."

"What about..—"

"Nikiwe is not issue. Today was the last time you saw her."

"I don't want to be sharing you with other women Luthando or even feel like I am." I whispered. "I don't deserve that. I don't deserve to share you. You should just be mine alone. I don't deserve to share you or feel like I am."

"You won't.. I swear."

"And my job?"

"You will get another job here.. Or bet yet start your own thing baby." I stared into his eyes. "Please.."

[JANINE]

"I can't believe this." I said as I looked at the newspaper. "I was gone for two days and I'm coming back to this?"

"What happened?" King asked as he maneuvered the car out of the airport.

"Kevin was short at his anniversary ceremony."

"Is he dead?"

"Yes. He died in the spot."

"Oopps.."

I sighed. "I wonder how Rocky is holding up. She really loved her father." I said looking at her picture being put in an ambulance. The media had really went all out.

"Rocky his daughter?"

"Yeah.. His only child. I feel sorry for her. The media too.. Such pictures aren't for publicity." I said staring at the picture of Lana crying.

"It's the media baby.. They are paid to do that."

"Still.. This is so insensitive."

"Well they can always be sued but.. It's really not worthy it." I put the newspaper away then looked outside through the window. I might have hated Kevin with all my being but he didn't deserve the way he died. At such cases it was so hard to know who could have killed him because people like Kevin stepped on so many toes.

"Are you ok?" King asked making me look at him with a smile.

"Yeah I'm fine." He took my hand then kissed it. Soon enough he was parked in front of my house. He took my bags from the boot before we walked inside the house. Everything was the way it was when I left.

"Feels good to be back but I miss the lodge already."

"I know.. We will go again."

"Thank you. I had a wonderful time." I said hugging him.

"It was worthy it..anyways.. I had a wonderful time too baby."

"Tomorrow it's back to reality.." I said unwrapping my arms around him.

"I know.. And don't worry about me baby. I own my own company. Opening a brunch here won't be so hard."

I smiled though I somehow felt guilty. He was taking a drastic move. Moving here wasn't a joke. "We will be fine baby. Don't worry."

I nodded then kissed him briefly.

"Let me put this away." He said pointing at bags. I had just carried two overnight bags. He walked towards them then started walking with them to my room. As he walked away his phone started vibrating on the kitchen counter. I swallowed looking at it. I couldn't really stop my legs from moving towards the phone. The caller ID was Gina. I fought the edge of answering it before I started following with his ringing phone. I met him when he was halfway coming back and the phone had just stopped ringing.

"It was ringing." I said handing it to him. He looked at it then put it in his pocket.

"Do you want to take a bath should we just go for lunch?" I looked at him for a while then smiled.

"What did she want?"

"Who?"

I chuckled then looked at him with brow raised.

"Babe I don't know but all I know is I don't want to talk to her."

I started walking away. I had no time for such. I had to call Orlando, see how things were.

"Babe.. Come on!" He said coming after me.

"What is it? Honestly King if you think I'm going to be the type of person who will be up in your face when you lie or withhold

information you got it wrong. I have better things to worry about."

"I'm not withholding any information from you."

"Well then good for you."

"I just don't want to be talking about Gina."

"Ok.."

He sighed. "She's threatening destroy my company." He said making me look at him in confusion.

"Why?"

"She had contested the divorce. We had to go through Court but what hurt the most was the fact that she didn't get anything from the divorce. There was a prenuptial she signed before we got married."

"So what now? She's trying to.. take revenge."

"So how is she planning to take your company?"

"I own an industry which make drugs. Medical drugs. She wants to take me to court after making claims that the drugs we make are not applicable to the humans. If her claims are heard, I might be forced to close down till the investigations are finished."

"Can't you stop her?"

"She wants money. I'm not going to give it to her because I have something to hold her with."

"And what is that?"

"She was my father's.. Companion. I knew from the beginning though I just never had enough proof. Now that I have she's going to jail if she tries me. That's why she's calling."

"But you could have told me this King."

"I just never thought it was necessary. I don't want to pull you in

unnecessary drama."

"It's not unnecessary. It's your problem making it mine too. How are we supposed to get married if we are not even transparent with each other?"

"I'm sorry. It will never happen again."

"It's ok. Do you have anything else to tell me?"

"Yeah.. My mother wants to meet you. She's pushing to come here and meet you."

I smiled. "She is?"

"Yeah.. I thought I could tell you first before I get her here."

"It's ok. She can come though I hope she's not a monster in-law."

"She's not.. exactly." I gave him a look. "She has her moments. You should just ignore her."

I sighed. "Ok... Let's go bath then go for lunch." His phone started ringing again. He took it out looking so annoyed. Answering it he looked angry and pissed.

"What do you want?" I kissed his cheek then walked to my bedroom leaving him on his phone.

I stripped naked then got under the shower. I delayed a bit thinking maybe he was going to join me. I walked out of the bathroom after a while with a towel wrapped around my body. He was sitting on my bed looking at his phone.

"Everything ok?" I asked walking to the closet.

"My father is dead."

"Dead?"

"Yes. He was murdered. Apparently he got stabbed and castrated. He was found in the morning."

"Big Daddy is dead?"

"Yes. As much as I'm relieved he is dead, I would have been more happy to have done it myself."

"You wanted to kill your own father?"

"That man was not my father. Never!" I could see he was getting upset.

"Who killed him?"

"I don't know.." I looked at him. There was one person I suspected and if it was him I was 100% sure he had really done a good job. A clean smart job. There was just something I didn't understand. Why Kevin? Kevin hadn't done anything. It was not so smart for Luthando to kill Kevin. This left a gap in the whole issue. Who had killed Kevin? Kevin had a lot of enemies though my biggest suspect was Lana Godwill Robert. She had taken Kevin back after they divorced. The days of the divorce she really hated him, she wanted a lot. Their case had went through Court. The divorce had taken a long time. For Lana to just take back Kevin was suspicious on it's own. But then.. She couldn't have pulled it off alone which left another question. Who had she been working with?

"Babe are you ok?" I smiled then looked at him.

"Yeah.. Just a puzzle I'm trying to put together.."

CHAPTER 45

[NOMPUMELELO]

I sat at the back with Nicholas besides me, wearing all black. It was filled. Most of the people were probably Kevin's business associates and the media. I didn't take off my glases as I looked

at the pastor preach. Kevin's coffin was at the alter. It was so beautiful, Lana had went all way out. Life was so unpredictable. One minute she was all happy planning for her anniversary and the next, there she was.. Crying over her dead husband. I could see Rockelle from where I was sitting. With the way Lana was holding her I knew she was crying. She really loved her father. My eyes scanned the whole room again and my eyes fell on Janine. She was sitted next to some white man. She was resting her head on his shoulder. A small smile crept on my lips. She deserved to be happy too. I looked around again but I couldn't find her. She had probably went back to New York. She couldn't have possibly waited for three weeks. The investigations delayed the buriel. The police suspected it to be assassination. The person who had killed him didn't even show on the camera but only the fact that he was wearing black clothes.

After a while we were walking out. They were going to cremate his body. I had only come to attend the funeral service.

Walking out of the church the media was by the door snapping pictures. I didn't care anymore, they had already featured me on some magazine along side with Latoya. Walking to the car Nicholas was holding my hand. He opened the passenger door for me. I got inside then let him close it for me. Getting in the car he started it immediately then drove away.

"That was a very dignified funeral." Nicholas commented.

"I know.. Lana probably planned it. I really feel sorry for the woman."

"Yeah.. But in politics things always end one way or the other."

"I know plus besides that.. Kevin had a lot of enemies. I just can't

believe he is gone.. Just like that."

"It's life."

"I love you.. I just want you to know that I love you and appreciate the fact that you love me too. You make me so happy. I'm so glad I met you even though the first time I met you I didn't like you." He laughed then glanced at me with so much love in his eyes.

"I really didn't like you too. I was going through Sally's shit and you just decided to come to my house invited." I laughed. "The gallery needed you."

"Through all that we are here today.."

"Yeah.. I can never wish for anything more with you. You complete me. It might have taken me time to realize that but.. I'm so glad at the end I did. I'm so blessed to have you."

"Me too.." I sighed as I looked at the road. The love Nicholas gave me was too much, he loved me unconditionally. He never held back and I loved that about him. He never made me feel as if he didn't love me. I didn't ask when he ignored the turn home. He drove for a while till he was taking a turn into some garden. Parking the car at the parking lot he climbed out then came to my door.

"Why are we here?" I asked as I stepped out of the car.

He took off my sunglasses. "Don't worry." Putting the sunglasses back in the car he took my hand and we started walking somewhere. After walking for while we finally reached a place where the lawn was covered with red roses. They made a heart. It was so beautiful it melted my heart.

"This is so beautiful baby.." I said walking in front of him getting

right inside the heart. "Thank you. You know I.. —" my sentence was cut short when I turned only to find him kneeling on the ground holding a ring. I felt tears wet my cheeks. All along I had been fantasizing about the way he was going to do it but never in my mind was it like this. "Oh my God.." I whispered looking at him.

"I have never met anyone like you. Someone so mature, so loving. Someone with a big heart like yours. I have never met someone who tries to overlook people like you just searching for the goodness in them. Someone with heart like yours. I love you so much, I love you because you love me. I never thought I could ever love a woman the way I love you. You have made me a better person by just loving me. Nompumelelo Sikhosana, please make me the happiest man in the world, share my life with me. The good and happy moments. Marry me baby." I blinked as tears fell from my eyes. I felt beyond emotional. I put my hand over my mouth as I nodded. He smiled then took my hand and slipped the ring on. He hugged tightly. I felt every emotion take me away. Happiness. Confusion. Fear then happiness again.

"I love you so much.." He whispered as he held me in his arms. We stood like that for a while till our lips found each other.

"I love you too.." I said after we broke the kiss. He wiped away my tears.

"I can't wait till we make it official."

I chuckled. "Me too baby.. Me too." He took my hand then led me me back to the car. Getting inside the car I couldn't help it but to admire my ring. It was so big. There was a huge diamond

on it. I loved it.

"Do you like it baby?" Nicholas asked.

"I love it. It's beautiful."

"I'm glad." All the way home I was looking at my ring. I felt like the happiest woman in the whole world. Getting at Nicholas's house the first thing I did was to call my mother. I no longer used the small phone. There was nothing to hide anymore. Mayra knew everything she needed to know. I didn't know exactly where she was but I wasn't really that worried. She was a grown woman. I had last seen her the day she walked after April.

"Mom!" I screamed as soon as she answered.

"My daughter, how are you?" I smiled.

"I'm fine Ma." Mom was so worried about Mayra no matter how much I told her she was safe.

"Nicholas proposed."

"Ohh Jesus! We thank the lord. I'm so happy for you."

"Me too.. I have never been happier."

"I'm so happy. You deserve nothing but happiness."

"Thank you."

"Have you spoken to Mayra lately or Zuko?"

"No.. I haven't. You know Zuko and I don't talk."

"Nompumelelo I want to come back home."

"What?"

"It's time I come back home. Look today.. You are going to get married. You need me close by. I have to come back home my baby."

I smiled. "I will make arrangements."

"Ok.. Thank you."

"Ma let me call you later ok?"

"Ok." I then hung up. I was hearing voices. I put my phone away before I walked to the lounge. My eyes fell on Siya first then at Nicholas. Siya hadn't been home too. I suspected he was with Mayra. I smiled as I stood next to Nicholas.

"Siya.."

"Sis.." He said hugging me.

"So you have finally decided to come see me?" Nicholas asked. Siya had left before Nicholas came back from Capetown.

"I was still sorting out a few things... Damn! Is that! Shit!" Siya said taking my hand with my ring. I smiled as he looked at it with wide eyes.

"Damn! This.. This ring is.. Wow!" I chuckled.

"It's beautiful I know."

"This cost more than what I earn monthly." I laughed as Nicholas gave Siya a look. He probably didn't want me to know the price.

"Are you hungry? We just came back from the funeral. I was going to start with lunch.."

"Yeah. I am hungry but first.. There's someone who wants to talk to you." I looked at him perplexed.

"To me?"

"Yes. To you."

"Ok..." He walked out of the house leaving me more confused. I took a deep breath when he walked back with Mayra. She still looked the same. I couldn't help but to notice the shame in her eyes.

"Ok.. Ummh Nick.. I think we should give them space." Siya said looking at Nicholas. Nicholas looked at me.

"If you want me to stay I will." I smiled.

"It's ok." He kissed my forehead before walking away with Siya. I looked at her carefully.

"Congratulations." She said looking at my hand with the ring. I smiled.

"Thanks."

"Lelo.. I'm so sorry."

"I'm sorry too.. We should have told you from the start."

"Yeah.. I do need to start a relationship with my father but that doesn't mean I have to abandon my family. You, Mom and Zuko.. You are all I have but to make it all complete now.. I have a father." I smiled then hugged her tightly.

"You don't know how happy I am to hear that."

"We are sisters by blood. I love you."

"I love you too sweetie.. I love you so much." I let her go then stepped away.

"Sisters for ever!" I said smiling. I felt so free. The weight on my shoulders had subsided.

"So.. Now.. Let's talk about the wedding."

"Don't be getting funny ideas. I just want something simple and small. Since mom wants to move.. The arrangements will be so easy."

"We are moving here?"

"Yes.."

"I have always wished to stay here. Thank God mom finally listened to me."

"Yeah.. I think you need to call her."

"Am in trouble?"

"No.. Just call her." She hugged me again.

"Ummh Sis.. About that lunch.." Siya said walking inside the lounge with Nicholas.

"I will start cooking."

"I will help.." Mayra said placing her handbag on the couch. She walked to the kitchen ahead of me. I turned before I could walk inside the kitchen then walked towards Siya and hugged him.

"Thank you." I whispered then let him go.

"We are family. Families don't part. No matter what.. Family is all that we got. Family always have each other's back." I smiled, he was right. Family was all that we got.

[ROCKELLE]

I walked inside the house holding my father's ashes. I was holding them against my chest tightly.

"Rocky.. Sweetie.." Mom called me but I didn't turn. I continued walking. I went straight to my room and locked myself inside. I sat on the bed as tears left my eyes silently. I put the ashes down silently and stood up. I had my important things in my mother's house. I had taken them from lungile. I took the suitcase with the important documents then placed it on the bed. Firstly I took out the divorce papers. I had asked my father's lawyer, Will, to draft them for me three days ago. I quickly took a pen from the dressing table and signed them. I wasn't taking anything from our marriage.

After signing the divorce papers I called Will. He didn't take long to answer the phone call.

"Ms Robert."

"Hi Will.. I have signed the divorce papers. I'm going to leave them with the rest of the other documents. You will collect them at home."

"Yes.." His voice sounded so strained. Defeated.

"Please, concerning my will.. Make sure there's no fuss made. I don't want unnecessary drama."

"Yes Ms Robert."

"Thanks Will.."

"You are welcome." I then hung up. I put my phone away then took my notepad and pen before I settled on the floor. I took a deep breath then started writing.

"I really don't know where to begin. Maybe at the fact that I'm scared. I'm so scared right now because I don't know what my tomorrow holds for me. I'm scared because.. I feel defeated. It's the first time ever feeling completely defeated. It doesn't feel nice. Not at all. I'm still wearing my dress. My father's favourite dress. I wore it at his funeral because I thought it would make him happy. He must have been happy. The same way was happy when he gave it to me. Today marks a very important sad day of my life. Today.. I have finally said Good-bye to my father. It's so painful. It's beyond painful. I don't want to live in such pain. It's not something I can handle. It's unbearable. When this letter is finally found and read out, the pain will probably be over. Don't feel sad or cry. I'm just trying to help myself. For the first time ever.. I'm finally doing something that makes me happy. That helps me relief pain so don't be sad.

To Mom

I love you so much. I know our relationship might have not been that good from the start. I would have loved it if we grew closer but then in life, things sometimes don't always go the way we intend they do. I'm sorry if I ever disappointed you. I'm sorry if I ever hurt. I just want you to know I never wanted to. I love you. I know things will be a bit hard from here but I want you to promise me to rise like the Lana Godwill I know. I'm always going to be there in your heart. Forever.

To Lungile

Hey.. I just wanna say thank you. Thank you for helping me change for the better. Thank you for caring about me. If I could go back in time I could never change anything. You made me so happy, you were the highlight of my adult life. You taught me a lot and for that I want to say thank you. Don't beat yourself up for this. It was never your fault. Like I said, I hope whoever that you will end up will appreciate the goodness in you. You are an amazing man. I wish nothing but happiness and love to you. Thank you baby.

To Kelly and Puleng

You guys have been nothing but the best friends to me. With you I don't remember a single moment of boredom. You guys are beyond amazing. Kelly.. I hope you find that dream man that you have always wanted. Lol... He better treat you good or else bitch imma come back as the nun. Please smile a lot more, it makes you so much beautiful plus either way you look less hideous smiling. I'm joking, you always look beautiful. I leave the nursery

in your hands. Continue loving those kids like they are yours. Puleng.. My funny babe. I pray and hope that you shine brighter than stars. You have so much love to give out and you know the most touching part is the fact that you never hold back. That over there.. Is the best thing about you. If CJ doesn't realize your worth then moghel leave. Your hunk is probably out there. I left some money for you. Use it to start something but first publish that book you wrote. Talk to my lawyer. I love you guys so much. Keep the friendship strong and be there for each other because hey.. We only live once.

Last but not least.. To Latoya

I know.. things were never smooth between us but I finally got to realize something. Sometimes we tend to judge people by what meets the eye. I judged you.. But funny enough you always smiled throughout the insults. Indirectly you played the mother role to me. You taught me how to deal with certain issues in life. I might have hated you but from afar I admired the woman you were and still is. You still managed to rise and stand no matter what life threw at you. I don't know but maybe they have never told you.. You are an Aphrodite. You are a goddess. I hope one day you realize the great power you hold. It's so much stronger than anything. Right now I wish I had the strength you always hold and possess but then again.. We are different. All my inheritance from my father.. I give it to you. You deserve it more than anyone else. You have a heart of gold but it is laced by heavy strong metal. Keep doing your thing. Take the inheritance. Take it as my last wish.

Ok.. I'm done. I can't help but to feel I'm being a Coward. Ok.. Maybe I am. I am a coward. But for my own relief.. Just this once.. Just this once I'm going to be that coward.

Love

Rockelle"

I put the letter with the other documents as I wiped my tears. I felt something strangle me. Pain. Grief. Agony. It was strangling me so much I couldn't even breath. Taking the razor blade from the dressing table it felt heavy. I took a deep breath. This was what I wanted. This was what I wanted. I chanted to myself. I wanted to relief myself of the pain.

I walked to the bathroom dragging my heavy legs. Coward! The voice in my head screamed. Selfish coward! I ignored it then got in the shower. I undressed slowly then opened the cold water. The water hit my body painfully but still I stood there getting numb slowly. I sunk down to the floor then brought the razor to my wrist. I completely shut the voices that screamed so loudly in my head and sunk the razor blade right in my skin. It was so painful but I wasn't going to stop. I was ending Rockelle Robert's chapter for good. Putting an end to all of it.

[LANA]

I sat still on the couch. I knew Kevin's death was going to hurt my daughter but I had never imagined it was going to be like this. She looked dead though walking. Her eyes were just dark and she was just there. Just.. walking. A walking dead. I had been sitting on the couch ever since we came back from the

funeral. It was over two hours now and I still didn't know how to console Rocky. I was startled by my phone ringing. I reached for it then answered it. It was Will, Kevin's lawyer. Killing Kevin needed good planning. It took me two full years. Now that he was dead I knew I had most of his assets. His money. I deserved it from all the abuse he put me through. All the nights I was his punching bag. After all the physical and emotional abuse he had put me through years ago I deserved it. I met Kevin when I was only 16. He was older than me but my father loved him. I loved him too, so much for that matter. He was the best man ever and he loved me unconditionally. A few years later I was pregnant with Rockelle. At first I had been so scared but after he told me he would stand by me I felt more relaxed. We got married after Rockelle was born. Being a mother and wife at young age was so hard but I still tried my all to always please him. It was never enough. It was just never enough. The abuse started. He would beat me to oblivion but I still stayed. I had to make it work. For my daughter I had to make it work. But staying meant more insults. Staying meant more punches and kicks. Due to the abuse I always miscarried but that didn't stop him. For years I endured the abuse till I finally decided it was enough and that was when I filed for divorce. Because he was smart and had so much influence he got away with a lot more. I couldn't just let him go. I needed my compensation and that's why I put forces with Pablo Tejera to kill him. I would have probably left Pablo but he was starting to be nausea. Him requesting for Rocky to be his lawyer was never part of the plan. I didn't want him anywhere close to my daughter. And that's why I had him killed. He was

forgetting who was the boss.

"Will.." I said answering.

"Mrs Robert.. I am coming to read Mr Robert's will tomorrow."

"Great.."

"But unfortunately.. You are not getting much. Almost everything he owned.. Everything.. He gave it to his daughter. The companies, the estates, the cars.. Everything. On top of that he gave her 50 million. Her trust fund contains more than that."

"What?"

"Yes.. What's left besides that don't even add up to 5 million."

"That bastard!"

"Your daughter wrote a will a few days ago. Everything is finalized. She gave most of that money, including the money from her trust fund to Latoya Samuels, Puleng Malinga, Kelly Marshall, Lungile Zwane and lastly you. She gave most of the businesses to you and a few to Latoya Samuels. Now.. The money. The 50 million has been given to Latoya. All of it. That leaves the trust fund. She gave most of it to Puleng Malinga and Kelly Marshall together with Lungile Zwane and you. Most of it though has been given to Latoya Samuels. I'm not supposed to be—"

"Stop! What do you mean she wrote a will? Why would she?"

"Your daughter wants to commit suicide."

"No.. No!" I dropped the phone then stood up and rushed to her room. The door was locked. I was panicking. I went downstairs then took my phone. My hands were shaking. Not my daughter. I called security immediately. It took the security a while to arrive but a lot more time to break her door. I had imported the doors

from Italy. The moment they managed to break open the door I was the first to walk inside. I couldn't find her anywhere but that's when I heard the shower. I held my breath as I walked right inside the shower.

[LATOYA]

3 WEEKS LATER

My heels echoed as I pulled down my skirt walking towards the entrance with my handbag and laptop bag hanging from my arm. I gave Maggie a smile as I passed the reception. She was the receptionist. Getting in the elevator my phone started ringing. I took it out as I walked right inside the elevator.

"Nono.." I said answering. I looked at myself on the elevator shiny walls as it led me to my floor. My new weave made me smile. I had ordered it online a week ago and it had arrived yesterday. I didn't waste time to go to the saloon in Brooklyn. Doroth, my hairdresser was more than experienced. She knew exactly what she was doing.

"Hey.. How's work?"

"The white bitch is still there but I'm good." She laughed.

"I saw Ocean yesterday." My heart leaped as I stepped out of the lift and walked to my office.

"You saw her? How's she?"

"She's ok. You always talk to her every night, you know she's ok. She was with Luthando at the mall."

"Ohh.. That's great." I put my bag on my table then sat down.

Just then Angelic walked in. I hadn't seen her when I passed her desk which was in front of my office. I raised my hand signalling

that I'm busy. She walked out leaving me sitting down.

"Yeah.. I never thought I would see the day Luthando actually plays Daddy." I smiled.

"Yeah.."

"Latoya...."

"Nono no. Not today. I gave Luthando a chance but he didn't want it."

"You can't just expect him to move there."

"Then who should move? I have a whole career Nothando. I'm finally doing well for myself. I'm not moving. I need my job. My siblings depend on me. I love Luthando so much. I won't lie but I refuse to be stupid only in the name of love. He refused to move so I guess there goes us. Maybe we are just not meant to be. Our daughter will be the only thing connecting us."

"Ok.. Anyways happy birthday. How old are you again?" I laughed.

"Thanks.. And ohh yeah.. I'm 28 years old."

"Happy birthday.. I hope you enjoy this day to the fullest."

"Yeah.. Look I have to go."

"Ok bye.." She then hung up. I put my phone down standing up. Peeping outside I smiled at Angelic.

"Hey.. What did you want?" She stood up and walked towards me holding my coffee in her hand together with a small basket and a big teddy bear. I took the coffee then walked back in my office with her behind me. She was my PA.

"This came for you." She putting the basket and Teddy bear on my desk. I took the basket and there was a note inside.

*JUST WANTED TO SAY HAPPY BIRTHDAY. GREET MY

DAUGHTER FOR ME AND KEEP ALL MY KIDS SAFE.

LT*

I smiled as I put the note away. Looking inside the basket there were muffins inside. I put them aside then looked at Angie smiling. I couldn't help it.

"Your meeting with the shareholders and the board of Directors have been moved to 10 minutes before now."

"What?"

"Yes.. Ava informed me yesterday but after you left. I tried to call you but your phone wasn't getting through."

"It's ok, has the agenda been sent?"

"No. Your meeting with Gwen is this afternoon."

"I haven't forgotten.."

"Ok.. That's all."

"Thanks Angie.." She smiled before walking out. I put the coffee down then took a muffin and started eating. As I ate, I took out the laptop. I tried diverting my mind from thinking about Luthando and just started wondering about the main reason behind the emergency meeting.

I had come back three weeks ago after attending MaMaphoto's funeral. Luthando had given his mother a very respectable funeral. I had went there supporting him because he had emotionally blackmailed me by putting Ocean inside the whole argument but of course, Julie had caused problems. I had to chose attending Luthando's mother's funeral over Kevin's because they were on the same day. I had left immediately after the funeral because of work. He didn't want me to leave but my

career came first.

I opened a few emails before I stood up. I had five minutes to get to the board room. Walking out Angie was busy on the phone. I walked straight to the elevator wondering what exactly the meeting was about because the agenda had not been sent out. 5 minutes later I was sitting with the stakeholders. Ava was also there together with Miguel. I hadn't seen him ever since I came back. The day I had left he was actually supportive for the fact that I wasn't like other woman but he also advised me to not let Luthando step all over me. He had said women like me where just the best. He even wanted to connect me with his lawyer though that had been unnecessary because I already had a lawyer.

The shareholders were also there. Men and women in suits "Before anything else, I would like to apologize for the sudden meeting." Miguel started. He was wearing a grey suite that looked so good on him. He looked like the business guru that he was. The way he spoke managed to capture everyone's attention. Looking around all I could see was serious faces listening attentively. I lay my attention back on Miguel.

"I have an important announcement. Miss Harvey here is being transferred to Australia. That leaves the magazine with no director and that is why I have nominated Miss Samuels as an acting CEO till a replacement suitable for the job is found." I looked at him in shock. Me? Ava smiled looking at me. What? "Those who are in agreement with making Miss Samuels, our senior editor, the CEO of collop please raise your hands." I held my breath as I looked. Almost everyone's hand was up.

"Miss Samuels is now the CEO and with that the meeting is over." He was now up. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. I still couldn't understand what had just happened. Everyone stood up to shake hands with me. I forced a smile through my confusion then stood up. Ava was the last to give me a handshake. She smiled.

"You deserve the post Latoya. Your hardworking does not go unrecognized. Keep it up." And with that she walked away. All along I thought she hated me. I threw myself back on the chair I had been sitting on once everyone was gone. I just couldn't believe it. I, Latoya Samuels, was the new CEO of collop.

"Hey.." A voice said making me raise my head. It was Miguel.

"What was that?" He smiled then walked towards me so to sit on the table looking at me. He had now unbuttoned the buttons of his jacket.

"What was what?" I gave him a look getting up.

"That! Me for CEO. You want me to destroy your company? I'm —"

"You are more than capable. You should stop degrading yourself like that."

"I'm not degrading myself.. I'm just.. I.." I sighed as my hands fell to my hips. I couldn't even find the right words to say.

"I know you are more than capable to tackle on this job. I didn't do it because I'm favouring you. I nominated you because I believe in you. I know you will do wonders for the magazine."

"You think?" He got off the table then stood in front of me.

"I know so. How is Ocean?"

I smiled. "She's fine."

"Still with him?"

"Yeah.. She's coming in two weeks."

"He is coming with her?"

"Yes. If he doesn't want to then I will go and collect her myself."

"Don't let him control you. I know men like him."

"Yeah.. I know."

"Good. All the best luck in this venture Miss Samuels." He said already walking out.

"Thank you Mr Thomas." He turned and gave me a smile, a polite smile. I slapped my cheeks a bit to just make sure I wasn't dreaming. I couldn't possibly be dreaming. I slowly walked to the elevator. When I got in my office the security was already in my office while Angie packed my things.

"Ummh what's going on?"

"Ohh Miss Samuels.. Mr Thomas said I need to collect your things because you are moving to a new office." Angie responded.

"He did?"

"Yes.. And some flowers came for you." She said pointing at the red roses which on my table. I took them and took the note.

*Happy Birthday Latoya. Beautiful roses for a beautiful woman.
Miguel*

I blushed as I held the note in my hands. There was just something about Miguel I couldn't shake off but then, I couldn't help it but think of my handsome boss. My handsome sweet boss.

I took out my phone from my handbag to text Latifar but only to receive a message from an unknown number. I opened the message quickly.

It's always a pleasure seeing you Miss Samuels. Miguel.

I couldn't help the smile that crept on my face. The way he had gotten my number was unknown but that didn't stop me from sending a reply.

Likewise Mr Thomas. And thank you for telling Angie to start packing. Your efforts are noticed. And also, thank you for the flowers.

I hesitantly pressed send button then put my phone away but to only to take it out a few seconds later due to a message alert.

Glad my efforts are noticed, it makes me happy if you would like know Miss Samuels.

I giggled silently then typed my reply.

*I'm glad it makes you happy. If you would please let me get back to work, I have a company to run. I don't want my first day to be a flop.

Do I need to make an announcement through out the BOD or what?*

I sent my reply but that's when I actually noticed the security guards who were now looking at me. I put my phone away out of embarrassment but I flushed even more at the fact that I was busy texting with my boss. Just how disgusting and

unprofessional was that?

After a while I was walking inside my new office. Ava had cleared everything that was hers. I walked to the glassy walls that made it easy for me to look at the New York streets.

"This office is off the hook!" I said walking back to the chair Ava used to sit on and throwing myself on it making it spin. I heard Angie laugh as she placed my boxes on the table.

"Even your..—" my sentence was cut short by my phone ringing. I took it out. Looking at the landline number I wondered if I should answer or not but ended up answering.

"Latoya Samuels hello?"

"Good Morning Miss Samuels, this is Will Cowley, Rockelle Robert's lawyer." I sat up right.

"How can I help you?"

"Rockelle Robert's will is set for reading in a week and unfortunately it can't be read in your absence."

"What?"

"Rockelle Robert, the deceased left a will before her death. It has been a week. Since her buriel is set up to be done in the following two days her will is meant to be read." My heart leaped in my mouth.

"Excuse me but I think we are having a misunderstanding. Who's dead?"

[JANINE]

A WEEK LATER

"Not only did you kill your husband but you killed your own

daughter. My only question is why Lana Godwill Robert. Why?" She looked at me straight in my eyes, not even blinking.

"How many times do I have to tell you that I did not kill my husband? Why would I? I was happy with Kevin. We were finally settling in well. And how dare you accuse me of killing my own daughter?"

I chuckled.

"Was it money? But you really did not get anything from Kevin's Will. Not that much. Rockelle took everything. That was a flop wasn't it?"

"I think this meeting is over. Please leave my house. I'm not guilty till proven." She said standing up.

"Rockelle was your daughter. You killing her father drove her to suicide. So in conclusion you really did kill two birds with one stone."

"Get out!" She screamed making smile then stand up.

"But then.. On Rocky's will.. You also did not get that much. Only the businesses. Most if it if I'm right went to Miss Latoya Samuels. Your plan really did not work."

"Do I need to call security Detective Adams? For all we know.. Latoya might have been the one to kill Kevin."

I laughed really hard. "Yes.. You are right. Latoya might have been the one to kill Kevin but only.. Why? It's not like she got anything from Kevin's will. She didn't get anything. Maybe she did it out of revenge.. But actually revenging what? Or maybe the person who did it held a grudge on Kevin. Maybe Kevin was abusing her physically? You never know.. I mean.. How do you get back with someone who abused you for years?"

"Get out!"

"The truth always a way to come out and when it does Mrs Robert.. It's going to destroy you. Keep safe and ohh.. All your assets, including those you inherited are going to be frozen till investigations are over."

"What?"

"Yes.. Since you are the prime suspect.. It's only procedure Mrs Robert. Don't worry too much." I said walking out of her house. I sighed when I settled in my car. There was just something missing. Something I couldn't seem to understand. There were a lot of suspects. We had Mr Tshekedi, his business partner, and a few other business associates. Then Lana. It had been a month since Kevin died. Three weeks since Rockelle killed herself but I still was going round in circles.

Starting my car I drove out of her gate. There was one person who could have possibly qualify to be a suspect but then without any theory of him being against Kevin there was nothing we could do to him. I took my phone which was vibrating from my pocket. It was my Aunt, Lerato's mother.

"Aunty.."

"Mathhogonolo what time are you arriving home? You know your negotiations are happening tomorrow." I sighed. Lerato' mother was the nicest relative I had though her snake daughter was just something else. "Your uncles are already asking questions."

"I'm coming today though I will probably arrive late at night."

"We will wait, I am glad that the white boy is more than willing to follow our culture." I smiled. King had his uncles call my family.

"Ehh Mme."

"We will talk."

"Bye.." I put the phone away. Somehow I just hoped my money hungry uncles would not scare away King's family. I drove in the garage then parked my car on the parking lot. The garage had been.. renovated. It looked like a real garage now. Somewhere you could actually bring your car to be fixed without fear of it being stolen. The first person I noticed was Zulu. He was fixing some Toyota hilux.

"Zulu!" I said approaching him. He looked at me then smiled.

"Detective.. How may I help?"

"I want to see Maphoto."

"If I didn't know better I would say you have a crush on him." I laughed abruptly.

"Where is he?"

"Follow me.." I walked behind him as he led me inside the house like building. Inside was beautiful. I guess he had really upgraded himself. We stopped by some door.

"He is in here.."

"Thanks." Zulu walked away as I knocked on the door. A faint "come in" made me open the door. Walking inside my eyes first fell on the baby who was on the walking frame holding her toy in her hand. She was so cute with dimples though I couldn't really misplace the fear that ran on her face when she saw me.

"Daddy.." She muttered softly walking towards Luthando who was holding a file. He stood up then picked her up. She clinged unto him wrapping her tiny arms around him.

"It's ok princess.." He said gently to her then sat down. "Adams what do you want?"

I smiled then sat down.

"Is she yours?" I said looking at Miss Cuteness.

"Yes.. She's mine."

"She's pretty."

"I know.. What do you want? You are scaring my daughter."

"I'm sorry.. I'm here about Kevin."

"Really? Are you being serious?"

"You were at the anniversary party."

"I was yes. What's your point?" I loved the way he kept calm because of his daughter. The last thing I wanted was to leave without asking the questions I wanted to ask.

"You could have killed him."

"Yes.. I could have killed him but I did not. Someone did it but it was not me. You are wasting my time and scaring my child. Until I'm found guilty stay away from me."

"There's no need to get angry. I just want to understand what happened and why you think you could have killed him."

"Look Adam, you are really getting on my nerves. I'm telling you.. I did not kill him. I don't know who killed him and I have no idea why. Go chase real criminals out there and stop acting all dumb and stupid." I looked at him for a while. He wasn't the one though he had motive. Whoever that had killed Kevin had done it with someone's help but if that person hadn't killed Kevin..

Luthando was going to. I smiled then stood up.

"Thank you for your corporation Mr Maphoto.. And what a beautiful daughter you have.." I said then walked out. Walking to my car my phone started ringing. It was King.

"Hey.."

"Hey.. My mom has arrived. We are on our way to your house right now."

"What?" I said unlocking my car and getting inside.

"Yeah.. Don't worry yourself. She's really nice."

"God King.. Why does she have to come today.. I have to start driving home right now. I thought she was coming on Monday!."

"She just wants to see you before you leave. Just relax babe.." I hung up then started my car. God knew my house looked like an earthquake had happened the previous day. I didn't even have groceries. I quickly reversed then started driving away. Today was just going to be a disaster.

BREAK OF DAWN

1

[NOMPUMELELO]

"There are different cultures involved here. We have Lelo.. Who's a swati, we have Nicholas who is a Zulu, we have Janine who is a Tswana and King, a French guy.." He chuckled. "So this wedding can be very interesting due to different cultures. I mean.. How much more interesting can it be when you mix a Swati, Zulu, Tswana and whiteness in the same pot?"

"I still don't get how this will play out. There are too many combinations." Janine said looking so confused.

"Honey boo they call me Derrek for a reason. You told me what you want and so did Lelo. They are two different things but when mixed they create something new so just let me.. Do what you will be paying me for. Since there is no budget.. We can brainstorm a bit." I sighed, this was finally happening. I had been

planning my own wedding till I found out Janny was also getting married. We had bumped into each other at mug and bean and that's how I had found out. The idea of us having one wedding had been just a joke till Janine actually agreed to it and now here we were planning a double wedding.

"So a venue.. Considering the fact that this will be a big wedding.. We should look for a bigger place."

"Yeah.. I agree on that." Janine said. Just then my phone started vibrating from my handbag. I took it out and smiled when I realized it was Nick.

"Excuse me.." I said standing up and walking a distance from them.

"Babe.."

"Hey.. Still with the planner?"

"Yeah but we are almost done.. What did you want?"

"You remember Lungile?"

"Ohh your friend. New friend."

"Yeah.. His other friend is having an engagement party and we have been invited. I think this is also an opportunity for you to meet him."

"What time does it start?"

"It starts in an hour."

"I think we are almost done here."

"Ok.. See you at home. I love you.."

I giggled. "Love you more.." He then hung up. I walked back to Derrick and Janine.

"Ok.. Where were we?"

"The venue.. I will look for some venues then get back to you

guys."

"Ok.. Ummh I have to go back to work." Janine said smiling apologetically. I smiled too.

"I have to go too.. Call us D.."

"You got it." Janine and I stood up and walked out.

"I guess I will see you.." She said unlocking her car.

"Yeah.." I also got in my car and drove away as Janine took a different road. Arriving home Nick was watching a soccer match.

"I'm going to take a quick shower before we leave."

"It's ok.." I ran to the bedroom already unbuttoning my shirt. I took a quick shower before I changed into my body hugging pink dress with maroon heels. I quickly fixed my hair there and there before doing my makeup. After I was done I grabbed my pink handbag and walked out.

"Done?" Nick asked as I approached him.

"Yeah.. Done." He stood then grabbed me so that our bodies were now against each other.

"You look so beautiful MaDumisa." I smiled pushing him away.

"Can we go? We don't want to be late."

"I will be quick."

"Nick.."

"It's been a while I miss you.."

"I miss you too but who's fault is it? You leave for work early and come back late."

"That's about to stop."

"Great.."

He chuckled then took my hand. Getting in the car he sighed.

"Babe.. You know.. You look really beautiful but that dress is

really exposing everything."

"Nicholas Dumisa.. You have started. This dress is just fine. I'm not changing."

"There are vultures out there baby.." I laughed.

"I'm all yours. Only yours.. You don't have to worry about the vultures. I love you and you only.." He smiled.

"Ok.." He started the car then drove out of the gate. From our house to the friend's friend's house was about 40 minutes. We were welcomed by music at the gate. Getting out of the car Nick slipped his hand into mine then we walked inside. The house was so big and it wasn't that filled. We were welcomed with glasses of champagne by the server I guess. I took a sip of my champagne as we walked further inside the house.

"Nick.. Glad you made it!" Some guy said, a guy who I believed was Lungile. He was tall. Very tall, wide chest and he looked like he worked out a lot. Maybe more than a lot. His cologne smelt so good but what made it all worse was the way the suit he was wearing pasted itself on that big body. Every male was wearing a suit. Including Nicholas though when we left home I hadn't actually noticed it.

"Yeah.. Ummh this is my fiancée.. Lelo and babe this is Lungile. The guy I told you about." I smiled then gave Lungile a handshake. He squeezed my hand slightly as he blessed me with a killer smile.

"Nice to finally meet you Lelo.. Just so you know.. You are all he talks about but I can't blame him." He let go of my hand then looked at Nicholas. "Now I know what delayed you." We all laughed.

"I didn't delay him.." I said laughing.

"We all know you took an hour preparing yourself babe.."

Nicholas said giving me a look.

"A lady got to look good.."

"Yeah.. Talking about ladies.. Most of them are in the kitchen including the lady of the night. You can go and join them."

Lungile said pointing at some door.

"Ok.. It was nice meeting you Lungile."

"You too.." I walked to that door holding my glass. I wanted to slap myself for having the thoughts I was having about Lungile. Getting in the kitchen as suspected.. Most of the ladies were there. I smiled looking at them.

"Ladies.. I'm Lelo.." They all smiled.

"I'm Puleng.." The one wearing a white evening gown said giving me a handshake. She probably was the lady of the night.

"It's nice to meet you Puleng."

"Yes.. Ummh this is my friend.. Kelly.." She said pointing at the lady who was standing besides her in a red flared dress. I couldn't help it but to notice how dark her knees were. I gave her a smile.

"Hi Kelly.."

"And this is Nikiwe.." She said pointing at the pregnant lady. If she wasn't five months pregnant then definitely she was six. She was wearing a very tight black dress which hugged her pregnancy so well, her short hair exposed her pretty face.

"Hi Niki.." She gave me a wide smile.

"Hey Lelo.."

"And moving on this is Akhona and Caroline.." She said pointing

at the dark skinned lady but beautiful in a manner and the white lady who looked out of place.

"There is Tanya.. and lastly but not least.. Juliette." I looked behind me and there Juliette was. Our friendship wasn't that tight anymore especially because I missed her mother's funeral. I didn't miss it because I wanted to but because I didn't know about it. We had an argument about it and words were exchanged. Since our argument we never spoke to each other though I wasn't even bothered.

"It's nice to meet all of you ladies."

"It's nice to meet you too Lelo.." Puleng said making me smile. I walked towards Nikiwe after putting my champagne down. Out of all the ladies, she was the only who looked normal to me.

"Hi.. How far are you?" I asked making her smile and rub her bump.

"I'm four months pregnant."

"Oh my God.. And don't you look beautiful."

"Thank you.. I'm actually expecting twins."

"Mhhhm baby daddy must be happy." She smiled a bit.

"Yeah.."

"Wanna go sit somewhere private?"

"Yeah.." We walked out with some eyes on us, including Julie's eyes. I ignored her as we walked to something that looked like the lounge and sat down. There was no one there.

"Wanna talk about it?"

She took a deep breath. "He doesn't love me. He doesn't even want me."

"What do you mean?"

"He still loves his ex girlfriend. I mean.. She's really beautiful.. Or maybe beautiful is an understatement. She's just beyond beautiful with a beautiful body. He just can't understand that she doesn't want him. She has moved on to a business man out there.. A millionaire but he's just hung over her."

"Then why do you stay?"

"I'm pregnant Lelo.. I'm not walking away. I love him too. I love him so much. What makes it worse is that they also have a child."

"What?"

"Yeah."

"Look.. You can't stay where you are not wanted. If you force yourself he will only hurt you. Let him be, let him go."

"I can't.. I'm not going to lose him."

"But look today you are in a competition with someone who doesn't even think about you."

"You don't understand.."

"If he does not love you then he doesn't."

"He will learn to.. I have his sister in my corner. She doesn't like the baby mama."

"Ummh where are the toilets?" I asked standing up.

"Go up the stairs, the first door to the left I think."

"Ok.. Give me a minute and I will be back so we can discuss this." I took my handbag then walked towards the stairs. I opened the first door to the left and walked right in but to only turn quickly.

"I'm so sorry.. I thought it was the toilet." He laughed making me turn and look at him. I was beyond mortified.

"It's ok.. The toilet is the door to the right." He said buttoning his shirt. I smiled then sighed.

"Then I better get going then. Thanks.."

"It's ok.. But you can use the one in the ensuite." He said pointing at the door. Lungile looked like a whole sin. An unforgivable sin. I wet my lips then nodded. Walking to the toilet in the ensuite I quickly peed. I couldn't be in the same environment with him for too long. Walking out he was still there with his jacket on now. I noticed the shirt he had been wearing on the bed. It looked spoiled.

"Thank you.." I said walking towards the door.

"Wait.." He said walking towards me. I held my breath as he closed the distance between us. He put his hand above my head then set my hair free.

"There.. You look more beautiful like this." I swallowed hard as his intoxicating cologne filled my nostrils.

"I... I have to go.." I said though it came off as a whisper.

"Why so eager to run?" He whispered back. My skin felt so hot.

"Nicholas.. He.."

"Shh baby... Relax ok?" I nodded. "Good girl.." He leaned over and kissed me softly. I could easily breath in his mint breath. His tounge gladly glided inside my mouth. This man knew was to do with that tounge. I dropped my handbag then wrapped my arms around him as I rubbed my body against his. He pulled away from me then locked the door. I stood there in anticipation of what he was going to do with me. He grabbed me and kissed me roughly. My head was pounding trying to process what was happening but my whole body was enjoying. He let my lips go

then pulled my dress up and pushed half my body to the bed. Pulling down my panties I felt guilt launch in but it was quickly disposed when Lungile's hand landed on my bare butt. I moaned as the pain went down my libido.

"Lift your ass." He commanded making me arch my back. I felt so exposed but his groan made that feeling go away. I had turned into a wanton. I heard him rip a condom before he pushed against me with a firm thrust that made me cry out. He was big. His thrusts were fast and deep. I tried to silent my cries but they escaped my lips as he hit it hard and good. He continued with his assault till my whole body stiffened. The knock on the door didn't stop Lungile. He just went on, going deeper and harder. I put my face against the bed as the knock persisted followed by Nicholas's voice.

"Is anyone inside?" My heart started racing as my body clenched all around Lungile as I came with a muffled cry. He soon following behind with a low groan. By then Nicholas was gone and my phone was ringing. I knew it was him. He slowly pulled out making whimper softly.

He walked to the bathroom then came back after a while holding a wet towel. He wiped me and walked away again. I stood upright then put on my panties before pulling down my dress.

"Answer it.." He said walking back inside the room. He now looked like he hadn't just fucked a few minutes ago. I took a deep breath before I walked towards my handbag. Taking my phone out indeed it was Lungile.

"Tell him you got stuck at the back room's bathroom and the door wouldn't open."

"What?"

"Tell him that. Don't sound weird or act weird around him. Just be normal."

"Ok..." He then unlocked the door and walked out. I took a deep breath then answered the phone.

"Hey baby.."

"Lelo where are you?"

"I was stuck in the toilet that is in the back room. I'm so annoyed I want to go home."

"Where are you right now?" He asked as I took out my perfume and sprayed myself.

"Back in the house." I said walking out of the room and hurrying down the stairs. Nikiwe was not where I had left her anymore. Lungile walked in a few seconds later.

"Where were you?" I could see he was questioning my story but I smiled.

"So I met the ladies and realized I could only click with Nikiwe. We came here and sat down but then I wanted to go the toilet. She said the toilet is on the first left door up the stairs but getting there, the door was locked so I went back downstairs and that's when I saw the back room. I quickly went there and there was a toilet. After peeing the door wouldn't open. I even had to spray my perfume because of the dust smell that side."

"Ntwana.. Found her?" A voice said making me turn. I smiled at the man who was walking towards us.

"Yeah.. She says she was stuck at the back room toilet."

"Fuck! That door has a problem. I really need to get it fixed. I'm so sorry Mam."

"It's ok.."

"Anyways I'm CJ.. The man of the night." I smiled at his cockiness before I handed him my hand for a handshake.

"I'm Lelo.. Nompumelelo, Nicholas's fiancée."

"Nice to meet you.. Ntwana.." He said then walked away.

"I'm sorry about that baby.. But can we stay a bit? Please.." I gave him a look.

"I'm begging you.. Please.."

"Ok. I guess I should find Nikiwe."

"Ok.. I Love you." He said kissing my cheek. I sighed as he walked away. I had never felt so guilty in my life like that moment.

2

[LATOYA]

I put on my heels while looking at myself on the mirror. I looked good to go though I was not wearing the top I had in mind. Surprisingly it was too tight. I had been dodging the gym for a while blaming it on having "too much work," while truly I was just lazy to go. Every time I wanted to go I felt tired and lazy.

"Do you think this is ok?" I asked latisher as she walked in my room.

"You look more than beautiful. All Mommy's genes went on you only." I laughed as I took my mac lipstick and ran it on my lips.

"You are crazy.."

"Ummh.. I hope you haven't forgotten about tomorrow." I looked at her.

"What's happening tomorrow?"

"The sleepover." I looked at the mirror and I looked good to go. Stepping away from the mirror I reached for my handbag.

"We talked about that Latisher."

"I'm 17! I deserve to go out!"

I gave her a smile. "Yes. You do deserve to go out but you should be home by six in the evening. Not even Latifar gets to have sleepovers or even me. You have a very big and comfortable bed here."

She rolled her eyes.

"You can roll your eyes all you want or even flip them or whatever but the main line is.. No. You can go out with your friends but be home by six."

"This is not fair."

"Life is not fair." I said kissing her cheeks and walking out. She could sulk all she wanted but there was no way I was going to let a mere 17 year old have a sleep over. Anything could happen to her. I walked to her room and there Ocean was holding her teddy bear tightly. She looked so cute with her super long lashes. They were so long I wondered who she got them from. I kissed her cheek gently then stepped away from her. Luthando had bought her the teddy bear for her birthday but of cause I was never letting Ocean hear me call "Shiny" a teddy bear. Shiny was her daughter with her Daddy. She was always with her, even at preschool. She took Shiny everywhere.

"I love you baby.." I said fixing her blanket. She had slept late because of Luthando. He had promised to call but I guess he had been too busy to adhere to his promises. His little madam had slept in tears because he didn't call. I had to come up with a

lie on why he didn't call but she wasn't hearing any of it. I walked out of her room then went downstairs. Latifar was finishing the last episodes of grownish.

"Oh look at you!" She said turning her attention from her laptop to me. "You look beautiful."

"Thanks."

"Thick Mami.."

"I really need to visit the gym."

She laughed. "I told you." Just then there was a knock on the door. Latifar stood up.

"I will get it."

"It's probably Miguel."

"I know.. Where is he taking you?"

"I don't know. He said it's a surprise though I will be back before eleven."

"You can sleep over."

"No.. I can't leave you guys alone for the night."

She laughed. "I'm 21.. Tisher is 18. We will be fine plus.. What can possibly happen to us?"

"No. I can't leave you alone for the night and I won't. What kind of behavior will I be teaching you. I'm your mother and that's not how mother's behave like."

"You are 28 for crying out loud Toya!"

"I know but I'm a mother first before anything else. Bye.. Lock the door." I said walking towards the door. Opening it there Miguel was in his casual wear. He looked sexy in the jean, T-shirt and sneakers. It looked so unlike him.

"Hey.. Ready to go?" He asked looking at me. Of cause he did

acknowledge my body.

"Yeah.."

"Is princess sleeping?"

"Yeah.. She was kind of upset tonight." I said closing the door and walking towards him for a hug. He gave me a warm hug with a kiss on my lips.

"What happened?"

"Her father was supposed to call and he didn't."

"That must have hurt. Tomorrow's adventure will probably make her forget." I smiled as we walked inside the elevator. Miguel had promised to take her to the zoo tomorrow.

"Yeah.."

"You look beautiful."

"I'm going to register for the gym membership." I said as we walked out of the elevator. My hand was into his as he led me to his Audi.

"Or you can just join me for my morning exercises. I will drive here every morning so we can take a run everyday."

"There's no need for all that Miguel.. I told you before."

"There is. You are my baby and I have the right to." He said before kissing me in front of his car. I kissed him back not caring if the press was going to see us or not. Miguel and I started dating a few weeks after my promotion. He was fun to be around, and carefree and kind. He always put my feelings first before his. He had this tender love I couldn't seem to get enough of.

"I think the heels should have stayed home." He said breaking the kiss.

"Where are we going?"

"We are doing bungee jumping tonight. We will pass by my place and get you sneakers." He said opening the door for me. I got inside the car as I suddenly felt excited. All the things we did for fun were just activities I never thought I could ever do. Activities that always had adrenaline running throughout my body. I had never did bungee jumping before but the thought was exciting enough.

Last time Miguel had taken me to swim with the whales. It had been a very exciting yet scary experience.

The moment he got inside the car he started driving to his house. His house was located on the top floor of a skyscraper in Manhattan.

He held my hand as the elevator led us up. I didn't like the elevator because every time I stepped out it always made me feel like vomiting. Even the one at work.

"How did your meeting go yesterday?" I smiled. "Well.. It went well. A month into the job and I can't really complain. Just that Angie and Sandy don't click." He chuckled as he kissed my hands.

"Just ignore them."

"I am.."

"And the girl who killed herself?" I sighed. Rockelle killing herself was shocking. Somehow I had never thought that one day she would try to kill herself. Even though she was my late ex husband's daughter I still cared for her. At first I thought she was just a lost soul. She was always following up with all the partying non stop, the alcohol.. There was a time when I actually thought

if she wasn't careful she was going to get pregnant. Kevin cutting her off exposed the real Rockelle. She managed to get married to some man out there. Whoever it was, was probably lucky just till she committed suicide. She had slit her wrist in the bathroom of her mother's house in the room she used to use. Somehow I felt responsible for her death. I felt like everyone was responsible because nobody made it their priority to let her know she wasn't alone. Everyone knew how she was so close to Kevin but nobody was there for her. When her lawyer called me a week after she passed on talking about the will I was shocked. Shocked at her passing but more shocked to find out that I was on her will. Rockelle from the first day, she hated me so much. After her father and I got married, she didn't bother hiding her hatred for me. It was so surprising that I was on the will. I went there for the will reading and that's when I came back with Ocean. Remembering the drama that took place made my whole body shrink. The drama Luthando's baby mama pulled. That girl was a serious mental case but back to Rockelle and the will. Almost everything that her father gave to her.. She gave it to me because according to her I played the mother role indirectly. To say I was shocked would have been an understatement. I was beyond shocked. The business she left in my hands, the main business her father had and the money. It was more than a lot. "Investigations are still going on so they have freezed everything she left behind just for a while. I heard the police suspect that Kevin was killed by his wife."

"She could have... Or not but I'm just glad it's not your drama to deal with." He said as we walked out of the elevator. I took a

deep breath trying to fight the urge of vomiting. Today it was a bit better. Sometimes it was worse and that was why mostly I opted for the stairs.

"Me too. I'm just glad that my life is drama free." I said as he unlocked his door. Walking inside it was clean as always. Miguel was neat freak and I liked that about him. Having a boyfriend who was always neat was just the best thing ever.

"Sit here as I go get the shoes." I smiled as I sat on the couch. I took off my heels then started massaging my feet.

"Are they swollen?" Miguel asked walking back in. I let go of my feet then looked at him.

"Yeah.. Today I spent the whole day standing, you know how it is with Ocean. The fact that she can run around makes it all worse."

He chuckled as he sat besides me then took my right foot and started massaging it gently.

"Did she enjoy it though?" Ocean had been invited on a birthday party by our neighbour.

"Obviously she did."

"That's all that matters."

"Ahhhh.." I moaned as he continued massaging my foot. "Are you sure you don't work at a massage parlor?" He laughed.

"No baby.. I guess I'm just gifted."

I chuckled as I put my leg down then sat upright.

"We thank the lord." I whispered as I sat on his lap and kissed him. Miguel and I had never had sex. Somehow I thanked God he never pushed but today whatever thought I had got discarded. I was tired of waiting on Luthando. He was probably busy with

Nikiwe. The fact that he was still with her was like a knife deep in my heart. I kissed him deeply as I straddled him. I was just thirsty I couldn't help it but to hump on him. He groaned in my mouth as he massaged my breast. I flinched.

"Don't squeeze too hard. I'm almost close to getting my periods so they are sore." I whispered.

"Sorry.." He whispered as he gently massaged them. I put my lips back on his and kissed him again.

He pushed me back a little then took off my top. Just then my phone started ringing.

"You should take it.. Maybe it's Latifar or Tisher." I sighed as I got off him. Taking my phone from my handbag my eyes fell on the caller ID. It was Luthando. I looked at it for a while as it rang then put it back in my handbag.

"You are not answering it?" Miguel asked standing up with his erection visible. I unbuttoned my jeans then took them off together with my lacy panties. Lust immediately filled his eyes as he stared at me.

"No.. I'm not answering it." I said then took off my bra at last. I tied my weave then stepped in front of him. "I want you.." He grabbed me then kissed me while picking me up. He walked with me up the stairs to his room. Laying me down on the bed he stepped back and looked at me carefully. I pulled my legs apart slightly as I ran my tongue on my lips.

"You are so beautiful." He said then got on top of me and kissed me hard. He opened my legs wider then rubbed his erection on me through his pants. I moaned softly tilting my pelvis.

"Shit! I want you so bad!" He said then sunk in two fingers in me.

He circled his fingers in me over and over again till I came with a loud scream.

He got off me then quickly undressed. My eyes fell on my erection. He was fairly blessed. I widened the gap between my legs as he got back on top of me.

"Wait.. Condom.." I said remembering. I couldn't sleep with him without a condom. Besides the fact that there were diseases out there and AIDS was real, the last thing I wanted was to get pregnant. After my last sex with Luthando I swore to never fuck without a condom. I had forgotten that we had fucked without it to only remember on the third day. I was glad that I had remembered before 72 hours passed and so I had managed to get a pill.

"Yeah.." He got off me then disappeared in what looked like the closet.

Coming back he was holding a packet of condoms. I smiled as he took one and ripped it with his teeth. After putting it on he got back on top of me. Easing into me slowly I bit my lower lip. He was slow and gentle and he waited for me. I came before him and him after me shooting his load in the condom.

"I love you.." He said as he lay besides me panting. I blinked a couple of times. It was too soon for him to be talking about love. My subconscious gave me a look. Of cause it wasn't the same with Luthando, I didn't want to rush anything with Miguel though I couldn't help but to feel guilty. I pinched myself slightly.

Luthando and I were only connected because of Ocean. Nothing else. I had given him a choice, he had an option to chose to either move this side so that we could be together or not and he

didn't. Of course it was unreasonable but who was it reasonable to? I couldn't just move too. I had a whole life this side.

"Baby are you good?" Miguel asked snapping me out of my thoughts.

I smiled then lay my head on his chest. "Yeah.. I'm good. How is your mother?"

"She's ok. She's dying to meet you though. And I didn't tell her.. She saw us from a magazine."

"It's ok."

"Baby are you sure you are good?" He asked tilting my head so I look at him. I smiled. I couldn't let him see the guilty that consumed me, the guilty that made me feel stupid because my brain told me I had no reason to feel guilty but my heart said otherwise. "I'm fine. I can't wait for tomorrow." He smiled.

"Me too.. Ocean will enjoy it."

"I know."

"On Monday I'm going to Florida." I looked at the wall.

"Good luck." He chuckled rubbing my back slight.

"Babe I don't need luck but thanks."

"Ok Mr big shot!" He chuckled.

"Wanna catch a movie or maybe you are still hungry?" He asked flipping me so that he got on top of me. I giggled softly trying to look for a way to turn him down. I couldn't help the guilt I was feeling. It was upsetting me so bad.

"I think I'm still hungry.." I said pulling him for a kiss.

3

[JANINE]

"You need to respect your husband. He is the man of the house." My grandmother said. I looked at her wondering when it was all going to end. I was tired and I wanted to sleep, besides that.. It was late. It had been hours and all I wanted was a bed and a pillow. Was that too much to ask? "You take care of his needs. You cook. You wash and even other things. Give him what he wants when he desires it. Anytime and anywhere. Don't turn into those kind of wives who become boring. Have some spice'nyana, some knorrox." My youngest Aunt said. The last time I had heard that she was married to a pastor. "It is his. If he wants to destroy that vagina let him do so. It is his to do what he wants." She continued. I felt my feminist side try to spring up but I shook my head. I had to listen. At least if I listened then I could go and sleep. I wanted to take off the mini blanket that was on my shoulders. It was hot.

"You need to protect your marriage. If you don't then your home will fall apart. Yes, be a wife, submit when needed and try not to question a lot but at the same time, take charge and build a strong foundation for your home. If he knows that you don't like 1 and 2, then chances are that he won't do it or he may do it but you will never find out. Let him know that you will not just take in his nonsense. This is the 20th century. You young women claim to be all about women. Yes, be that woman. Stand your ground but at the same time do not degrade your husband. Know when to talk and when to keep quiet. Be wise. Don't seek marriage advice from those single women or those divorced women. 99% is that their advice will be biased but I am not saying don't befriend them or think you are special in a way. Just know who

to go for advice and what advice to actually listen to.

"Sometimes advice will come but you should be able to know what is right and wrong. This is your marriage alone. Yes, fight for your home but don't be made a fool. And cheating. Yes, men will always be men but don't let him disrespect you. Don't let him manipulate you into thinking less of yourself. Don't be a woman of vengeance, don't be made a fool out of " I'm trying to keep my marriage going." Sometimes in life you need to leave a place you are not deserved. I have spoken. We have spoken. We hope you shall listen but I know you will. You are a very bright girl Tlhogi. We bless this marriage. Now.. Your young Aunt will take you where you will sleep tonight. I'm sure you are tired. It has been a long day." Lerato's mother said.

I sat on my bed as I remembered the day my lobola had been paid. Some advice I could actually listen to and some were just too much. Today I was planning for my real wedding. Mixing my wedding with Lelo's had sounded stupid but after a while I realized it was not a bad idea. I got off my bed and walked to my phone which was ringing. It was my youngest Aunt. She had been the one to dress me at the lobola negotiations because she didn't want the white men to think I wasn't a diva enough for their son. The whole process had just been weird but everything had went well. I knew King's family were probably charged a lot but I wasn't going to ask. I didn't want to know. I answered the call.

"Aunty.."

"Hey girl.. How's the wedding plans coming up?"

"Well.. I'm mixing my wedding with my friends wedding. We are

having a double wedding."

"Then meaning this is going to be a big wedding. Did your husband agree? And won't it be costly?"

I smiled remembering King's reaction when I had told him. He wanted whatever that I wanted. He didn't object to anything.

"He agreed plus there's no budget so it's ok."

"Uhh shame you are lucky." I blinked trying to comprehend what she was trying to say.

"Ma?"

"I could see from those men that you have been married into a nice family. A nice well off family. The last thing you would want is not have your dream wedding. It really is not nice, sometimes a girl's dream has to be fulfilled." I chuckled, I wasn't with King for his money.

"And no, I'm not implying you to be a gold digger or something. Sometimes financial stability is also needed in life. You see me.. I got married to my husband because I loved him but only to realize later that love wasn't enough. I didn't have a wedding because there was no money. Him being a priest was a calling as he said it but so was poverty." I tried to hold it but a chortle escaped my lips. She laughed joining me.

"You can laugh. It is funny.. I also had the perfect image for my wedding but I didn't get it. Not that it's enough, I have needs and my needs sometimes just need financial help but your own husband can not even take care of those needs. All he does is read Bible verses for you and pray. You know.. I love Tobias so much but the reason I cheat is for money." She said giggling.

"Sometimes being Mamfundisi has to move back a bit."

"Are you not supposed to be holy?"

"God will understand why I did it. I do it for money. Money that I use on our family. My kids can't just starve because someone refuses to work because his work is to lead the lost souls to the light. I'm not saying go and cheat, no, but if needed do it just don't get caught." I laughed so hard.

"Anyways.. I just wanted to check up on you. I haven't talked to you in a while."

"Thank you. It's always nice talking to you."

"Goodnight sweetheart.." She said then hung up. My youngest Aunt and I had gotten close at my negotiations. She had been that friend I needed. I loved her from the very start when she proved to be very an honest and straightforward person. My other Aunt, the one that followed my brother, the one I had kicked out of my house the last time, she didn't come for my negotiations because apparently I had disrespected her. I was so glad she didn't come because the last thing I wanted was for words to be exchanged. How dare they bury my father in my absence?

Putting my phone away I undressed then walked to the bathroom. The water had filled the tub. I got inside, it was so warm and smelt good. After bathing I dried myself and changed into my pyjamas. Getting in bed my phone vibrated. I reached for it and realized it was King. I smiled. He had sent a text. He wasn't sleeping here tonight because he was in Capetown. He was trying to open a brunch of his business this side.

hey, sorry I couldn't call today. How was your day?

I smiled as I read the text.

It's ok. My day went well. I met up with Lelo and the wedding planner/designer. I think everything is coming off well.

He didn't take much time to reply.

I'm glad, I just can't wait for you to be Mrs Tejero. Anyways I'm looking for an estate agent.

I quickly typed my reply ignoring the part of me being a Tejero.

Looking for a house to stay?

I waited a bit for him to reply me.

No. I'm looking for a house for US. We are getting married in 2 months remember?

I sighed. I hadn't really thought about that but then again I was excited.

Ok.. After you find the agent we can meet him/her together. I will see you tomorrow.

I sighed as I pressed the send button. Somehow the fact that I was going to be Janine Tejero didn't sit well with me but what I could possibly do? I thanked God Big Daddy was dead. All the prison guards knew was that he was killed. By who? They didn't know only that it might have been someone from the outside. I knew it was Lana. My theory was that, Lana had hooked up with Big Daddy, a dangerous man who could help her take out her husband. After Kevin died, probably Big Daddy wanted something from Lana so she killed him or another theory was that maybe Lana was just covering her tracks and big Daddy was a lose end so she had to take him out.

I looked back at my phone, King had replied.

Yeah. I miss you so much. I love you.

I replied with I love you too and a heart emoji before I put my

phone away. Closing my eyes all I could think about was the fact that Kevin's case was about to be closed because it had hit a dead end. I had no choice but to close it but at the same time I felt so guilty. My duty was to make sure Justice was served but here I was, with a case and I was closing it without any justice being brought.

[NOMPUMELELO]

I walked back inside the house breathing hard. Somehow the run had done me so good I felt refreshed. Walking inside the kitchen Nick was already up preparing breakfast. I smiled as I walked towards him and hugged him from behind.

"Hey.. How was your run?" I sighed as I squeezed him a bit before I let him go.

"It was ok. I ran 5km."

"My baby is going for the skies." He said making me laugh as I sat on the kitchen stool.

"Yeah.. Next time you should join me." He looked at me then laughed.

"No I'm good but we can try other ways of exercising." He said giving me a naughty look making me chuckle.

"You are crazy.. Anyways yesterday was fun. I made a friend."

"Who? Nikiwe?"

"Yeah.. At least she's no mental case."

"I saw Julie.."

"Yeah. We didn't talk and I'm glad. Julie was not a friend I needed. She kept encouraging me to do things which are just.. too much and I was stupid enough to listen. I'm so glad she's out

of my life for good together with her brother."

"I can't believe that thug is friends with Lungile." Nick said dishing for us. Yesterday we had gotten surprised when we saw Luthando. Thank God he had left early, according to CJ he was flying out of the country to check up on his family. I wondered what family he was talking about because as far as everyone was concerned, Latoya was with a business man. She had moved on and she was happy.

"Yeah but hey.. People are Oceans. You never know how deep they are."

He sat besides me handing me my coffee.

"I know. How did it go yesterday with the wedding planner?"

"It went well.. All I can say is that our wedding is going to be lit!"

He chuckled. "I'm glad."

"I trust Derrek. I think soon enough we need to go for measurements."

"Ok. I'm meeting up with Lungile today."

I smiled. "And I'm meeting up with Nikiwe. I wonder who of all those men is her baby daddy."

"I never asked too but it's not Lungile. Lungile recently lost his wife though they were already having problems."

"He lost his wife?"

"Yeah.. It's so sad. You know baby.. Lungile and I have a lot in common. I'm just glad I met him."

"I'm happy for you too babe. He seems genuine. Friends like that are needed. You can invite him for dinner tonight if you want." He took my hand and kissed it.

"Yeah but he is going to Windhoek today then from there Zaire."

"Wow! Such a traveller. When he comes back he can come."

"Yeah anyways I'm meeting him this morning."

"Ok.." After eating he prepared and left. He had issues with friends especially with what had happened with Sally the last time. She had slept with his best friend and that was why I decided what had happened was a mistake and the only way I could rectify it was if I didn't do it again. Nicholas deserved all the loyalty he could ever get. After Nick left I read some of my emails and replied others. I was planning to go and benchmark some museums in Egypt. I wanted to see what exactly made their museums the way they were. I wasn't so sure of the dates yet.

Around lunch time I was already dressed in black jeans with a black silky shirt. I had the first three buttons unbuttoned. To finish the look I put on my heels and fixed my make-up. We had discussed where we were going to meet so getting in my car I just drove straight there. Arriving I saw her sitting at the far end table drinking juice. I walked towards then gave her a hug.

"Hey Mommy.."

She laughed. "You look beautiful making me miss my body."

"Just a few more months to go." I said sitting opposite her.

"I know.. Anyways how are you?"

"I'm good.. And you look.. a bit sad. What did he do this time around?" She sighed.

"So yesterday I didn't go at CJ's house with him. I went with his sister."

"What? He didn't know you were coming?"

"Yeah. He didn't even acknowledge me the same way he doesn't

acknowledge the fact that I'm pregnant with his children."

"And you still stay?"

"I'm not giving up on him. On us. On our family. I love him Lelo."

"So what are you going to do now?"

"I'm moving in with him and I'm telling my family about the pregnancy."

"Then what? You moving in with him won't make him love you."

"It will.. I know it will. Plus after I tell my family that he impregnated me he will be forced to pay lobola."

"I'm speechless."

"It will work. Right now he went after his baby mama."

"It seems like he really loves this baby mama. What if she takes him back?"

"I'm not going anywhere, we will just have to share."

I laughed. "Polygamous relationship?"

"Yes. I don't mind sharing as long as I have him."

"Do you think she will agree to share him?"

"I don't know, all I know is I won't be going anywhere. Cordy and Corby are his kids. His semen. Since I met Luthando he is the only one I have ever slept with. He can deny it right now all he wants but the kids are his. I know his baby mama is a smart bitch, I don't think she would want to settle for someone with another baby mama."

"You are being serious ain't you? What if she takes him back then turns his back on you."

"If lobola has been paid then I will be be his wife if not first wife. She may be beautiful like Miss universe or whatever, and have a body like Buhle Samuels but what remains is that.. I, Nikiwe

Mandla, I am not going anywhere. She will have to deal with it."
"I think you are more crazier than I thought. I think you need help because you are crazy."

4

[LATOYA]

"No offense but I really don't feel your relationship with Miguel." I bit my apple looking at her then shrugged.

"He is just too.. good. You need some drama in your life a bit." I chuckled. "Some drama? No I'm good love."

"I wonder when Ocean's father is coming. That man looks like drama himself."

"I don't want unnecessary drama in my life. I like it peaceful."

"So you'd rather settle for someone you don't love for the sake of settling leaving the person you love?"

"No, I'm adoring those who adore me and actually settling with those who won't hurt but love me unconditionally."

"Miguel is hot but not as hot as that black nigga! Can't you consider the looks at least? Don't you want heaven to be brought to you?"

I laughed getting off the kitchen stool. "If we are meant to be, we will be but if not, then well.. I guess he will remain just Ocean's father."

"Why isn't love just enough? I heard you on the phone the other time and you were talking about not wanting to move because of your career. Is your career that much important than your happiness Latoya? You know.. Sometimes money can't buy you happiness and when you are not happy you get depressed. If it's

because of Latisher and I.. Don't worry. You will take us to Harvard as you wanted at first or any varsity you can afford. We will stay at Res but as we wait.. We can all move. We don't mind moving."

"You don't know what you are saying. Latifar I worked so hard to be where I am today. I worked my butt off. I came here pregnant. It was hard but I still kept going for you. For us. I'm not going to destroy what I have worked hard for, I'm not going to destroy all my hardwork just for a relationship that might not even work."

She raised her hands surrendering. "Ok. Well—" she was cut short by a knock on door. "I guess he is here." She said walking to the door. I sighed as I walked to Latisher's room where Ocean was. They were laying on her bed with earphones in their ears. I smiled as they noticed me by the door.

"Mommy!" Ocean screamed. She never got tired of screaming. She got off bed leaving the earphones behind and hugged my leg. I laughed as I picked her up.

"Hi Ocean.." I said softly.

"Hi.." She said squirming. I kissed her lips then her neck. A bruise on her neck caught my attention.

"What is this.." I muttered as I rubbed the bruise gently. She giggled pushing my hand away.

Latisher was on the bed still sulking.

"Say hi to Regina when you see her. Don't forget.. You should be here by six." I said then grabbed Ocean's bag from the bed before I walked out.

"Mommy.." I kissed her nose.

"Yes honey.."

"Zoo?" I laughed entering the lounge. Miguel was talking to Latifar about school but immediately stopped when I walked in. "Uncle!" Ocean screeched as she wiggled herself out of my hold. I put her down then let her run towards Miguel. They were close. Miguel picked her up when she got to him.

"Hey sweetheart.." He said making her giggle. I looked at Latifar.

"We will be back later. Don't bother cooking, we will go out today."

"Ok.." She said smiling.

Soon enough Miguel and I were walking out with Ocean in his arms. I couldn't exactly understand most of the things she was saying but Miguel was hearing perfectly. He was even responding and laughing with her. Getting in the car, a baby seat was already placed at the back seat. I smiled as he put her on the baby seater carefully. After securing her we got in the car. He started the car and started driving to the zoo. Miguel had promised to take Ocean there when she cried for the zebra which had been attacked by the Lion on TV. The whole way she was beyond cheerful. Getting inside the zoo the excitement multiplied. She wanted to see everything, to be everywhere. After the whole adventure at the zoo Miguel took us to a restaurant. I was famished and so was Ocean. I fed Ocean first, I had packed food for her. After her Highness was fed and happy, I finally ordered and ate. After lunch Miguel drove us to his house for his swimming date with Ocean. She had completely forgotten about Luthando not calling. Yesterday he had tried to call a couple of times but I didn't want to talk to him in front of Miguel and when I got home last night I was just too tired to text.

"Wanna swim too baby?" Miguel asked as he got out of the house in shorts only. I was already in my panties and bra laying on the lounge under the shade. Ocean was on the lounge besides mine trying to put on Miguel's sunglasses.

"No I'm good. You guys can swim while I watch." He walked towards us then gave me a kiss before he took Ocean from me. She discarded the sunglasses then focused on what was about to happen. She was now dressed in her own mini bikini.

"Swim!" She said as she walked towards the pool in Miguel's arms. Just then the intercom rang. I looked at him wondering who was he expecting today. It was Sunday.

"Sweetheart sit with mommy here. Let Uncle Miguel sort out this.." He said walking back with her. I stood up then took her from him and walked to the pool. He rushed inside the house as I sat by the edge of the pool and dipped in my foot. The water was amazingly cool. I splashed some water at Ocean as she sat comfortably on my lap. She giggled making me splash her again. Miguel walked out after a while.

"Who is it?" I asked not bothering standing up.

"It's your mental case ex."

"Huh?"

"I have buzzed him in.."

"No wait.. What are you saying? What Ex?"

"The crazy one." My eyes widened. Miguel took Ocean from me then helped me up.

"Shit!"

"Babe don't worry. He won't do anything to you as long as I'm here."

"Miguel are you listening to yourself? This man is—"

"Daddy!" Ocean's scream made me look and there he was. He was wearing dark navy blue to grayish chino with a royal blue golf T-shirt. He had a cap printed LT in his head. He looked mad. So mad. So pissed and angry. He looked ready to kill.

"It's fun and sweet I see.." He said walking towards us. I took a deep breath to calm my nerves which were a wreck. "Busy with my daughter."

"Lutha—"

"Don't you dare!" Just then Latisher emerged. She smiled when her eyes met mine.

"I knew you guys would be here. Uncle Luu wanted to see Ocean." She said with her smile. For someone who was 18, Latisher really proved to be stupid. I glared at her avoiding the pitbull's eyes. She shrugged.

"I tried calling but your phone wasn't going through."

"It's ok Latisher. Get your niece from your sister's boyfriend." Luthando said sounding so steady. I knew shit was about to break lose. Latisher walked towards us then took more than willing to go Ocean from Miguel who looked so chilled. He didn't know just how crazy Luthando could go. He didn't know that Luthando's anger could reach Pluto in seconds then go to mercury from there. He was like a manual car. One moment he would be a in gear number 1 and the next you would find him in gear number 6. Latisher and Ocean disappeared leaving me alone with calm Miguel and above normal angry Luthando.

"What did I say about him Latoya?"

"You are misunderstanding this Luthando."

"Misunderstanding? What I walked on wasn't a misunderstanding. If you badly want to play daddy why can't you fucken have your own?" He was now looking at Miguel.

"All this rumbling is unnecessary. What do you want?"

I swallowed looking at Miguel. He was fueling the fire.

"Didn't I tell you to stay the fuck away from my daughter?"

"Not only are you deluded but you are also stupid. Ocean is also Latoya's child. Stop acting like an immature bitch. I'm not about to argue about a useless issue with an immature person." My brain was too slow to comprehend what was going on till Luthando's fist landed on Miguel's face. I screamed as I tried to pull Luthando from Miguel.

"Simple instructions are too hard to follow I see."

"You see how pathetic you are.." Miguel said wiping away blood from his nose. Luthando took out a gun and pointed it at Miguel.

"I'm going to fucken blow your brains off and by the time the police finally finds you if they do, you would have fully decomposed."

"Luthando please put the gun away. Please.. I'm begging you."

"You fucken let your small dick boyfriends come near my daughter. Didn't we discuss this Latoya?"

"I'm sorry. Please put the gun away."

"I'm sick and tired of this game. You are going to chose between me and him. Who is it going to be? Me or him?" He asked, I could see he was really trying to keep calm but he was failing. All his veins were popping out. "Choose!"

"Only cowards behave the way you are behaving." Miguel said. I wanted to scream shut the fuck up because he was making the

whole situation harder than it was. Luthando cocked the gun then held it against Miguel's head. A wave of fear ran across Miguel's eyes but it was soon replaced with cockiness. I could see Luthando wasn't joking or bluffing.

"So is killing going to make her want you? Or make you a better man seeing the fact that you are not even a man. Such a disgrace you are." I ignored Miguel totally and focused on Luthando who was ready to kill someone.

"Luthando please put the gun away. I'm begging you.." I said getting between him and Miguel. "I'm begging you. Put the gun away. Put it far away, there's no need for this."

"What is it that he has that I don't huh? Latoya what is it?" I was shaking with fear. My hands were vibrating as I put them together.

"Luthando.. Put the again away. Please.. I'm begging you."

"I said choose."

"Why would she chose? Can't you see she has moved on?"

"You are right. Why does she have to choose." Luthando said then put his gun away making me sigh out of relief. He walked towards the lounge I was sitting on then took my black dress shirt with white stripes. He threw it at me.

"Put it on." At the moment we were in the last thing I wanted was to question him. He looked ready to burst because of anger. I quickly put it on.

"You are not choosing anything. You are going with me right now so either you walk on your own or we do it the other way."

"Luthando you just can't —" I was cut short by him picking me up and throwing me on his shoulder. I yelped in shock as he

walked towards the gate. Getting outside a car was parked right in front of the gate. He put me down in front of the car then took my hand and led me to the door. He opened it. I got in without even turning to look at him. I was upset or beyond. He had no right to trample on my business. No one said anything till he was parked in the garage at my place.

"Latisher you can get inside with Ocean, I need to talk to your sister." He said smiling at them.

"Ok.." They got off the car. I took a deep breath, I knew we were going to fight and I didn't want that. The moment they disappeared he drove out of the garage.

"Where are you taking me?" He didn't say anything but just kept on driving. I couldn't read him anymore. I couldn't tell if he was angry or not. He drove towards some hotel. Parking the car there he got out then came to my door and opened it.

"Get out." I looked at him then around to see if anyone was looking.

"Luthando I'm not even putting on shoes."

"Get out."

"I'm sorry. You are right, it was wrong for me to let Miguel play Daddy to Ocean. I'm sorry, I'm so sorry. Please.. It will never happen again."

"Latoya I said get out of the car right now." His voice was firm and stern. I took a deep breath then stepped out. If he tried anything all I was going to do was scream.

He took my hand then led me inside the hotel. He didn't even bother walking to the reception but just went to elevator. A few eyes were on me. I bravely ignored them. When we finally

reached his floor I had relaxed. I don't know why but I had just relaxed, maybe it was because the atmosphere wasn't chocking or maybe it was the way he had been holding my hand. Stepping out of the elevator he stepped out first but didn't let go of my hand. I let him lead me till we were in a huge room. The room was so beautiful. He looked at me so intensely, it was as if he was trying to figure something out or was searching for something. I could see that he was hurt, I could see though he was trying to cover that up. I wanted to reach up to him and tell him everything was going to be fine but it was as if my legs were tied down to the floor. I couldn't move so I just stood there looking at him. I couldn't misplace the eletricity that was between us, the feeling that was pulling us together. That feeling that took over my heart. It was there, strong as ever and so intense. It couldn't just be missed.

"I love you so much. You love me too don't you?" I blinked and tears fell. "Do you still love me toots? Do you? Or you love him now?" I couldn't seem to be able to open my mouth. He closed the distance between us then pulled me into him. The electric shock that sparkled when he touched me had me vibrating.

"Do you still love me or you have moved on?"

"I love you.. You know I do." I whispered. He seemed to relax a bit but the intensity in his eyes still remained intact.

"Don't you want us anymore? Are you giving up on us?"

"Luthando you have too much drama going on in your life." I said wiping away my tears.

"I told you Nikiwe is not an issue."

"She is, you are just trying so hard to make her not an issue but

the truth is that she is Luthando Maphoto. You know this. You are praying that her pregnancy is not yours but deep down you know it's yours. I love you but I will not let you put me together with another woman. I told you, if I'm not your everything I would rather be nothing at all. I will not put myself through unnecessary heart aches." He closed his eyes for a while, he now looked beyond frustrated.

"Then what should I do because I love you?"

"Maybe we just not meant to be."

"Don't say that.. You know how I feel. You know I love you. You can't just be saying things like that. If I have to choose you know it's you."

"I'm not going to be the reason you abandon your kids out there. I grew up without my parents, I know the struggle. You should know it too considering the fact that your father was and still is absent."

"I have always used a condom. If it's really my pregnancy then it means she did something, you can't blame me. You can't hold that against me. I deserve a fair chance. I will make sure your path never runs with Nikiwe ever because you come first. I will move."

"What?"

"I will move.."

"What about Julie?"

"Julie is 32 years old. She's a big woman. She will survive. I will move but not here. Anywhere in the world I will move just not here in New York or any surrounding town or city. Anywhere.. We will move." I looked at him for a while. Before I could open my

mouth there was a knock on the door.

"Please give us a chance. Give us our fair chance toots. We deserve it." He begged. I felt warm tears on my cheeks. The knock persisted as I looked at him. He was all I could see. Just him. Our love.

"Luthando.." I whispered, unsure of what to say. He captured my lips with his ignoring the knock. I opened my mouth then let him glide his tongue in my mouth. The emotions that flew in the kiss set me off making me cling onto him. I felt my blood rush as he deepened the kiss.

"Detective Houston open up!" A female voice said followed by the door knock. Luthando stepped away.

"So your boyfriend called the cops on me. Pathetic loser." He said walking to the door. Opening it some lady walked in holding a gun.

"I'm Detective Houston from—"

"Is there a problem officer?" Luthando asked with a smile. I couldn't help it but to notice how the detective looked at him. She was black American cop. Just then three more officers stepped inside.

"There's been a report. We are looking for Latoya Samuels."

"I'm Latoya Samuels." I said standing besides Luthando and taking his hand into mine. I was stacking claim.

"Mam what are you to this man?"

"How can we help you?" I asked.

[JANINE]

"There's a tiled patio, an outside sitting area that is near the

firepit. There's a shade at the back. Two pools."

I nodded looking around. "It's big."

"Yes. There's also a garden. This house was built a year ago. It's a family house."

"I like it."

She smiled looking satisfied. "We can sort out the paper work as soon as you want Ms Adam." I looked at King who was looking at me.

"I'm happy if you are happy." He said.

"You can sort the paper work." I told the lady. Her name was Lumka and she was an estate agent. I looked around again, I was in love with the kitchen. The design was just hard not to love.

"Great. I will call you when everything is ready."

"Ok.." King responded taking my hand into his. I loved the house. I could feel excitement reel in.

"I'm glad you loved the house baby.." King said opening the car door for me. I smiled. "It's beautiful."

"Yeah.." He closed my door then walked to his seat. Getting inside he started the car and drove out of the yard. King had arrived in the morning. I really didn't like it when he traveled away, I was turning into clingy partner as Orlando put it. He still didn't understand why I chose King out of all people. What he didn't understand was that nothing could beat true love. Nothing could win against true love because it always conquered all. He said I was rushing it. To me I wasn't rushing it. Yes King did hurt me before but my heart yearned for him. I loved him and so did he.

"And that smile? What are you thinking?" King asked making me

blush.

"Nothing. Just that I love you."

"I love you baby. I love you more.." He said as he took my hand and kissed it. "I love you so much."

His phone started ringing. It was connected to the Bluetooth speaker so he just answered it.

"Kingsley Tejero," he said.

"So I heard you are getting married."

"Gina?"

"Yes darling it's me. Congratulations in order. I hope she knows what she's in for. Your mother says you love her but I wonder.. I really wonder if that's the reason you are with her. You are a corny bastard."

"Don't be bitter, it doesn't suit you. Greet my brother for me."

"If the reason you didn't want our marriage anymore was because of another woman why lie about it? You know.. That's how you and Miguel are different. He—"

"I love my fiancée. She's everything you are not and that's why I am marrying her. You can compare me to my brother all you want but he doesn't want you too that's why he has a girlfriend. You were nothing but a sex toy. Pablo is dead, I think you need to find a job since you have nothing."

"Salopard! Putain de salopard!" She screamed.

"Bon vent!" He responded then hang up.

"What was she saying?" I asked.

He laughed. "Fucking bastard."

"She's really upset."

"I know. That's what happens when you realize you have played

yourself." I laughed.

"And "bon vent"?"

"Goodbye."

"You need to teach me French. The time your mom came you guys spoke it a lot and I was just lost. How do you say hello?"

"Bonjour, enchantée? Meaning hello, how do you do?"

"Ohh.. Bonjour Monsieur." He smiled.

"Where did you learn that one?"

"I have my ways."

He chuckled. Ok Madame Tejero."

"You didn't tell me you had a brother."

"Because him and I are good as strangers."

"What do you mean?"

"He is his father's son. We don't share the same mother though."

"Wow!"

"Yeah.. He is just another Pablo Tejero.. Just a crazy one. A certified crazy one."

"So he slept with Gina?"

"They were always fucking and still are."

"But you said he has a girlfriend.."

"He does but fucks her every time he gets a chance."

"Even when you were married to her? He still fucked her?"

"Yes. They fucked. Miguel is crazy.. I wasn't even hurt."

"What do you mean he is crazy?"

"He is a mental case. Sometimes he even forgets who he is. His name. Everything.. It's like he gets possessed."

"Huh?"

"He... He has a mental issue. He.. He is just crazy. You know

there are people who are crazy but you know they seek medical attention so to feel better. Miguel is I'm not crazy, you are the crazy one kind of crazy. He.. He once killed his girlfriend. Well.. He tortured her for a long time till he killed her. He is a psychopath. It's a mental disorder but he won't take in help."

"He killed his girlfriend?"

"He kills his girlfriends. They just end up going missing. He is manipulative. He makes you think he is actually trying to help you. Makes you think he is on your side while in his crazy mind he is plotting. He always go for the weak type. For the type which is just too much into making it. He.. He will manipulate you so much till you start thinking everyone else is against you and he is the only one on your side. He will make you eliminate everyone close to you so that he can be the only one. He is.. Crazy. The previous girl he had, Ava Harvey.. She was married. He gave her one of his companies. Made her think he was on the same boat as her. Then he started with the abuse. He would drug her. Make her think she's crazy."

"Is she dead?"

"I really don't know. He found new prey."

"Wow! So.. The girls he kills.."

"His father always covered for him. He never got caught."

"And they just went missing?"

"Yes."

"Can't he be stopped?"

"The only way to stop him is when God kills him but besides that.. No."

"Wow.."

5

[LATOYA]

I quickly put on my heels as I brushed my weave. After brushing it, I tied it into a messy bun then ran lipstick on my lips. I grabbed my handbag then rushed out of my room. Latifar was just going to have to drop Ocean off or Latisher. Both of them were on holidays.

"Latifar please drop off Ocean. I have to go to the police station."

"I still can't believe that Miguel called the police on Uncle Luu.. Ocean was sad again last night." She said putting her phone away.

"I know. Let me go and sort it out then go to work."

"Ok." I walked out of her room then rushed downstairs. Getting to the garage I got in my new matte grey range rover and drove out.

Yesterday had been a dramatic day. Miguel had reported harassment and attempted abduction. It wasn't a big deal but because Miguel had strong influence the police saw it fit to take Luthando down to the police station. I had ignored Miguel's calls last night because I was upset. He knew how exactly Ocean was going to get upset but he still went on and did what he did.

I took my phone then connected it to the Bluetooth and called him. He picked up almost immediately."

"Baby are you ok? I tried calling you last night but you were not answering. I was so close to cancelling my trip. Right now I'm on my way to your house. I couldn't come yesterday because my mother decided to arrive uninvited." I took a deep breath.

"Miguel please have Ocean's father released." I said calmly.

"Did he threaten you? I'm going to teach him a lesson baby. After I'm done with him he will never disrespect you."

"Miguel please. Have him released. Do you realize the drama that he is going to cause? As much as you think he is disrespectful, he is Ocean's father."

"Why am I getting the feeling of you feeling sorry for him?"

"Are you listening to yourself? He is my daughter's father." My voice was now a whisper, I was too upset or maybe beyond.

"So? Baby he needs someone to teach him a lesson."

I chuckled. "I can't believe you right now."

"Toya baby I don't think I understand why you are upset. This man always disrespects you. He is so full of himself and thinks he is God. I don't understand why you are still supporting him and trying to defend his foolish behavior. It's already enough that I have to deal with him because he is Ocean's father. Sometimes I wish he wasn't because being honest he doesn't deserve to be a father. I'm really trying to be lenient on him because of his role in Ocean's life so make me understand baby because I'm failing to."

I sighed as I parked the car at the police station.

"I don't think you understand and I don't blame you. My daughter's happiness comes first. That man..that man you are looking down on is my daughter's father. Our fights have nothing to do with our daughter that's why I never let it affect our daughter. Now imagine how it is that you have sent him in jail. He holds my daughter's happiness Miguel." I explained.

"Do you still love him?"

"What?"

"Do you still love him?"

"You know what? I think this conversation is over. Bye!" I said then hung up. I took my handbag then got out of the car.

Walking inside the police station I spotted detective Houston first.

"Ms Latoya Samuels."

"Detective Houston. I'm here to bail Luthando out."

"You know.. Abusive —"

"Detective please.." She sighed then signalled with her hand that I follow her. The procedure of bailing him out wasn't long. When he came out he didn't look like someone who had slept in a prison definitely. He even looked more handsome and sexy. The same way I lowkey thought he was sexy when he was upset yesterday at Miguel's house.

"Better pray when I get my hands on him, I give him a better death sentence." Luthando said as we walked to my car.

"I'm really sorry Thando about —"

"It's ok. I'm probably a troublesome baby daddy and your boyfriend is only trying to help his girlfriend."

"I'm really sorry. I.. I'm sorry." He looked at the car then me.

"Is it yours?"

"Yeah.."

"It's beautiful. You really are something ain't you. Wherever your parents are, they should be proud of you."

"Let me drop you off at your hotel. I have to go to work." He looked at me carefully for a while. His eyes slowly went down my body. I was wearing a cream lace mid thigh dress. It was

short but beautiful. I had gotten it from one of the designers I once interviewed. It featured the office life and the casual life together. Such style was to die for.

"You look beautiful."

I blushed. "Thanks. We can go."

"And you are getting thicker in a very good way." I looked at him then blushed hard feeling mortified. Now I was 100% sure I needed the gym.

"I think we should go." I said taking out the car keys. He put on his cap then pushed me against the car.

"Not before I do this." He said then kissed me. Hard. I wrapped my arms around his neck as he rubbed his body against mine. I let out a slight moan in his mouth making him step away from me. I stood there breathing hard as he stared at me biting his lower lip. I just wondered how he managed to get me all hot with just a kiss. How could he get me all wanting and wet by just a kiss. A simple kiss. I snapped out of it when my eyes fell on Miguel who was standing behind Luthando. Luthando turned then smiled.

"Ohh it's uncle Mlungu. Toots I will wait in the car while you sort him out." Luthando said taking the car keys from me and pressing his lips hard on mine before he unlocked the car. I uncomfortably fixed my dress while rubbing my lips. Why didn't I feel guilty?

[NOMPUMELELO]

"One of the artwork we got from Tracey will be coming there as soon as it arrives."

"Ok Mam."

"Ok bye." I said then hung up. The gallery in Capetown was running smoothly. I had hired the best team to run it so of cause it was running smoothly. I put my phone down as I fixed my eyes on my laptop. I was looking at some charcoal drawings of some 18 year old. I could see that she had potential. Her art works were the kind to give a second glance. We needed some new hands for the gallery. She could use charcoal and paint on her pieces together and they blended in well together. It gave it the texture and feeling it needed. After a while I had decided to give her a call. She was worth it. Just then Tshidi walked in my office smiling.

"Hey."

"Two paintings sold!"

I smiled. "Great work Tshidi. I'm trying to get Nichols's painting and Tracy's latest work in the museum for viewing."

"Tracy and Nick are good. I'm sure everything will go well."

"Yeah.."

"Lunch?"

There was a slight knock on the door. I knew it was Khethiwe, the new receptionist.

"Yes KT.." I said and then she walked in then smiled. Khethiwe was different from Nancy. Nancy was free and energetic while Khethiwe was just shy regardless the fact that it was almost six months since she joined the gallery.

"There's someone here to see you."

"Ohh Who?"

"He says his name Zuko Sikhosana." I stared at her.

"Who?"

"Zuko Sikhosana."

"We will talk later Lelo.." Tshidi said walking out.

"Let him in.."

"Yes Mam."

"Lelo.." She blushed.

"Yes.. Lelo." She then walked out. I sat up straight and waited for Zuko. My brother who I didn't consider as my brother. Zuko and I were close, since young age. He was my hero. We didn't have a father but he was always there for me. He was like the father I never had till he was 18. We had a fall out because of how he hated Mayra and mom. I don't know what happened but things went worse when I didn't take his side as he had expected. He didn't want Mayra at home, he wanted mom to return the white girl wherever she had come from. Constant arguments started between us and words were always exchanged. The last time we had argued he told me he had disowned me because I was a disgrace and that was because I was marrying Kevin. I blamed him for my marriage with Kevin. If he had been there Kevin wouldn't have happened but because he didn't care he let it happen. I looked at him as he walked right inside my office. He looked well. I had heard that he was married and had two kids. Of cause he didn't tell me, we were practically sworn enemies. "Nompumelelo.." He said. I couldn't help the way my heart beat. I couldn't help it but be happy to see him, it had been years since the last time I saw him. He had grown. He was taller and buffer. I wondered if his kids looked like him or the kind of a father he was. I wondered if he was happy but I didn't let it show. I tried to

suppress my happiness because this was the same man who hated my family and I.

"Zuko."

"Can I sit?"

"Yes," he sat down opposite me. He looked at me for a while. I wondered if he still saw me as a whore. The same way he had done years ago.

"I came so that we talk. Mom told me that you are getting married."

"Oh.."

"Yes. I would have loved being there for your negotiation ceremony but hey.."

"Yeah.. But hey.."

"I know we don't talk anymore and this is because of a lot of things that happened. I'm not about to revisit what happened in the past. I'm here so that we can put our differences aside and mend our relationship."

"I don't hate you. I have never have. I did try to but then I guess.. Some.."

I smiled as I tried looking for the perfect word to say.

"Some kind of love can't just be erased. You don't have to come here and try to mend things while deep down you are not comfortable with it. I know mom probably tried talking to you. Some things in life shouldn't be forced. I'm happy that you have made it in life. Your marriage.. Your kids.. I'm proud of you."

"I have been acting like a complete asshole I know. I just.. I guess I wanted you to be the way I had imagined you were going to be in my head. I don't hate you. I know my actions might have looked like I did but I have never hated you. Most of the time I

stayed away because I didn't want to make your life more hard. I'm sorry. I know words are just words but I'm sorry. I'm sorry for not being the brother I was supposed to be. I'm sorry for failing you as a brother. I'm sorry our relationship had to fail all because of me. I'm sorry I'm such an asshole. In the morning my kids.. They had an argument. It was so heated that the other one cried but you know.. They hugged just after that. They hugged because their love is just.. That kind of love that can never be broken. Instead of me protecting you I became your worst enemy." He stood up then came towards me. I looked at him wondering what he was about to do.

"I am so sorry Lelo." He said going down on his knees. My heart leaped in my mouth as I struggled to swallow the huge lump that was on my throat.

"I'm sorry about everything. I'm so sorry." My lips quivered as I stared at him on the floor begging me.

"Lele I'm sorry. I hope you just find it in your heart to forgive me. I have wronged you so much that I don't think I should even be here." I felt fresh tears leave my eyes. I automatically went down on my knees too and hugged him.

[JANINE]

"So what now?"

"I have to close the case. That's what now."

He sighed. "What do you have so far?"

"Orlando I have nothing. Nothing! Zilch!"

"You are convinced it's Lana though?"

"I know it's her. She went back to Kevin for revenge. Kevin was

too blind to see it because Lana blinded her. They got back together and got married. Then he gets shot on his anniversary two years later. Lana killed him and Big Daddy. I went to prison a few days ago. I asked the guard if Lana had been there once before and she had. She had went to see Big Daddy. Why? Big Daddy is dead. Why?"

"What about Maphoto?"

"Big Daddy's death was smart but not that smart. Someone must have seen what happened but just people are too scared to talk. It's not so smart for Luthando kill like that or even with Kevin. The camera caught the killer."

"That was a slick move."

"More of a reason why I think Maphoto didn't do it."

"This case has really hit a rock."

"I know.. What hurts the most is the fact that Lana killed her daughter too. She might have not done it directly but she did but she won't even take responsibility."

"At least the assets have been frozen."

"Not for long. The moment this case is closed then everything is going to be unfrozen."

"And Lana Godwill gets away with murder."

"Exactly."

"Maybe Lana didn't kill big Daddy alone. Maybe someone helped him. Might have not been directly." I knew what exactly he was trying to say.

"I already snooped around on King. Went through his phone. He might have but then.. If he did he would have wanted to do it himself."

"What if he didn't want to get his hands dirty? What if he agreed for his own father to be killed because he hates him? Because of what happened to you with the accident. Kingsley has motive."

I looked at him then sighed.

"Think about it Janine but without proof.."

"Maybe I need to visit Lana one last time."

"Maybe you need a bug. I know we are not supposed to do that but just maybe we need to."

"That might work but I can only give it a week."

"That might work too. I'm sure we would have gotten somewhere. We bug the phone."

"How am I supposed to do that?"

Orlando looked at me with a grin.

I looked at the design. I loved it.

"I love it."

"Should we run with it?"

"Yes.."

"Fab!" Derrek said standing up then took the sketch from me.

"We are going to start with the dresses tonight. We will be done in no time. Tomorrow everyone can come for fitting since we agreed on the theme and designs. How many bridesmaids and grooms do you all have.

"I have eight." I answered.

"Lelo?" Derrek asked Lelo who was on her phone. Derrek clapped dramatically. "We are here whilst you are busy typing!" She smiled then put her phone away.

"I'm sorry.. What were you saying?"

"How many bridegrooms and grooms do you have?"

"10.."

"So we have 18 all together?"

"Yeah.."

"Great. I have managed to get us a venue through the friend of a friend."

"Where?" Lelo asked.

"In.. Symphony of the seas!"

I looked at him in shock. "What?"

"Yes.. You are going to have your wedding in the symphony of the seas!"

"Wow! That.. Is a major pull over Derrek." He smiled as Lelo praised him.

"I know sweetie.. What do they call me again?"

6

[NOMPUMELELO]

"I can't believe you are going to have your wedding in the ship." Nikiwe said as we ate our lunch at some restaurant.

"My designer is just the best."

"He is but what I just don't understand is why you would have a double wedding with your ex sister wife." I smiled as I sipped on my juice.

"Because even though we shared Kevin, we both had something in common. We hated him and because of that I think we grew close without anyone of us realizing it."

"Wow!"

I chuckled. "I know.. How is Cordy and Corby?"

She laughed. "They are ok. We went for a scan yesterday. I was

supposed to go with Thando but he is still not back though it's already Tuesday."

"I just still don't understand why you are doing this to yourself. Nikiwe it's never love if you are forcing yourself into him."

"I already told my family."

"What now?"

"Well.. There's going to be a meeting for a way forward."

"Do you think he will agree to whatever that your family would be demanding? He doesn't sound like the type to follow through."

She smiled. "He will."

"Did you move in?"

"Yes."

I sighed sadly looking at her. I felt sorry for her. "Anyways I think there will be fittings for the wedding sometime this week." She smiled revealing her gap. She looked so much like Dineo Moeketsi.

"I swear to you, you look like Dineo Moeketsi." She laughed rolling her eyes. "You are seeing things. So how many bridegrooms do you have? I still can't believe I'm going to be part of the team. I just hope my tummy won't ruin it for you."

"You will be looking beautiful I swear. And I have five. It's you, my sister, her friend, my cousin and Toya."

"Toya?"

"Yeah.. Ex sister wife."

She shook her head. "I can never be you. Never!"

"Yet you want to share your baby Daddy with his ex girlfriend."

"Me sharing him doesn't mean I will like her."

I laughed. "He already loves her. He will always take her side. You will always come after her. She will get the cream while you get the crust."

"I don't care."

"I give up! Anyways I haven't invited her yet."

"Who? Sister wife?"

"Yeah. Matshidiso got her number. Let me call her now." I said taking my phone. I dialed Latoya's number copying it from the piece of paper Tshidi had wrote it on. Her phone just rang unanswered.

"And?"

"She's not picking up."

"Try again."

I sighed as I called her again. I listened to it as it rang.

"Latoya Samuels hello?" She said answering. My breath caught as I heard her voice.

"Hello?" She said again.

"Latoya, hi.."

There was silence for a while. "Ummh please who's this?"

I chuckled. "Am I that forgettable?"

"911, there's a stranger calling me." She said laughing making me laugh too.

"I don't think they can save you." She laughed making me smile. She had always had that contagious laugh. "It's so good to hear your voice. How's New York treating you?"

"New York is ok. Everything is going well. You? A little birdy told me you opened a branch in Capetown. I'm happy for you."

I smiled. "Thanks, I'm ok. Just getting married."

"Oh my! I'm am shocked and so happy for you!"

I laughed. "Thank you. And that's why I called."

"Ohh.. What is it?"

"I was wondering if you could be my maid of honour."

"What? Me?"

"Yes.. You."

"You want me.. Oh.. Jesus Christ me!"

"Please.."

"I don't know why you think I'm a perfect fit but I will be very honoured to." I smiled sighing.

"Thank God! You can send your measurements so that the dresses can be designed."

"Or you can tell me your theme colour and I will take care of it this side."

"Anything is ok with me."

"Ok.. We will talk right?"

"Yeah.."

"Ok, take care.." She said then hung up. Nikiwe was just looking at me all along.

"What?"

"Why her though?"

"Because she's a really nice person. She's awesome. You will like her.. She's different. Good different."

"I don't like her name." I laughed.

"You have serious issues Niki. I will blame it on the hormones." After a while I was dropping Nikiwe off her boyfriend's house. I still hadn't asked who her baby daddy was because it was just too soon. From all the guys I had met at CJ's house, it seemed

like all of them had girlfriends only expect Luthando and Lungile. I felt guilty catch up with me when I thought of Lungile. I hoped it wasn't him.

Dropping her off at the house, I drove towards Zuko's house following the directions he had given me. Zuko and I fixing our relationship was just like a weight had been put off my shoulders.

After a while my car was parked in front of his gate. A big house. I drove in as soon as the gate opened.

I took a deep breath as Zuko came out holding some girl. She looked six if not seven. I got out of the car then walked towards him.

"Hey.. I'm glad you came."

I smiled. "Me too.. Hi!" I said to the little girl. She smiled.

"Hi."

"I'm Lelo you are?"

"I'm Lelo too!" She said out of shock.

"That's great. What's your full name?"

"Nompumelelo.." She said smoothly making me look at her in shock. I raised my eyes and looked at Zuko.

"What?"

"You guys are twins." Lelo screamed laughing.

"I can't believe you gave my name to your daughter."

"Get used though this Lelo is the opposite of you." He said looking at his daughter who had just ran inside the house.

"Wow!"

"Ummh I have two kids. Oh great!" He said as some woman came out with a boy. Two years or so older than Lelo.

"Ok, that's Ricardo and my wife, Grace." My jaw went right on the floor as I stared at Grace. She looked like the lookalike of Latoya. The eyes, the face..

[LATOYA]

I got inside the car then stared at him. He smiled, that smile that always got my insides moving. The smile that always got me falling for him over and over again.

"I thought you were not coming since I'm dangerous."

"I'm sorry about what Miguel did."

"Whatever.. It's your boyfriend." I couldn't miss the sarcasm in his voice. "But that's not why I wanted to see you. I know Ocean's holiday is coming in a few weeks. I won't be taking her because I will be going somewhere for a while."

"Where?"

"I'm going to Tokyo. I will be there for a while."

"What will you be doing there?"

"Nothing that concerns you so you can keep Ocean. I will send more money."

"You are already sending a lot of money monthly, you don't have to send more."

"It's my child and I will send whatever amount I want. I probably won't be reachable too most of the time."

"How long are you going for?"

"A month or less."

"Are you going to be doing illegal things?"

He looked at me for a while. "Why don't you focus on your relationship? I'm done begging you Latoya Samuels. I can't be

going around in circles like this with you. You are always bringing up issues like Nikiwe and how disrespectful I am. Some things I can't control. If Nikiwe is carrying my child then well there's nothing I can do. It's a situation I can't compromise though I could have at all times made sure Nikiwe doesn't cross paths with you. Some things I can't change so if the reason why you don't want us back together is because of things only God can control then it's fine. You can go be with whoever you want to be with, there's no one stopping you. I want you to know that as much as I love you so much, if anything happens to be child while you are with your boyfriends, be it a small cut or anything.. I will kill you together with your boyfriend. My daughter will not be your playground. Let anything happen to my child, you will live to regret it till you die, given if I hadn't killed you yet."

"I will never let anything happen to Ocean Luthando. She's my daughter."

"Then I guess this conversation is over." I looked at him, somehow I was hurt. I was hurt because he was giving up on us. My subconscious gave me a look, a look of "what did you expect?"

At some stage he was going to get tired. I sighed then smiled.

"Ok.."

"You look beautiful by the way.. I don't regret offering to fix your car." He said with a small smile. I swallowed as I tried not to cry. I just nodded not trusting my voice then opened the car door. The moment I put one leg out he grabbed me by my waist and kissed me. I didn't stop him as he owned my lips. He kissed me slowly then let go.

"I love you ok?" He said making me bit my lower lip nodding. As soon as he let me go I got out of his car then rushed to the elevator. He was parked in the underground company parking lot. The moment the elevator doors closed I leaned against the elevator walls. I felt tears prick my eyes. Walking in my office my phone vibrated in my hands. I sat down opening the text that had just got in. It was Miguel.

*Hey baby,

Will be there in a few minutes with lunch.*

I sighed then put my phone away. Just then Angie walked in my office.

"Afternoon Miss Samuels,"

"Hey Angie.."

"Your meeting with Karen Smith is immediately after lunch."

"Oh great! Thanks."

"Yes and also..—" she was cut short by a light knock on the door followed by Miguel walking in. Today he was wearing a black suit. I smiled as he walked in. Angie quickly walked out after muttering a "good afternoon Sir,"

Everyone suspected what was going on between me and him just that they were not sure. I didn't care though about all that, I didn't let it affect me.

"Hey." I said standing up. He walked towards me then hugged me.

"I brought lunch for the beautiful lady."

"You are the best.." He smirked making me laugh.

"Sit baby.." He said. I sat down and watched him take out the lunch for me.

"How's the day coming so far?"

I sighed. I wasn't going to tell him about Luthando. The last time he thought Luthando was harassing me because he didn't see the kiss. I was more than relieved. Miguel had been nothing but an amazing person to me and he didn't deserve me playing with his feelings. He was exactly the opposite of Luthando. He was so sweet and soft. He always put me first. The fact that he loved my daughter and my siblings sealed the deal.

"It's ok. I'm on top of everything. I think the shareholders are happy with the way I'm running the company." He smiled as he gave me my food.

"They are. I am. The magazine is doing better than ever. You are the best thing to ever happen to Collop." He said sitting opposite me.

"I'm happy to hear though you know you are the one guiding me."

"It's all you baby. You are simply the best. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. You are so smart and wise."

I blushed. "Thanks. How was your meeting with Lincoln what what." He chuckled as I started eating.

"It was ok, I'm buying his shares."

"Great."

"The business awards are next week."

"I saw! You are a nominee. I'm so happy for you baby.."

"Thanks. Please come with me. Besides the fact that I don't mind showing you to the whole world, I think this will be a really good opportunity to meet important business people. In business, having connections is one important thing. You never

know when you might need a favor."

"You want to take me with?"

"Yeah.. Please say yes."

"Of course! I would love too. Thank you for asking."

"Now that's out of the way. I'm planning a trip for us."

"A trip?"

"Yeah.. I won't tell you where we will be going but it will be a weekend away."

"I can't wait! When?"

"Sometime.. I'm not sure when because I need to finalise a few things before we go there."

"Ok.."

Miguel was the best, he was so perfect. By the time he left I knew that he was my new start. Luthando and I could never be. That chapter had closed. I had to focus on someone who could love me in the best way possible.

After Miguel left Karren Smith came. She was one rich trophy wife to be. She reminded me of myself when I was with Kevin. She wanted the magazine to cover her wedding. She could have easily called but I guess the idea was too inconvenient for her. After she left, I had assigned Hope to take over the wedding. She wanted her wedding to be the cover page.

After work I immediately drove home. I had to go to the gym. I had to keep fit and maintain my body. No tiredness was going to prosper against me.

[JANINE]

"Babe come on! You have been on that laptop since you came

back!" King said trying to take the laptop from me.

"Wait.."

"Janine come on!" I looked at him taking off the earphones then sighed.

"I'm.. Just a few minutes and I promise I will come to bed."

"You said that 30 minutes ago."

"I know it's just that.. " I sighed not knowing what to say. I couldn't tell him what I was doing especially more if Orlando suspected him to be a suspect.

"its work. I'm almost done."

"It's time for sleeping. Can't you do it tomorrow?"

"No.. Please.. Just a few more minutes." He sighed then walked away. I knew he was probably upset but I had finally gotten Lana and all I had to focus was try and listen to her phonecall conversations. Bugging Lana's phone had gone exactly according to Orlando's plan. He had someone do it, a cleaner at the hotel she was staying at. She did it in the morning and since then we have been listening to every incoming call and outgoing call. So far the only calls she had been having where from the press. Her messages also.

Just then her phone was ringing. I laid back and listened praying it was not the press.

"Lana hi.." A voice said. A female voice.

"Matshidiso I said don't call me! Didn't I say I will call you? What do you want?"

"Listen here Lana Godwill, I'm the one with the ball and it's in my court."

"I'm going to kill you!"

The female voice who I now believed to be Matshidiso laughed. "Kill who? Oh please.. Now listen and listen carefully. Before I announce to the whole world that you killed your husband you better give me what I want."

"I don't have the money you want you gold digging bitch! Everything is frozen till the investigations are over."

"Well I guess all I have to do is call Detective Adam. She would be very very pleased to get my call."

"I will give you your money I promise just that right now I don't have access to it."

"You better. I'm giving you three days or else I'm going to tell the whole world that you were sleeping with Mr Tsheledi then you killed your husband. You better get me that money." She said then hung up. I was now sitting upstaight. She had really killed him. What I just didn't understand was who Matshidiso was and how was she connected to the puzzle. I sighed then stood up. I could feel that I was close to locking Lana away for good. I put the laptop away then walked out from the study room and followed after King. My house felt more like home because of King. Getting in the bedroom he was already asleep. Quickly I took off my clothes then crawled into the bed besides him.

"You are cold." He said turning to look at me. He took my hands into his then blew warm air on them.

"I'm sorry. As soon as I'm done with the case I'm working on I will be all yours." I said as he kissed my hands.

"I don't want to be an obstacle in your life but I just want you to balance your things. I get that your career is important to you but I also need attention.

I exhaled. "You are right. I'm sorry.." I said blinking a couple of times dramatically. He pulled me and kissed me. As the kiss got heated his phone started ringing. He reached for it then switched it off only to continue kissing me.

"I missed you.." He whispered me.

7

[LATOYA]

"Give me that sexy smile!" The photographer said while he continuously snapped the camera.

"Yes! Like that.. I want more!" He said. A photoshoot had never been my thing but it had to since my pictures were going on billboards.

"5 minute break!" The photographer said walking away. His name was Archie. I walked where the designer was pointing I should go. Getting inside and I was back again to the closet. I had gotten a call from Sierra a few days ago, a well known brand name for clothing, cosmetics, fragrance, jewellery and a lot more. They had launched their new fragrance and they wanted me to be the face of it. I couldn't miss the opportunity, when I told Miguel he was more than happy for me.

This had happened on Wednesday and today it was Saturday and they were shooting.

"You are changing." The designer said smiling. After a while I was wearing a beautiful red lingerie set with a red silky gown. With that I wore mid thigh red boots and red lacy gloves. They fixed my make-up, replacing my lipstick with a red lipstick. They styled my weave till I looked like a sexy goddess.

Archie was more than happy when I came back. This time there was a bed filled with roses and the perfume.

"Ok.. This will have to be fun and sexy at the same time. Let's start!" Archie said as I got on the bed.

The photoshoot ran for a while. When it was over I felt like a real model. I couldn't wait to see my face on billboards. I viewed some of my pictures with Archie. I had already changed back into the clothes I had come with.

"These photos are the best I have ever taken."

I laughed. "Stop with the lies."

"No.. I'm not. You.. I guess you are a natural. You give the camera that thing. Yes you are pretty but there's just something about you that makes you.. So.. Untouchable, so.. Unforgettable. The fire that burns in your eyes makes it so hard to forget you. It's like you hold the big key to something. Your eyes.. They make me feel exposed." I smiled stepping away from him.

"I have never done a photoshoot before, well not like this. The ones I ever did were for the magazine and they were nothing like this." He smiled.

"Well.. I think they will be more after this. I'm sure you had fun."

"Yeah.." Archie was a black American born in Alaska and came to New York at 20. He had been a photographer since then. He was exactly the story of started at the bottom and now I'm at the top.

"Ummh.. I have to go." I said taking my handbag.

"Wait for me. I'm leaving too.." He said packing his things. After packing his things I watched him talk to Ruben, the lady who was in charge of the whole photoshoot. They talked for a while till they started walking towards me.

"Thank you so much Miss Samuels for doing this. Sierra is very happy to work with you."

I smiled. "So am I."

"Ok, see you around.." She said then walked away. Archie and I walked out.

"So besides being a well known photographer what do you do?"

He chuckled. "Well.. I'm a lot of things. I didn't really go to school. I'm a tattoo artist, a well known tattoo artist. I do it for most celebs."

"Wow!"

"Yeah.. Well.. I earn more than those who went to school so I'm good."

"People like you are.. are motivation to others." He chuckled as we stepped out of the huge building. Sierra was located in the middle of New York. We walked down the street talking.

"Thanks, wanna see my tattoo offices?" He asked laughing. I smiled nodding. I was more curious to see what he did. I had left my car at home because Miguel had offered to pick me up. Archie and I got in a taxi then he told the Hispanic driver where we were going. Along way we talked about the struggles he faced when he came to New York the first time.

"It was kind of hard especially with no accommodation so I stayed in some abandoned caravan." He said smiling. I could see that it was history he didn't mind sharing. "And I worked at some restaurant as a cleaner. The benefits of a cleaner was that I got to take the leftovers left the customers."

"That must have been hard."

"It was but some of us don't just start from the top." I chuckled. I

knew exactly what he was talking about. I knew the struggle like the back of my hand.

"I know.. The struggle.." I sighed as my brain took an unwelcome turn and recalled the days I was a mule. "It's painful remembering the days."

He smiled revealing his white teeth. The way he smiled made me smile too. It was a reassuring smile.

"Yeah.. There's always a story. Sometimes it's painful but it's there, we all have a story to tell." He said as the driver stopped. He quickly paid the taxi fair then we stepped out of the taxi. We walked across the road then walked in some building. Up the stairs we went for a while till he opened some door. Walking inside the tattoo posters which were on the walls caught my attention. Archie took my hand and led me to this other room. Getting inside there was a massage bed.

"This were it all happens."

"Wow! It's a relevantly big place you have."

"Yeah.." He put his bag down. "I don't want my customers to feel stuffed." I smiled.

"So you do it alone?"

"No.. I do it with my girlfriend. You should see her. Though she is not a full time worker because of her other two jobs."

"I would really love to see her.."

"She wants to be a model." He said walking to some huge book which he hand over to me. I opened it then started looking at some of the tattos he had drew.

"This are nice."

"Yeah. One of my best work so far."

"I..—"

"Baby!" A voice said making me look at the door. Some curly haired girl was standing by the door. She was tall and pretty. She wasn't what I had expected because she looked so innocent especially with the spectacles.

"Kayla baby meet Latoya. She's the lady I was photographing today. She comes from South Africa." Kayla smiled walking toward me. She gave me a handshake. Now I saw why she wanted to be a model. She had the body and height for it.

"Hi, I'm Kayla.. I know you. You run Collop." I smiled at her undeniable knowledge.

"Well it's nice to meet you Kayla."

"You too.. You are here for a tattoo?"

"Ohh no.." I said hopping off the massage bed I had been sitting on then put the huge book down. "Archie wanted to show me incase I ever want to." She laughed.

"You..—" she was cut short by my phone ringing from my handbag. I opened my handbag then took out my phone. I smiled answering.

"Miguel.."

"Where are you?"

"I.. Uhh.. I am at Staten island."

"What? Who are you with?"

"I'm with a friend."

"What friend? You don't have any friends so what friend?!" I had never heard him use the tone he was using before. He sounded over the edge and so angry.

"Can you calm down!"

"I. Said. What friend?"

"The photographer.. He..—"

"I'm coming to get you!" He said then hung up. I stared at my phone for a while not understanding what had just happened. I smiled then put my phone back in the bag.

"Everything ok?" Archie asked.

"Yeah.. It must be nice working together."

"It is.. " Kayla said smiling.

"I think maybe we should exchange numbers. Right baby?"

Archie said looking at Kayla smiling. There was no doubt that he really loved her.

"Yes. We can all be friends." I smiled.

"I would love that." After exchanging numbers my phone started ringing. It was Miguel. I reluctantly answered.

"Yeah?"

"I'm outside. Come." He said then hung up. I felt so angry. I didn't appreciate the way he talked to me.

"Ummh guys.. I have to go. We will talk."

"Yeah.." I walked out immediately. Getting outside indeed his car was parked in right in front of the building. I got in the car then looked at him.

"Who were you with?"

"I'm not your child."

He took off his sunglasses then looked at me. "You are not, I know that. I'm just a worried boyfriend. We discussed that I was going to pick you up. I showed up and you were not there. I'm hearing you left with a stranger. Someone you don't even know. What if it's a druggie? A thug? What if he killed you? People are

lunatics out there. You don't even know him. What if something happened to you? You have Ocean and your siblings. You want them to become orphans?" I sighed. He was right. I didn't even know Archie at all.

"Ok.. You are right. I guess I acted carelessly." He smiled then took my hand.

"It's ok. You are safe. I just don't want you associating with people you don't know."

"But Archie is..—"

"A nice guy? Sometimes looks are just a cover up. You don't know him. Please promise me you are going to stay away from him."

"Ok.. But no." He looked at me with a puzzled face.

"You can't detect who my friends will be or who I hang out with the same way I don't do that with you but you are always free to come rescue me if I need to be rescued." He laughed then leaned over and kissed me. There was just a feeling at the back of my mind which kept telling me I didn't know Miguel too. That there was something about him and that something made me feel cringy.

[JANINE]

Orlando parked the car in front of the house where Matshidiso stayed. Yesterday after hearing her conversation with Lana I had to tell Orlando. It was around five in the evening and there was a car parked.

"I have a feeling she will deny it." I said staring at the house.

"Obviously but all we want is her to confirm that Lana killed

Kevin. She might not do it verbally but the way she will react will."

"Ok. Let's go." We got out of the car then rang the intercom. We stood there for a while till the gate was opened. Walking in, we looked like casual people.

She was already standing by the door and she didn't look like anything I had in mind. She was young.

"Good evening, how can I help you?" I smiled.

"I think it should be how we can help you Matshidiso." She looked at me confused.

"I'm lieutenant Adam and this is Detective Thabethe." I said taking out my ID. "We are here to talk about Kevin Robert's death."

"Am I under arrest?"

"Is there a reason why you would be under arrest?"

She blinked then opened her door wider. We walked in her house as she led us in. After a while we were sitting in her sitting room.

"How can I help you?"

"Before we begin I will let you know that keeping important information from the police is a crime." Orlando said staring at her. She looked scared. "So I advice you to be honest. We are here to help you."

"I don't think I'm following.." She said shifting on her sit.

"Mam how do you know Lana Godwill Robert?" Her eyes widened but immediately blinked. I could see she wanted to look composed but she was failing dismally. She knew something.

"I don't know her."

"And Kevin Robert?" I continued.

She shook her head. "I don't know them." Orlando laughed.

"Then why did you assume you were under arrest when we told you that we were here because of Kevin Robert's death?"

Matshidiso I will remind you, keeping important information from the police is a crime."

"I don't know Lana Godwill Robert or Kevin Robert." I stood up then walked to a painting that was on her wall.

"You know you could really end up in hot soup if you don't cooperate with us." Orlando said as I stared at the painting.

"I don't know those people."

"But surprisingly Lana Godwill Robert knows you." I said turning to look at her. She stood up.

"What?"

"Lana Godwill has come up to us and said she suspects you killed her husband."

"What?"

"We are taking you with us down to the station because you don't want to cooperate with us."

"You can't do that! My pregnant sister is coming —" I cut her short.

"Well at this stage there's really nothing we can do. The deceased's wife says you murdered her husband."

"I did not kill Lana's husband!"

"I thought you said you don't know her." I was now standing right in front of her face staring in her eyes.

"Yes.. That's why I'm saying I did not kill her husband."

"Mam please let's go down the station."

"You can't do that!" She screamed.

"We can. It's just the normal procedure. If—"

"She killed her own husband! She hired a hitman to kill him!

Thembelani Ndlovu. I did not kill her husband!" She said shaking. I smiled then stepped away from her.

"Firstly you tell us you don't know Lana Godwill Robert and Kevin Robert."

"I lied. I'm sorry. Please don't take me to jail. I have a job. My sister is coming. I'm the only breadwinner. I'm begging you."

"Where is this Thembelani Ndlovu?"

"Tembisa."

"Wow! How did you do that?" Orlando asked as we got in the car. I laughed starting the car.

"Common sense. I knew if I told her Lana threw her in the deep end she would retaliate."

"So now what?"

"Now we go after this Thembelani, we arrest him for murder of Kevin Robert."

"But we have no proof."

"Listen.. We arrest him for murder and take him down to the station. We put him in interrogation and tell him Lana Godwill Robert said he killed her husband and that she has proof. He will talk because he knows if he tells the truth it means he gets a lighter sentencing. If he confesses then we have Lana Godwill."

"Damn girl!"

"Yeah. Take out the laptop. I want to know if Matshidiso will call Lana or not."

"Ok.." He said taking the laptop from the backseat. The journey

to Tembisa was a bit long but when we got there it didn't take time for me to locate Thembelani's house. It was just a normal RDP house. Parking my car eyes were looking. That was the thing with the ghetto. Nothing ever passed people's eyes, nothing could pass people by.

Orlando and I got out of the car and walked to the door. It looked like there was no electricity. We knocked a couple of times till the door was opened. An old woman came out.

"Ngizo nceda ngani?" She asked looking at us. I looked at Orlando. I wasn't that familiar with the language.

"Litshona njani?" Orlando replied.

"Sitshonile,"

She looked at us, analysing us carefully.

"Ummha Ma we are looking for Thembelani Ndlovu. We believe he happens to live here."

"What do you want from him?"

"I'm lieutenant Adam and this is my colleague Detective Thabethe, we are from..—"

"He is not here." I looked at Orlando.

"It would really be helpful if you tell us where he might be." Orlando said.

"I don't know where he is. He doesn't stay here."

"Ma who is there!?" A voice screamed coming from inside the house. We stood there in silence till some guy was standing behind the old woman.

"Ehh who are you?" He asked. I looked at him in his eyes in silence. The moment it clicked I saw his eyes flick.

"Thembelani Ndlovu, you are under arrest of the murder of Kevin

Robert. Whatever you may say can be used against you in the court of law." I said stepping forward while Orlando handed me the cuffs.

"Thembi what is this? Do you want to kill me?"

"Gogo this is nothing. I will be back. Don't worry." The old woman wiped her tears as she stared at Thembelani.

"Why do you do this to me Thembelani? Do you like it when people hate me and say hurtful things about me. Do you enjoy seeing me cry? Do you enjoy stressing me?"

"Gogo this is just a misunderstanding. Don't cry, you know you have ihigh high."

"I don't know anymore. I don't know what I should do."

[NOMPUMELELO]

"I swear they must know each other Nick." I said putting on my pyjamas.

"But sometimes people just look alike."

"I know.. I'm not saying they are siblings because there's a difference. Just that they might know each other."

He chuckled. "So what are you now? The fixer?" I gave him a look as he asked. "Kahle kahle wena you work for Khumbulekhaya."

"Mxm.." I said crawling to the bed. I got under blankets then he pulled me unto him making me rest my head on his chest.

"Ok.. Did you tell your brother?"

"Not yet. I didn't get a chance."

"Maybe you should tell him first before you start playing Nancy Drew."

"I will.. I want to tell Latoya too."

"Yeah.. You know it's so funny how you are so fond of that lady."

I looked at him. "Why?"

"You know I thought you guys probably hated each other."

"What?"

"Yeah.. I guess you are the most nicest person on earth." He said squeezing me.

"I mean.. You even have her pictures on your phone."

I swallowed. "I..—"

"I think you lowkey like her. Like that.. Like." He whispered.

"What? That's absurd!"

"I'm not saying it's wrong to like another woman." He chuckled.

"Do you ever fantasize about her?" I felt my face burn.

"No."

"Tell me.. I won't tell."

I covered my face with my hands as he looked at me.

"Don't be shy.. Tell me."

"A bit." I whispered.

"Why? I just want to understand."

"I don't know. Because she's pretty.. maybe because we once kissed."

"You once kissed her?"

I nodded not knowing where to look.

"Hey.. It's only us. Don't be shy."

"I'm not bisexual or lesbian."

"I know."

"Great. I love you and I'm happy with you."

"I love you more. Just tell me.."

"Ok.. Latoya got drunk at some party. She called me in her drunk state and so I went. She was so drunk and couldn't drive so I drove her home. Kevin wasn't there and Janine too. She kissed me when we got home. Well I wanted more but she.. She slept and she didn't remember it. She still doesn't."

"So you like her?"

"Kind of.. She's.. Different. I.. She's smart, sexy and beautiful. What's there not to like."

"She's dating the thug?"

"I don't know but if she is then I feel for him."

"Why?"

"Latoya can always leave if she wants to. She doesn't stay where she sees she doesn't fit. Luthando has some controlling traits, an attitude that stinks. Latoya is uncontrollable, if you want to see that she can be a demon, a very evil mean demon.. Think you can own her. She's so strong, she's unbreakable." The way he was looking at me made me laugh.

"What?"

"You are so cute." I rolled my eyes. He kissed me deeply pulling me on top of him so that I now straddled him.

8

[NOMPUMELELO]

I looked at her as she looked at the picture with a frown. She gave me my phone back moments later then sighed.

"We don't look alike that much.. But she does look like my mother." Grace said.

"Your mother?"

"Yes.. Who is she?"

"She's.. A friend."

"Maybe I can meet up with her and..—"

"She doesn't stay here. She stays in states. You can only meet her at my wedding. She will be there."

Grace smiled. Now I could clearly see, she didn't look like Latoya that much. Grace had the rest in peace bitch face. She never smiled a lot. I looked at Zuko, I had told him first before I approached his wife. He also thought they looked alike.

"Well.. I have to get going. I'm going to Egypt today."

"For the benchmarking?" He asked making me smile.

"Yes.. I won't be there when mom and Mayra arrives. Please don't be mean."

"I won't be. If Mayra is our sister then there's no reason for me to hate her though I'm not so sure if she likes the fact that she's going to stay in Mbabane."

"She's a grown woman now. I think at this stage in time if she doesn't want to stay with mom it's ok. She can always look for a job and rent a house for herself."

"I guess. I will see you."

"Yeah." I gave Grace a smile which she returned. Grace's face was that kind of face that made you think twice before you spoke to her. She had the face Latoya put on when she was upset. Walking out of the house I got in my car and drove out. I had met Grace two weeks ago but till this day, I wasn't used to her yet.

I dialed Matshidiso's number as I drove home. She answered after a while.

"Lelo.."

"Hey.. I'm going home right now."

"Ok, your plane leaves at six."

"Great. I want to sort out a few things before I leave."

"Ok."

"I will call you as soon as I land."

"Do so." I hung up then drove to a mall. I was meeting Nikiwe. She had called me earlier on crying over the phone. I was sure it was her baby daddy who didn't love her. The way she refused to leave him was so annoying. I walked to mug and bean and sported her before noticed me. She looked a mess.

"Hey.." I said sitting opposite her.

"Hey.." She looked tired. It even showed with the eye bags she had.

"What's wrong?"

"He hasn't come back yet."

"He is not back?"

"No. He is not back yet. It's almost month. I don't know why."

"So who are you with in his house?"

"His weird sister. I can't believe I listened to her. Her muti is clearly weak." I laughed.

"What? You are now using.. Muti?"

"The sister suggested it."

"So what are you going to do now?"

She shrugged. "I don't know. My parents are waiting for him too. I'm beginning to think maybe something is wrong."

"Or maybe he is with his ex baby Momma."

"She's still with her millionaire boyfriend. They were together on

Tuesday for the business awards and they confirmed their relationship."

"So she's famous?"

"Kind of. Latoya Samuels." I momentarily stopped breathing and looked at her.

"Who?"

"Wait.. You know her?"

"Who is your baby daddy? What's his full name?"

"Luthando Maphoto." I sighed as I raised my hand to call the waiter. I needed a glass of water to let the information sink.

"Lelo you know her?"

"Yes! She's.. God!"

"Who's she?"

"She's the ex sister wife who's my Maid of honour."

"You can't be serious!" I just stared at her as the waiter approached our table.

Leaving mug and bean the atmosphere had just been suffocating. Nikiwe had just went quiet. We both knew she didn't stand a chance against Latoya. Yes she was beautiful but still, not to Latoya's level. I still couldn't believe she was so desperate to go to the extent of using muti.

I drove to Derrek's boutique from there, I was meeting up with him and Janine. He wanted to confirm a few things though we had already went through most of the things. Arriving at the boutique I found them already sitted.

"Finally! She graces us with her presence." Derrek said as I walked inside. I laughed rolling my eyes, he was just dramatic.

"I'm sorry I'm late, hi Janine."

She smiled. "Hey.." I sat besides her then looked at Derrek.

"The invitation cards have arrived. For Janine," he said handing an invitation card to her. "And to Lelo.." I took mine and looked at it. It was beautiful.

"I love it." I said.

"Yeah.. Me too." Janine agreed.

"Great! We agree. I spoke to the restaurant which will be catering for the wedding. They want to know your menu."

"Can't they just cook?" Derrek laughed looking at Janine.

"No darls, they can't 'just cook!' They only cook what they have been told to cook. You and Lelo can work on a menu then give it to me so I let them see. You need to work on it fast, the wedding is around the corner."

"I guess that can work. What else?" I asked.

"Your dresses are in the working." He said smiling. With the way he was excited one would swear he was the one getting married but I couldn't blame him. He was doing almost everything for us. After about 15 minutes we were walking out. My mind was stuck on the possibility of Grace and Latoya knowing each other, and on the Nikiwe issue. What she didn't understand was that Luthando loved Latoya, he would do anything for her. We were talking about the man who held a gun on my head for Latoya. He was crazy about her.

Getting in my car I drove straight home. Arriving there Nick was home but he wasn't alone. He was with Lungile. I smiled at both of them as they were outside standing by their cars.

"Babe.." I said kissing Nick on his cheek.

"Lungile, it's nice seeing you again."

"You too Nompumelelo."

"Ummh I'm going to finish packing." I said looking at Nicholas.

"Ok.." I walked inside the house with my heart beating fast. I quickly undressed then got under the shower. I needed to get hold of myself. Not that cheating on my fiancé had been enough but I just had to do it with his new friend that he liked so much. After bathing I put on my shorts and vest then finished up packing. I was going to Egypt just for the weekend. On Monday I was coming back.

Nicholas walked inside the bedroom as I changed.

"Hey.." He said kissing my cheek.

"Hey.. Is he gone?"

"Yeah.. Lungile invited us to his annual one week vacation."

"He did? When?"

"In a few months to come. It will be good for us and I think by then we would have been back from our honeymoon." I smiled. Yes I had cheat on Nick but I wasn't going to do it again so I saw nothing wrong with going on a vacation.

"So how many are we?"

"It will be me and you obviously, him and his girlfriend, CJ and his fiancée, and his four other friends with their girlfriends.

"Wow! What a crowd."

"Yeah. But it will be fun."

"Where are we going?"

"Switzerland."

"Wow!"

"And you won't be lonely. You will have a lot of females around you."

"Yeah.." He hugged me tightly.

"I love you so much. I don't think I can ever love anyone like I love you." Nick said while inhaling audibly. I hugged him back.

"I love you too.. And I'm going to miss you." He let go then stepped away after freeing my straightened hair. He looked at me for a while before he started undressing me. I didn't say anything. After I was naked before him he gave me a small smile then walked to the bed and removed the duvet. He took a white sheet and threw it on the bed.

"Get on the bed."

"I have two hours till—"

"Lie on the bed." I sighed then crawled to the bed. He took the sheet then drapped it around me but just covering my privates.

"Lie on your side.." I swiftly lay on my side then looked at him.

"Support your head with your hand and put the other on your hip." I took a deep breath as I obliged to his instructions. By then he had a pencil and a sketchpad.

"I'm going to miss my flight." I muttered.

"Relax Lelo. Take a deep breath and relax. Relax your body and your face. Let the tension go. The worry.. Just relax."

I looked at him then let my body lose.

"There.." He started sketching. His eyes were on me most of the time. His face had completely changed. He looked so focused and so into what he was doing. It's like he was taking me in with just his eyes. He had a frown like on his look as his teeth were sunken in his lower lip. God knew he was perfect. He had his flaws but his love was so perfect. He stared at me for a while then smiled.

"You are so beautiful.." He mouthed making me smile a little. He put the sketch pad and pencil down before he walked towards me. He lay besides me on his side and looked at me.

"You are so perfect.. I want to be the woman you need so that you can never look anywhere else." I whispered as he captured my eyes with his. He trailed his finger on my face till it rested on my chin.

"You are everything I have always wanted." He whispered back.

"You are the one for me. I don't think there's anyone else out there."

"I love you." I mouthed making him chuckle.

"I love you more."

"Babe fast!" I said tying my hair into a bun.

"We are there." He said parking the car. Instead of dressing up after he was done drawing me, I let him make love to me instead. It was slow and sensual and loving. I didn't want him to stop, or to ever stop.

"If I miss my flight!" I said getting out of the car.

"You won't." He was already holding my bag. We quickly walked inside the airport as my flight was being announced.

"I will call as soon as I land ok?" I said kissing him.

"Ok. I love you.." I sighed, somehow I felt so clingy. I didn't want him to leave. I wanted to go back home with him and let him mark my body with his.

"I love you more.."

"You should go before they leave you."

"Why can't you come with again?"

"Because I have work."

"Can't you bunk."

"Babe I love you but they are going to leave you." I wrapped my arms around his neck then kissed him one last time before I took my bag and walked away.

[JANINE]

I looked at myself on the mirror failing not to get angry. I had been trying to style the thin braids for more than 30 minutes but still, the braids were just doing the things they were not supposed to be doing, things that were making the braids not to be done. I took a deep breath before I started again. I was trying to do a weird style. After about 15 minutes later I had done it though it didn't look the way it was supposed to be looking. I then took the lipstick Namhla had bought for me yesterday when we went out for shopping. I carefully applied it then rubbed my lips together. I wasn't going to try doing make-up because I simply didn't know how to. I looked at myself again smiling. I was wearing a red long dress that reached my feet and it had a slit from my right mid thigh. It hugged all my curves. Tonight was my dinner date with King. I stepped away from the mirror then took my purse. I had 30 minutes to get to the hotel.

I walked out from the bedroom then went outside to my car. The dinner was happening at his hotel room. Starting my car a text message reported to my phone. I took my phone and read King's message.

Can't wait till I see you. I have a surprise for you.

I smiled as I read the text. King was full of surprises.

As I started typing my response my phone started ringing and it

was Orlando.

"Hey.." I said answering.

"Hey. Lana has escaped."

"What?" We had gotten Thembelani Ndlovu but he was not confessing. We couldn't really keep him without proof so we had to let him go because of that, Lana was the only prime suspect left. Ever since the day we visited Matshidiso it's like her phone too stopped working.

"What do you mean she has escaped?"

"Somebody send me a footage. A footage of Lana and Thembelani talking. A footage of her giving him a gun. A footage of her commanding him to kill him."

"What?"

"Yes. Thembelani is or was big Daddy's worker."

"Oh my!"

"She has escaped. She's not at her house. We have called the airports to block her."

"She escaped?"

"Yes.." I took a deep breath trying to put my thoughts together. If she knew that we knew, obviously she was going to make a run for it but where was she going to go. I hung up then opened the gate with the remote. I knew where she was. Driving out I headed to Kevin's house. To the house we all stayed in before he got back with Lana. I pressed on the accelerator trying to keep calm.

Parking the car in front of the gate I took out my gun from under my seat. I slowly got out of the car. The gate was open and there was a car right in front of the house. Slowly I walked inside the

house with my gun ready for action if there was a reason.

I knew she was here. This was the only place she could run to because she needed money. She was probably trying to look for something, something to help her escape. A contact.

I slowly walked up the stairs. The house felt so strange. It was like I had never stepped inside it but I knew I spent most horrible days inside the house. I walked to the study and getting inside as suspected, it looked a mess. I knew she had been here.

"Wow wow wow! Look what the cat has dragged." Her voice said from behind me. "Don't worry sweetie.. Put the gun down."

"Lana you..—"

"Put the gun down or I will blow your brains. I will kill you and I won't even hesitate to." I sighed then put the gun down slowly.

"Kick it far away from you Detective Adam." I kicked it immediately then turned. She looked different in a Jean and T-shirt holding a gun in her hand.

"So you really killed him for money?"

"Yes."

"Funny it didn't work out."

"Yeah.." She said nodding. "Or maybe it did."

"Really? The only thing you achieved was killing your own daughter."

"Don't you ever talk about my daughter again."

"I wouldn't have to if you didn't kill her."

"I'm going to kill you."

"You are going to jail for a very long time Lana Godwill Robert."

"We shall see. You see.. You are a fool Janine. You don't think. You just do." I chuckled.

"Is that so?"

"Yes. You see, I never meant for my daughter to die but I guess she loved the monster so much to die for him. But what can I do? Nothing. Kevin left everything in Rocky's hands. She gave it to that stupid girl you call Latoya. But it's ok. She's stupid, I will outsmart her and I will have everything at last. Including the money right under this house."

I looked at her. "You are going to jail Lana."

"Let's see.. Who's going to put me to jail and why? You don't have proof that I killed Kevin do you? And if you are dead, who will put me in jail. They are going to have to call off the case."

"That's where you got it all wrong."

"No, that's where you got it all wrong. Babe!" She called out and just then Orlando stepped in.

"What?!"

9

[JANINE]

I looked at Orlando in shock. Lana laughed.

"Surprised?"

"Orlando.." I managed looking at him. My brain couldn't bring itself to register what I was seeing.

"You see.. You are the fool here Lelo," Lana said walking towards me. "I'm going to kill you and bury you right under this house."

"You won't get away with this."

"I have.. Right baby?"

She said looking at Orlando who smirked.

"Yes. You should have let the case go from the very start but I

guess there goes the reward for being overly smart."

"Orlando.. How could you?"

"That's what you get for choosing the white man." I laughed out of disbelief.

"I can't believe you. I thought we were best friends."

"Well not anymore." Lana chipped in. "I killed Kevin. I killed Big Daddy. That Matshidiso ant is lucky. I'm going to kill you. I'm going to kill whatever stands in my way." I stared at Orlando trying to read him. I sighed then chuckled.

"Well.. I guess money is the root to all evil."

"It is hunny,"

"I don't know how you live with yourself. You killed two human beings for money. How do you even sleep at night?"

"I sleep like a baby. I would have personally killed him but I wasn't about to get my hands dirty.. So I called big Daddy. The old fool thought he could use me. I had to kill him too."

"What kind of mother are you?"

"I wanted to give Rockelle the best life but she killed herself. I didn't kill her! I loved her. She was my only daughter you bitch!" She screamed right on my face.

"Maybe they never told you.. But I hate people who call me names." I said softly then slapped her hard that she staggered back. She looked at me in shock as her nose bled.

"You just slapped me?"

"Yes."

"You bitch!" She walked towards me then tried to slap me back but I held her hand.

"If you want to fight put the gown down."

"I don't fight with pathetic people. Maybe this where we should end your journey." She said stepping back pointing the gun at me. My heart started beating as I tried to look for a plan but I was blank. I took a step towards her then pushed her that she lost balance and the gun fell. I pulled my dress up then sat on her and gave her a punch. She screamed then pulled my braids. I held her hand trying to get her to let go because it was painful. I leaned over and bit her hand.

"You bitch!" She screamed pushing me off her. She tried to reach for the gun but I grabbed her leg making her trip and fall with a loud groan.

I stood up then started kicking her. She then pulled my long dress making me fall, I couldn't ignore the tearing sound it made. King had bought it for me. I loved it.

"You ripped my dress?!"

"Ohh well.. You won't need it!" She said getting on top of me strangling me. I struggled to breath as she closed my oxygen supply. I tried pushing her but she had her hands firm on my neck. I could feel all my veins popping out as I tried to fight her. I pulled her soft hair making her let go and slap me. I rolled us so that now I was on top and my hands were fixed on her neck.

"Let's see who won't need their lives." She couldn't fight me off, first of all, I had a bigger body. Just then I felt sharp pain on my thigh that made me scream letting her go. She started coughing as I stared at my thigh. She had stabbed me with a small knife. I looked at her as tears swelled in my eyes. It was beyond painful. Without thinking twice I gave her a strong punch that sent her to sleeping.

"Damn!" Orlando said walking back inside but this time he wasn't alone. I hadn't noticed Jim leaving. He was with a crew. Luke looked at me then laughed with Riley.

"That went on for too long." Luke said.

"This bitch stabbed me! It's painful."

"Shit!" Riley muttered.

"You better have recorded everything Orlando or else I'm going to fuck you up real bad!"

He chuckled flapping a small device in the air. "I have everything on tape. She's going down." Two other officers walked towards me then helped me up.

"Be gentle.." Orlando looked at the knife mounted right on my thigh.

"She really did a number on you."

"Fuck you!"

"So she called me. Said she wanted to meet me. I knew exactly her plan so I went prepared. I had been recording her since she told me to back her up so that she gives me 50 million."

"That was a really great plan. For a while there I couldn't understand what was going on."

"I'm glad you did. I would never betray you. You will feel better in no time though." I grinned.

"Yeah.. How's she?"

"She looks well beaten.. But you too hey. I don't know how you are going to explain that to your fiancé."

"What? You called him?"

"He called the station and they told him you are in the hospital."

"Shit!"

"He will understand though I don't think he is happy."

"Oh God.." Just then King walked in. He looked a mess. His bowtie undone, jacket undone and hair beyond unruly. I smiled nervously. Orlando gave me squeeze before walking out. King looked at me in silent.

"Hey.."

"Thug chase was nasty today huh?" He asked looking calm and hot as ever. I forced a chuckle.

"Kind of.." He put his hands in his pockets. "King I'm sorry.. I.." I sighed.

"It's ok. I think I just need to accept the fact that your career will always come first no matter what."

"Babe.. Come on. You are being unfair right now.. You know I have been chasing after Lana for a while now."

"And I'm glad you finally caught her."

"I'm sorry I missed our dinner."

"Don't say you are sorry because I know you are not. I hope you get well." He said already walking out.

"King.. I'm sorry. I really am."

"Yeah.." He opened the door.

"I love you!" I screamed as he walked out. I threw my head back on the hospital pillow then covered my face with my hands.

[LATOYA]

"I'm scared Nono.."

"There's no need to be scared. You are a grown woman. What's happened has happened. What can you do about it other than accepting the situation?" I rubbed my forehead.

"How could I be so careless!"

"Go to the good doctor and just confirm." I laughed. "I don't need to confirm anything. It's been three months since I last got my periods."

"Well go to check how far you are and if everything is ok."

I sighed. "What am I going to tell Miguel?"

"Are you showing?"

"Just a bit, if you pay attention to it you will notice it but I look normal."

She laughed. "Baby number 2! Luthando will be so happy."

"I'm sure, he's expecting two babies already!" I said annoyed and upset.

"I don't trust that Nikiwe girl."

"She didn't do anything wrong. The reason she's pregnant is because someone was careless. I can't believe I let him do this to me again. Just when I thought I was afloat he just had to drag me down. I feel like that girl who always get pregnant."

"You can't possibly blame him alone, I mean.. It takes two to tangle."

"This is what he probably wanted. What am I saying! This is what he wanted. He just wanted to tie me down to him!"

"You are upset. It's not good for the baby. Secondly, you are just looking for someone to blame, nothing more. Thirdly, where's the Latoya I know? The Latoya who's not defeated by anything?"

"I feel so stupid Nothando. I feel beyond stupid and yes! I'm upset. I'm upset because I'm having an unplanned pregnancy like before. I'm upset because I wasn't careful. I'm upset because.. because I don't want a child yet. So yes! I'm going to

blame Luthando. I hate him so much. God just knows how much I hate him. He just had to.. He just had to!"

"What do you mean.. "You don't want the baby?"

"I'm not ready for another child, that's what I mean."

"You can't possibly be thinking of aborting. Latoya that's not you. Yes, this baby is unplanned but the baby is already there. Tell Miguel, I'm sure if you explain to him that it happened before him he will understand." I hung up then threw the phone away. The tears that glided down my cheeks made me bury my face in my hands. I had never been so disappointed in my life before like that moment. I had never been so dissapointed in myself to that level. I wasn't ready for another baby as yet. Not when Luthando was still playing games, not when I had Miguel who valued me so much. My hand fell to my stomach. As much as I wasn't ready for another baby I couldn't kill my baby.

"At 12 weeks and a day I would say everything is going well. If you keep up like this then we will be fine though we need to maintain your blood pressure. It's slightly above normal."

"Ok.."

"I can tell this pregnancy came as shock." The good doctor said sitting on her chair as I wiped off the gel from my belly.

"Sort of." I got off the small bed and pulled down my T-shirt.

"I'm going to prescribe some supplements for you."

"Ok.."

She smiled. I could see she was around 40's but I couldn't really be sure because of her petite body.

"Babies are blessings. You should rejoice."

I chuckled. "They are.. But baby daddy is.. Something else."

She laughed. "I'm sure it's not that bad."

"Ummh thank you."

By the time I left her office I was beginning to come into terms with the situation. There was nothing I could really do than accept that I was having a second baby from the same man. My phone started ringing when I got in my car. I smiled as I realized it was Archie. We were still friends though Miguel didn't know.

"Hey.."

"So Kay and I are going to this party. It holds the 1960's vogue. We thought maybe you would like to come." I smiled. "Ummh.."

"Please say yes. It's going to be fun. You can even bring your uptight boyfriend." I laughed.

"No. He's probably busy with work. I will come."

"Great. It starts at 1800hrs.."

"Ok, send me the location though you know I won't be staying right?"

"Yeah. Of cause."

"Ok bye.."

"You sound down are you ok?" I laughed.

"Yeah.. Just that I'm pregnant with my ex's baby."

"Shit!"

"I know.."

"There's always light at every end of a dark tunnel."

"Yeah.. Look we will talk."

"Yeah.."

I hung up then started my car. I wondered if my parents would have been disappointed like I was or they would have been happy. Everything felt so surreal. It was like I was stuck in a dream and I badly wanted to wake up but that wasn't going to happen. I sighed as I blinked away my tears, my hands were

shaking uncontrollably. I stopped the car at last then let it all out. I just took a moment and allowed myself to feel angry, sad and scared because it felt right to. I took my phone with my vibrating hands then called him with the number he had texted me with a few days ago. It led me straight to voicemail but I didn't care. "At some point in life I thought you loved me. At some point I thought.. I thought I knew that you loved me. I told myself that even though you may mess up most of the time, you still loved me." I sighed as I wiped my tears with the back of my hand. "I guess I was wrong all along. I partly blame myself, you know.. I think I gave you the platform to think you can do anything. I'm so glad now I know my worth and I can never settle for you because you are less than I deserve. I guess.. Congratulations.. You are about to have to two kids. You must be happy. But don't get too overexcited. I finally understand that I deserve better, and I'm happy with where my life is right now." I hung up then put my phone away.

After a few more minutes I had gathered myself. A few more moments later life was still going on. It never stopped. I took a deep breath as I continued driving, I wasn't going to allow negativity have a corner in my life. I was pregnant and I was going to have a baby but that didn't mean my life had to stop. I was humble enough to know that life gave out lemons and confident enough to know that I could make lemonade. I was a woman with a courageous heart, I was stronger than I knew, I could tackle any hiccup in life. They could never tame me.

[NOMPUMELELO]

I looked at the gold snake as it moved. It was so beautiful.

"Beautiful but very dangerous." A voice said coming from behind me. I turned and looked. He was probably the museum guide. I had seen him earlier on with a group of people.

"It can kill you in seconds."

"Wow!"

"I know.. I think it serves a purpose in life. Sometimes we want the most beautiful things but they are the most dangerous things and they have the power to destroy us." He said as he stood besides me.

"If you are not carefull then yes they will destroy you."

He chuckled. "Yes, but sometimes still. This snake is considered the most venomous snake."

"I can't believe it's actually goldish."

"Yeah.. By the way, I'm Dakota, I'm from Spain. You are?"

I chuckled. "And here I thought you were a museum guide. I'm Lelo from SA."

He laughed. "A what? No.. I have just been here a lot of times. I never get tired of seeing such wonderful art."

"I was convinced you were a museum guide." I said walking away from the snake. The museum was everything I thought it would be and more. What they had was beyond magnificent. They had with them everything. I stared at the painting that was in some glass. It was huge and so obstruct.

"Apparently the man who painted that.. Painted it thousand years ago. He had painted it to pray it."

"To pray it?"

"Yes. It holds such great.. Significance."

"This is what I call art."

"This is the reason I always come back. Egypt is a great place for what it holds mostly."

"I wouldn't mind coming back."

"Come.. Let me show you something.." He said walking away. I followed after him till we were looking at what looked like the skies. The reddish with orangish skies. It was a painting.

"This was painted in the 1500's.. And it was painted with blood. Human blood."

"Really?"

"Yes. Apparently the skies stayed like this for a lot of days. No one knew if it was daytime or nighttime."

"It's so.. Mysterious."

Dakota laughed. "It is. This paintings and sculptures are what I call.. Monumental pieces."

"I can't argue on that."

Dakota was an artist, he mainly focused on painting. He showed all around the museum, he knew it like the back of his hand. It was so funny how each time he got so excited to show me something he had seen before. He held great wild fire. For my benchmarking, he made it all easy for me. He took me to some best galleries, galleries he considered the best.

They sold what I called extraordinary. Something I had never set my eyes on before. Something I needed in my galleries. They gave me ways to get hold of some of their artist. I also took Dakota's number. There was nothing wrong in reviewing what he did. Maybe I could also take one or two pieces and place them in

my gallery.

After my benchmarking he took me to some restaurant which sold Egyptian traditional meals. He knew almost every dish. He even knew some history on Egypt at the times of pharaoh. It was so nice listening to him talk about all that history like he was part of it.

"Honestly I think the world was a better place before technology."

"It was but then Technology really did make things easier."

"No. It just changed people's lifestyle. No one ever complained about the way of life back then. Even today.. We don't complain about the lifestyle we are living because we are comfortable with it. But if by any chance new technology had to come, maybe in the next 100 years someone would be saying that just maybe.. Just maybe life was nice before the new technology but noone will be complaining because everyone would be used to that present way of life."

"Yeah.. So how many times have you been here?"

"At some point I lost count. I love Egypt. It's the only country I can say I dearly love followed by Italy."

"I need to start travelling. I'm not a great traveller."

"Well it takes getting used to. I have been in all continents. Travelling is my second passion. Seeing the world and what it holds just ignites the fire in me."

"I can see. I have to adapt that lifestyle."

After a while we were walking out of the restaurant after eating the delicious traditional meals. It was just at dusk and the skies were reddish. I smiled.

"This reminds me of that painting." I said looking at the skies.

"It's beautiful isn't it?"

"It is."

"Well.. I guess this is where we part ways. It was nice meeting you Lelo." I smiled.

"You too.." He winked then walked away.

I sighed as I stared at the sky. There was just something enigmatic about the sky. I caught a cab back to the hotel.

Getting back in my room the first thing I did was call Nicholas. I had so much to tell him. He answered after a while.

"Babe!"

"Who's this?" A female voice said making my heart just stop beating. I took a deep breath.

"His fiancé can I speak to him."

She laughed. "He's bathing."

"Then go and give him his phone."

"Unfortunately I can't. I will tell him that you called."

I hung up then threw myself on the bed. No matter how much I shut my eyes I felt tears cascading down my face. I was trying not to jump to conclusions but everything was pretty much clear to me. There was nothing to not to understand. My phone started ringing a few minutes later. I slowly took it, he was calling back. I answered desperately wanting to hear that it was all a prank but I knew there was no prank like that. Maybe what I wanted was for him to lie to me.

"It's not what you think babe.." I chuckled. "Did you use protection? I don't want you to bring AIDS to me or any other virus." There was silence for a while.

"I'm sorry.. I.."

"It's ok. Did you use a condom?"

"Yes.." It came off as a whisper.

"Change the bedding and throw away the ones you used. Bye.." I said then hung up.

[LATOYA]

I combed my hair into a huge big afro. A chuckle left my lips as I looked at Ocean who was staring at me through the mirror.

Looking at her made me smile. There was nothing that completed me more than my daughter. She was the reason I always kept fighting, she was the reason I always strived for survival. I walked away from the mirror then went and sat besides her on the bed. She smiled as I placed her on my lap.

"You are going to have a brother.. Do you want a small brother?"

"Daddy.." She said making me press my lips together as I held back my tears.

"Daddy is busy."

"Want Daddy.." She said accompanied by her waterworks. It had been two weeks and he hadn't called since the day he left, all he did was send one text. I wasn't even worried. Luthando was a grown man and he could fend for himself.

"We will call Daddy next week."

"Daddy.."

"We will call Daddy.. Don't cry. Do you want ice cream?"

And like that she had forgotten about Luthando. I admired her life. She had no worries following her around, burdens. I stood up then went back to the mirror. I was wearing one of the

ancient style dress. It was brownish like with buttons and a small belt on the waist. It fit in the discription of the party perfectly. I didn't bother with makeup, just Vaseline on my lips.

"You look.. Like those black American ladies in those late 50's movie." Latifar commented as I walked inside the sitting room. I gave her Ocean as I laughed.

"This is probably how your mother looked when she met your father." I said patting my Afro.

"You are right by that. You look different today."

I smiled. "Different?"

"Yeah. You.. seem different."

"Isn't that a good thing?"

"I don't know because I can't tell your mood."

"I'm fine. Where's Latisher?"

"In her room."

"Well.. I will be back before you know it." I said before I walked out of the house. Getting in my car I shoved every negative, soul dragging thought far away then took a deep breath. I wanted to just have fun. I wanted to be free of any burden. I started my car then reversed as Janalle Monae's song played.

"I don't care what I look like but I feel good.." I sang along with her as I increased the speed. Archie had sent the directions.

"Better than amazing," I continued. After a while I was driving in some house in Brooklyn. I parked my car next to some BMW then stepped out of the car. Loud music was playing. Walking inside the house I was met by a lot of people dressed similar to me. Most of them, if not everyone was holding a red disposable cup.

"Hey!" A voice said making me turn. It was Kayla. I smiled.

"Hey!" I screamed so to be audible.

"Come!" She said already dragging me. We walked to the outdoor through the back door. A few people were at that backyard and I easily spotted Archie. The music wasn't so loud at the backyard.

"Hey.. Look at you." He said with a smile.

I laughed. "Hey.."

"I'm so glad you made it. Ummh this my homie, DeWayne." He said pointing at the guy he was standing with. DeWayne gave me a smile that I returned. "And D my man, this is Latoya.."

"Yoh wassup babe..?" DeWayne said with a deep low voice.

Something about him made me smile.

"Hi.."

"Ummh babe please get Latoya juice?" Archie asked looking at me.

"Yes, juice."

"Coming right up!" Kayla responded already walking away. I sighed as I sat down on a camp chair. The way DeWayne was looking at me made me laugh.

"Why are you staring at me?" I asked making him chuckle.

"Well for you to realize that I was staring, it means you were also doing the same." He replied with the deep low voice again. His black American accent made the way he talked peculiar.

"I was not staring at you. I looked at you and realized you were staring at me."

He smiled then bit his lower lip. "You are so..." He pressed his lips together as if looking for a word to say. I laughed.

"So what? Pretty?"

"No. No, that's not the word to describe you. You are beautiful it's even scary but that's not what I wanted to say.. You.. I can taste the fire burning in you from a distance."

I smiled then looked at Kayla who was walking back with my juice. "I'm glad you realize I'm not to be taken lightly." Kayla smiled as she handed me my juice.

"It's orange juice, I hope you don't mind."

"No it's ok." Just then some song started playing. Kayla screamed as she pulled Archie.

"Babe.. That's our song." She said as she pulled him further away. I watched them as they danced. They looked so young, so free and in love. I sipped on my juice as Archie said something that made Kayla laugh.

"So what is it that you do?" DeWayne asked making me look at him.

"I'm a mom, a sister and business woman and a lot more, you?"

"Not willing to give much away huh?" He asked sipping on whatever that was in his red disposable cup.

"That's a weak line. Yes, I'm not willing to give anything away and I won't even do so.. I'm telling you only what I know you need to know."

"Smart! Not only is she a beauty but she's smart."

"What can I say.. I love keeping it real."

"Wow! You really do amaze me."

"I'm glad. What do you do?"

"I'm a rapper."

"Oh.."

"Yeah.. I'm not that well know but hey.. We all have to start somewhere at some point."

"If you follow your principles and goals, you will get anywhere you want."

"You said you are a mother.."

"Yah.. I have a two year old daughter who I love with all my being. Her name is Ocean. And I'm also a mother to my two siblings."

"Your daughter must be as beautiful as you."

"She is. She.. She has this beautiful eyes. She's my life."

He smiled. "The way your eyes light up when you talk about her.. I wish everyone was like you."

"I love her." I said staring at Archie and Kayla who were now just holding each other. "And you? Child?" I said turning to look at him again.

"No. Not yet but the way you are talking about your daughter makes me want to."

"Well having.. —" I was cut short by my phone ringing from my dress pocket. I took it out then looked at the caller ID. It was a number I didn't recognize. I looked at it for a while as it rang before I answered.

"Hello?"

"Hey.." His voice said making me take a deep breath. I didn't know either to be happy or not. I had lost complete hold of my emotions.

"Hi.."

"How are you?"

"I'm fine."

"I just listened to your voicemail.. I don't know where to begin apologizing. I know my apologies won't change the situation. If you want to abort it's ok. I'm not going to keep being in the way of your dreams and happiness. I just realized that as much as I love you so much, I hurt you the most. I'm sick and tired of always being the one behind your sadness. Congratulations on your job, congratulations to the woman you have become. There's really nothing more sexier than a woman who has goals and knows what she wants and strives by her all to get what she wants. You are wonderful person, it's sad that I lost you. It hurts.." He chuckled. "I have never been this hurt but I'm glad you are giving me a chance with my daughter. I'm going to stop harassing you. I'm really sorry toots.. You were right. You do deserve..—" his voice was cut off with the phone being snatched from me. I quickly turned but blinked as my eyes fell on Miguel. He looked upset. Beyond angry. He hung up then put my phone in his pocket.

"What the hell!" I said shocked at his behavior.

"What are you doing here?"

"You have no..—" he grabbed my hand then squeezed me so hard I screamed out of shock.

"Don't cause a scene. We are going to walk to the car right now." He said with a menacing voice.

"Are you well?"

"Latoya, don't try me." He said still squeezing me. I looked around and DeWayne was not besides me anymore and nobody was paying attention. He pulled me up from the camp chair roughly.

"Miguel let me go." I hissed trying to free my hand but that just caused him to squeeze me harder.

"We are leaving." He said already walking. I faked a smile at some eyes which had fallen on us as he dragged me around the house to his car which was parked at the gate.

"Get in the car!"

"I'm not going anywhere with you. Let me go!"

"Latoya.."

"That's my name. Let go of my hand before I scream."

"Don't forget I'm the one who made you."

I laughed. "You made who?"

"Fucken damnit get in the fucken car!" He roared catching a few eyes. I sighed as I got in the car. The last thing I wanted was to be people's talk. He banged the door closing it then walked to his side. Getting inside the car he immediately drove off. All I was thinking about was Luthando and what he wanted to say. I was angry but a deep breath sorted all that out. I was at a crucial stage with my pregnancy. The last thing I wanted was to lose the baby. Parking the car in his garage he got out then walked inside the house. I slowly got out the car too and followed after him. I walked straight to his bedroom. I had once been there. Getting inside I walked to the ensuite and splashed my face with water on the sink. A lot had happened in one day.

I stared at myself on the mirror. I had a headache. I opened the cabinet in the bathroom. My breath caught as I stared at the bottles of medicine. I took one and stared at it. I knew the medicine so well I couldn't be fooled. It was the same medicine Sarah used to drink. All of the bottles were written his name.

Miguel Thomas.

"Shit!" I quickly put them back then walked out. There was another door in his room. Without reluctance I was at it, opening it. It wasn't locked.

"Oh my God!" I muttered beneath my breath as I stared at the wall. My pictures were all over the wall. My daughter. Latisher, Latifar and Ocean. Luthando's pictures were also there. Looking around again there was my picture with his, glued together. It was kind of weird that it was my face glued on a picture of a woman wearing a wedding gown. I quickly walked out when I heard footsteps then ran back in the bathroom.

"Babe!" He called out as I opened the tap and splashed my face with water.

"Babe?" He said opening the door. I looked at him as he walked in, he seemed to relax as his eyes fell on me. He didn't look crazy. I started putting one and one together. His weird behavior. I took a deep breath trying to calm myself down. I was still shocked.

"Hey.." He said walking towards me and hugging me from behind.

"I'm sorry. I.. I just got worried. Babe those black things are dangerous. I don't want anything happening to you. I love you so much I get worried you know. Can we put it all behind us now?"

I smiled looking at him through the mirror.

"Yeah.. I understand." He turned me around then took my bruised hand. He rubbed my wrist gently then kissed the bruise.

"I'm sorry.. Please forgive me."

"It's ok. How did you know where I was?" I asked hugging him.

He wrapped his arms around me tightly sighing.

"For security I always know where you are."

"I'm glad." He let me loose then kissed me. I kissed him back as I tried coming up with a plan. My phone vibrated in his pocket making me step back. I prayed it wasn't Luthando. I didn't know what Miguel was capable of. He took it out then looked it before handing it over to me with a smile.

"Take.. It's Latisher." I took the phone and answered.

"Tisher.."

"Latoya you need to come to the hospital. It's Ocean.. She's not breathing.." She said crying.

"What?"

"We thought she was sleeping but she wasn't. She's not breathing Latoya.. She's dead. Please come."

11

[JANINE]

I opened the door then limped inside the hotel room. He didn't sleep at my house, I had discharged myself early in the morning and I had driven to my house quickly. He wasn't there, somehow it hurt not finding him there but I understood why he was upset. He had every right to be upset.

I looked at the bed and there he was sleeping. I quietly closed the door then walked towards the bed. I put the chocolate brownies aside and crawled besides him on the bed.

"Babe.." I said softly shaking him. He opened his eyes slowly then frowned.

"Hey.." I said with a smile ignoring the frown.

"Shouldn't you be in the hospital?"

"I discharged myself but that doesn't matter. I brought you some chocolate brownies."

He looked at me for a while, his facial expression still unreadable. "You should be at your house sleeping."

I swallowed not knowing what to say. "I'm sorry King.."

"It's ok. Don't apologize for doing your job."

"I really hate it when we are fighting."

"Who said we are fighting?"

"Whatever that we are doing. I hate it."

"I'm sleeping." He said turning and giving me his back.

"King can we talk about this like a couple?"

"Janine I don't know what you want me to say to you. It's quite obvious that your career comes first and I'm happy you are so independent. I'm happy you are the woman you are. I'm not even upset anymore, it's fine. Sleep."

I pressed my lips together. I had no excuse to missing our date and if time had to be reversed I would have still done the same thing. I couldn't just let Lana get away with murder. I lay on the bed besides him in silence. He was right, I wasn't really sorry. I took out my phone. It was just after five. I closed my eyes then tried to sleep.

"Janine!" His voice rang in my head as he called out my name.

"Janine!" His voice much more louder and it was accompanied by him shaking me. I opened my eyes and looked at him.

"Your phone." He said then walked to the ensuite. My heart broke a little at how cold he was being. I took my phone. It was Orlando. I looked at the direction he had went then I heard the

shower running. Quietly I answered the phone.

"Hey.."

"Hey, I'm at the hospital. You discharged yourself?"

"I had to."

"Ok, are you coming today? Lana woke up."

I looked at the ensuit's door. "I can't. You can go ahead with the interrogation. Keep me updated."

"Are you ok?"

"Yeah.. I have to go." I said then hung up. I couldn't join him in the shower because of the bandage I had in my thigh so I sat on the bed and ordered breakfast. As I waited for breakfast his phone started ringing from the bedside. I sat still for a while till I found myself walking towards it. Getting it, my eyes fell on the caller ID. It was Gina. I closed my eyes then answered it.

"King's phone hello?"

"Wow! Are you a receptionist?" She asked making me laugh.

"How can I help you?"

"I want to speak with King."

"He is not here."

"Ok. Stop it. This is important. Give him the phone. There's no need to be insecure."

"You can tell me. I will pass the message."

"Look here, I want to discuss my son's future with my husband. Give him his phone."

I laughed. First of all.. There's nothing you are going to discuss with my fiancé. Secondly, stop bluffing. King has no son, I'm not stupid, stop being desperate and lastly.. You are an ex wife. Act like one. "

She laughed really hard. "Wow! And here I thought you knew. Let me fill you up seeing that King hasn't told you yet. We have a son. A 4 year old son. His name is Liam.. Liam Tejero. King and I haven't divorced as yet. Well.. He can't divorce me because if he divorces me then he loses his company. So you will respect me as his first wife." I heard the shower stop running making me hang up immediately and put his phone away.

He walked out after a while with only towel wrapped around his waist. Water was dripping from his hair.

Just then there was knock. I sat down as he walked towards the door. I felt betrayed. So broken. He had lied to me.

"You ordered breakfast?" He asked walking back with the breakfast. I stared at him wondering how much he just had to use me till I knew he wasn't what I wanted him to be.

"Are you ok?"

"Yeah.." I said getting up from the bed and taking off the ring. I threw it on the bed. "I'm fine. I'm going to walk out through that door. The moment I leave I want you to know it's over." I said grabbing my car keys.

"What's going on?"

"Go back to wherever that you happen to stay. Go back to your son. Go back to your wife."

He ran his hands in his head.

"Shit! I was going to tell you babe."

"Don't bother anymore. It's ok. I'm going to work." I took my phone and walked out. He grabbed my hand.

"Please don't go. I can explain. I was going to tell you about Liam just that I was looking for the perfect timing. I didn't want you to

leave me."

"And Gina? King you lied to me. You told me the divorce had been finalised. You lied to me.. I believed you. How could you do this to me? Why?"

"I'm sorry. I'm so sorry babe. The whole thing is complicated."

"So you want to make me the second wife now?"

"You won't be second in my heart and I'm... I'm..—"

"I don't think you and I can be together. There are too many lies. I don't think I can deal with it. I'm sorry.." I said then walked away. I hurried to my car then drove away from the hotel. I wiped away a tear which had fell from my eye. I wasn't going to cry over him. He was his father's son after all.

[LATOYA]

I looked at her tiny body, it was like she had lost weight over night. She stared at me with the oxygen mask on her. She had a drip connected to her. I felt fresh tears on my cheeks as I held her hand. She didn't deserve to be here looking so weak. She deserved to be at home playing and screaming.

"Hey baby.." I said kissing her hand. She just blinked while staring. I wanted to break down and cry so hard but I held it.

"We are going home soon enough ok? We are going home.." Her temperate was so high though the doctor had said it was meant to go down after the antibiotics they had given her.

"Oh.. Morning." The doctor said walking inside.

"Doc.."

"How's my patient doing?" She asked as she took her other hand. My baby was probably wondering what was going on.

"She looks tired. What's wrong with her?"

"Well.. She has a fever. She will be fine."

"And the bruises?" I said looking at her bruised neck.

"We are still running some tests but we suspect it's an allergy reaction. She will be fine."

"Ok.."

"Don't worry. I'm convinced it's nothing so we are going to give her some antibiotics to deal with the fever."

"Ok.." She then injected something in Ocean's drop before walking out.

"Do you want to talk to Daddy?" She blinked a couple of times making more tears gush out from my eyes. I hastily wiped them away as I took out my phone with shaky hands. I couldn't shake off the feeling that I was losing my baby. I called back the number Luthando had called me with yesterday. It rang for a while unanswered. The moment he answered it I felt like just breaking into small pieces.

"Toots.."

I took a deep breath as I blinked away my tears. "Hey.."

"Is everything ok?"

"It's Ocean. She's in the hospital."

"What happened?" I could easily hear the panick in his voice.

"Yesterday she.." I took a deep breath trying to calm down.

"Yesterday she wasn't breathing so she was rushed to the hospital. The doctor says she has a fever.."

"Where were you when she wasn't breathing?" He asked steadily but I knew he was upset. I was upset too. While I was busy out there my child was home dying. I was the worst mother

ever.

"I wasn't home. I know.. I know I'm a bad parent. You don't have to say it."

I heard him sigh. "I didn't say that. I just wanted to know who she was with."

I started sobbing silently. "She was with Latisher and Latifar. She has bruises all over her neck. I'm scared."

"Toots nothing is going to happen to her. Kids get sick all the time. I'm coming there."

I wiped my rears clumsily with the back of my hand. "Ok..."

"Don't worry, stop crying.. Crying doesn't suit you." Ocean's eyes were now closed. I shook her gently and she lazily opened her eyes.

"Daddy.." I said putting the phone on her ear. She blinked a couple of times then smiled. Whatever he was telling her was probably funny. Seeing her smile put my heart in place. All I wanted was my daughter to be back at home. She looked at me after a while making me remove the phone from her ear.

"Done?" I asked Luthando.

"Yeah.. I will probably arrive tomorrow at night but I will be there I promise."

"Ok..."

"I love you." He whispered. Just then I heard voices at the background. I couldn't really hear what was being said.

"I have to get going. Don't cry.. I hate it when you cry." I chuckled. That was the first time hearing him say something like that. "Ok.."

"I love you so much toots.. I love you and our daughter ok?"

I nodded.

"I can't really see you.." He said making me laugh.

"Ok.. I heard you and I know.."

"Good. I will call you later."

"Ok." The call then got disconnected. I put it away then took Ocean's hand again. Her eyes were now closed. She probably wanted to rest. Since she was still a minor, I had to stay with her in the hospital and I didn't mind. As long as I was with her. There was a light knock on the door followed by Latifar, Latisher together with Miguel walking inside. They all walked towards me then looked at Ocean who was sleeping peacefully.

"Can't she breathe on her own?" Miguel asked as he gently caressed her face. I wanted him to put his hands off my daughter. I wanted him to stay far away from my daughter.

"Her breath keeps coming short and quickly so the oxygen mask is aiding her." I replied looking at the oxygen mask.

"I brought Latisher and Latifar so that you can go home and freshen up. You have been here ever since yesterday."

"I'm fine."

"Baby.. I'm sure Ocean isn't loving seeing at you like this. You look a mess. You need to freshen up and also eat."

"I'm not leaving my daughter Miguel. I'm never going to."

"Sis.. You need to freshen up." Latifar said brushing my face gently.

"Your hair looks a mess. You look scary. Just go home, freshen up, eat then come back." I knew she was making sense but I wanted to be nowhere close to Miguel and I wanted him to badly stay away from my siblings. Latisher sniffed making me look at

her.

"Don't cry.." I said softly.

"I don't want to lose her.." She muttered as her voice broke.

"And you won't. It's just a fever.. She will be fine. You don't have to worry."

"Ok..."

I finally stood up.

"I will be back before you know it."

"Ok..." Latifar said hugging me. I hugged her back briefly then walked out followed by Miguel. He took my hand and led me to his car. I wanted to protest but something deep in me stopped me. The drive home was silent. It was silent but not serene.

There was a lot that was happening in my head. A lot I wanted to scream. Parking the car at the townhouse we stepped out of the car. He followed behind me as I walked to the elevator. Getting inside the house nothing looked out of place. I walked to the kitchen then opened one of the drawers and took out a knife. I turned and looked at him holding the knife.

"Baby is everything ok?"

"You know.. Your moves.. They are so calculated. You are always there when I need you. You love me. You love Ocean. You love my siblings. You make me feel so good about myself. You gave me your company. You always know where I am, ready to rescue me."

He looked confused. "That's because I love you so much babe.."

"But what you don't know is that I can kill you. Matter of fact I will kill you with this knife. You might think you are smart but hunny.. This is my game."

"Latoya are you ok?"

"You see.. This bruise.." I said raising my hand so that he could see the bruise on my wrist.

"Baby we talked about this and I'm sorry. I was just upset and worried."

"This bruise was it. There's never going to be more. If your crazy head tells you otherwise.. Then I have no choice but to slice you with this knife right now."

He looked at me, his eyes darkening. He then smirked.

"I knew you went through my things yesterday."

"Yeah I did and I'm not even sorry. I want nothing to do with you."

He laughed. "You can't leave me. You can't ever leave me. You and I are married. I love you. I love our daughter. I love your siblings. We are a family and families never part." I looked at him smiling, not fearing anything. Somehow I knew he was going to act crazy but I was prepared for anything. I wanted him far away from me and my family.

"You are crazy. You are married to who?"

"You are married to me! You are my wife."

"It's either you are going to walk out and never turn or I'm going to be forced to stab you right now. You choose what you want."

"It's him isn't it? Babe he doesn't love you. He wants to destroy you."

I stared at him, blankly. He let out a loud roar hitting the kitchen counters but I didn't move nor did my eyes leave him. I stood right there, not even shaken.

"I love you. We are married. There's no leaving each other. You see.. You see what you are doing baby? I don't want to hurt you."

"I love you." His voice was shaking.

"Hurt who? I'm the one who doesn't want to hurt you but I'm going to if you don't leave. You are pushing my hand and I don't like it."

"I'm not leaving." He said as he walked towards me slowly. "You think you are smart huh? You are just like the rest of them. You are a dirty whore and you are mine. I made you and I own you." I sighed. "This is really getting boring. You can take your company. I don't care. Take anything that belongs to you and see if I care but come near me or my family.. I will slice you and I'm not joking." He laughed really hard giving me his back as if I had just cracked a joke. I put the knife down then reached for the cornflakes glass jar and struck him in the head. He fell to the floor immediately with a groan as cornflakes scattered on the floor.

"Let's see who's joking now.." I said re-owning the knife back in my hand. He stood up slowly and looked at me.

"I'm really mad now." He said as blood from his head dripped on his white T-shirt.

"Then the game can start."

He charged towards me then slapped me real hard I could taste blood in my mouth.

"Wrong move." I muttered. "You shouldn't have done that."

I quickly changed into a pair jeans and a T-shirt then the sneakers. I combed my thick hair and held a tight back bun before grabbing my phone and walking out of my bedroom. I walked inside the kitchen then jumped Miguel's bloody body which was on the floor then walked to the fridge. I took out a

bottle of water and gulped some water down as I stared at him. Taking out the syringe from my pocket I looked at him, it was already loaded. I kneeled down and injected him. After I was done I put it back in my pocket then took my phone and dialed a number.

"Hello how can we help you?"

"Please come to my house.. I need an ambulance. He stabbed himself.. I think he's dead." I said opened the window in the kitchen.

"Where do you stay Mam?"

12

[NOMPUMELELO]

I stepped out of the cab as the driver took out my bag from the boot. It was dark. I opened my purse then took out some money and gave it to him when he placed my bag in front of me.

"Thank you.." I said then dragged my bag inside the gate. I was grateful I always had the gate remote and the house keys. My heart was beating fast as I tried opening the door and surprising enough it was not locked. I walked in then placed my bag on the couch. The tv was on. I took off my shoes then started looking for him. I walked from bedroom to bedroom searching for him. Opening our bedroom door, he was lying on the bed, face down. Besides the bed there was a bottle of wine. I stood there looking at him. I ignored the voice in my head which told me I had no right to be upset as I had done worse. I sat on the bed wondering who it was. If she was prettier than me or what. I wanted to know who it was. I shook him earning myself a groan.

"Nicholas!" I screamed shaking him again.

"Fuck!" He cursed turning to look at me. He looked like a bus had hit him.

"Babe?"

"Wake up."

"Shit.." He mumbled trying to sit up right but he was failing. His covered his face with his hands. I wondered if she was better in bed than me. I got up from the bed then went to the bathroom. I started filling the tub with water. I had slept last night after buying a plane ticket to leave for home today. I didn't care if I was ruining my plans, all I knew was that I wanted to come back at home. As soon as the bathtub was filled I added some salts and walked out. He was now sitting upright on the bed looking disoriented.

I leaned on the wall and stared at him.

"Who was it?"

"Babe.."

"Who was it?"

He stood up then staggered towards me. He smelt like a brewery.

"I said who was it?"

"It doesn't matter.. It will never happen—"

"You disrespected our relationship. You are going to answer me.. Who was it?"

"I'm not telling you." He said then walked back to the bed and threw himself on it.

"Ok. You choose what you want. Either you tell me or I walk out."

"All this is unnecessary. I'm sorry Lelo. I'm so sorry babe."

"That's not the answer I want. Who was it?"

He sighed as he rubbed his face.

"I think maybe you should calm down." I looked at him as he stood up and walked to the bathroom. I walked over to his phone then unlocked it. He still hadn't changed the password. I went to his call log.

"Lelo stop this!" He said snatching his phone.

"What? So you are still talking to her?"

"Babe no. I just..—"

"Tell me who she is!"

"I'm not doing that. I'm not talking to her."

"You cheat on me! You fucken cheat on me! I have every right to know who it is! If you don't tell me you better cancel the wedding."

"I know and I'm going to do everything to make sure you forgive me."

"I'm not going to forgive you till you tell me who it is!"

He stepped away from me with his phone. I was angry or even beyond. I walked to the bedside then grabbed the lamp and threw it at him. He dodged it just in time and it shattered to the floor breaking into small pieces.

"You have the audacity to cheat on me. It was only a day... Maybe all along you have been cheating and just that never got caught."

"Babe come on.. I made a mistake. I'm sorry. I'm really sorry. I have no excuse."

"Who is she?!" I screamed as I threw the bottle of wine at him. He dodged it again and it hit the wall. He looked terrified.

"I won't stop till you tell me who it is!" I walked to the bathroom as tears clouded my eyes. My eyes ran threw the bathroom as I looked for something. Something I could just...

"Babe..." He said hugging me from behind.

"Let me go. I'm never going to forgive you for this! I'm never going to ever trust you again after this!" I said as my voice broke. He held me tightly as I failed to hold in my sobs.

"I'm sorry.."

"Let me go.. Let me go so you can cheat perfectly in peace."

"Babe I'm sorry.. I'm so sorry."

He picked me up then walked with me to the bedroom. He lay me on the bed with him besides me holding me tightly.

"I'm sorry.." He whispered as I shut my eyes tightly. I just wanted to black out and forget everything. I just wanted the nightmare to end.

"I'm so sorry.." He whispered again kissing my forehead. Slowly my body relaxed as I lost my touch with reality. I dissolved into a meaningless sleep with Nicholas still holding me.

Opening my eyes again, the sun which penetrated through the curtains struck my eyes. I immediately closed my eyes then opened them again more slowly. It was in the morning and somehow I felt new. It was as if last night never happened. Just then Nicholas walked in holding a tray of breakfast. I got off the bed then looked at him smiling.

"Hey.. I brought you breakfast." He said placing it on the bed. I looked at the frenchtoast. "You shouldn't have bothered. You should have woken me up."

"You were sleeping. I didn't want to disturb you."

"You wouldn't have but thank you. Let me bath then eat." I said walking to the bathroom. I took a long cold shower. I had to get hold of myself. The Lelo that had erupted yesterday wasn't me. Walking out of the bathroom he was sitting on the bed. I walked to the closet and took out my jeans and a white silky long sleeved shirt. I put them on together with my white ankle boots. After dressing I sat on the bed then started eating.

"I'm going to see my brother then go and see mom and Mayra. They arrived yesterday and they are currently at Zuko's house." I said getting up and gulping down the rest of my apple juice.

"Ohh.. Want company?"

"Oh no it's ok. I think I will sleep over there tonight though mom might want to see you tomorrow."

"Lelo.." I smiled then took my handbag and stashed my necessities inside.

"Don't worry about me. You can go out if you want or invite her over. She will keep you company." I said then walked out.

[JANINE]

"So you probably thought you were going to get away with murder huh?"

She just stared at me. "Seeing that you killed Kevin..I'm starting to wonder if you really didn't kill your daughter."

"I won't say anything till my lawyer arrives."

"Which lawyer? The state lawyer? Will is not coming. Forget it."

"We shall see."

I smiled. "Ok. Ohh yeah.. Your inheritance has been unfrozen and unfortunately.. The state is thinking of giving the inheritance

to Rockelle's next of kin. Unfortunately it wasn't you. So you might walk out with nothing."

"You can't do that!"

"Ohh wait and see.. Rockelle's next of kin was her ex husband. If he doesn't get the inheritance then well.. Latoya Samuel's takes everything. You see.. The plan backfired and it didn't work. I feel sorry for you. I really do." I said then walked out of her cell. We had enough proof to have her locked up. If everything went well she was going to get nothing below 30 years. She was going to be in prison till her trial was over. I walked out and went to my car. For a Monday the day was going well so far. I felt so relieved, Lana was going down. I started my car then drove to Namhla's work place. I had promised that that I would pop by.

Arriving at her workplace she was sitting in her office. The one she shared.

"Hey girl!" She said getting up and hugging me then immediately letting me go.

"Hey.." I sat down on the couch.

"Where's your ring?"

"There's no wedding happening."

"What? Why?"

"Can you believe it? King is still married and he has a child."

"Damn! I kind of expected the child but but the wife! Haai ngeke!" She said clapping her hands. I stared at her for a while before I laughed. There was just something about how she always clapped her hands and said "haai ngeke," every time I told her something she happened not to know.

"It's ok. We broke up."

"What was his defense?"

"I left."

"You didn't give him a chance to explain?"

"He lied to me and kept secrets from me. What could I possibly listen to? More lies?"

"So you mean to tell me that this guy came back from wherever you say he was staying, paid Lobola for you, has been planning for a wedding just to play you?"

"You never know? Maybe he is trying to avenge for what happened with his father."

"Wow!"

"All I know is that I want nothing to do with him."

She stared at me for a while.

"You are pushing him away Janine. You have met his family. This guy is even willing to give up his life so to be with you. Yes, he lied but I really don't blame him. You make it so hard for him or anyone else to come upfront and tell you something. I'm your friend and I'm just telling you the truth. You never want to listen or compromise. It's always your way or no other way. I don't know where you are looking for a perfect guy but you won't find him. I'm not supporting King for lying to you but you will never be happy if you keep looking for a perfect guy. You never want to give him a chance. You never want to listen to him. Just yesterday you missed your date with him. You are always right. Your wedding is near, if we are canceling we better start now." I sighed as I thought about what she had said. Was I really like that?

"Girl! Come to the boutique. We want to finalise everything."

Derrick said as soon as I answered the phone. I was on my way to the station.

"Derrek.. I don't think there's going to be my wedding." I said faintly feeling defeated. King had been calling but I had been ignoring him. I didn't want more of his lies.

"Moghel what are you saying? Where are you?"

[LATOYA]

"The fuck did you do to me?" He asked making me smile.

"How are you feeling?"

"You bitch! The fuck did you do?"

"I'm not who you thought I was. I will kill you next time. You should appreciate the fact that you only got away with a scratch. Though from here they are sending you straight to the nutfarm. You better behave."

"You are not going to get away with this."

"Well get well soon babe.." I said then walked out.

My phone started ringing as I walked from the hospital to my car. I answered the phone getting in my car.

"Tisher?"

"Hey.. The doctor wants to see you."

"Ok.. I'm on my way."

I quickly started my car then reversed and drove out from the hospital. I didn't regret stabbing Miguel last night, I was trying to protect myself. I didn't want to go to jail so I had to do what I had to do. It seemed like the injection had worked perfectly because the doctors were 100% convinced he was dangerous to himself and the people around him.

Arriving at the hospital where Ocean was I quickly rushed inside. Her fever had subsided but she was still weak. Her doctor though was assuring me that she was ok.

Getting inside her room, she was with Latifar.

"Hey.. The doctor said you should go to her office when you arrive."

"How's she?" I asked walking inside.

"The fever is back. I think the test results are back." I sighed feeling so down. She was sleeping and she still had the oxygen mask on her. I forced my legs to move then went to the doctor's office.

"Miss Samuels.." She said gesturing that I sit down. I sat and looked at her wondering what was wrong with my child.

"The test results are back. Ocean has anemia. We are running more test but.. Things are really not looking good."

"What do you mean?"

"We are suspecting that she has cancer.. Metastasis to be precise."

"What?"

"The symptoms Ocean has are for stage 4 cancer. You just have to pray it's not that."

"If she has metastasis, what's going to happen?"

"We will have to see what type of cancer it is and it's aggressiveness. We will also have to see the original cancer and where it started. At this stage, stage 4, it will mean it has spread around the body. So we will have to see just how much it has spread. We will try chemotherapy if she has it but it doesn't work we switch to another form of treatment or we might even do

combinations of treatment."

I looked at her not comprehending. My baby couldn't have cancer.

"But she... She looks ok."

She smiled sympathetically. "Does she?"

I stared at her as tears settled in my eyes.

"So she's dying?"

"We are not really sure that's why we are running more tests."

I wiped away a tear which had fallen. I could feel my whole world giving up on me. My head was quiet. I didn't even know what to think.

Walking out from her office I felt a huge weight on my shoulders. It was weighing me down, threatening to just squash me. Getting back in Ocean's room she was now awake and was just staring at Latisher who was talking animatedly.

It was like she kept losing weight every single day. Her eyes were dim. She didn't look like my baby at all. I stood by the door as tears streamed down my face.

"Oh hey! Look at Mommy." Latisher said when she noticed me. Ocean diverted her eyes from Latisher to me then blinked. My lips quivered as I tried holding myself together. I didn't want my siblings to see me that weak. Ocean pulled the oxygen mask.

"Mommy.." She quietly. I placed on my mouth as a sob escaped my lips.

I slowly walked towards her then took her tiny hand into mine as I pulled the mask off her face..

"H—hey baby.." I whispered. "I love you honey.." I said as I kissed her tiny hand. "I love you so much. I love you so so much."She

giggled.

I pressed my lips together trying to hold back the sob that wanted to escape my lips.

"She's going to be fine Sis.. Don't worry." Latifar said standing besides me. I looked at her. Only if she knew.

I wanted to call Luthando and tell him but I felt beyond drained. I felt so tired. I knew I was about to face a storm but I wasn't so sure if I was going to come out alive. I dismissed Latisher and Latifar after a while. I wanted to be alone with my daughter. That moment nothing mattered more than my daughter.

I felt hopeless as I stared at her. I felt hopeless because I couldn't do anything but just watch. I was helpless. It was like I was watching my child disappear right before my eyes. I felt walls closing in on me as I realized I was just useless.

13

[JANINE]

I sat in my office then rested my head on the table. I lay like that for a while till there was a knock on my door. I raised my head then summoned the person to come in. Orlando walked in holding MacDonald's.

"Hey.. Lunch?"

"It's already lunch hour?"

"Yeah.." He walked in then placed the MacDonald's on my table and sat opposite me.

"Is everything ok?" He asked.

"Yeah.. Everything is ok."

"You don't look the way you looked when you left."

"I'm just tired that's all."

"Well congratulations on Lana."

"No.. Congratulations to us. We did this together."

"Yeah.. I have something to tell you." I looked at him. He looked nervous or more than nervous. I sat up right waited.

"What is it?"

"Before I tell you I just want to say.. I thank God I met you.

Remember the first day we met?" I laughed recalling the day.

"We were both newbies here remember that?" He asked with a chuckle.

"Yeah.. It's been time."

"Yes and overtime you got to become my best friend then my sister." I smiled. "I know.."

"That's why I feel it's right if I tell you this."

"What is it?"

"I'm bisexual." He said looking directly in my eyes. I took a deep breath before I stood up and walked towards him. I hugged.

"I'm happy you are finally coming out and I still love you the same." He held me tightly.

"Janine.." King's voice said making me sigh letting go of Orlando. I raised my head and looked at him.

"Ummh should I give you guys space?" Orlando asked looking at me.

"Yeah.." He stood up then walked out though I couldn't really miss the way King looked at him. I went back to my chair and sat down pulling a file before me. He closed the door then stood there looking at me.

"Can I explain?" He asked softly.

"Go ahead but nothing is changing my mind."

"Then I guess there's no use of explaining right?"

"Yeah.."

"Ok. I love you.." I just looked at him in silence. He opened the door then walked out. I wanted to scream "no, come back!" I wanted him to fight for us. I waited for a few minutes hoping he was coming back but he didn't. I covered my face with hands wondering if this was really the end of it, if him and were really over. I was disturbed by my phone ringing. I exhaled then reached for it. Surprisingly it was Lelo. I answered immediately.

"Lelo.."

"Hey.. Wanna meet up for drinks tonight?"

I chuckled. "I would love to."

"Great! I will text you the place and time."

"Do that." She then hung up. I was somehow looking forward to the drinks. I needed some unwinding time. I took my MacDonal'd's from the table then started eating pushing all my worries to the side.

After work I drove quickly home, took a quick shower and dressed up. Lelo had sent the directions to the place. We were meeting at seven. I left my braids loose before I left. The journey was long due to the traffic. When I arrived Lelo was already on her second drink.

"Hey!" She screamed as I sat besides her by the bar.

"Hi.. Started already I see.."

She laughed. "Well.. Join in. Braids do look good on you."

"Thanks.." I quickly ordered my cocktail.

"Nick cheat on me." She blurted making me gasp.

"What?"

"Yeah.. I went to Egypt on Friday. On Saturday in the evening I called him but a lady answered his phone. There was no way he could lie to me, I had already caught him. I came back yesterday and he won't tell me who it was."

I gave the bartender a smile as he placed my cocktail before me. I quickly took a sip. "I can't believe this."

"I'm hurt. I'm so hurt but.. A few weeks ago it was me."

I looked at her in shock. "You cheat too?"

"Yeah. Honestly I don't know how I easily opened my legs for that man but.. That fuck was bomb!" I laughed.

"So you don't regret it?"

"Well I regret cheating on Nick but I don't regret the sex anymore. That man is talented."

I laughed harder. "Oh my God! So Nick doesn't know?"

"Nope.. It's his new friend."

"No! What?"

"That guy is sizzling hot. He is fire. Damn! That body.. That big body.." She said shaking her head while biting her lower lip. "He is to die for. Sometimes when I just think about what he did to my body I get wet."

"You better tie down that whore inside you! And here I thought Latoya was the wayward one." She laughed shaking her head.

"You too.. You have that inner whore in you just that you don't want to explore."

"Haii girl! You exploring now made you sleep with your fiancé's friend."

"That's not the issue. The issue is I can't get over him cheating

on me."

"So what? You are cancelling the wedding?" She looked at me in horror.

"No! I'm not doing such! It's his first time plus he is sorry. I'm not going to cancel the wedding because honestly no one is perfect. Nicholas is a very good guy and he loves me."

"But don't you question his loyalty?"

She giggled. "I do but that doesn't mean anything Janine. I'm not losing him to some floozy bitch. My wedding is around the corner. Yes he cheat but he loves me and me only."

I sighed then took another sip of my cocktail.

"So King and I met when I was still married to Kevin. That time when he went to New York. We were in a relationship sort of, he used to spoil me. I thought he loved me till he disappeared after our sex."

"And?"

"And then he comes two years later. Apparently his father was a criminal I sent to jail. The father had threatened to kill me if he didn't leave me. The father still did try but I made it. Now he comes back and proposes. I say yes only to find out he was once married. He then explained that his divorce was being finalised. His ex wife kept calling though, to his defense she wanted his company. I found out that they are still married and he has a child with her."

"Ok. I'm lost. You met King, you guys were having an affair then he left after the sex?"

"Yes."

"Then he comes back two years later, explains why he left then

proposes. You say yes, then he tells you he was once married?"

"Yes.. To Gina. The lady his father wanted him to marry."

"So it was like a forced/arranged marriage."

"Sort of."

"Ok, then what happened?"

"She kept calling though, he said it was because she was threatening to take his company."

"Ok then what?"

"We had a fall out a few days ago. We were supposed to have dinner. He bought me a dress and everything. When I was still dressing, duty called."

"Then you missed the date?"

"Yes but it was because of work."

"Then?"

"Well he was upset. I was in hospital because the criminal stabbed me. I discharged myself the following day in the morning then drove to his hotel room. He was cold. His phone rang as he showered and it was Gina. She told me about them still being married and having a four year old child."

"And you believed her?"

"Well King's reaction didn't make it any better too."

"What was his reaction?"

"He said he was looking for the perfect time to tell me. That it was complicated."

"And his explanation?"

"I left."

"Janine you need to loosen up! Girl! This is not a fairytale. King is your man. Stop pushing him away because of stupid things. If he

really has a child with Gina then you are going to be a stepmother. Accept that though I doubt it's his child because if it was really his child then he would have told you but either way, you should have given him a chance to explain."

"I'm just tired of his lies. If he can't be truthful now who knows what else he can lie about when we are married?"

"If you don't give him a chance then what kind of a wife are you going to be when you are married? Janine you have to tone it down a bit. You can't be a detective at work and at your house too."

"I just feel betrayed."

"Give him a chance to explain. He looks like a good guy."

I laughed then gulped down my cocktail before summoning the bartender that I needed another glass.

"I wonder if Latoya has the same problems as us." I said as my drink was placed before me. "You know she's a business woman, a mom.. I wonder how she's holding up."

"Latoya is probably being the boss."

"Tell me about it."

"So I met this lady.. Nikiwe.. She's Luthando's baby mama to be."

"Why am I not surprised." Lelo laughed.

"I once slept with him."

"You need serious prayers."

After a while we were done with our depressing stories and we were now taking shots. I didn't remember the last time I had so much fun but it felt so good. It felt so good to be free, to have no worry hanging on your shoulders. To just be you and you alone.

After a while we were on the dance floor dancing to whatever that was playing. I wasn't a great dancer but I found myself dancing. Lelo was besides me dancing while drinking.

After a while we were joined by two guys. I didn't know them but that didn't stop one of them from dancing with me.

After a while one of the guys suggested another club. Lelo was more than happy to go to a much fun place.

[LATOYA]

"God please she's the only thing I have. I won't survive it if you take her away from me." I prayed with tears streaming down my face. She was sleeping. I sighed as I rested my head on her bed. I closed my eyes and just sat there in silence. I could hear my own heart breaking with each second that passed. The test results were coming tomorrow. I was ready to do anything for my baby.

I don't know how many hours passed as I just lay there in silence. Time seemed to be flying. One moment Ocean was fine and the next here she was lying on a hospital bed.

I heard the door opening followed by voices. I could hear his voice accompanied by the doctors voice though I didn't open my eyes. I just remained in silence as a fresh tear left my eye. The doctor was retelling him what she had told me. The same story. After a while I heard the door opening and closing. There was silence, heavy silence and I knew he was staring at me. I felt his arms around me after a while. I let out a muffled sob as pulled me into him. He held me in his arms as I just cried.

"Please save her.. Save our daughter.. Save our baby.." I said

crying.

"Save her.. Save her..". He held me tighter. He didn't say anything but just held me in his arms.

Opening my eyes I could feel that my eyes were swollen.

Consequences of crying yourself to sleep. I looked at Ocean when I heard her giggling softly. She was sitting upright holding a teddy bear which was a bit bigger than shiny. Luthando was holding a tiny toy tea set while Ocean held the kettle with the teddy bear on the other hand.

"Daddy tea!" She said more softly making me smile.

"Yes..". Luthando as he pretended to sip on something.

"Mommy!" She screamed as she looked at me. I laughed. It was as if yesterday she was not weak and not saying anything. Luthando looked at me smiling. I wondered what time they removed the oxygen mask.

"Look who's awake!"

"Mommy tea..". She offered raising her kettle.

"Oh yes please..". I stood up rubbing my eyes while walking to the bed. I took a tiny little cup and she poured for me the imaginary tea.

"Thank you..". I said taking a sip. My eyes felt heavy.

She poured for herself then took her cup. Nothing made me more happy than seeing my daughter happy.

"You look like an alien." Luthando said making me laugh.

"I'm still pretty unfortunately." He chuckled.

"Who's feeding you such lies? Mlungu?"

"I stabbed him." He put the tiny cup down.

"You what?"

"He's crazy. Mental illness crazy."

I clicked my tongue as he laughed.

"I knew it!"

"Knew what?"

"That there was something about him. The moment I didn't find anything on him I knew there was just something about him."

"So you snooped on him?"

"My family's safety comes first. I'm glad you took care of it. Did he hurt you?"

"No."

"Good. If I find out he did something to you or if he ever tries.. He will regret it."

"I know most of the time you are an asshole, a pure jerk, an arrogant bastard but I'm happy you are here." He smiled then hugged me. He smelt so good.

"For you and our family I will do anything." He let me go after a while.

"Though this doesn't mean—"

"Relax, I don't want you back." Just then Ocean started crying. Luthando was by her side in 0.1 seconds already trying to see why she was crying. She pointed at her kettle which had fallen. I watched as he picked it up then resumed with their game. I bit my lower lip as I looked at him. The fact that he didn't want me back annoyed me but hurt me more.

I took a deep breath as the doctor walked in. She smiled when her eyes fell on Luthando with Ocean.

"Looks like my patient is happy." She said making Luthando look at her. I didn't miss the way she looked at him. Of course she was

going to stare, he looked like he had just fallen from heaven. His beared was perfectly shaped and he had a cute low fade. His muscles were sticking out. His black short sleeved T-shirt exposed his tattoos on his arms. I couldn't help my eyes which went straight to his zip. I wasn't the only one who noticed the dick print. The doctor did too.

She cleared her throat then walked towards Ocean.

"The results are back."

"What's wrong with her?" I asked standing besides her.

"She has metastasis as suspected and we fear it may have spread so much and that it's very aggressive." I stared at her. All the happiness I had a few seconds ago had just disappeared.

14

[LATOYA]

I absentmindedly undressed. My mind was just mushy and numb. I forced my legs to move. Getting under the shower I opened the cold tap and water soon hit my body. I stood there and let the water wash me. I could feel the warmth of my tears even with the cold water. My legs felt so weak. I felt so weak. It was as if I was just dead because I wasn't living. I slowly let my weak knees win and I sank to the floor. I hugged my knees with my head between my legs. Today was another day. A day that had just passed and everything was still the same. Ocean was still in hospital. She still had the cancer. She still was weak. She didn't laugh or smile more often anymore. She still had the oxygen mask helping her breath. Nothing had changed though it had been a week. She was still dying and I was just there

watching. It was like movie. My daughter's life was like movie. Slowly it played and it never stopped. My body slowly fell numb. The water was slowly numbing my body and I couldn't seem to be able to stand up and close the tap. With my eyes closed, I slowly fell into the darkness.

I could hear his voice as he cursed. My brain slowly regained touch with reality as he picked me up. I opened my eyes slowly as he placed me on the bed immediately covering me with a blanket.

"Dammit do you want to kill yourself now!" He said calmly. I could see he was frustrated. I closed my eyes. I wanted to sleep and never wake up. My body still was numb.

"My daughter is dying.." I whispered with my eyes closed.

"She's not.. Babe..—"

"She's dying and there's... Nothing.. Nothing I'm doing." There was silence. He knew too. She was dying. I opened my eyes then looked at him.

"You said you would do anything for her.. Why can't you save her?" I asked. My voice came off as a whisper. I looked at him waiting for him to answer me. I could still hear the doctor's voice when she told us that the cancer had spread to her brain, liver, bones and adrenal glands from her lungs. I could still hear her voice when told us that they were going to do a chemotherapy just to slow the growth and reduce the symptoms. At stage 4 there wasn't nothing they could really do. Nothing was as painful as hearing someone telling you that the baby you carried for full 9 months was going to die in a few months. Nothing was as painful as waking up each and every morning to only realize the

nightmare still continued.

I looked at him waiting for an answer. I was hurting so bad, it felt as if I was drowning but no one was able to save me. He wiped away my tears gently. He wasn't going to answer me, I knew. I had a new car in my garage, it had arrived a few days ago. I had ordered it a while ago. It was parked in my garage. It couldn't save my daughter. It could never save my daughter. I had the new house I had recently bought. I hadn't told anyone yet but it couldn't do nothing for me. It couldn't save my daughter. I had the perfect job. The perfect life. I had a lot of money in my account but all of it was just a joke to my daughter's life. Nothing could save her. Not my car. Not my house. Not the millions I had. Not my job. Nothing could save her.

I was more than willing to pay any doctor the amount they wanted but still.. Still.. She was dying. I closed my eyes then let out a sob. Luthando held me in his arms as I cried.

"Why!" I cried. "Why..!Why!"

He didn't say anything but just held me tightly. No one could understand what I was going through.

I raised my head from his chest after a while then kissed him. Hard. I wanted to forget. Just for a little while I wanted to forget everything.

"Toots.." He said freeing his lips from mine. I looked at him as tears filled my eyes.

"Make me forget.. Please.."

"Toots you..—"

"Make me forget.. Please make me forget." I whispered then kissed him again. This time he didn't push me away. He held my

waist as I grinded on him. The kiss wasn't hungry or full of lust or wanting, no. It was full of pain. Of "I want you to have me so that I forget"

I pulled away from the kiss then pushed him so that he was now lying on the bed. I hastily with shaky hands struggled with his belt. When I finally loosened it I unbuttoned his pants then unzipped the zip. I didn't take much time freeing his him from the boxers. He was hard. He groaned as I took him in my hands. He felt so soft yet hard. I pulled the small blanket from my body the straddled.

"Toots you..." His speech was cut short as I sunk into his length. I took in the pain. I wasn't wet yet but I didn't stop. I wanted the physical pain so much. I took all of him in. The sharp pain was much bearable than the emotional pain I was going through. He held my waist as I started moving. I was grinding on him hard, taking him deeper and deeper. I felt the pleasure kick in making the pain much more sweet to take in. I put my hands on his chest as I increased my pace. The room was filled with my moans and his groans. I could feel him hitting my sweet spot. After a while I began to build up slowly as I grinded harder. I closed my eyes tightly as my body stiffened. I buried my head on his neck coming all around him over and over again. He squeezed my waist then he let go moaning my name.

I lay still on top of him panting. His arms were wrapped around me. I don't know for how long we just lay there in silence. I felt a tear escape then he squeezed me a bit.

"I spoke to a friend's friend. He is a doctor and he's based in China. I managed to explain to him Ocean's condition. He will be

flying in, in a few days to come."

I raised my head from his chest then looked at him.

"Is he going to save our baby?"

"We can hope.." He said with slight smile. He too looked drained.

I chuckled tearfully. Ocean's condition wasn't only affecting me.

"I trust you.." I whispered. Just then I heard a violent knock on the door. I lay still as my body tensed. Who could it be? I had asked for an immediate leave at work but somehow I knew either way Miguel was going to have me fired but quite frankly I didn't care.

Luthando pulled me aside then stood up fixing his pants. He practically was staying with me now and I was more than glad. Each day was unbearable to go through but each day I had him and it felt better. I wasn't alone. I got off bed then walked to the bathroom. I took my towel then quickly wiped myself. Luthando had forced me to leave the hospital so that I shower though I did not want to. I had left Ocean with Latisher and Latifar together with security. I didn't want Miguel anywhere near my family but somehow I wasn't that much cautious of him. Luthando was here.

Walking out of the bathroom I walked to my closet then quickly dressed in my tights with an oversized T-shirt. After putting on my sneakers I walked out. Luthando was back and he looked annoyed.

"Who was it?"

"Your bipolar boyfriend."

I paused and looked at him.

"Don't worry. I took care of him."

"He is gone?"

"Yeah.. He won't bother you or our family if he knows what's good for him."

I sighed. "I'm surprised they didn't send him to the loony bin." Luthando laughed as he made me sit down in front of the mirror then took my hairband from me. I looked 10 years older but that moment I felt better. Hope had sparkled in me. I had faith in Luthando's friend's friend. I had faith that he was going to save my daughter.

"I will send him there if you want.. Just say the word." I smiled looking at him through the mirror as he tried to tie my thick Afro into a bun.

By the time he was done my neck was even painful but at least my hair was fixed though it didn't look that much pleasing.

"Can we go now?" I asked standing up.

"Yeah.." We walked out but the moment we stepped into the sitting room we were faced with Miguel with a gun.

"Wow.. Isn't this cosy?"

Luthando laughed. "You can't be serious. So you came back?"

"If I were you I would —"

"Mlungu I'm about to punch you into coma. You are testing me. Where the fuck did you get him?" I sighed getting tired.

"Thando I just want to go to the hospital to my daughter. It's past seven now. Latisher and Latifar have been there for a while. They are probably hungry, they need to eat their dinner."

Miguel looked at me. "Baby I love you. You don't need him." He said.

I walked to the couch then sat down. It was going to be a long

night.

[NOMPUMELELO]

I held my breath as Janine walked out from the changing room. Her dress was beautiful but with the way it hugged her wide burst figure, it made it all perfect. She looked so beautiful.

"Say something!" She urged making me walk towards her.

"You look beautiful."

"Are you sure? It's a little bit tight."

"My darling Janine! My my my!" Derrek said standing besides me.

"That dress.. Is beautiful. You.. You are beautiful."

She smiled nervously. "Turn." I said prompting her to look at herself on the mirror. She slowly turned then gasped out loud. The look on her face was priceless. Tears fell from her eyes as she stared at herself.

"I look beautiful.." She whispered making me laugh.

"Because you are.."

She wiped her tears clumsily moving away from the mirror.

"We look beautiful Janine. This wedding is going to be the best wedding ever." I said as I sat on the couch with my own dress. Derrek had called us earlier in the morning informing us that our dresses were done. The dresses were beautiful as I had suspected.

"Everything is almost ready." Derrek chipped in. "This wedding will definitely be off the hook."

"You know I haven't spoken to King yet."

"Yeah but that doesn't mean the wedding is not happening. We

talked about this. We are not going to let some unknown floozy called Motlatsi or Gina get between us and our men. I don't care if I sound like one of those housewives but Janine we deserve to be happy. Don't you think it's stupid for us to just break off things because of some other women? I'm not saying we need to entertain lies and cheating but really? Breaking off things because of another woman? A woman he is not even seeing? King is your man. Yours alone. Don't let that bitch win."

"But they are married."

"Then why are you still here?" Derrek asked. "Moghel you should be there telling him to divorce her. If that child is really his, he can always stay with the mom."

"I don't know.." Janine said sighing.

"Haike girl then I don't know. They are probably jumping him right now. Monna wa tsamaya whilst you are sulking over petty issues."

She chuckled. "Derrek it's a little bit tight." She said ignoring me.

"We can fix it but overall are you happy with it?"

"Yes. I love it."

I stood up when my phone started ringing. I answered moving away from them.

"Hello?"

"Nompumelelo.." I knew the voice. I closed my eyes tightly hoping that it was all a dream. "Are you there?"

I cleared my throat. The air was suddenly too hot for my skin that I started fanning myself. "Who's this?" I asked trying to play dumb.

"It's Lungile.. Are you busy right now? I want to see you."

"Ummh yeah.. I am trying in my wedding dress."

"That's nice. Where are you?"

"Uhh.. Lungile I don't think this is a good idea. What happened last time was a mistake. I love Nicholas and we are getting married." I heard him chuckle making my palms got wet.

"I know all that and I respect you for that. I'm at Palazzo hotel. Room number 10. I'm going to wait for an hour." He said then hung up. I swallowed as I stared at my phone. Walking back to where Janine was with Derrek my mind was racing. I loved Nick and he loved me too. I couldn't do this to him. Yes he had cheat with some girl called Motlatsi but that gave me no right to hurt him with his friend.

"Lelo what do you think about this flowers?" Derrek said showing me a picture of some white roses with a bit of purple and red.

"They are beautiful.. Uhh I have to get going. There's crisis at work. If there's anything else you want discuss, hit it up with Janny.. I will call her." I said already taking off the dress. I didn't care if Derrek was looking or not, all I knew is that I had to leave. It was getting late. Around seven I had to be home with Nick. I quickly dressed back into my short white floral dress then my heels. Walking out Janine was after me.

"Lelo wait!" She called out making me turn and look at her.

"Yeah?"

"I was thinking we invite Toya to our wedding though—"

"I did. She's my maid of honour." I said smiling.

"Isn't the crazy pregnant girl part of the bridesmaids team?"

"Nikiwe will just have to deal. It's not our fault Luthando loves

Latoya not her."

She laughed. "I smell drama."

"Look I have to get going. I will call ok?"

"Yeah.." I quickly turned then rushed to my car.

My mind was all over the place as I started driving to the hotel. A lot of thoughts were filling my mind though I bluntly ignored them. After a while my car was parked in front of the hotel. I took a deep breath then freed my weave. I took out my mirror from my handbag and fixed the weave.

Stop this. Start the car and leave. The voice in my head screamed as I stepped out of the car. Locking my car I walked straight to the entrance. I felt as if everyone knew what I was doing. That I was nothing but a cheating partner.

Getting to his room number I stood there. I wanted to turn back that moment and walk away but I didn't, I couldn't. I don't know why but I couldn't. I found myself knocking softly on his door. He opened the door after a while. He was only wearing sweatpants. When I said he was greatly built, I meant really greatly built. He was so buff and huge making me look tiny before him. Even in heels he still looked taller than me.

"Hey.. You are here.." He said as his eyes skimmed my body. He smiled then opened the door more wider. "Come in." I took a deep breath and stepped inside.

"Lungile I.. —" I said turning to look at him but was cut short when he covered my lips with his. He smelt as if he had just gotten from the shower. He picked me up making me wrap my legs around him. I let him work my mouth with his tounge as he walked with me to the bed.

15

[JANINE]

I took a deep breath as I stood by his door. I think I would have loved it was in the afternoon because then if he rejected me I would then go to work. I could feel my legs shaking as I stood in front of his hotel room. I couldn't help but to think that maybe he was with another woman but still I felt as if I was selling myself too short. King had lied to me. He didn't respect our relationship to the point of keeping information like his marriage from me. Information like his son. It was as if we kept on going in circles repeatedly. I hadn't told anyone yet from my family. I knew some relatives were just there waiting for that moment where they would say "I knew it!" I took a deep breath then knocked on his door. He opened after a while and he looked surprised to see me.

"Babe?"

"Hey.."

"You are here.."

I smiled nervously then nodded. Somehow it felt right, my heart settled as I looked at him. His beard had grown and it had covered his handsome face. His hair was another story. It had also grown. "You look like something." I whispered making him laugh.

"I'm happy you are here. My mom told me not force you to be with me. She said and I quote "if she loves you then she will come back" I was so scared I had lost you."

I shrugged then smiled. "I love you."

"I love you more. I was going to tell you I swear.. Just that I was hoping that the divorce would have been finalised by now."

"Do you really have her sex tape and does she want to destroy your company?"

"Yes. I didn't lie about that. Our divorce is still being finalised. The judge gave us some months to think about our decision that's why I was still married to her."

"But she said you—"

"She lied to get to you. Babe trust me.. I'm done with that woman. I was always done with her but at this stage I can't even stand her face. She reminds of Pablo."

"And Liam?"

"That's her son with Miguel."

"Your brother?"

"Yes but she denies it and refuses that I do paternity tests."

"So you don't have a child?"

"No. I want my first child to be with you." I felt my face burn. I looked around and I was still outside his hotel room. He took my hand then led me inside.

"Baby I'm really sorry. I know this brings doubts and second thoughts about us but please don't give up on us. I'm really trying to get my life in order but I don't want to lose you. I don't want to ever lose you like before."

I sighed. The only problem was the the lying and the constant secrets. The constant lies. The constant secrets. They really made it hard for me.

"I don't like secrets nor lies."

"I'm sorry."

"Is there anything else I need to know? I once asked you this question and you told me there was nothing so I'm going to ask you again hoping that you will tell me the truth. Is there anything else you are keeping from me?"

He smiled. "Yes." He then walked away. Coming back he was holding a necklace. A sparkling diamond necklace.

"I wanted to give you on our dinner night." He said holding it before me. It was so beautiful.

"It's so beautiful.." I muttered making him smile.

"Turn.." I turned and let him put it on me. It felt so heavy yet so delicate on me.

"You look lovely.." He whispered as I looked at myself on the mirror. He let go of me when a knock erupted from the door. I sat on the bed as I caressed the necklace. Some young lady soon walked in holding what looked like his dinner. She gave me a slight smile before walking out.

"I hope you are hungry baby.." King said closing the door and walking back towards me.

"My dress is done."

"Really?"

"Yes and it's beautiful."

"I can't wait to see it.."

"Well what I—" I stopped talking due to the knock that was the door. I looked at him as he walked towards the door looking annoyed. The moment he opened the door I heard a child scream "Daddy." I quickly stood up then walked to the door but only to be met by some white lady and some kid who was now in King's arms.

The lady laughed. "Damn and here I thought it was someone better."

"Gina!" He reprimanded but she smirked looking at me. She was exactly what I had in mind. She was beautiful and tall.

"What? It's not my fault you definitely have no taste. I can't believe this is my competition."

I chuckled shaking my head. "I think I'm honoured to announce that there is no competition." I said calmly. Somehow she might have been pretty and tall but she didn't intimidate me. Not even one bit. She was acting exactly like how pathetic ex wives would. My eyes fell on the kid who was still in King's arms then back at her.

"I think you are right. There's definitely no competition.. You look like an elephant. You should really work on that weight. You look disgusting."

"Gina! You will respect my wife. Do you understand?"

"Ok.." She said smiling. "Ok.. Since we are practically going to be sharing him we might..—"

"You need help. Janine won't be sharing me with anyone because you and I getting a divorce." She laughed.

"We shall see about that.. I came to drop off our son. He missed you. I'm not exactly sure if I trust this elephant with—"

"I really didn't want things to get like this but.." I said stepping in front of her and giving her one hell of a punch that led her straight to the floor.

"I think we need to put up some rules. Rule number 1.. You shall respect me as King's wife and only wife. Rule number 2.. Make sure I never set my eyes on your pathetic face with 100 shades

of foundation and rule number 3.. Never ever.. I mean ever refer to your bastard son as my husband's son. Are we clear?" I said looking at her as she groaned from the floor.

"Fuck.. My tooth."

"Next time it will not only be your tooth, it will be your life."

She stood up slowly. Her other eye was now closed and she was bleeding from the nose and mouth.

"You.. Ahhh!" She moanes out of agony stumbling back.

"Well.. Welcome to SA.. I'm sure you will have lovely stay here in the country." I said smiling then walked back in the hotel room already getting naked. I filled the bathtub then stood in front of the huge mirror.

"Your are beautiful with your weight. You are beautiful with your skin tone. You are beautiful with your figure. You are beautiful with who you are. You are beautiful with the stretch marks. You are Janine and you are beautiful and worth it." I said smiling.

"And you are baby.." King said coming from behind me. He wrapped his arms around me then kissed my throat.

"Kingsley Tejero.." I said looking at him through the mirror.

"Baby I'm really sorry about Gina. I didn't even know she was coming."

I turned then looked at him. "I was not joking when I said next time I would really kill her. Ke serious. Ga ke tsameke. Don't you ever look at me and think I'm weak. I will sit on you ene o tla swa. I don't give a fuck. I see your family ke di tsenwa fela mara heeei! You will not be crazy with me. Wa nyela. I'm giving you two weeks, only two weeks to put your shit together or else I will call someone from the taxi rank and otlo go nyisa. Nyi nyi nyi." I said

with a straight face.

"Is my life being threatened?"

"I don't know. I'm bathing." I said walking to the bathtub. Getting inside the water felt so good on my skin. He quickly undressed then got inside the tub behind me.

"Ke a go rata.. Letato.. Laka." He said slowly making me laugh.

"You sound weird but I love you too and that's why I'm going to call ubra Jabulani from itaxi rank if you hurt me."

He chuckled then kissed my neck. "I'm not perfect. I'm human and I'm bound to make mistakes too but I promise you baby.. I will never hurt you on purpose. I love you so much to watch you hurt because of me but if I ever hurt you.. Feel free to call..

Ummh bra Jebullane from the taxi rank?" I rested my head on his chest.

"Yes.. I will have to call bra Jabulani because he is nice but ubra Mazibuku.. That one wa nyisa straight. He will tie you to his taxi then drive around the taxi rank with you till you die."

King laughed before he started massaging my breast. "I'm not that worried.. I have a john cena on my side. You will show them right baby?" I laughing rolling my eyes.

"Nna I'm scared too so I'm going to leave you while Bra Mazibuku sorts you out. Mara don't worry wena.. I will say a very good funeral speech. And gape mona rena le clientele life. O ska warra, you meet up with them then you start with your funeral cover or maybe wena o wa asupol?" He laughed.

"I'm just trying to help you baby.." I said softly.

"I love you.." He whispered softly squeezing my breast a little harder. I moaned. "And I missed you. I was so scared.. I feel so

complete right now with you. Please don't ever leave me.

Promise me you won't ever leave me."

I turned then kneeled looking at him ignoring the water that was splashing on the floor.

"I won't leave as long as you know gore bra Jabulani and bra Mazibuku will always be there." He smiled then wrapped his arms around my waist resting his head on my breast.

"I don't care. If I die then I die." I blinked away my tears as I wrapped my arms around his head pressing him on my breast. Somehow everything felt right. Our love felt so right.

[NOMPUMELELO]

"Hey.. I have been waiting for you. I was starting to get really worried." Nick said hugging me. I smiled pushing him back a bit.

"I know and I'm sorry just that I couldn't seem to get over my gown."

He smiled. "It's done?"

"Yeah.."

"3 weeks to go and we will officially be husband and wife. I'm so excited baby.. I can't wait."

"Me too.."

"Anyways I cooked since you were not here." He said leading me to the kitchen.

"I know it's not that good but it's eatable." He said as I sat on the kitchen stool. He took my plate from the microwave then hand it to me. I quickly ate, I was so famished. All along he was just smiling.

"What?" I asked as I chewed my last spoon of the vegetable

lasagna. He hadn't cooked it and I was 100% sure.

"When last did you eat today?"

"In the morning. Today was hectic."

"Well I can run us a bath then help you relax.." He said getting behind me. I stood up as soon as he started massaging me.

"I could really use a bath but I think a shower will do. I just want to sleep. I was dealing with a tiresome artist today. All the up and down.. My feet even hurt." He smiled then fixed my weave.

"Ok.. I will clear this up and I will join you in a moment." I nodded then pecked his lips and walked out to our bedroom. I quickly undressed then stuffed my clothes in my other bag that I didn't use that much. Getting under the shower I scrubbed my body really hard. I was trying to wash away the guilty that was consuming me. How could I just cheat like that?

Lungile was different today. He did things I never thought I would ever do. Had me reeling in pain and pleasure at the same time. I never knew that ice blocks could bring so much pleasure till today. My wrist were a bit bruised because he had tied me with a rope. I got out of the shower after a while with a towel wrapped around my body. I held my breath as I looked at roses that were on the floor and the bed together with the candles which were lit. Tears filled my eyes as I stared at the beautiful sight that was before me. A song was softly playing at the background. I held on to my fluffy towel as I stared at the man I loved. Why was it so easy for me to hurt him with someone who I didn't even know? I bit my lower lip as a tear fell.

"It's our anniversary today. Today marks the day we made it official. When I first met you I never thought that today we would

be here getting married. I never thought I would be standing here before you. I know I have hurt you so bad and I would like to make it up to you. I know that you probably don't trust me and I understand but I want to make a vow to never ever hurt you like that. I love you so much.." He said then held my hands.

"You are so beautiful.. I love you."

I swallowed hard. "I love you too.." He wrapped his arms around me then kissed me. He undid my towel then let it fall.

"You are so beautiful. " he whispered kissing my neck. I couldn't say no to him.

Opening my eyes I was alone on the bed and I felt beyond tired. Nick had went all night. If there was a theory that said you couldn't have sex with two guys in one day, last night it had proved to be a lie. Nick made love to me all night, he was soft and loving. He kissed every part of my body, caressed every corner I never knew. I sat upright rubbing my eyes.

"Hey babe.." He said walking out of the bathroom all wet with a towel wrapped around his waist.

"Hey.. What time is it? I have to get to work." I said getting off bed.

"You still have time. Today I'm going for golf with Lungile. He has some business associates he wants me to meet."

"Ohh.." I said walking to the bathroom.

"Yeah.." I took my toothbrush then applied toothpaste. The only question that was buzzing in my head was exactly how did Lungile do it? How could he smile with someone who his wife he was fucking?

After brushing my teeth I stepped under the shower.

By the time I was done with my shower Nick was already done dressing.

"I will call you ok?" He said kissing my cheek. "And I haven't forgotten about the dinner with your family. I will be home much earlier today. I love you."

I smiled then kissed his lips. "I love you too." I watched him as he walked out. I quickly changed into my office wear then left. I couldn't stand the house. I needed to get to work and keep busy. Getting at the office Tshidi had already arrived.

"Do you ever sleep?" I asked as I settled on my desk. She laughed.

"Yeah.. So....."

And like that the day started. I pushed every other thought at the back of my mind and focused on work. I had managed to get hold of Dakota but he wasn't home. He was in Jamaica though he had promised to get hold of me as soon as he went back home.

Around lunch time I had signed two art pieces for the gallery. I decided to call Latoya and ask how far she was with her dress. Her phone rang unanswered for a while.

"Lelo.." She answered. I could easily detect the sadness that was in her voice and it unsettled me.

"Hey, how are you?"

"I'm fine. How's the wedding coming?"

"Ok. I wanted to ask how far you are with your dress." She cleared her throat.

"The designer is almost done I think. I will call her and check."

"Ok.." There was silence for a while. I was dying to know the

reason behind her sad voice. As I opened mouth to ask I heard a voice at the background calling her and I knew that voice. It was Luthando.

"Ummh Lelo I have to go. We will talk." She said then hung up not giving me a chance to respond.

I immediately decided to call Nikiwe. She didn't take time to answer.

"Girl!" She said sounding cheerful.

"Hey.. Is he back yet?" I asked.

"No but it's ok. My parents are meeting his uncles today. Dad says he has to pay Lobola."

"What?"

16

[NIKIWE]

I ignored my sister as she paced around the room. She looked frustrated but I really didn't care. My eyes were focused on the mirror. I looked rather beautiful. It was already two weeks till Lelo's wedding and I had to start upgrading myself.

"Nikiwe I just don't understand.. I said I would take you back to school. I'm willing to pay your fees. I will support this babies. Why can't you just leave him!" She didn't understand. No one understood just how much I loved Luthando.

I had met Luthando the days I still worked at D restaurant. He had come with his friend, CJ. I had been having a bad day, Mxolisi, my boyfriend by then had been accusing me of cheating as always. Somehow I knew between him and I, he was the

cheating one.

I had been their waiter and due to my absent mind I had given them wrong orders. For a while there I had expected him to shout but he had just laughed about it. He didn't let me return the wrong order but he just ate though CJ wasn't happy about it. Just from the start CJ never really liked me.

When I left work I was surprised to find Luthando waiting for me outside the restaurant. Yes, I may have loved Mxolisi but God knew just how much Luthando was hot. He was maybe even beyond hot. He had the looks and the body. When he offered to drop me off I didn't need to think twice about saying yes.

Somehow at the back of my mind I knew he had a girlfriend but I didn't ask. I didn't want to come up as a forward person. It was dark and late at night and I needed a lift so I said yes, I had convinced myself that, that was the reason I had said yes but my heart knew otherwise. Even when he asked for my number, I gave myself a stupid excuse of I was giving it to him because he had helped me.

Getting home that night, to the room I shared with Mxolisi he beat me. I never thought one day I was going to be one of those people who got beaten by their boyfriends. Mxolisi had beat me because I now had people dropping me off with fancy cars. He had accused me of being a whore. I had run out of the room at hillbrow at night not caring if thugs and rapist were out there roaming around. I feared Mxolisi was going to kill me. Getting outside the flats that's when my phone started ringing.

Answering the phone I was surprised to hear Luthando's voice. I don't know why it was so easy to break when I heard his voice.

And that's when it started. He picked me up then drove with me at his beautiful house. It was beyond beautiful I won't lie. A week later I was staying in a good flat which Luthando was paying for. That same week later, Mxolisi had been mugged and was well beaten. I didn't care because somehow the feelings I had for him had evaporated and as much as it was stupid of me, I loved Luthando.

He was always there and he made me so happy. I had quit my job at the restaurant then started focusing on school. I spent most of the time at his house than the flat he was renting for me. It didn't take me much time to realize it was all about sex. Signs had always been there from the very start that he didn't love me. Some beautiful lady was his wallpaper. He even had a picture frame of her in his room. I had thought that maybe overtime he would love but he didn't. To him I was his sex toy, nothing but a sex slave. Five months into the relationship things started falling apart. He never called nor answered my calls like he used to. I tried every trick in the book to get him to start paying attention to me but it was like I was losing him. The day he left for New York I knew I had lost him. I didn't know he went to New York till late at night I called Puleng, CJ's girlfriend, asking about his whereabouts. I had been waiting for him with my new lingerie set. CJ had been too generous with information. He didn't like me. I knew he had went after her. She stayed in New York. I knew because I had stalked her on social media. There was nothing that hurt more than the fact that she was so beautiful. I knew I was going to lose him to her or I had already lost him. Finding out about my pregnancy that following day, I just knew I

wasn't going to walk out from our relationship. When he left for New York, his sister arrived. She had been surprised to find me in her brother's house but we clicked from the start. My heart calmed down when I found out that she hated his ex girlfriend. Apparently she had once been married to a 48 year old man for money. Julie told me not to worry because with the pregnancy he was going to stay.

When Luthando came back, I knew I had completely lost him. Just the way he looked at me I knew his heart never belonged with me. Him breaking up with me was the hardest pill I had to swallow. He didn't want me anymore and I was pregnant. I could already see my father disappointed. They had sent me to Johannesburg for school but here I was getting pregnant. I cried for so many nights, crying for a man who never loved me but I loved dearly. One day I just woke up determined to get my man back. I was going to get him come rain, come thunder. By fire by force. I took a taxi to his house but arriving there he wasn't there. I took that as an opportunity and wore my sexy set. When I had his car I had been nervous, scared and excited at the same time. Luthando was so confusing so I hoped we would make up. He still didn't know about the pregnancy. I kept reminding myself that I was fighting for the man I loved. Hoping to surprise him I had been the one who got surprised. He had brought her to his house with a baby. I didn't need to be told twice that it was his baby. I could never forget the way he had embarrassed me in front of her. That moment I knew he loved her. The way he looked at her, the way he spoke to her was just different from the way he looked at me or spoke to me.

I had never been hurt to that stage in my life. It was as if my whole life had just ended. Looking at her I realized how much I resented her. She hadn't done anything to me but I hated her. I hated her so much for the love they had. Telling her about my pregnancy was to hurt her and I had really hurt her though she had picked herself immediately.

I looked at Matshidiso. She could never understand how much I loved this man. No matter how much he hurt me I still loved him. I still loved him so much. I wasn't sick in the head for loving him. Yes I wanted him to love me only but I had gotten over the fact that it was never going to happen.

"You don't understand.." I said still looking at my reflection on the mirror.

"Then make me!" She screamed making me stand up.

"I love him Matshidiso! I love him! I want him! Why can't anyone understand? Why can't anyone understand that I love him?"

"Because he doesn't love you. He is not here to hold your hand through this pregnancy. He doesn't love you that's why we are failing to understand how you can love someone so much but he doesn't feel the same." I felt tears sting my eyes.

"Then leave me alone.. Why is it wrong for me to love him? Why do I have to be labeled as crazy because I love him? I'm not obsessed with him. I just happen to love him. He might be the wrong person to you but he is perfect to me." I whispered.

"Niki sweetie.. I want to help you.. I love you.. I want to help you.. Do you want to end up miserable?"

"He is marrying me."

"No he is not. His uncles and family are.. Not him. He doesn't

even know that his family is paying his Lobola for him. He won't ever love you. I know there's no business trip. You don't even know where he is."

I smiled taking her hands into mine. "But he will love his kids. See.. Through his kids I will win him over."

"Nikiwe why can't you see? Why can't you see?" She cried.

"You are stressing over nothing. He will be back. He is going to come back to me. His family loves me."

She wiped away her tears shaking her head.

"I wash my hands off you. I tried. I really did but I guess I have to leave you be. You are 27 years old after all." She took her pace then walked out of our room. The room we shared as kids. She could never understand. She could never understand just how much I loved him. I wasn't walking away. Just then my phone started ringing. I took it and answered it.

"Chomi.." Carol said.

"Chomi.. Hey.."

"So guess what?!" She screamed.

"What is it?"

"I found this lady. Apparently she's an apostle and I heard she helps."

"Haii Carol! You have been making me drink thinks for a while now. Making me bath water with stones and pray stupid prayers! He is still not back yet!"

"We can try for the last time."

"No.. They are paying my lobola."

"Mara chomi that doesn't mean anything if he doesn't love you. Have you seen her?"

"I have and I know just how pretty she is!"

"Well I can always call T.K.. You know he can take care of this."

"You want Thando to kill me? You know I told you that he's shady. He has too much money it's not even normal."

"He can never find out it was you."

"No.. She will be here in two weeks and by then I will be Luthando's wife."

"Well.. Ok. But let's try this apostle. Please.."

"Carol..."

"Just one last time.."

[LATOYA]

I sat on the chair with my hand locked with Luthando's. He had suddenly turned into my pillar of strength. I looked at Tyrone hoping he would tell a different story. All my hopes had risen and I had faith. I had faith that he was going to save my baby. I had faith that my baby was going to make it. I had so much faith that I could even smile and eat.

"Ok.. So I looked at her test results.. We can't possibly try surgery because now the cancer has spread. We can try all combinations of treatment but the only issue that is there is that her body might not be able to keep up."

"What are you trying to say?" I asked trying to keep my voice steady.

"Like her doctor had suggested.. We perform chemotherapy only and try to reduce the symptoms or we can try all the treatments like chemo and radiation and stand a chance to lose her in the process."

I swallowed. "So there's no chance she can survive the combination of treatments?"

"She can but with the way the cancer has spread, I don't think we can win the battle but we can buy a few more months. But that's a given if she survives it."

"Is there a guaranteed solution?" Luthando asked making Tyrone look at us sympathetically.

"No. Stage 4 cancer is always hard to deal with. Plus we caught it too late. The cancer cells have spread to the lining around her lungs and there's excess fluid there. The fact that it has now spread also to her brain makes the whole situation hard. At this stage.. There isn't much we can do. She might be in pain though and the only thing the doctors can do is manage the pain and they symptoms together with it's growth."

"So how long does she have?" I stood up not wanting to hear my daughter's death sentence. It was too painful for me to sit there and listen to how my daughter's life was finished. It was too painful to know she didn't have much time. I walked to the couch on the waiting area and sat down crying. I couldn't bring myself to accept that it was over just like that. That there was nothing I could do than just watch her die. After a while I felt Luthando's arms around me.

"Why!" I cried loudly breaking down. I had lost the battle, I had lost and it was painful. I could take anything else but on my daughter. I could die in her place. I could die for her. I felt myself falling in a dark tunnel as my heart repeatedly got stabbed with a sharp knife over and over again. The pain was too painful to deal with, it was too painful to bear. I couldn't breathe because it kept

choking me. It wrapped itself around me and squeezed me. It wasn't that pain that got better with time. It didn't get better, it never did. It always kept getting worse every time reality kicked in.

17

[LATOYA]

Growing up all I knew was that I had to survive. Maturing was something that had happened me when I was only 10. When my parents passed on I immediately stepped into the role of being a parent to my siblings. Through every battle, through every storm that came into my way I always came out alive for my siblings. I knew I was the parent and I knew what was expected of me even though no one taught me. Ocean came when I needed her and what I had for her was pure unconditional love. It was that love that I had never experienced before. The kind of love I had to learn to deal with because it was so delicate. So fragile. I had given birth to her as a premature baby but she still made it through. Now today here I was, here I stood and I watched her painfully die. The doctors had been hinting we stop the chemotherapy and relief her of the pain. It was like they didn't care at all. They didn't even care one bit about my child that they had the audacity to ask me to register her as a organ donor. I looked at myself on the mirror. My hair had shrunken. I had eye bags under my eyes. I had lost weight. I took a deep breath stepping away from the mirror. The dress for Lelo's wedding had arrived and it was beautiful but just not beautiful on me. The waist was too loose. The dress was supposed to hug my figure

but it looked like a sack on me. The figure was gone. I didn't even fit in my clothes anymore except for the dresses but I didn't care. Luthando walked in after a while. All along I had been staring at the wall in silence drowning in my own thoughts. I don't know how he still managed to look so handsome and in great shape. He didn't look like a man who was about to lose his daughter to cancer. He looked like he had just walked out of a men's magazine. I looked down on my fingers wondering how many more days my baby had.

"You look pretty.." He said sitting besides me and taking my hand. I tried smiling then looked at him.

"I look 100.."

"Who told you that? You look so beautiful baby.."

I chuckled as tears fell. "I'm going for Lelo and Janine's wedding in a few days. I wish I didn't have to go because I don't want to leave my baby but I promised her I would be there." I said wiping my tears away.

"You don't have to go if you don't want to. I'm sure she will understand." I shook my head slightly.

"No. I won't do that to her." I swallowed then forced a smile.

"How's your arm?"

"I'm fine. I have been through worse." I smiled. Miguel had shot him but that didn't mean anything to Luthando. It didn't mean anything especially now that Miguel was in a nutfarm.

"I'm sorry.."

"Hey.." He said pulling me unto his lap. I had lost all weight it wasn't hard for him to just shift me around like a leaf.

"It's not your fault. He is crazy and he needs help and he is

getting it." Luthando said caressing my face gently. "I don't want you worrying about unnecessary things."

I rubbed my eyes trying not to cry but my tears still fell. "You are right." I whispered. "I should be thinking about my daughter's death not this.."

I could see the pain reflecting in his eyes before he sighed and held me tightly. "Toots I'm so sorry.." He apologized but I couldn't understand why he was apologizing, he hadn't done anything wrong.

"Why are you —"

"I know I'm failing to save our daughter and.. —"

"Shhhhh.." I said putting my finger on his lips. "Remember when you talked about things only God can change?" He nodded. "Not that I believe in God anymore but.. Sometimes there's just nothing we can do about the unavertible. You did your best. I don't even hate you and I'm sure she doesn't too. I know you love her like I do.. But.." I took a deep breath trying to keep calm. "But.. I guess she was only a season. You know sometimes people.. We are like seasons. We are only for a certain period of time to teach someone somewhere something. We tried our best and I love you." I said with tears in my eyes. Just the way he looked at me made me bury my head on his shoulder blade and cry. Crying had now fully adopted to be my home. Crying was all I ever did. It was as if my tears could save my baby but I knew crying was just crying. I felt a slight pain in my abdomen which made me wince. The pain slowly grew as I sat still in Luthando's arms. I remained in his arms because in his arms was where I found solace.

"Toots..?" Luthando whispered softly making me stand up immediately.

"Shit!" I heard him curse. I looked at him then my eyes automatically went down to where he was looking. His lap was bloody. I quickly looked at my back... There was a blood stain on the dress.

"The baby.." I muttered.

[NIKIWE]

"Baby.. I don't think this is a good idea." Mom said rubbing my stomach. "I don't think this man is the right one for you. I just have a bad feeling on him."

"That's because you don't know him. You will love him when you get to know him."

"I'm just worried. I wish we can wait till he returns from wherever you say he is."

"He is on a business trip. He will be back soon enough. I can't wait till you meet him." She stood up then sighed.

"Ok.. I hope everything goes well. I will keep praying for you."

"I love you.." I said standing up too. She smiled then hugged me before walking out. As soon as she walked out my phone started ringing.

"Carol.." I answered.

"Chomi how is it going?"

"We are still preparing." I smiled. "By tomorrow chomi I will be MaMaphoto."

She chuckled. "Chomi I'm happy for you. I can't wait till he starts spoiling you. I heard zulu men like spoiling their wives."

"You know Luthando has always been spoiling me."

"I know.. Anyways I got it."

"You got what?"

"The muti.."

"Carol I don't need it. Being his wife is enough. He will come around I know it.."

"Chomi you think so? You know I love you but this hot man of yours has gone AWOL on you for months now. Where exactly do you think he is? He is probably with her."

"I don't care but what remains is that I'm his wife."

"If you say so.. I hope it doesn't backfire."

"Everything will be fine. After I give birth to the twins I'm going to work hard for a nice body. He will know what he is missing."

"Ok.. Look I will call you tomorrow. I'm going to some party with Prince tonight."

"Ok have fun.." I said then hung up. I was beyond excited about my lobola negotiations and I damn well couldn't wait to rub it on Latoya's face. This was a battle and I wasn't going to be the one to lose.

Yes my father was disappointed in me but then I was always the black sheep of the family. No matter what I did, dad always found fault in it. The only person who saw me as someone better was Luthando and I wasn't going to leave.

Just then my phone started ringing. It was an unknown number. I hesitantly answered.

"Hello?"

"What the fuck am I hearing Nikiwe?" He roared. Excitement, happiness and fear drilled down my veins. My heart was beating

so fast.

"Thando?"

"You are really testing me neh?"

"Babe.. I'm happy you called. I went to the scan. We are having twins."

"We? Who's we?"

"Babe.. Me and you.. Us."

"Askies uthini?" He said. He was angry I could tell or even beyond angry. My heart was beating so fast it was threatening to leap from my chest. Breath Niki.. I whispered to myself.

"Luthando I.. —"

He laughed but I knew it wasn't a care free laugh. The laugh had some edginess in it. It scared me even more.

"You better for your own sake.. You better stop all this shit do you hear me? If I come back and I find out you went ahead with all this shit you are going to regret the reason why your mother didn't abort you. Nxla!" He hung up almost immediately. I stood there not knowing what to do shaking while tears left my eyes.

[NOMPUMELELO]

I closed my eyes tightly as he dropped the candle wax between my breast while rubbing my clit gently. It was all a mixture of pleasure and pain at the same time. My hands were tied tightly on top of my head. He dropped the candle wax on my nipple while sinking his finger deep me. I screamed at the pain of the wax and the pleasure of him circling his finger deep in me. The torture was painfully pleasurable. It drove me to the egde. He went to the next nipple and did the same thing with the wax as

he went deeper with his finger.

I groaned trying to deal with the pain and pleasure at the same time. Everything was just too much.

"Had enough babe?" He whispered in my my ear softly. I bit my lower lip as he went faster and deeper with his finger pushing me off. I came with a loud scream pulling the restraints painfully.

"That's it." He whispered then put the candle away. Quickly he took a condom and rolled it on his length.

He got on the bed then put my legs on my chest. Roughly he slammed into me. I moaned loudly as my body shook. He was still for a moment before he slowly pulled out then slammed right back in me again. I couldn't move, he was holding me immobile as he pressed my legs on my chest. Slowly he thrashed into me hitting my sweet sweet spot.

"Want more baby?" He asked but I couldn't talk. I was all sensation. All so sweet. I wanted to grab something, to sink my nails unto his back but I couldn't do anything but just endure his slow thrusts. He continued going deeper and deeper. I could feel myself building.

"Ohh fuck!" I screamed as I came over and over again. He was now going faster and harder following after me releasing his load in a condom. He pulled out slowly then lay besides me. I was breathing hard trying to calm down. Slowly I straightened my legs then he untied my hands. My wrists were sore.

"Hey.." He muttered softly. "I missed you.."

I took a deep breath before getting off bed. My phone was ringing and it was Nick. I answered walking to the bathroom.

"Babe.."

"Hey.. Your mom is already here. How far are you?"

"Ummh give me an hour.."

"That's what you said an hour ago."

"I'm on my way.."

"Ok.. I love you."

"I love you too.." I hung up then stared at myself on the mirror. I didn't like the person I was turning into. I walked under the shower. After bathing I walked out with a fluffy towel around my body. Lungile was already dressed and he was on his phone.

"I won't be in for a couple of days." He announced as I reached for my clothes which were on the floor.

"Ok.."

I quickly dressed up but by then he was long gone. He wasn't even worried because either way there was no way I was going to come clean to Nicholas.

After dressing up I left the hotel room and went straight to my car. Driving home all I was thinking about was Lungile and my cheating. Nicholas didn't deserve what I was doing. Yes, he may have cheat but that didn't mean I had to do the same. I looked at my wrist as I pulled up in the garage. They were reddish.

"God.." I murmured as I looked for my watch in my handbag. I put bracelets on the other wrist and watch on the other one then stepped out of the car.

Walking inside the house Mom and Nick were sitting by the dinner table eating.

"Mom!" I said as I walked towards her and hugged her.

"Hey honey.."

"Babe.." I said giving Nick a kiss on the cheek.

"Hey.. Your food is in the—"

"Uhh let me go and change first." I said already walking away. I rushed to our room then quickly undressed and stashed the clothes in the bag that had the clothes I was going with to my house.

As I put on comfortable clothes Nick walked in.

"Hey.. How was your day?" I asked smiling.

He just stared at me in silence for a while. "Lelo I know.." I held my breath looking at him.

"What?" I managed.

"I know you were with Lungile." I placed my hand on my mouth as I looked at him. My head was spinning as I ran out of words to say.

"Love.. I can explain.. Look.. It's not what you think.. I know.. God! Please forgive me.. I don't know why I.. —"

"Hey.. Don't cry. One of my colleagues saw you and babe I know you guys are planning my birthday party but you don't have to."

"What?"

"Lungile told me when I called him. You don't have to plan for my birthday.. I just want us to focus on our wedding." He said hugging me tightly. I sighed out of relief as I hugged him back.

"Don't worry about my birthday ok?" I nodded then he pecked my lips gently.

"Now come and eat. Your mom says she cooked your favourite." He said taking my hand and leading us to the door but as he opened the door his eyes fell on my wrist. I tried pulling my hand from his but he held me tightly.

"Lelo what is this?"

"Uhh.." I laughed. "Tshidi bought handcuffs for her man and tried them on me."

"Why.. Are you bruised."

I blinked then smiled. "We then lost the keys. It was a disaster." He chuckled then led us out. "Next time don't be her testing rat." I laughed. "I won't!"

Getting downstairs mom was almost done eating. I sat down as Nick got my plate. Placing it before me I immediately started eating.

Halfway through my meal a knock erupted on the door.

"I will get it." Nick said standing up. Walking away I could feel my mother's eyes drilling holes in my skin.

"Nompumelelo where are you coming from this time of the night?"

"What?"

"Where are you coming from?"

"Ohh.. Lungile and I were trying to plan for Nick's birthday party.

"Lungile?"

"Nick's friend."

"So you meet up with his friends at night?"

"Haibo Ma! What are you trying to say? I swamped the whole day. I could only see him after work."

"Why are you getting defensive?"

"Mom please.."

"Nompumelelo men like Nicholas are hard to find. If you lose him you will regret it my daughter."

I rolled my eyes placing my food aside. "I would never sleep with Lungile!"

"Who said you are?"

"You are indirectly accusing me of sleeping with his friend."

"Are you?"

"Babe it's your package." Nicholas said walking back inside the dining room with a box interrupting my conversation with mom. I smiled taking it from him. Opening it I found a watch and a note. I took the note out.

I think you need it.

I put the note away and took the watch. It was so beautiful and I knew who had bought it for me. I wanted to call him and thank him but rule number 1 was that I never called him while I was with Nick.

"Who bought it for you?" Nick asked.

"Tshidi.. I can't believe it.." I said putting on. Raising my eyes mom was looking at me with the look of "I know."

18

[JANINE]

If somebody had told me Gina was going to turn out to be lil bitch then I could have killed her the first day I met her. She was so adamant on really ruining my relationship. I tried.. Really tried to ignore her after the day I punched her but the damn hoochie really wasn't backing up. I was getting sick and tired of her and I was just waiting for King to push her damn flat ass in the plane together with her bastard child. Matter of fact, I was waiting for King to tell me the divorce had been finalized because I wasn't marrying no man who was already married. Of cause I was lying to myself though I wasn't really sure. The wedding was

tomorrow and here I was, sitting on a my chair with King's hoochie in front of me in my office.

"You better enjoy this while it last." She said making me laugh.

"Are you done?"

"I just came to warn you.."

"I really don't want to throw you out Gina but let me tell you one thing.. If you think you are going to get anything from King since your source of income is dead, you are so wrong. My husband will not support you nor your bastard son."

She laughed throwing her head back. She probably I thought I was joking but what she didn't get was that I was dead serious.

"We shall see about it."

"You really think you..—" she was cut short by my phone ringing. I smiled as I reached it. It was King.

"Baby.." I said answering while looking at Madam Gina.

"Hey.. The divorce has been finalized."

"Your company?"

"She managed to get 10% of the shares and im going to buy her out but baby that doesn't matter.. You and I —"

"I know. You and I are finally free from the wretch. I love you.."

"I love you too babe.. I can't wait to see you tomorrow."

"Me too.. Bye." I said then hung up. I stood up then started packing my things.

"Seems like.. Your divorce has been finalized."

I smirked as her whole facial expression changed. "Bye.." I said opening my office door wide. She scowled at me before walking out. I knew somehow I had won.

Arriving home that day I found my youngest Aunt at home with

Namhla and Lerato together with my two cousins. All in all my bridesmaids were Namhla, Lerato and the two cousins. My aunt was holding a glass dancing though I could see she was drunk. "Guys what did you give her?" I asked as I put my bag down. Namhla laughed.

"Some wine.. She's having fun."

Lerato laughed joining Namhla. "It's the first time.. You know she's Mamfundisi."

"Let me go and change." I quickly walked upstairs and took a very quick shower. Getting back downstairs she was now sitting on the floor still holding her glass.

"Matlhogonolo.. He he!" She laughed. "How do you.. How! How do you go to work! Huh? Tomorrow.. It's your day tomorrow mara.." She said with a slurred tone then laughed.

"You guys how much did she drink?"

Namhla chuckled as I sat besides her.

"She finished the whole bottle. She's celebrating."

I just laughed. Lerato took the bottle of wine which was on the floor then poured in a glass and hand it to me. Somehow I knew with Lerato being in my house I had to keep my purse far away from her. I took the glass and took a sip. Lerato poured for everyone well expect aunty who her glass was still filled.

"The day has finally arrived.. I'm so proud of you and I'm so happy for you. We wish nothing but happiness in your marriage together with love. To Janine!" Namhla said raising her glass. We all clicked our glasses then started drinking. The moment the music resumed playing Lerato and aunty were already up dancing.

"You should be dancing. You should be enjoying this moment." Namhla said looking at Aunty who was dancing put if tune to the song which was playing.

I laughed then sipped on my wine. "I'm good. I don't want to suffer from muscle fatigue."

"You seem happy today. What is it?" She asked.

"Well.. The divorce has finally been finalized. That hoochie bitch is finally out of my way. King and I can finally be happy."

She smiled then stood up and started dancing. I stood up when I heard the intercom ring. I buzzed the person in walking outside with my glass in my hand. I smiled as Lelo's car pulled up besides mine. She stepped out of the car in shorts and a T-shirt, her hair was already fixed.

"Hey.." She said walking towards me with a smile. "Is that wine?"

"Yeah.. Shouldn't you be with.. Your family or friends.. Precisely Luthando's baby mama?"

She laughed shaking her head. "Apparently Luthando's family paid her lobola two days ago so she's practically his wife."

I laughed. "Wow! And where is he?"

She shrugged. "He just disappeared. It's been time."

"I still don't understand why you would make her one of your bridesmaids and make Latoya your Maid of honour. I'm sure they don't even like each other."

"I told Niki to behave. I don't want drama and I know Latoya won't react till she's poked."

"Ok.. If you say so.."

"I'm still sleeping with King's friend." She blurted making me drop my glass in shock.

"You are what?"

She closed her eyes as tears fell. "I keep telling myself to stop but I always find myself back at it again."

I took her hand then dragged her to the her car, away from ears.

"Why?"

"I don't know why Janine. I love Nick so much. He's my life and I would rather die than him leaving me but I just don't know what happens.. Every time his friend calls.. I just submit to him."

"What is it? Is Nick not blessed between the sheets?"

"He is.. He loves me in the best way possible but..." She sighed wiping her tears away.

"Look.. Cut all communication with this friend of his and never talk to him."

"I have tried but he keeps coming back. I'm scared. I don't want to be the way I'm turning."

"Just how good is he?"

She giggled lightly as she leaned on her car. "He.. He is different from Nicholas."

"Different how?"

"He.. He believes that pleasure and pain go hand in hand."

"He whips you?"

"What? No.. He doesn't whip me.. He just.."

"You don't have to explain but Lelo do you realize you are breaking your marriage before it even starts? You need to stop all this!"

"And you think I haven't tried?" She said taking out a cigarette from her pocket and a lighter. She placed the cigarette between her lips then lighted it.

"Maybe if Nicholas would more rough.. Maybe if he would just spank me hard and pull my hair and chock me.." She muttered slowly as she smoked.

"He is very good I won't lie. He takes me to heaven but.. I want him to fuck me hard. To chock me. To spank me. To pull my hair. To try out any other position which is not missionary or me on top. Maybe if he would make time for me."

I sighed shaking my head. "Why can't you tell him then?"

She laughed. "And say what?"

"I don't know.. That you like it rough like the way the friend does it."

"I was ok with it till.. Till his friend started. I don't think I can go on with the wedding. I feel so guilty I can't even breathe. I want to take back everything. I just.." She covered her face crying.

"I really don't understand why you are crying.. Are you crying because you are guilty of cheating and that you are hurting Nicholas along the way or you are crying because you are not going to stop? Is the friend coming tomorrow?"

She nodded as she wiped her tears with a T-shirt.

"Lelo don't lose a diamond while chasing after stones. Nicholas is a very wonderful man. Don't lose him in the name of sex. You know he loves you."

"I don't think I can go ahead with the wedding.. Janine what should I do?"

"Wipe your tears. Call the friend. Break it off and mean it. Focus on your family. Be wise, don't let this get in the way."

I smiled as Namhla approached us.

"Hi.." Namhla said as Lelo forced a smile on.

"Hi.. Ummh Janny we will talk."

"Yeah.. Go and rest." She gave me and Namhla smiles before getting in her car and driving out. I sighed.

"Everything ok?"

"Yeah.."

"Ok.. I hope tomorrow I meet my dzaddy! I'm tired of being single." I laughed at her as we walked to the house.

"You do need a dick in your life."

"I am going to get laid tomorrow.. I need a dick." I just laughed but really my mind was on Lelo.

[NOMPUMELELO]

I wiped my tears away as I drove where the road led me. I didn't know where I was going but all I knew was that I had been driving for the past two hours. I tried to ignore the voice that kept screaming in my head calling me names but it was so persistent. I finally stopped the car by the side of the road and took out my phone with trembling hands. I knew the only way I could get through it was if I told Nick the truth and that was what exactly I was doing. I dialed his number then pressed the phone on my ear. He didn't take much time to answer.

"Baby.."

"Hey.."

"Babe I'm so excited about tomorrow.. After all the waiting we are finally doing this."

"Me too.. I.—"

"Don't stress about anything my love. I'm going to make you the happiest woman on earth."

"I know.. I need to tell you something. I—"

"Hey.. You will tell me tomorrow.. I just want to rest and stay beautiful. I love you baby.."

"I love you too Nick.. I love you so much."

"Now sleep. Tomorrow is going to be a long day."

"Ok." He then hung up. The thing with telling the truth was that it always clogged you. I couldn't tell Nick. I couldn't let him ever find out. I swerved my car then started driving home.

Two hours later I was walking inside the house with my phone ringing. I answered it walking to my bedroom ignoring my mother's eyes. She had waited for me to come back but there was something in her eyes. Disappointment. I looked away totally ignoring her.

"Nikiwe.." I said to the phone.

"Hey.. I just wanted to check on you. I hope your nerves ain't ripping you apart."

I chuckled entering my bedroom and sitting on the bed.

"No I'm good. How's the babies?"

"They are doing ok. They are excited about tomorrow."

"They can't wait for tomorrow or they can't wait for the food?"

She laughed. "Stop.."

"Congratulations by the way.."

"Thank you. I can't believe I'm finally his wife."

I chuckled. "Congratulations to have signed your death sentence. I hope he kills you in a dignified manner."

"Lelo.."

"I'm telling you. The moment he finds out you are good as dead. I hope he won't kill you in a nasty way."

"Look.. I will deal with that once I get to that stage."

"Ok.."

"Yeah.. I have to go. Bye."

"Bye." I lay on my bed tossing my phone away. Niki was the least of my worries. The way she was so obsessed with Luthando was not normal and it wasn't my problem.

"Lelo baby.." Mom's voice said. I raised my head and she was walking towards me. After sitting besides me she took my hand into hers and gave it a light squeeze.

"I'm so proud of you baby."

I smiled. "Thank you."

"I met your father when I was young. Your father was one forward man. He was forward and overly intelligent." She said with a smile. I never met my father and neither mom or Zuko ever talked about him.

"Mama don't tell me he is coming for my wedding after all this years!" I said standing up. I was beginning to get angry.

"No sweety.. He's not coming. Sit." I sat down as I sighed out of relief.

"He was short and handsome and intelligent. I was only 14 by then. He used to come to the village during holidays to visit his mother's uncle but initially he stayed in KZN. At first I rejected him. Mazwi had a girlfriend and I didn't want to be his side."

"Mazwi? That is his name?" Mom nodded blinking away her tears.

"He.. He was so smart. He used to send me letters. I still have some of them. He managed to get me to agree. Our relationship was shaky because of the distance but we still managed to pull

through. When I was 18, I got pregnant with your brother. Mazwi was happy so his parents helped him pay Lobola for me. By then he was already in varsity in here.

"I stayed with his family in KZN. They never liked me expect for his grandmother. I stayed through the emotional abuse. Mazwi used to visit every once in each year. During December he would come back and stay with me. Five years later we made you. Mazwi was done with his degree but I couldn't move there with you and your brother because he was still job hunting. So months passed. When your grandmother was lying on her death bed.

"She gave me money. Money she had been saving and told me to pack my bags and take my kids to follow Mazwi. It's like she knew the abuse I was going to encounter with the family so I left. I left as she instructed me. I had never been to any place other than the village. Getting in the bus that day with you as a baby and your brother. I was scared. I had heard terrible stories about Jozi.

"Arriving all I had was Mazwi's number on a small piece of paper. I carried you and your brother to some lady and she helped us. She gave me her phone and I managed to call Mazwi. He was upset and angry. When he came to get me, he told me tomorrow morning I was returning home with the kids.

"I tried explaining to him about the situation back at home but he didn't want to listen. We arrived at his house. It was a 3 roomed house. Not big but beautiful.

"That night he didn't even touch me. It was as if he had changed. We were woken up by a knock on the door the

following day and some woman was screaming. He instructed me to stay in the house but I went with him outside. The lady was fuming. It was his girlfriend. Thandiwe was beautiful. She was very beautiful. Your father introduced me as his brother's wife. I was hurt. I was beyond hurt. I loved Mazwi for him to just hurt me like that. The girlfriend already had a child with him.. A boy.

"I told Mazwi I wasn't leaving. That I was his wife. He was working at the mines by then so he managed to find us a bigger house. All of us. I as his first wife and Thandiwe as his second. We stayed like that. Thandiwe hated me with passion. She hated me. She hated my kids. After a while she got pregnant. I was willing to stay through all of it trying to protect my marriage but that was till Thandiwe was admitted at the hospital for food poisoning.

"She managed to get Mazwi to her side and hated me. I couldn't stay anymore. She didn't lose the pregnancy and now she was his favorite. That's when she poured my son with hot oil. Those scars on Zuko's back is the oil. I left. I wasn't going to wait for her to kill my kids. She told Mazwi it was a mistake but we all knew she had done it on purpose. I left and that's when I got the job as a Maud from the Witherspoons and Mazwi married her." I looked at her as she wiped away her tears. I never knew that the pain ran that deep. I hated Mazwi even more. I hated him with passion.

"I'm telling you this because I let myself settle for less. Right now Nompumelelo.. I want you tell me if you are sure about this. We can always stop the wedding and baby I will not be

disappointed. I will never be disappointed. Tell me.."

I took a deep breath. "I love Nicholas. He is the one."

She smiled. "Then I'm happy. I don't want the drama that happened with Mazwi Maphoto and his family to happen to you too."

"Mazwi Maphoto?"

"Yes.. Mazwi Maphoto. Apparently he left Thandiwe too and got married to some white woman."

"Mama his surname is Maphoto?"

"Yes.. What's wrong?"

I quickly took my phone and scrolled through my contacts till I clicked on Julie's number. The phone rang for a while before it was answered.

"Lelo is this you?"

I ignored that and went straight to the point. "Julie what was your mother's name?"

"Why do you—"

"What was her name?!"

"Thandiwe Sthando Maphoto. Why do you ask?" I hung up and covered my face with my hands. What had I done?

"Baby what is it?"

"Mom.. I slept with my brother Ma.."

"Hawe nkosi yame!"

19

[LATOYA]

I dragged my bag inside my room feeling more less than I had when I had boarded the plane. It was raining hard and as

gloomy as the weather was, my mood fell heart to heart with it. I sat down at the edge of the bed side as I shivered. I wanted to grab the duvet and wrap it around my body but I just sat still in silent listening to the rain as it hit the window. I stared at the white wall losing touch with reality. I looked at the door when I heard a soft knock that brought me back to life then stood up slowly and pushed myself forward to the door. Opening it, I forced a smile when I realized it was the hotel staff.

"Good evening again Ms Samuels.. Your dinner." I looked at her wondering if I probably looked hungry then blinked remembering Luthando's emotional blackmail.

"Promise me you will eat for Ocean or Quinton if not for me or yourself.." He had said as he fed me the fruit salad he had made.

"Please.." Looking into his eyes that moment I could see just how much he was worried. His shoulders had slumped a bit though he still stood still through the worst. He still tried so hard to make me smile though by each day I was losing the strength of keeping up with the fake smiles. It's not like I had a reason to smile anymore. My daughter's death certainly wasn't a reason to smile or the way my siblings were sad or the way Luthando walked with the whole world on his shoulders. He had looked into my eyes in the morning making me promise him that I was going to eat but now here I was looking at the food. I didn't have the appetite and the last thing that was in my head was food. I didn't want to eat but Quinton probably wanted to eat. My hand fell to my belly. I had almost lost him.

The good doctor was upset at my carelessness but she didn't understand. When we saw the blood the first instinct I had was

to save my child but the moment I saw the blood on my dress dripping to the floor I had just lost all energy. Something kept screaming I was bound for failure and sadness. Arriving at the hospital the doctor just said it wasn't anything serious, just the child trying to make space for himself. It was a boy and could be a healthy boy if I stopped trying to kill him. My blood pressure was beyond abnormal, they had admitted me to keep a close eye on me. And as always Luthando was there telling me it wasn't my fault. He was there as always trying to make me feel better. Trying to assure me. Somehow I knew no amount of assurance would possibly help now. My baby was bold now, what assurance could I possibly need? Assurance that my baby was indeed dying? Luthando received it all. From the blaming of our daughter's misery, to the physical tantrums I threw.. The physical abuse of me always hitting him and throwing things. He received it all, to my emotional abuse. I was a mess and he was at the receiving end but he never complained. He always held me tightly and say nothing or something sometimes but not always.

I looked at the food again then smiled as a tear fell. Opening the door wider she walked in. The moment she walked out I walked over to the food. I was going to eat or force down the food for him. For Ocean. For Quinton. I hadn't ordered the food but the hotel was giving out food to every resident they had that night because if I recalled well enough it was the hotel's anniversary. I wasn't sure because when the receptionist told me my brain was far away. I sat down and started forcing it down like most days. With each spoon I could feel my intestines twist. After the

tenth spoon I felt it come back with full force. I tried running back to the ensuit but I didn't make it. The food came back and splashed on the floor now looking so disgusting.

I threw myself on the floor and just cried. For a while now I had tried to shake off the feeling of just taking my life away. After a while I was silent and just staring at the space. I couldn't help but wonder if my daughter was still alive. If she was still breathing. Her condition was getting worse by the day. Only if I had been the mother my baby needed then I would have noticed the symptoms. I sat on the floor and watched the telephone ring. My phone was off and I was glad. I knew Luthando was probably sick worried and I knew I was being unfair but could anyone blame me? It was not like I still enjoyed my life.

The telephone kept ringing till I stood up and walked towards it.

"Hello?"

"Ummh Ms Samuels there's a call for you."

"Ok.." I waited for a while till I heard his voice. It sounded over the edge but as always he tried to control it.

"Toots why is your phone not going through? Do you know how worried I am? I'm starting to regret letting you go. You are out of my reach right now and I'm just worried sick!"

"I'm fine."

"Did you eat?"

"I vomited it."

There was silence for a while then I heard him exhale. "The doctor said it's normal. Please try eating again. Just a few spoons."

"Ok."

"Ocean is ok."

"Ok."

"I love you ok?" He said. I wiped away my tears.

"Ok."

"I will call again in the morning. If anything please call me ok?"

"Ok." He then hung up. I could hear just how strained his voice was. This was how most of our conversations were. I put the phone away then walked to the bed. Getting on the bed I got under the duvet then pulled it over my head and shut my eyes tightly. I started counting in my head. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9... Till I lost count and a fog swallowed me.

Opening my eyes my head was buzzing so loudly I wanted to put my fingers on my ears and stop the buzzing but it remained. The headache was back again. Reality was looking at me with a look of "just how far did you think you could go?"

I chuckled. Life was a bitch. A real motherfucken bitch. It would take you and chew you then throw you like a whole used condom. I sat upright. My eyes fell on the watch which was on the wall. The moon shone bright light in the room that my eyes didn't have trouble knowing that it was just before three.

Insomnia. One of the demons that kept hounding me. Staying up at night was becoming one of the things I was starting to get used to but tonight was the first night I had ever had to endure to it alone. No matter how much I shut my eyes there was no way sleep was going to come.

Slowly my mind fell in that dangerous trench. That trench that left you questioning if there was really a reason to keep living. Every horrid thought I fought with during the day haunted me

during that time of the night. They would haunt me till I would just start crying. I hated God. I hated him so much. I hated him because he never let me be happy. Ever since I was 10 I don't remember a day I could fully say I was happy. All my happiness was always short lived. I hated him for all my pain. I hated him for letting my parents die. I hated him for all the suffering I went through. I hated him for all the abuse I encountered at a young age. I hated him for my struggles. I hated him because he always let the bad things happen to me. I hated him even more because he was letting the only thing that held my life die.

"I hate you!" I screamed. "I hate you! I hate you!"

[NOMPUMELELO]

"Turn.." Derrek said. I turned and gave him my back. He fixed my dress from behind.

"You look so beautiful.." He said after a while. This was the first time I had ever seen him emotional. I smiled then hugged him.

"I look beautiful.. Thank you."

"Oh Darling.. Deep breathe in!" He chastened both of us. We inhaled then exhaled. My dress was body hugging but just till my mid thighs then it was flared from there on with a really long tale. I looked at myself on the mirror. I looked beyond beautiful. My makeup had already been fixed and my hair too.

"Is Janine done?" I asked.

"Almost.. How far is your maid of honour. I want to see her dress. I hope she doesn't come wearing things."

I smiled. "Latoya is the Queen of fashion, wait till she gets here.."

"Ok.." Just then Niki, Mayra, her friend who she had introduced

as Marcella but asked us to call her Cece, and lastly Tshidi walked in. They were all wearing the same dark purple dresses only Nikiwe's wasn't body clutching. It was flared to accommodate her pregnancy and she looked so beautiful. The new weave really suited her. They were all holding white flowers. "Lelo.." She said hugging me but of cause her belly didn't allow. She chuckled. "You look so beautiful.."

"You too Mommy.." She blushed.

"I can't wait until it's me. I'm so excited." I just smiled. I wasn't going to be the one to try and pop her unpoppable balloon.

"You look beautiful Sis.. That gown is just out of this world."

Mayra said hugging me. She had styled her long black hair in a way that was very eye catching, together with her friend who gave me a brief hug. Tshidi was the last one to hug me but I could almost taste the tension between her and Nikiwe. I had found out recently that they were sisters.

"Girls.. Girls! It's almost time.." Derrek said clapping his hands dramatically. We were in one of the rooms in the ship. I had passed by where the wedding was going to be held and I was still speechless. Derrek deserved a round of applause for the way he managed to pull off the wedding. I had last seen my mother in the morning before we left the house.

"Damnnnnnn!" Derrek said looking at the door. We all looked where his eyes were and there Latoya was.

"Damn girl I heard fashion was your thing but I didn't know you were the Queen of it. Who designed your dress? Oh look at this lace.. You look.. Elegant! Exquisite! Beautiful and beyond. Imma give you a 1 million at the scale of 10." Derrek said as he walked

towards Latoya who was just standing with her best smile. She was getting more and more beautiful by the day. Her dress was different from my everyone's dress. It was an off the shoulder dress with lacy arms. I went along with her body but I couldn't really see because there was a dark purple lace on top of it from from just below her breast going down.

"Hello.." She said then walked towards me and hugged me. She smelt so good and her hug was warm as always.

"You look extraordinarily beautiful." She said, her voice quiet and soft.

"Thank you.. You too." She blessed me with a kind smile.

"You must be Latoya.." Derrek said.

"Yes.. You are?"

"I'm Derrek.. It's nice to finally meet you."

"Well I'm glad.."

"Ummh this is Tshidi, that's Mayra.. My—"

"Sister." Mayra finished the sentence off then giggled with her friend at her forwardness.

"Yes.. My sister and that's her friend, Marcella and that's Tshidi and lastly Niki."

Latoya smiled the same way she had when she walked in though I couldn't help it but to notice that her smile was guarded.

Nikiwe rolled her eyes when Latoya looked at her.

"Hi Nikiwe.." She said softly.

Nikiwe laughed then placed her hand on her huge belly. "Hi sister wife.. You are really into sharing men aren't you?"

"Excuse me?"

"I'm Luthando's wife Sisi.. But because it's Lelo's day today

maybe we can discuss this after the wedding." Latoya just smiled.

"I'm afraid that will not be possible but congratulations."

"Thank you, I hope you are taking care of him well." I could see Nikiwe was hoping to have hurt Latoya but she was so unreadable. She kept herself guarded. Latoya looked at me.

"How much do we have till the wedding starts?"

[JANINE]

"To Janine!" Aunty said holding a glass of champagne. It was her first glass and I feared that by the time we left she would be really drunk and beyond.

Namhla laughed then sipped on her champagne while I stared at myself on the mirror.

"You can do this!" I chanted to myself. I had never felt that nervous before. My hands were even shaking. "You can do this!" I chastened myself again.

"Lelo are you ok?" Namhla asked standing besides me.

"Yeah.. Just nervous.."

"Don't be.. Everything is going to go well.."

"Do you think I'm making the right decision?"

She looked at me for a while. "What I think doesn't matter. Just follow your heart."

"Ok.. Let's do it." Just then Derrek walked in. Today he was wearing some shorts and a blazer with nothing beneath. His heels echoed as he walked in.

"Ladies! Are we done with our toast?" He said taking the bottle of champagne from aunty. He poured for himself.

"I guess the show is almost starting."

"Yeah.."

"Don't worry. Everything will go well. I hope after this you won't forget me." He said hugging me. I hugged him.

"Never!"

He let go of me when there was a slight knock on the door.

"Girls! Let's go."

They all walked out leaving me staring at myself on the mirror. I smiled, it was like my mother was looking down on me smiling. I walked to the door when the knock persisted. Opening the door the usher was standing there to tell me my uncle was already waiting for me. My father's. Initially I had wanted someone from my mother's side to walk me down the aisle but since my stepfather had married both my mother and I there was nothing I could do.

"Show has started!" I smiled as I muttering softly then walked back and took my bouquet.

Walking out of the room my eyes landed on Gina who was wearing a wedding gown too holding her own flowers.

"Janine.."

"What are you doing here?"

"You thought I was just going to let him go just like that?"

I laughed shaking my hand. I was shaking. This couldn't be happening.

"So what now?"

"I'm getting married too.."

"I bet King's brother's mental disorder rubbed on you. Look here little girl.." I said stepping in front of her making sure we were on

the same level.

"I will make you regret the reason you are here do you hear me?"

"Really now?"

I stopped the usher who was walking past us with a smile.

"Hi.. Can you please borrow me your phone." She handed it to me smiling. I guess today I got what I wanted without hustle. I quickly pressed Orlando's number. I knew it by heart. I prayed his phone was on. I took a deep breath of relief when it started ringing. Gina was just looking at me.

"Hello?"

"Thank God!"

"Janine? Everything ok?"

"No. I have a problem and I need your help."

"What is it?"

Giving the phone back to the usher Gina looked at me then laughed.

"You really think I'm joking don't you?"

"You are pathetic. That's what I think."

"Well I'm not playing with you." She said taking out a gun from her dress.

I sighed rubbing my forehead.

"Really now?"

"If I can't have him, you can't too.."

20

[LATOYA]

I sipped on my juice staring at the crowd. There were a lot of people. Maybe it was because it was a double wedding.

"Hi..?" I looked up to see who was talking to me.

I forced a smile as some lady stood in front of me with the biggest smile ever.

"Hello." I responded.

"I just wanted to say I'm the biggest fan to your blog."

"Oh.. It's nice to meet you..?"

"Snegugu Gumede."

"It's nice to meet you Gugu," she smiled. "And I'm pleased to know you follow my blog."

"I'm so pleased to finally meet you in person. The world is a small place indeed."

"That it is.."

"Ladies!" A voice said interrupting the moment. I sighed looking at Nikiwe. I could sense she was looking for drama.

At first it was the stunt she pulled in the morning about being Luthando's wife then followed some pathetic comments she had made about my dress. I had been ignoring her all along and now here she was, on my face yet again. Snegugu smiled then walked away.

"Nikiwe.."

"Latoya.. We didn't talk that much earlier on."

I smiled. "Because we really have nothing to talk about."

"Maybe we do.. Concerning our man."

I chuckled slightly. "Our man? You have lost me."

"Luthando, considering the fact that I'm his wife I think maybe we can start by you respecting me."

I laughed. "Wow!"

"Yes. His family paid lobola for me."

"Congratulations then."

"Thank you. Now back to the main issue.. Concerning our man considering the fact that you refuse to leave him alone."

"What?"

"Yes.. You are refusing to leave him alone but I guess you like sharing too much. The same way you were sharing a 100 year old man."

"Are you done?"

"No. My pregnancy is almost due and I would like him back home with me.. His wife."

"Then feel free to go and take him wherever he is."

"You think you own it all huh? Just because of your pretty face? Sisi I'm not going anywhere if that's what you are hoping for. You better get used to me as his first wife." I regretted leaving the table where everyone else was to stand at the deck of the ship. I couldn't stand the speeches which were being given nor the chattering that was happening on my table. I needed space to breathe but looking at it now I realized I had made a grave mistake because now I was cornered with a heavily pregnant woman.

"Nikiwe what exactly do you want?"

"I want us to discuss our man. As I have said, soon enough I will be giving birth and —"

"Look you little dirty cunt, I don't have time for your stupid games! My daughter is dying and you stand here talking about being Luthando's wife! So now that you are Luthando's wife did you get prettier? Did you get rich? Did the price for your ugly wig go down? Did it rain money? Did you become president because

you are now his wife? I'm sick and tired of your no degree and unemployed ass. Stay in your lane, I'm not your friend." I said then started walking back to where the wedding was being held. The ship was so huge, the wedding was only taking part at a particular place in the ship. Before I could take the stairs then were leading me to the elevator which took me straight to where the wedding was Nikiwe grabbed my hand bringing me to a stop.

"What now?"

"Luthando is—"

"Luthando this! Luthando that! Sweetie go to school, get a degree and find a job."

"No wonder your daughter is dying. You—"

"You bitch!" I said slapping her. She looked at me in shock.

"You better know your place. I'm not your friend hunny." I got in the elevator trying to do the breathing exercises like the doctor told me, trying to calm down. I couldn't let my blood pressure stir because the doctor had emphasized the fact that I could lose Quinton.

Getting back where everyone was it seemed as if the speeches were over. The wedding on it's own had started with drama. Janine had come late because no one could find her. Even her best friend couldn't find her. The poor white man had looked so worried as he stood at the alter with the priest. Lelo was already standing with her man. As usual after 20 minutes passed people started talking. 5 more minutes later she had arrived and looked so beautiful. All her curves were out and she looked sexy and beautiful in the white wedding gown. Then after that, Nicholas's

brother who was the best man couldn't find the ring for a while. Surprisingly I had recognized Rockelle's ex husband, Lungile Mokwena, he was one of Nicholas's bridegrooms. Nicholas's brother had found the ring after a few minutes but the fear that had occupied Lelo's eyes those few minutes couldn't have been missed. Then we got to the speeches. Some of the things that were being said were just irrelevant that's why I had quietly excused myself. Everyone was now up dancing. The wedding was grand like the wedding planner would say. I knew it was going to be the talk of the city for a while.

"Mind a dance with me?" A voice said making me turn. I was angry and I wanted to go.

I smiled shaking my head negatively. "Well I'm leaving right now."

"Meaning you could have said yes if you weren't leaving." He responded with a smirk. I wanted to laugh and scream "you are not my type" loudly but I held myself.

"No.."

"Ok. That's not really the reason I'm talking to you." He said now looking serious. "I have a wife."

"Good to know."

"Yes.. Ummh I would like you to meet her." He said.

"I really have to go Mr whoever your name is."

"Zuko.. Zuko Sikhosana." I looked at him for a while as my head worked overtime. I shook my head trying to stop my brain from working overtime.

"I would like you to meet my wife.. Please." He begged. I stared at him curiously wondering if he knew Lelo but probably he did and that was he reason he was here.

"Ok." I agreed. He led me across the room, ignoring people who were dancing to some song.

"Ummh babe this is thee Latoya Samuels and Latoya this is Grace, my wife." I looked at the woman wondering how this Zuko person knew me but I stopped thinking when my eyes fell on a woman who looked almost like me.

[JANINE]

I lay my head on King's chest as we swayed together though we had lost rhythm to the song.

"I locked your mistress in one of the cabinets." I whispered gently.

"You what?"

"I locked her up. She was here."

"You locked my mistress in one of the cabinets?"

"Yes.." My head was still on his chest.

"What mistress?"

"Gina.."

"Gina is here?"

"Yes.." I felt his body tense making me wrap my arms around him.

"I sorted her out."

"She's really getting on my nerves. I'm going to deal with her." I pulled my head from his chest then kissed his chin smiling.

"I love you.."

"I love you more baby.. I love you so much.." I let go of King when I heard someone clearing his throat. I smiled as I came face to face with Lungile. I had been surprised when I found out that he

was one of Nicholas's bridegrooms.

"Congratulations Mr and Mrs Tejero.." He said looking at me. I moved closer to King wrapping my arm around his waist.

"Thank you.." King replied shaking his hand.

"You looked beautiful today Janine."

"Thank you Lungile."

"See you around.." He said then walked away.

"Babe.." King said taking both of my hands into his.

"Yes?"

"Is that him?"

"Yes.. But I have forgiven him. The therapist said holding a grudge would only bring me down so I decided to forgive him and I'm very content with my decision."

He smiled then kissed my forehead. "I'm so proud of you.."

"I—" my sentence was cut short by a light tap on my shoulder. King let me go then I turned.

I smiled. "Hey.."

"After all that drama in the morning I deserve a dance." He said making me laugh.

Orlando had arrived whilst Gina was still pointing her gun at me. He had approached her from behind so I was the only one who could see him because Gina had her back to him. Snatching the gun from her had been easy plus either way Orlando was a professional at such things. We had been through worse since we met. Locking her in one of the cabinets had been easy too and something told me she was still there.

"King?"

"You can go ahead baby.." He said giving me a brief kiss then

walked away.

Dancing with Orlando was harder than dancing with King. Both of us didn't have an idea of what we had to do.

"I'm so happy for you Janine.."

"Thanks.. Did you bring your date?"

"Yes.. He is here."

"Can I see him?"

He chuckled. "Not yet. I'm going to miss you at the office."

"I will be back before you know it. I'm sure this honeymoon won't drag for a long."

"Don't be in a hurry to come back. Enjoy yourself."

"I plan to.."I muttered. We were just standing by then just looking at each other.

"Till next time Mrs Kingsley Tejero." He said stepping away from me. That's when I finally took notice of his grey suit. It was the first time to see him in a suit and he looked good.

"Mhhmm you look handsome!"

He laughed. "I know.." And off he was gone.

"I think it's my turn again!" King said taking me in his arms gracefully. I giggled. The song soon changed as we started dancing. A thousand years by Christina Perry started playing.

"I want you to meet a few people before we leave."

"We are leaving?"

"Yes. Since I don't have a private jet here so we have to catch the flight before we are left behind." I looked at him with a smile of both curiosity and excitement.

"Where are we going?"

He kissed my neck then my lips. "It's a surprise..."

Taking my hand he led me through the crowd where we kept getting smiles and handshakes. We finally stopped in front of his family. Some of the faces were new and some I was familiar with them.

"Ohh sweetie don't you look beautiful.." King's mother said hugging me. I couldn't help but smile. She wasn't bad but she had her moments. "This wedding was so beautiful. I can't believe you did it in the ship. At least my daughter in law is not.. Boring." I smiled more blushing.

"Thank you.."

"Congratulations.."

One of King's Uncles said giving both of us hugs. We got more of the hugs and kisses. I guess I had to get used to the kisses and hugs.

"King.." Some woman said with a tight smile. Somehow she just reminded me of Gina.

"René.." He said giving her a brief hug. She looked at me after a while with a frown.

"Hello.." She said faintly.

"Hi.."

"I never knew you went for this type." She said giving King a shallow smile. My mother in law, Joanne, laughed.

"Oh please René.. At least my son doesn't suffer from a mental case." I immediately figured she was Miguel's mother, King's crazy brother. I smiled now understanding why she was so bitter.

"Mom.. We just wanted to see you gius before we left."

"I apologize on behalf of my mother.." Some young lady said, I could possibly group her in Lerato's age. Somewhere between

25 and 28. She smiled then hugged me and King. I could see she was a very nice person.

"Congratulations King, Miguel couldn't come. He had one of his episodes." She said quietly.

"It's ok Rosslyn.." King said.

"And it's nice to meet you Janine, you look so beautiful by the way." She complimented me.

"Thank you and nice to meet you too Rosslyn.."

"Ok. My wife and I are leaving.." King said taking my hand into his. This was the first time he had called me his wife and the feeling was so overwhelming.

Arriving late for my own wedding ceremony had been so scary but I had easily seen just how King was scared I wouldn't have showed up. Locking up Gina had taken a lot of time because she was yelping and making noise. The moment my uncle finally gave me away I could easily see how teary King was. That moment I knew it deep in my heart that he was my soul mate. The pastor had stuck to the ordinary vows, we had asked him to do that, both Lelo and I. The wedding had went exactly according to plan. Even better because the hoochie was locked away.

After bidding farewell to King's family we went to my family. My youngest Aunt was a bit tipsy though she was trying to behave in front of her holy husband. A lot of people from my family had come. As long as there was food they certainly could come. After bidding farewell to the important people King took my hand and walked from the wedding venue to the deck. But that was not before I had to throw my bouquet.

"Ready to start a life with me baby?" He asked as the wind hit my face gently.

"As ready as yesterday.."

[NOMPUMELELO]

"Thank you so much for coming.." I said hugging her. I smiled involuntary as she stepped away.

"Baby number two already!" I said making her release a faint smile. She was pregnant again and so was Nikiwe. I wondered how exactly Luthando was going to deal with Nikiwe.

"Yeah.. I should get going."

"What did Grace say?"

"Well she gave me her mother's number. I think maybe our mother's are sisters or something."

"Yeah I thought so too.."

"Ok. Bye.." I gave her one last hug before she walked away. It took me the whole day to realize that something was wrong. Now I was 100% sure something was up. She looked tired and disoriented.

I took my glass of champagne and sipped a bit while watching Nicholas with his mother dancing. I had never seen her as happy as today. She was happy because her son was finally settling down. Sally had joined us. At first I thought she was going to be a problem but then realized she could only be a problem if I let her become one.

I had watched Janine leave with King. She was so happy like I was but guilt kept eating me.

"Hey.." Lungile said standing in front of me. I wanted to scream

leave me alone. Get away from me but my throat had suddenly clogged. "Congratulations Mrs Dumisa."

"Thank you.." I said though it came off as a whisper.

"You look beautiful.."

"Lungile I want what's happening between us to stop! I don't want to do this anymore! I don't want to hurt Nick. I love him." I whispered urgently.

He looked at me for a while in silence then smiled.

"Ok. But just after I let you see this. I want to show you something and I swear I will never ever bother you again.."

"What is it?"

I forced a smile as Nicholas joined us with a huge grin plastered on his face.

"Baby.. Done?" I asked smiling.

"Yeah.. My man!" He said giving Lungile a fist bump.

"I was asking if I can be awarded with a dance." Lungile said with his charming smile. Nick nodded as he took my glass from me and sipped a bit.

"Yeah.. Baby go and dance." He urged. Did this man understand what he was igniting? Lungile offered me his hand. I reluctantly took it and stood up. Walking to the dance floor we started dancing though I made sure I was not so close to him, that there was a bit of distance between us because I could never handle it if Nick's family started talking.

"You smell so good." Lungile whispered twirling me. I wished he didn't have an effect on me. His whisper did more than turn me on. "I'm going to to go to one of the rooms. I will send a waiter to come and get you. I want to show you something and after that I

promise.. I will never bother you again."

"Why does it have to be in a room?"

"Just come.. Please.." He begged then twirled me one last time before letting me go. I stood there watching him as he disappeared in the crowd.

"Tired?" Zuko asked approaching me. I chuckled slightly.

"I'm sure one more dance will do."

I got in his arms then started moving with him to the song.

"I'm so proud of you. Nicholas seems like a good man. I'm sure he will take care of you but if he doesn't, you can always come to me."

"I know.."

"Good. This was a beautiful wedding."

"Thank you.."

"Mom told me that she told you." I looked at him as I stopped dancing.

"Don't you think we need to talk to our half siblings?" I asked.

"We do.. But it's going to be hard locating them."

"You don't have to worry about loca—"

"Excuse me Mam but I have been asked to come and get you."

An usher said interrupting my conversation with Zuko.

"We will talk.." He said walking away. I looked over at Nicholas and he was busy talking with Mayra. It was so funny how easily they clicked. I let the usher lead me away till we were far from the crowd and we were standing in front of some door. She gave me a polite smile before walking away. I opened the door then walked in.

"Lungile what is this?"

"Shhh.." He walked to the door then locked it before he took off his jacket while staring at me. He unbuttoned his white shirt looking at me. I felt myself get wet as my cheeks also got wet. He couldn't do this on my wedding day. We couldn't do this. At least just not today.

"Lungile please.."

"Shhh.." He whispered taking off his belt then walked towards me. He took off my dress quickly together with my lingerie. The lingerie I had specially wore for my husband so to please him.

"You are so so beautiful Lelo.." Whispered then pushed me on the bed. He spread my legs with his hands getting on top of me. I knew today we were sticking to basic sex but that didn't make the whole situation any better. I was still getting fucked with my husband's friend on our wedding day. Lungile fucked me real hard. He drove me insane with his dick. The orgasms I suffered transformed me into a maniac.

"Do you really want us to end?" Lungile whispered as my body tried to calm down from the mind blowing orgasms. "Is that what you want Lelo?"

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[LATOYA]

ONE YEAR LATER

I held my mug filling it with my whisky. I gulped most of it down as I took off the heavy blanket which was on my shoulders. I sighed as cold air hit my my body. I gulped down the rest of my whisky then walked to the couch holding my bottle. Putting the bottle and mug down I removed the black doek from my head.

"What are you doing?" Grace asked making me laugh. She had the audacity to ask me what I was doing or to even enter my house without knocking.

"What the fuck does it look like I'm doing? Does it look like I'm fucking?" She took the whisky and the mug and walked with them to the kitchen. I struggled standing up, the whisky was already having an effect on me but it wasn't enough. I wanted to forget everything and lose touch with reality.

"All this has to stop Latoya!"

I laughed falling back on the couch. "What has to stop? Bring back my baby and everything will stop!"

Her face softened as she sat besides me.

"I don't understand what you are going through. I don't know what you are going through but as far as I have heard.. This is not you."

Tears tickled my eyes. "All I want is my daughter. That's all I want. I want my baby.. I want her back."

"You are destroying yourself. Quinton is only a baby.. He needs you."

"He has Luthando.. He doesn't need me." I muttered as I stood up. I staggered back to the kitchen then took my whisky from the kitchen counter.

"I don't want to see him. I hate him." I said before I gulped down some of the whisky. She just looked at me with nothing but pity in her eyes. I wanted to yank the pity from her eyes because it was irritating and annoying. As annoying as the people who kept telling me they knew how I felt. Nobody knew shit about how I felt! Nobody could ever begin to tell me about how I felt. When

the doctors gave my daughter a few months I didn't think those few months could only be three months. I felt robbed of my time with my daughter. I felt robbed of my happiness. All the dreams I had for myself and my daughter disappeared into thin air just like that. Nobody could tell me they knew what I was going through. The didn't know shit!

"Ok.. At least just call them tomorrow.. Just to say hi.."

"I don't need to say hi to anyone. I'm sick and tired of everyone telling me what I should and should not do. Telling me how to mourn my own child. Just fuck off!"

"We are only trying to help you.."

"Ohh go and die!" I muttered as I took another swing of my whisky. She sighed looking defeated then took her bag and walked out. I fell to the floor still holding my bottle. It was my only friend. The only friend that loved me. I couldn't be bothered about Quinton or Luthando. I hated him too. He had just watched my daughter die. I hated everyone.

I opened my eyes slowly trying to get hold of the life threatening headache I had. I stood up slowly then walked to the bedroom with my hand clutching my forehead. I knew the remedy I needed and I had to get it fast. The moment I got inside the bedroom I quickly walked over to the dressing table and took the unopened bottle of whisky.

Getting back to the kitchen I made coffee then poured the whisky and some codeine. It helped me in the best possible way. It made me forget for a little while. Forget that I had lost my daughter 9 months ago. That I had lost myself. That I had turned into someone I couldn't even recognize on the mirror.

Being drunk helped. At least I didn't have to think about anything when I was drunk. At least I didn't have to think about how I wasn't mourning my daughter rightfully. At least I didn't have to think about how I had to dress like someone who had just lost her child or listen to Luthando's Aunts telling me that the reason my daughter died was because she wasn't introduced to the ancestors.

The morning passed like a movie as I lay on the kitchen floor unconscious. I had finally accepted it. I was a drunk. A disgusting drunk.

Opening my eyes I could hear my phone ringing. I lay still as it stopped but only to start again. More louder now. I groaned as I struggled to sit up. The headache was gone. This was the kind of remedy I needed for a headache but I couldn't help but to still feel disoriented. My vision was blurred though I managed to stand up. The phone was on the kitchen counter. I took it and answered with my eyes closed. All I wanted to do was to sleep and never wake up.

"You said you were going to come yesterday." His voice said. I could easily hear that he was upset.

"Hey.. Shhh.. You are making noise. Why are you screaming?" I whispered.

"Are you drunk? Again? Latoya what did we talk about the day before yesterday?"

"You don't understand how—" he cut my slurred sentence with his voice full of anger.

"I fucken understand! You are not the only who lost Ocean. I was her father. As much as you are hurting, I'm also hurting! The

fuck do you think I'm made of? I'm sick and tired of this Latoya. I tried giving you space but seems like you just won't grow up. I'm going to raise my son alone. I don't want to see you anywhere near him or me. I'm done treating you like an egg."

I laughed. "Yippee! Great! I will not even bother you."

"Latoya.. Babe please stop.." His tone had now changed. He was now begging. I didn't want him begging me. I wanted him to leave me alone. I wanted him to stay away from me.

"Luthando I want you to leave me alone.."

"Toots baby we have a son. A 9 months old son. He needs his mom. Please if not for me then for him then.."

I shook my head as tears fell from my eyes.

"No.. Stay away from me.." I said then hung up.

I was now used to losing people in my life. First it had been my parents. My friends. Now my daughter. I couldn't care less anymore. I was used to it. It wasn't something I knew.

And like that the day passed. All I did was drink, sleep, vomit and drink some more. I didn't care if I died or not. All I wanted was to numb my pain. That's all and I didn't find it wrong to. I was glad my siblings were at varsity. I hadn't really given them much of a choice. Moving them to Australia was to ensure they didn't get to see me miserable. I wanted them far away.

The following day waking up, instead of waking up to my own space I had woken up to Luthando in my house. It looked clean. I cleared my throat as I looked at him.

"What are you doing here?"

"I came to see you.."

"Where's your wife?" I asked leaning on the wall trying to deal

with the headache. I felt so out of touch with my own self. "You should be with your wife."

"She's not my wife. When last did you eat?" He asked walking towards me. I couldn't really move back because I felt too tired. He picked me up as I tried to think of the last time I had eaten. It was definitely 6 if not 7 days ago.

He walked with me back to the bedroom and straight into the ensuite then undressed me. After filling the tub he picked me up and carefully placed me inside.

"Your hair is growing.." He commented. I had cut it after Ocean's funeral. It was too heavy to carry. I don't know but just maybe it needed my daughter's death to make me realize I hated my hair.

"I hate my hair.." I whispered as he washed my body. He didn't say anything but just washed my brewery stinking body. After washing me he made me put on a dress. I hated it too.

I leaned over and kissed him when he was done lotioning my body. He kissed me back almost immediately but only to push me away when my hand made it's way to his pants.

"What's wrong?" I whispered trying to kiss him again but he stood up then stepped away from him.

"I don't want us sleeping together. I love you but I won't let you use me as your alcohol." He said making me laugh.

"Then what are you doing here?"

"To clean up your mess.."

I laughed harder then abruptly stopped. "Since I'm now a drunkard you can leave.. Go back to your wife who doesn't treat you like her alcohol." I could see he was getting more upset by the second.

"What are you still waiting for?!" I screamed making him chuckle shaking his head.

"I'm so disappointed at you."

"Fuck you with your disappointment. You can go to hell and see if I care! Don't forget to take your suffocating family with you and that pathetic piece of ugly shit you call your wife." He walked out of the bedroom leaving me standing by the bed. I knew I had gone too far when I heard the door slamming. I didn't need anyone telling me he had left. I knew he had left, I could even feel it in my heart. I wanted to cry but I had done enough of that lately. I wanted to sleep.

I walked to my closet then took out my sleeping pills. After popping three at one go I felt myself get weak and weaker. The last thing I thought was Luthando. My pillar of strength had left me..

[NOMPUMELELO]

I stepped inside the house holding my handbag and briefcase. Walking inside the kitchen I placed my bags on the kitchen counter and walked over to the fridge. My body was aching. I took out a bottle of water then gulped down most of it. I was so tired all I wanted was to take a shower and sleep. I walked out of the kitchen then walked to the study room with my bags. I knew he was there. He was always there.

Opening the door there he was, sitting on his chair while staring at his laptop as usual.

"Hey babe.." I said standing by the door. He smiled looking at me.

"Hey.. You are back."

"Yeah.. Work was hectic today. Wanna take a shower with me?"

He looked at the smiled.

"I will pass. I want to finish this report."

"Ok.." I walked out closing the door behind me and went to our bedroom. Quickly I undressed then got under the shower. My body tensed at the cold water at first but then adjusted.

After taking a shower I slipped into my night dress then got on the bed and slept or at least tried to. I was thinking about how I was going to tell Nicholas about my façade business trip to London. Things had been shaky lately ever since he left his job so to start his own business. We were a bit strained financially but not that much strained.

I got off bed then walked back to his study room where he spent most of his time in.

"Babe.." I said walking in.

"Lelo sweetheart I'm still busy right now.." He said as I walked in.

"You are always busy."

"I know and it will be over soon. As soon as I get this client I will even look for premises for the business. Even hire a few workers."

I sighed then sat on his lap. "I know.. And I'm 100% behind you."

"I know I have been neglecting you but it's all about to end."

"I know and I trust you. I love you." I kisses his cheek.

"I love you more.. And ummh.. About that range rover you want baby.. It's going to have to wait a bit."

"What?"

"I know how badly you want it but right now I don't think we

should get it. We are trying to get our business off the ground."

"Nicholas you know my car is giving me problems! You promised me."

"I know.." He sighed whilst burying his head on my breast then he gently squeezed my waist. "I will make a plan.."

"Ok.." He kissed my neck gently while caressing my thigh.

"I miss you so much.." He said putting his hand under my night dress and straight between my thighs.

"Nick baby.. Remember when I told you I had to bench mark some galleries?"

"Mhhmm.." He said while caressing me on top of my panties gently with his other hand while the other squeezed my boob.

"Yeah.. Tshidi and I decided that I would have to benchmark galleries in London."

"Ok.." He whispered trying to get his hand inside my panties. I held his hand then stood up giggling.

"Babe wait.. We are still talking."

"Can't it wait?" He said pointing at his erection. I rolled my eyes chuckling.

"No.. This is serious. You know how the gallery is losing its touch."

"Ok.. That's a lie. Babe your galleries are considered the best in the country. You have the best collections. Best artist. Your galleries took in a new level of giving significance to culture and tradition."

"I know but it's not as good as other galleries. I want it to be considered the best but I can't do that if I don't know what other galleries out there offer."

"So when do you have to go to London."

"During the weekend. You can come with me. It will be great plus you could really use a break. You have been working so hard." I said straddling him.

He placed his hands on my waist and gave me an apologetic face.

"I can't leave now babe.. Things are a bit hectic but you can go. I will give you money for shopping." I smiled.

"You would?"

"I know things have been quite strained financially but I aim to make you happy."

"Ok.." I kissed his lips slowly.

He held my waist and I started bumping on him. I moaned softly in his ear. He stood up with me then placed me on his huge desk. He took out his hard dick from his pants then moved my panties to the side before entering me slowly. It felt good as always. Slowly he went in and out. I wanted to tell him go faster or deeper or harder but I just kept quiet. I guess this was his fastest because it had been like this for years. By the time he was done his desk was wet and I was breathing hard. He fixed my panties then helped me off his desk.

"Lelo what did you say about trying for a baby.. You know I'm not getting any younger."

I smiled nervously. "We can start trying as soon as I come back."

"We can?"

"Yes.." He hugged me tightly. I knew exactly how the idea of having a child excited him and I wanted nothing but to make him happy. Walking inside the bedroom I slipped into the bed then

pulled the duvet on me.

I was excited about my trip and also excited that I was going to try for a baby with my husband. Everything felt so balanced.

The following morning I woke up early. I wanted to go somewhere before I went to the office. I was in Nick's arms and he was holding me tightly. I wasn't really sure about the time he had came to bed.

Carefully I got out of his hold then headed straight to the bathroom. After bathing I put on my cheetah print body hugging leather dress. I brushed my Bob weave then applied my make up. The moment I was done preparing i noticed that Nick was up and he was just staring at me.

"Hey baby.." I said as I gave him a kiss on his lips briefly.

"You are early today.."

"Yeah.. I'm meeting an artist in the morning."

He chuckled. "So to bully them into working with you?"

I laughed. "Yes! See you later ok?"

"I love you.." He said as I took my handbag.

"I love you more baby.." I said then walked out.

Getting in my car I quickly drove out and drove straight to his house.

Arriving at his house I opened the gate with the remote he had given me and I drove right in. He had given me his house keys sometime ago. Getting out of the car I walked straight inside the house.

Getting to his gym as suspected he was there.

"Babe?" He said getting off the trademill.

"Hey. He said yes!"

Lungile smiled then kissed me hard. "Good.. I missed you." He said kissing neck.

"I missed you too.." He squeezed my ass. I could feel him on my tummy.

"The fuck is going on here?" Luthando roared walking inside the gym. I quickly stepped away from Lungile while fixing my dress.

"Lungile didn't I tell you to stop?" Luthando looked so pissed it even scared me.

"And wena? What exactly is your problem? Why are you so loose?!"

"You don't know me!"

"Well I know enough to know that usfebe!"

"I'm leaving!"

"I wonder how your brother will feel after finding out that you are busy fucking around. Are you a sex addict that you can't keep those damn legs closed."

"I wonder how he will feel after finding out that we once fucked!"

I shot back. He had no right to talk to me that way but that moment I was so scared. Was he going to tell Nick?

"Uthini?" He said charging towards me. Lungile stood between us.

"Ahh ntwana relax.."

"Ey wena don't tell me to relax! You are busy fucking with my married sister!" I quickly walked out as Lungile held him and went straight to my car. Driving out my hands were shaking. I couldn't care less about anyone else finding out but just not Nicholas. Not him.

[JANINE]

King held my hand as we walked inside the restaurant. It wasn't that filled that I could easily count the people who were inside.

"Mr and Mrs Tejero, right this way." A waiter said motioning us to follow her. We followed after her and sat at the far end table.

"Thank you.." King muttered as she walked away. He pulled out the chair for me making me blush sitting down.

"Did I tell you how beautiful you are?" He asked sitting opposite me while taking my hands into his.

"No.."

"You are so beautiful.. I can't wait till we go back to the beach house.." I slapped his hand away blushing.

"Stop!"

"Good evening, I'm Laura and I will be your waiter today."

Another waiter said placing our menus in front of us then walked away.

I looked at the menu going through it slowly. I knew some of the things and some I didn't know. They even had foreign names that had me biting my tongue. After a while I had made up my mind.

"Ready to order?" King asked.

"Yeah.." He raised his hand summoning the waiter to come. She came almost immediately. After taking our orders she walked away.

"How did the deal go?" I asked.

"I don't want to discuss business baby.. We are here to relax not talk about business."

"Thank you for bringing me here.."

He smiled taking my hand and kissing it.

"I knew you would love it."

Being married was proving to be a total bliss. I couldn't really want anything more. I was slowly adapting to the life of always traveling around the world. In 12 months I had already been in 14 countries worldwide and Mexico being the 15th one. At first I was skeptical about it but now that I was getting the hang of it, I was turning into an adventure junkie.

"Our next country would blow your mind off.."

"I can't wait.."

"Me too.." He let go of my hand when the waiter came back with our food. We had arrived in Mexico three days ago and so far I loved it. I couldn't mind staying forever the same way I couldn't really mind staying in Costa Rica forever or any other place King had taken me.

We ate over light conversations here and there. After dinner we left. King was taking me back to the beach house. Walking out, it was drizzling.

"Wanna get wet?" He asked while kissing my lips.

"Yes.." I said giggling. He knelt down before me then took off my shoes. I hadn't complained yet about them hurting me but I didn't ask anything when he took them off.

"Hoop on my back." He said giving me his back. I stood there confused.

"What?"

"Hoop on.." He said going down a bit. I laughed as I hooped on his back. I took a deep breath as I wrapped my legs around his

waist. He started walking with me down the streets in the rain.

"When you get tired babe you can always put me down."

"I will never put you down. I will always have your back." I smiled then buried my head on his shoulder.

King made me happy, he made me so happy. He always managed to make me forget about any problems I could possibly be facing. Yes there were fights from time to time again but what I loved most was that even after we fought, he always held me in his arms every night. He always made me feel loved every night.

"I love seeing you happy.." He said as we got to a turn. We were drenching in wetness by then. I kissed his neck.

"You make me happy.. I love you King.."

He put me down then turned and pulled me in his arms. "I have never been this happy before I fear it will end or something will go wrong." I whispered as he held me in his arms.

"Baby nothing will go wrong. You and I are meant to be and we will be. I love you more.. Mrs Tejero.."

I felt tears on my cheeks. That's just how much I was happy with him.

"I think we should go home.. I don't want you catching a cold."

King whispered.

Getting home it was still raining but just a bit harder. Walking in the house we were met by Jacque in the kitchen. She immediately smiled standing up.

"Mr and Mrs Tejero.. Welcome." She said softly. She was the caretaker of the house and also helper. Kingsley had long bought the house but just never visited Mexico regularly so he

had hired Jacque to take care of the house. She was somewhere between late fifties and early sixties.

"You shouldn't have stayed up Jacque.." King said softly. She just smiled. After bidding her goodnight we went to our bedroom.

The moment we got inside the bedroom he pulled me into him and kissed me, pushing his tongue through my lips and coaxing it with mine. My body shivered as he unzipped my dress then pushed it down my body. I pulled my lips from his then started unbuttoning his shirt. My movements were frenzied. I wanted him right there and then. Getting his shirt off I ran my hand on his torso then started kissing him from there going down. The moment I knelt down before him he quickly pulled his pants down together with his briefs and stepped out of them. I wrapped my fingers around his length then started stroking him slowly.

"Fuck!" He whispered closing his eyes. I licked him slowly tasting the precum in my mouth. His body tensed as I took him in my mouth.

"Janine.." He groaned while fisting his hand in my short hair. He started fucking my mouth going deeper. I didn't mind, as long as I was pleasing him. The way he was groaning made me put my legs together tightly. Suddenly he pulled me up and pushed me on the bed taking off my panties off. He unclipped my bra then pulled it off me hastily. He settled between my legs kissing my lips while his finger slipped in and out of me repeatedly. I moved my hips to the rhythm of his finger then he took it out and replaced it with his length. He started stroking me making me

mutter his name. I knew it wasn't long till I started screaming.

[NOMPUMELELO]

"Are you sure? I don't want Nick finding out. This could end my marriage." I whispered. I couldn't scream because it was just after midnight and I was in the toilet talking with my affair about my brother who now knew about my affair.

"Maybe you should have thought about that before you started having an affair." He snapped.

"What?"

"Nompumelelo can your husband's name stay away from our conversations? I'm sick and tired of hearing his name. Dammit I know he is there so no need to remind me every chance you get."

I blinked. It was the first time he had ever made an outburst. I took a deep breath.

"I'm sorry I'm just.. —" I held my breath when I heard a female voice at the background.

"Who's that?" I asked.

"No one."

"King I heard a voice!" I was beginning to get agitated.

"There's no one here.."

"Really? I know you are lying."

"Sisi weh! I'm not the one married." I hung up then flushed the toilet switching off my phone. I put it in my PJ pants then walked out. Nick was still sleeping. I quietly crawled on the bed then carefully put my phone under my pillow and closed my eyes. I couldn't really sleep not when I was thinking about the female

voice I had heard at the background. I sighed as Nick's leg landed on me. I couldn't be thinking about another man while I was with my husband so I turned then wrapped my arm around Nick and forced myself to sleep.

The following morning I woke up early, took a shower and changed into my gym wear. Nicholas was still sleeping. Getting out of the house it was a bit dark but it was just minutes before five. My subconscious gave me a look. Of course it was still dark and here I was. The moment I got out of the gate, the uber pulled up. I got in immediately.

By the time I arrived at Lungile's house, my heart was already in my mouth. Whoever that I had heard in the background was probably still there. I pressed the gate remote then walked inside the yard already taking out his house keys. Unlocking the door I quietly stepped inside the house and switched on the light. The living room looked in order. I walked to the kitchen and switched on the light and momentarily I stood there frozen. The mess that was in the kitchen told me definitely there was someone inside the house. Lungile never cooked especially when he was alone. I took a deep breath then started the journey to his bedroom. Opening his door I switched on the light and there they were. I knew he was with a woman. I stood by the door for a while starring at them till the woman woke up. We both stared each other for a while, she wasn't that pretty, her complexion covered it though.

She shook Lungile a bit while starring at me. I could feel rage build in.

"Lungule vuka!" She said shaking him a bit more. He slowly

opened his eyes and I could tell he was surprised to see me.

"Babe.." He started rubbing his eyes.

"Lungile who's this?" I asked with a shaky voice.

"Hawe ma!" The girl exclaimed. "What do I look like? I'm his girlfriend sisi and wena looking at the fact that you have a ring in your finger you should be home with your husband not here."

"Thulisile!" He said trying to get off the bed. I couldn't control my anger anymore that I found myself walking towards the girl who was now sitting up straight on the bed and slapped her. She looked at me in disbelief. I was also caught in disbelief, I couldn't believe I had just slapped her. I had never been a violent person from birth. Lungile pulled me away as his girlfriend got off the bed. She walked towards me then pulled my weave that I screamed.

"Kante yini?!" She screamed. "You are married but—" I pushed Lungile aside then grabbed the girl's neck. I squeezed her hard as she tried to fight me off. I felt unfamiliar rage build in deep within me making me tighten my hold on her neck.

"Shit Lelo let her go!" Lungile said pulling off her. I slapped her before letting her go. She fell to the floor coughing and gasping for air.

"Lelo.. Calm down." He said pulling me out of the room. I wanted to cry but I knew there was no reason to. Between him and I, I was the married one not the other way round. He had every right to act the way he was acting. I couldn't blame him. I was shaking so hard.

I let him lead me to the living room.

"It's not what you think.." I just nodded. The only mistake I had

made was have an affair. Nicholas was a great husband to me. He loved me. He made me happy. I looked at Lungile wondering what had gotten into me. I was a married woman for fucks sake and I had to start acting like it. I had to start acting the part not go around fighting.

"I guess it's been real.." I said staring at him while fixing my weave.

"Don't say that.. I'm sorry babe.."

I took a deep breath. "No.. Don't be. You have nothing to be sorry for."

"No.. I'm sorry. Matilda was just leaving." He said as the Matilda girl walked past us going outside. She looked a mess. After a while I heard the gate opening and her car driving off.

Lungile held my waist then tried kissing me but I turned. I couldn't do it anymore.

"I can't keep in doing this anymore Lungile.." I whispered.

"You are just upset and I'm sorry but babe can you blame me? Do you know how it feels to know that you are with Nicholas? It's hard on me too. I want you here with me all the time but I have come into accepting it. You can't possibly expect me to just sit and wait for you till you are done with your husband. You are being selfish right now."

I blinked then took a deep breath.

"I should get going." I said walking out leaving him there.

"Babe wait.." He said grabbing my waist from behind.

"Lungile let me go. I want to go home. I'm tired."

"I'm sorry.. Can we talk about this?"

"No.. Bye." I struggled out his hold and walked away. I felt tears

wet my cheeks as I stepped outside the yard. I wanted to scream. I had no reason to cry over Lungile. I didn't even love him. I took my phone and quickly typed a message to him.

I don't think I can do this anymore. I would really appreciate it if you stopped calling me. It's over.

I sent the text then called the uber. About 30 minutes later I was jogging inside the gate. Getting in the house as suspected Nicholas was already awake and he was busy in the kitchen making his protein shake.

"Morning baby.." I said kissing Nick's cheek gently.

"Morning sweetheart.. How was your run?"

I smiled. "It was ok. Let me go and take a quick shower."

"Ok.."

I walked to our bedroom undressing. Getting under the shower I wanted to sink to the floor and cry. All the guilty that I had been suppressing all along seemed to be surfacing. All the guilty of cheating on my husband. Walking out of the bathroom I quickly changed into my pink slacks, a white shirt and a pink blazer and pink heels. I put on my make-up then brushed my weave.

Walking downstairs Nicholas wasn't alone anymore. He was with Lungile.

My heart leaped in my mouth as I stared at them talk and laugh.

"Oh baby.. Lungile and I are going out today.. The whole day."

Nicholas said smiling.

"That's great babe.. Good morning Lungile." I said softly.

"Morning Nompumelelo.."

I ignored him then walked towards Nicholas and gave him a deep kiss. "I love you and you only baby.." I said loudly then

kissed him one last time and walked away. I didn't bother looking at Lungile. Getting in my car I started it then started driving to work. As I maneuvered the car my phone vibrated. I took it with one hand. It was a message from Lungile.

I'm going to fuck you so hard you will regret it.

I threw my phone on the passenger seat. I didn't have time for such games. We were done. My phone started ringing. I cursed as I stepped on the brakes on the red traffic light then grabbed it.

"Lungile I'm —"

"Lelo hey.." A soft voice said. I took the phone off my ear then checked the caller ID.

"Shit hi Grace.."

"Hey.. I'm at the hospital with Toya.."

I almost stopped breathing. "What? What happened?"

"It's nothing hectic but I think you should come. She doesn't want to listen to me or anyone else.. I'm worried about her."

I accelerated the car forward as the traffic light turned green.

"You really care about her huh?" I asked.

"I know we have not proved anything yet but I know we are somehow related. She's my family and I care about her."

"Which hospital are you at?"

23

[LATOYA]

I stared at the wall in silence. I knew Grace was looking at me, I could feel her eyes drill holes into my skin.

"Should I call Luthando?" She asked. I wanted to roll my eyes.

"Latoya I'm very worried about you. I'm scared for you."

"I'm fine." I muttered. I wanted to go home to my bottle.

"You can come stay at my house for a while if you want."

"I'm fine."

I heard her sigh. "Latifar called." I looked at her.

"Is everything ok?"

"Yes. She was just checking up on you. I feels she knows that something is wrong." My eyes fell back at the wall.

"I passed by Luthando's house yesterday. Quinton is fine." I quietly zoned out as she spoke. All I wanted was to go home but here I was, stuck on hospital bed. Grace had found me unconscious then decided to bring me to the hospital. No matter how much I tried to explain that I wasn't trying to commit suicide no one was hearing it. I was now under suicidal watch. I snapped out of it when I felt a hand touch mine. Looking up I sighed as I looked at Lelo. Of cause Grace had called her.

"Hey.." Lelo said smiling.

"Lelo.."

"How are you? I heard what happened.."

"And what happened?"

She smiled brushing her Bob weave.

"You know I'm here for you right?"

"I want to go home."

"I spoke to one of the doctors. They are not going to discharge you till they council you."

"For fucks sake I wasn't trying to commit suicide!"

Lelo looked at Grace who just shrugged. I was getting more angrier by the second. I wanted to strangle everyone.

"Latoya relax.."

"Lelo I think you need to leave. You are depressing me. Go and focus on your marriage and leave me alone." I said steadily. She looked at me for a while before walking out. I closed my eyes tightly.

"You are going to lose everyone you care about if you keep doing this." Grace said brushing my short hair. "I wish you can see that we care about you and we love you. We are not the enemies here. We are just trying to help."

"I don't want help Grace." I whispered with my eyes still closed. "I'm going home. I will come back later." I grabbed her hand opening my eyes.

"Please tell them to release me. I want to go home." I begged. She smiled then gave me a slight nod. The moment she walked out I threw my head on the pillow grunting.

I opened my eyes slowly as heard my name being called. My eyes came into contact with a doctor. I blinked a couple times. "Ms Latoya Samuels.. Good seeing you awake.." He said softly. I swallowed hard as I looked at the fine specimen. I was looking straight at a handsome dark chocolate dzaddy. Not very tall but ok tall. It had been time since my eyes fell on a delicious looking man and my body seemed to have been reacting so well.

"How are you feeling?"

"I'm fine.." I whispered sitting up straight. He sat on the chair besides my bed.

"Well I'm glad. I'm doctor Brown, and I will be your therapist." I started laughing while just looked at me smiling.

"Mind to share the joke?" He asked after I was done laughing.

"You Dr Brown.. You are the joke."

"I'm glad you find me funny Ms Latoya Samuels.. Not a lot of people think I'm funny."

"I don't need a therapist. I'm not crazy."

"And who said therapists are for crazy people?"

"Because I have been there before."

"Did the therapist say you are crazy?"

"You make one feel like they are crazy. I don't need a shrink but thank you."

"Well you are forced to take sessions with me or else we won't release you." He said softly while unbuttoning his coat.

"I can always release myself."

He shrugged with a smile. "Oh ok."

He sat there for a while just staring at me smiling. He didn't look moved. I rubbed my face getting irritated.

"I'm not crazy.." I whispered.

He kept his smile. "I know."

"Then what do you want?"

"I heard you lost your daughter a while ago."

"I don't want to talk about my daughter. I just don't understand why people are forcing me to feel better! I'm sick and tired of it!"

"We can start from a different angle. Why don't you want to feel better?"

"What?"

"Why don't you want to feel better?"

"I lost my daughter 9 months ago due to cancer and you ask me why I don't want to feel better?"

"Yes."

"This is useless! I want to go home."

"And drink alcohol?" He asked. I was now getting angry.

"You don't know anything about me."

"Then talk to me."

"I don't want to talk to you or anyone. I want to go home."

"Latoya would you rather go on and act the way you are acting. Pushing everyone away, everyone who cares about you and love you so to be lonely or get better? Get better for your own sake."

I kept quiet for a while. "I lost my daughter and —"

"You are not the first person to lose a child nor are you the last. There are a lot of people going through worse things than you. How about you stop blaming people you love for the death of your child?"

"I don't blame anyone —"

"You do. That's why you are angry."

"Yes! Yes I blame everyone. I fucken do blame everyone! And I hate you!"

"I figured." He said then just looked at me in silence. I felt tears warm my cheeks then carefully laid my head back on the pillow.

"Life was so good when I was born. You know I also had it all at some point of time. I don't even know why all this things are happening to me."

"How about we start right at the beginning?" He asked still looking as calm as ever.

"Are you guys trained to always be calm?" He chuckled rubbing his mustache.

"No.."

I nodded slowly then looked at the ceiling. "What's your name?" I

asked.

"Mthunzi Brown.."

"Do you really want to go down where it all started?"

"I have all the time in the world."

I looked at him then the ceiling. "I see.."

I told him everything. Even the things I never thought I could ever tell anyone. The things that happened with Aunt Edith's husband. The things that happened with Zamo. The things I had buried deep down. I told him everything. His facial expression never changed. It remained the same as he wrote something on his small notebook. He always asked leading questions. I guess he wanted me to tell him everything.

"Why didn't you tell your Aunt about her husband rapping you?"

"She wouldn't have believed me."

"So you kept quiet till when?"

"Till he died."

"How old were you when he died?"

"15.. I killed him."

"Did you feel better after that?"

"No but I moved on."

"Zamo.. Your neighbour's son.. He also rapped you?"

"He did. I went to his house. He was my boyfriend. We always kissed but it always ended with kissing. Not that day though.. He wanted more. I told him No but he locked the door and had his way."

"And you kept quiet?"

"I told my Aunt.. That's when she said she couldn't stay with me anymore because I was causing problems for her."

"So you stayed with your cousin?"

"Yes.."

"When you slept with men for money.. How did it feel?"

"I had no choice."

"So when you started doing drugs.. Did it help?"

"It always helped."

"What do you see when you look at yourself on the mirror Latoya?"

I looked at him then smiled. "I see nothing but a fake bitch of a failure. I see an ugly human being with no heart."

"Do you want to know what I see when I look at you?" He asked standing up. I just looked at him in silence.

"I see a strong beautiful woman. I see a focused, a beautiful intelligent smart person. You are so much stronger than you think. A lot has happened in your life. A lot of shit. A lot of disappointments. A lot of pain. Too many Heartbreaks. Too many " I can't do this anymore, " too many.. "I'm giving up" too many lies, too many grudges, hate, secrets..I see a woman who always strives for survival, a woman who has been through a lot but still manages to come up in every situation on top... But you know what Latoya.. I want you to look back just one day in your life.. Just look back to this today.. Quote this day, this minute.. I want you to look back to this period and just analyse it. You will see what I'm talking about. Losing your daughter must have been the hardest thing you ever had to go through and I'm not saying this because I'm supposed to say it.. But what if.. Just what if this was meant to teach you something? I want you look back at this day in the future and just try to analyse everything. Your

heart is heavy at the moment and if you don't free it.. You will never be free. I think we have spoken.. Do you want me to come back tomorrow? "

"I blamed Luthando for our daughter's death. I felt like he didn't do enough. Like as her father.." I wiped away my tears. "I felt like he failed her. Like he failed us. I guess I have been selfish.."

Mthunzi smiled then buttoned his coat.

"You think?"

I covered my face crying. "I'm so selfish!"

"Hey.. Look.." He said taking my hands off my face. "People are different. We are different. You are mourning. Nobody mourns the same way. I just want you to take this moment.. To take as much as you need.. Would you rather go on and act the way you are acting. Pushing everyone away, everyone who cares about you and love you so to be lonely or get better? Get better for your own sake? Think about it.."

"I just want to sleep and never wake up."

"Is it worthy it though? Do you think everyone who go through the worst in life should just kill themselves because life is hard?" I just stared at him in silence because he broke the silence with a smile.

"You are beautiful.."

I chuckled in confusion. "What?"

"You are beautiful.. In and out."

[JANINE]

I sighed then lay my head on his chest. It had been hours since I sat on the plane and I was glad we were already in a connected

plane back home. This was the worst part of traveling. The amount of time we had to sit in the plane. They were the worst.

"Babe..?" King said shaking me softly.

"Mhmm.."

I heard him chuckle. "We are almost home.."

"I missed home.."

"I doubt.." I giggled raising my head from his chest.

"Well I was really having a good time in Mexico.. You couldn't really blame me."

"I love it when I have you all to myself."

"Me too.. Are you going to Capetown when we get home?"

"Yeah.. Just for a day."

It had taken a lot of time for King to open a brunch of his business in Capetown but as soon as he did everything started flowing smoothly though that required constant traveling to Capetown. I hated the nights I had to sleep alone on our bed, the nights became longer.

I lay back my head on his chest and listened to his heartbeat.

Opening my eyes King was shaking me.

"Hey baby.. We are home."

"We are?"

"Yeah.. Come." I took off my seatbelt then stood up. Getting out of the plane I could easily breathe in the air of home.

"Are you good?" King asked as we walked out of the airport. I nodded stretching my neck.

"Yeah.. Just tired."

"I will give you a massage when we get home.."

"I would love that.." We got in our hired cab which took us

straight home.

"What?" I exclaimed as we walked inside the house. Everything was upside down. Glasses broken.

"Babe don't touch anything.. I'm calling my security team." King said taking his phone. I rushed upstairs to our bedroom. I sucked in my breath when I looked at how everything was upside down. Slowly I made my way to the closet. Most of the clothes were on the floor. My whole new wardrobe was on the floor.

"Babe?" King called out. I walked out of the closet, I couldn't miss the shocked expression that was reflected on his face.

"King what happened?"

"I think someone broke in.." I walked to my hairdressing table then took the case that had all my jewelry. Everything was inside.

"Did they take anything?"

I shook my head. "No.. Everything is here. This wasn't a break in King. Somebody did all this on purpose."

"Who? One of your criminals?"

"Gina did this.."

He laughed. "Ok babe I know she tried some funny funnies on our wedding day but accusing her of this is a bit extreme."

"She's the only one who could have done this King."

"Nope.. She's in New York.. With her son."

"And how do you know that?"

"Janine babe.. Let the security team do their job."

"Kingsley how did you know that Gina is in New York? Have you been talking to her?"

"Babe.."

"Have you been talking to her King?"

"She called.."

"When?"

"A while ago.."

"And why didn't you tell me?" He ran his hands in his hair.

"Because I knew you would react like this."

"React like what? This is the same woman who wanted to prevent us from getting married! This woman is your ex wife!"

"Babe calm down.."

"Are you financing her?"

"Janny..—"

I laughed. "Wow! Wow King!"

"I don't want us to fight."

"I want to sleep. I'm tired. We have that dinner with Orlando and Stefanie." I said walking out after taking my car keys. I felt betrayed yet again at his hands.

I walked back to the living room and just then security team was arriving. I walked past them and went straight to my car. Getting inside the car I adjusted my seat that now it was laying flat down. I locked myself inside the car then took a deep breath before I closed my eyes.

"Babe!" He called out making me open my eyes. I stared at him for a while then unlocked the door and stepped out. It was already dark. He looked so worried.

"I thought you left."

"And where would I go?"

"Babe I know you are upset but..—"

I raised my head. "I don't want to hear it." I said then walked

back to the house. Everything was now in order. There were no glasses all over the house. Getting to our bedroom it was clean. I got under the shower after stripping and took a long bath. I felt so emotionally tired I wanted to just rest but I couldn't. I had promised Orlando.

I put on my jeans and T-shirt then combed my short hair. King walked in as I put on my sneakers.

He didn't say anything but just walked to the bathroom.

The distance between us was almost palpable. As much as I wanted to reach out I felt betrayed. How could he? Before driving to Orlando's apartment King passed by a liquor shop and bought wine.

"Hey guys!" Stefanie said giving us hugs.

"Hey.." Stefanie was a bubbly soul. He was always happy. Always smiling. Always laughing. I had met him after 5 months of him dating Orlando and they were still going strong

"King.." He said smiling.

"Stefanie.. Good to see you."

Orlando being bisexual still irritated a lot of people including his family. They had officially disowned him and Namhla hated him. All along she had a crush on him but only to find out that there was Stefanie.

"Come in come in.." Stefanie said opening the door much wider. Walking inside the house my eyes fell on Orlando who was setting the table.

"Hey.."

"Lovers are back from vacation?" He asked giving us hugs. King handed him the wine as we sat down.

The dinner as expected went well. Orlando was going to meet Stefanie's parents in a weeks time and he was nervous about it though Stefanie saw no reason for him to be nervous.

After dinner King drove us back home.

"Babe can we talk?"

I ignored him walking to our bedroom. I didn't have anything to say to him. He was the one who had betrayed my trust.

24

[NOMPUMELELO]

I chopped the green pepper humming to Emeli Sande. I had arrived home earlier and I was cooking up a storm for Nicholas. He had gotten the client he had been fishing for a while and that meant a change. He was finally going to look for premises for his business. I nodded my head singing along. Somehow breaking up with Lungile felt as if I had just took off the heavy load which was on my shoulders off. After chopping the green pepper I went to the fridge so to take out my marinated chicken. Placing it on the kitchen counter but that's when I heard the door opening.

"Babe you—" I stopped talking when I realized who it was.

"What are you doing here? Nick had not arrived."

He smiled rubbing his hands together. "I know. He is in a meeting."

I smiled. "Well that's your cue.. You need to leave now."

"And if I don't?"

"I'm forced to call security then."

He chuckled shaking his head.

"Go ahead."

"Lungile stop all this! I don't want this anymore. I love my husband and I don't whatever that was going on between us to continue." He smiled as he closed the distance between us.

"I started it." He whispered slowly. "And I will be the one to end it."

"Lungile stop all this!" I begged.

"I will.. After I'm done." He roughly kissed me, making our teeth clash for a while. He stepped away from me after a while and I could easily taste blood in my mouth.

He got hold of the hem of my summer floral dress. It was new and short. I had bought it so to wear it for Nick. Without thinking twice he teared it from the side. I stood there with my jaw right on the floor. Taking it off me he ripped my panties into two pieces. As much as my heart was beating so fast I was so turned on. He unclipped my bra then took it off. Picking me up he placed me on the kitchen counter. He ate my pussy so bad I felt as if I was just going to die from the pleasure. He looked satisfied when raised his head from my pussy, his face wet.

"Does he do it like me?" He whispered as he thrust his finger inside me. "Huh? Does he do it like me?"

I closed my eyes. I wasn't going to answer that even if I wanted to. He placed me down then made me turn around and place my hands on the kitchen counter. He stuck his dick in my pussy from behind and fucked me hard. All the shitty attitude I had been giving him, he fucked it out of me. He was so rough and I loved it. It was not too much but just enough. He could feel his balls slap against my thighs as he thrust in and out pulling my

weave so hard in the process.

The moment it was all over I felt all the juices streaming down from my pussy.

"We will meet tomorrow at the airport." He said before walking out leaving me vibrating. I took a deep breath as tears left my eyes.

"Babe this is good." I smiled then took a sip of my juice.

"I made it all for you."

"And that's why I love you."

"I love you more.."

"By next week I would have bought you your car.." He said excitedly.

I cleared my throat. "The car can wait babe.. I will take mine to the garage."

"No. I'm going to buy you the car. I promised."

"Ok.. Ummh tomorrow I'm leaving for London." I finally said. He looked at me then his plate.

"I would have really loved to come with but right now I'm extra busy."

"It's ok. I understand."

"Thank you."

Right after dinner I went to our bedroom to start packing while he went to the study room. I took out my small suitcases then quickly packed my clothes. I was coming back on Sunday night so I really didn't need a lot of clothes.

After packing I lay on the bed thinking about Lungile and his bitch. I could still hear he words ring in my ears.

"Hey.." Nicholas said walking inside the bedroom. I looked at him

surprised. This wasn't the time he usually slept.

"Already sleeping?" I asked. I had a thought of calling Lungile so he can explain what he was doing with that bitch before Nick walked in.

"No.. I just wanted to tell you about that Switzerland trip with Lungile and his friends that was cancelled a year ago."

"Oh?"

"Yeah.. It seems like it's on. We are going in a week's time."

"How many are we again?"

"It's us, and 5 of Lungile's friends with their girls and Lungile himself."

"Ok."

"Yeah.. I didn't want to tell you the last minute."

"I think we all deserve a break. Especially you."

"Yeah.. Ok, let me get back to work."

"Ok." I watched him as he walked out then started thinking about the trip. Lungile couldn't bring that bitch of his or else Nick was going to know. My subconscious gave me a look of "that's what you get for being married and fighting over ya sides cause ya ass is a whore!"

I threw my head on the pillow and closed my eyes. I started crying for a reason only God knew. Maybe it was because Nicholas was perfect and I kept messing it up and the fact that I couldn't stop all the shit I was doing made me even cry harder. After a while I had stopped crying and I was feeling so sleepy.

"I was thinking maybe we could go out for some drinks tonight." Janine said as I put my suitcase in the car.

"Oh I can't love, I'm traveling out of the country today."

"Oh business?"

I hesitated a bit. "Yes.. Is everything ok?"

"Nompumelelo you are still cheating ain't you?"

I opened my mouth to protest but only to close it again.

"I can't believe this!" She whispered.

"Look it's not your place to judge me."

"It definitely is not but if you don't stop all this you are going to lose your husband! Do you love this guy?"

"What? No! It's just sex and nothing more."

"Lelo you have to stop all this nonsense."

"I know.. And I'm going to."

"When?"

"As soon as I come back. I promise."

"I really have a bad feeling."

"Don't worry. I'm going to end it as soon as I come back. Look I have to go. We will talk ok?"

"Yeah.."

I hung up then put my phone away getting inside the car.

[JANINE]

I put my phone away as I walked inside the station. I was early because I had left home earlier. Things between King and I were just not making me comfortable. I didn't understand why he was talking to Gina behind my back and on top of that financially supporting her. This was the same lady who wanted to ruin us. The moment I got in my office my phone started ringing. I took it out already feeling tired as I sat down.

"King." I answered.

"Where are you?"

"I'm at work."

"At this time?"

"Yes at this time."

"Look I know you are upset and I understand why."

"Good for you."

"But we need to talk about this as a married couple. You can't keep avoiding it. You need to hear me out."

"Hear you out? King you are busy talking to your ex wife behind my back, sending her money and you talk about hearing you out?"

"Yes! Janine you need to give me a chance to explain."

"Well right now I'm busy."

"I'm really getting tired of this!"

"Getting of this? What is this you are getting tired of? Me?"

"Yes you! Every time we come upon a hiccup you are always running. You don't want to listen. You come to a conclusion before hearing my side of the story."

"Ohh so now I'm tiring you?"

"Yes you are! Janine we are married and the sooner you get that through your mind the better!"

"Well we can always divorce if you are sick and tired of me!"

"What?"

"You heard me."

"You know what.. I don't have time for this. I'm going to Capetown."

"Have fun!" He chuckled then hung up.

I sat there as tears streamed from my eyes. I didn't even

understand what was going on. I covered my face with my hands as my lips quivered.

Big girls don't cry, I chastened myself as I tried to hold it but that only made a stifled sob to escape my lips.

I walked inside Namhla's office feeling tired. She smiled as I sat down.

"Wow girl.. Look what the cat has dragged."

"Hey.."

"What's up?"

I sighed. "King and I had a fight."

"Again?"

"What do you mean again?"

"Well the last fight was a few weeks ago when he didn't come back the day he was supposed to come back from Capetown."

I sighed. "Is it me?"

"Is it you what?"

"Am I the one always starting fights?"

She smiled apologetically. "Yes."

"King is still talking to Gina and financially supporting her behind my back. I found out yesterday."

"He is?"

"Yes. I feel betrayed Namhla. That woman has been nothing but a problem in our lives."

"So what happened?"

"We had a fight about it in the morning and I told him we can always divorce if he wants."

"Wow!"

"I was just angry."

"So you suggested you guys divorce?"

"Yes."

She just stared at me in silence.

"Look I know you have something to say, say it."

"Today I have nothing to say but... Let me tell you about this hot man I met earlier on today! That guy is hot! He is all combinations of hot. Together with his friend." She giggled with a naughty look on her face.

"The first time I met this guy was at your wedding but we didn't talk because he just disappeared. I met him yesterday at some bar I was meeting a client at. Yuhhh friend! that guy.. He is hot mara his friend." She screamed making laugh.

"Girl tell me!"

"So I walk inside the bar right? I'm putting on my new jeans, a black vest and a black blazer with those red bottoms wabona!" I laughed harder as she narrated her story.

"Bestie let me tell you! Then kana I notice uguy's friend first. He he! That guy.. He is hot. Look I have met hot guys before mara that one! He takes the trophy. Hey that guy is hot. Those muscles.. Shhhh girl! Those tattoos.. Heey that guy is a mixture of trey songz and... And I don't know who! Shame God took his time with him. His mother should be proud wherever he is!"

I chuckled. "So you like the friend?"

"No. He's too hot. I can't deal. Now him.. Uguy now.. Ok both of them.. They breathe in gym. They smell gym cause those muscles baby... Those muscles are life! They probably work out everyday. So my guy, not the friend.." She said rolling her eyes while smiling. "I get inside the bar right and I sit next to them

waiting for the client. My guy is listening to his hot friend, LT, talking about his baby mama.. I'm not really listening but it seems like he's really stressed cause baby mama is depressed and won't accept help and blah blah and my guy keeps saying "nah bruh LT, you need to understand where she's coming from," So now the hot friend excuses himself and yours truly do what? Says hi.. I can't let such slip through my fingers."

I laughed. "And?"

"And then we hit it off. While we are still talking his hot friend comes back. Apparently he has to go something with his son what what! I'm happy because we are alone now eish but that hot friend's voice.. Fawtha Gawd!" She said laughing making me laugh too.. "So anyways I'm happy because me and uguy we are alone now, no disturbances. My guy tells me how beautiful I am.. He's charming I can't stop blushing then the client comes and ruins the moment. But he took my business card. Maybe he will call."

"Haii I'm happy for you, I hope he is the one."

"Me too.. Soon enough I will 32. I need to settle down."

"I hope it works out."

"But I know he probably has a girlfriend but at this stage, unless he has a ring on his finger.. He is for everybody!" I laughed hard, she surely had finally met him.

I walked inside the house, it was already dark. It was so silent and the lights were off. I knew he wasn't home and he was in Capetown. I switched on the lights then walked to the living room. Switching on the TV I sighed. There went my night alone.

[LATOYA]

I looked at myself on the small mirror. I couldn't tell if I looked ugly or not but I knew I once looked better. I pressed my lips together tightly trying to stop the quivering. I felt as if I was in purgatory. I blinked my tears away then took a deep breath. I wished the dark circles beneath my eyes were not there, I clearly looked beyond ravaged. I tried my best smile while staring at myself but only to have tears fall from my eyes. I hastily wiped them away, when I woke up I had promised myself that I wasn't going to cry anymore but it was too hard.

"There's nothing wrong with crying." Mthunzi said walking inside. I placed the mirror away.

"When am I going home?"

"How are you feeling?"

"I'm fine. I want to go home."

"Well I'm not the one who's discharging you."

"Then what do you want?"

"To talk.." I groaned burying my face in my hands. I didn't want to talk. I wanted to go home. I wanted to be myself again. I wanted my baby..

"I just want to go home.. Let me go home!" I said trying to hold back my cries. I was tired. I was so tired. Couldn't they see?

"How are you feeling today?" I kept my face in my hands which were shaking. I wondered if people never got tired of asking the very sane question. It was the same question everyday and I hated it. I hated it so much I wanted everyone to stop. I kept quiet with my hands still on my face.

"You know if you don't cooperate you will spend more time

here?"

I took my hands off my face. "Is this a government hospital?"

"No.. Private."

"Do you realize how much I'm paying this fucken damn hospital."

He shrugged. "I wouldn't know."

"How about you go and find out? I don't think I still want you as my therapist."

He smiled. "Well..—"

"You better watch how you talk to me. I'm more of a client than a patient."

He still kept his smile for a few seconds before he laughed.

"Those are very beautiful flowers." He said looking at the flowers which were by side. I stole a glance at them then looked at him. They were Luthando's flowers.

"I want to go home."

"And you will.."

"I want to rest. Please leave."

"Well I guess there's nothing I will be writing on the progress list today."

"What do you want me to say?"

"Let's start at how you are feeling."

"You can't force me to talk."

"Yes.. I can't but—"

"But nothing." I said pressing the emergency button.

"Latoya I'm trying to help you."

"I will help myself like I have always done. I will not pretend I'm ok when I'm not but I'm fine the way I am. I can fight my own battles. I don't need you or this stupid hospital. I'm not going to

apologize for the way I'm acting, I never said I was perfect but thank you. Thank you for making me see my fault. You can now leave. I want to rest."

He smiled. "I have never met anyone like you. So.. Fierce."

"I'm glad that's what you see. You can leave, thank you."

"Well I will see you later.." He said then walked out. I sighed as soon as I was alone then reached for my phone. I switched it on then swipped away the notifications that had popped up.

I went to my contacts and went straight to Terry's number. I hadn't spoken to her in a long time. She took her time to answer.

"Hello?"

"Hey Terry, it's me."

"Toya?"

I sighed out of relief. "Yes. Look I need your help."

"Ok.."

"Ok, what just happened?" She asked as she drove away.

"Just drive." I muttered trying to get my head clear. Sneaking out of the hospital had been easier than I had thought. Well I couldn't say sneaking out exactly, the correct phrase was 'releasing myself.'

I directed Terry to my house, well the house I had inherited from Rockelle. One of the houses I had inherited.

"Thanks.." I said getting off the car.

"Hey.. I heard about your daughter." She said before I could close the door. I stared at her for a while before I let out a brave smile.

"It's ok, it's life." I said then closed the door and rushed inside the house. I unlocked the door then walked in and went straight

to the bedroom. Getting inside I was met by my bottles of whisky.

I swallowed then took them all outside to the dustbin. After disposing them I took bottles of codeine and threw them away. Walking back inside the house I felt relieved. Yes losing Ocean still hurt. I could never stop hurting at the loss of my child. She was always going to be a part of me. But the way I was acting was definitely not it. I had Quinton and he needed me. I went back to the bedroom then stripped off the clothes Terry had brought for me and got under the shower. I opened the cold tap and took a long bath. I couldn't go on the way I was.

Getting out of the shower I took out my suitcase then placed it on the bed. Moving inside this a house a month ago was because I felt suffocated at Luthando's house. His Aunts were always on my case on how to mourn my own child. I opened the suitcase and took out my addidas sweatpants and T-shirt. I quickly changed into them.

Somehow knowing that I was about to take a drastic move made my blood rush. A small wave of excitement was radiating throughout my body. I combed my short hair then ran lipgloss on my lips. Walking out of the house I took a deep breath in.

"You can do this.." I told myself.

I texted an uber to come and get me. 30 minutes later the uber was dropping me by Luthando's house. The gate surprisingly was open. I walked in taking charge of the atmosphere surrounding me. I couldn't let myself feel weak or down. I had to be strong. For my son. For my daughter. Getting to the door I knocked for a bit. The quietness made me try to open the door

and it wasn't locked.

Walking in, everything was in order. I walked past the living room and went upstairs. I wondered why he didn't use the other house and still stayed at the house we had chosen together. I heard a voice at the guestroom and I found myself walking right there. Opening the door my eyes fell on Nothando who had my son in her arms.

"Latoya!" She said out of shock.

"Nothando.."

25

[LATOYA]

"Hey.. I didn't know you were.. Ummh coming today." She said with shaky voice.

"Aww.."

She smiled. "You look.. Well."

"Thank you."

"Latoya I'm not sleeping with Luthando. I'm just helping him with his son."

"My son."

She smiled. "Yes.. Your son."

I chuckled. It was so funny how she never visited me when I needed her but was quick to help Luthando with my son. I walked inside the room trying to keep calm. "Don't show them how they get to you.." I whispered to myself.

"And thank you. For your help."

"It's ok. Quinton is a lovely boy. Luthando went to get him some food."

I took a deep breath. "Now that I'm here, I think I will manage quite well." I said steadily.

"Uhh yeah.."

"Can I have him?" I said stretching my hands.

"He cries when given to unfamiliar faces."

I smiled. "Nothando give me my son."

"Latoya why can't we wait for Luthando to come back. You —"

"Nothando give me my son." I whispered trying to keep my rage at check.

She blinked a couple of times. "Toya he—"

"Give. Me. My. Son." I said emphasizing each and every word while smiling.

"Ok.." She said then handed me Quinton. He immediately started crying.

"Toya he doesn't —"

"You can leave. Thank you so much for your help."

"|—"

"You can leave. Don't forget to close the door behind you." I said turning away from her. I exhaled as I remembered how the energy I carried could be easily picked up by my baby. I placed him on my shoulder then started patting his back softly.

Nothando took her bag then walked out.

"Shhh mommy is home.." I whispered as I continued patting him. Looking around the room I could easily see how the room had slightly turned into a nursery room.

He was quiet after a while. The door opening made me raise my head. Luthando walked in holding a plastic.

"Toots you —"

"Sshhhh... He's sleeping." I whispered looking at Quinton who was now sleeping peacefully in my arms. Luthando just stood by the door till I put Quinton in his baby bed then walked out.

Getting to the living room he was behind you.

"Nothando was just helping around."

I smiled. "Good for you."

"Don't be like that. I wasn't coping."

"What did I say?"

"I can tell you are upset."

"Since when did you start being a prophet?"

"Babe.. You—" he was cut short by the knock on the door. I just stared at him trying to keep my emotions at check. The first thing I heard was her voice.

"Hey! I brought the kids!" She said loudly. I pushed my legs to the door and stood besides Luthando. She was wearing a beyond short dress. She gave me a wide fake smile while batting her fake lashes at me.

"Hi Latoya, good to see you. My condolences to the loss of your daughter. So sad."

I took a deep breath. In then out. "Thank you."

"There's this therapist I know that—"

"You should leave." Luthando said cutting her sentence short.

"But I brought the kids for you. It's been time since you last saw Thando and Lwandle." I laughed. Really laughed.

"Wow!"

"Nice names huh?" She asked smiling.

"I know you are hoping to see me angry or upset or hurt or just something... But it's a shame I'm not even bothered. You are

nothing but a pathetic attention seeking naive child. You need guidance."

She laughed. "Me? Guidance?"

"Yes. Guidance. If a man does not love you, he will never love you no matter how much you try. You need to grow up. You need to take charge of your life. Go back to school, get a degree. Look for a job or start your own thing. Be a woman of value not a woman of cheapness. I pity you."

She just laughed but I could see I had hit where it hurts.

"I can always sponsor you to go back to school but.. Till you make up your mind, maybe you really need to leave. Luthando is not OUR man. He can never be OUR man. He has never been OUR man. Get that through your head sweetie.. Next time when you bring the kids, call first but on the brighter side, beautiful kids you have."

"They are his."

"I know, and don't worry, we will support the kids. Luthando and I. We will talk." I said then closed the door on her face. I turned and looked at Luthando.

"I didn't know she was coming."

"I don't care."

I walked to the couch then sat down. He sat besides me and pulled unto his lap. He smelt so good I wanted to stay in his arms forever. I closed my eyes then inhaled in his cologne.

"Toots I love you.." He said kissing my forehead.

"Good for you."

He chuckled then pulled my head off his chest. "You really like messing with me don't you?"

"No. You like messing with yourself." He cupped my face with one hand then kissed me. My body was quick to respond at his lips against mine. Slowly we kissed with him leading. It felt so right, I couldn't even bring myself to deny the connection between us. He let go of my lips then wrapped his arms around me tightly.

"I want you with me forever." I didn't respond but just let him hold me.

"I know this may sound corny but I see us getting married." I chuckled raising my head so that I was now looking into his eyes.

"You see us getting married?"

"Yeah.. I see us getting married, staying together, having more kids, being happy and loving each other." I looked at him for a while before putting my head back on his chest.

"That was the most corniest thing you have ever said."

"I know.. But I can't help it."

"In your version where's Nikiwe?"

"I see us only. Me and you. Together. Forever."

I sighed. "I'm sorry. I know I have been—"

"Shh.. It's ok. You are here now." He whispered. "I love you. Quinton loves you. It's ok."

I wrapped my arms around him. "He's cute."

"Like me.. I know."

I laughed. "Stop lying to yourself. You are not cute that afro shit in your head makes it worse. You look like..." I chuckled letting go of him and standing up. "You look like something you shouldn't be looking like."

"Mxm.." Just then I heard Quinton's cries.

"Already awake?"

"I think he's hungry." I took the plastics of whatever he had bought from the floor then walked with them to the kitchen.

"What does he eat? Is he allergic to banana's like..." I closed my eyes as I stopped myself. Not today Latoya! I told myself. Today no waterworks. I was doing ok so far. I felt Luthando hug me from behind.

"We will get through it together ok babe?"

I nodded as I wiped away my tears. He turned me around then picked me up and placed on the kitchen counter.

"Maybe a vacation would do you good. Us I mean.."

"A vacation? I just stepped up in Q's life. Isn't it too early for vacations?"

"No. You need a break and so do I. We are going to Switzerland in a week's time."

[NOMPUMELELO]

"Hey.." Lungile whispered as I opened my eyes.

"Hey.."

"How was your sleep?" I looked at him then smiled.

"It was ok."

"I want to fuck you so hard for your misdemeanors." He whispered while caressing my thigh. I looked at him in shock then around to see if anyone had heard him.

"Not here!"

"Of cause. As soon as we land."

I relaxed then rested my head on his chest. He kept caressing

my thigh till I fell asleep.

Waking up again we were almost there and the air hostess was telling us to put on our seatbelts. I looked around as I put on my seatbelt. We were not really a lot at the first class seats. The moment we stepped out of the plane I felt excitement push in me. Sexual excitement. I couldn't stop myself from thinking about all the things that Lungile could possibly do to me.

Arriving at the hotel he had booked us in, I went to take a bath first. I was tired and just needed a bath. I made a mental note to call Nicholas and tell him that I had arrived safely. I didn't want him worrying.

After a while I felt Lungile's hands hugging me from behind. I bit my lower lip as he rubbed himself on my butt. He cupped my boobs then squeezed them a little hard earning a moan from my lips.

After a while I was in his arms with my legs wrapped around his waist and my back against the shower walls and he was having me. I felt myself melt at his relentless moves, he was pushing me so hard I didn't even know what to do with myself.

After a while I was scratching him while screaming his name. I came all-around him but that didn't slow down his movements. He started going hard and fast. With the way he was groaning I knew he was close. I felt myself build up yet again till we fell together.

We stayed like that for a while catching our breaths. He turned off the tap then walked out with me still in his arms. He placed me the bed the stepped away from me. I looked at him carefully as he walked towards his overnight bag which was constantly

making me feel as if I had carried a lot of unnecessary clothes. He took out cuffs then walked back with them. It wasn't the first time and I was ready for whatever he was going to be dishing out. I was always down for anything with Lungile. He tied me up as usual then made me kneel on the bed giving him my ass. After a while I felt something a bit cold in my rear. I knew what it was. It wasn't going to be the first time he did it. I was never a fan of anal sex before, well before Lungile I never even wanted to hear about it but when Lungile introduced it to me I didn't say no. It had been actually nice though just uncomfortable. Slowly he worked his way in and out while his fingers massaged my clit gently. By the time we were finally done I was beyond exhausted. All I wanted to do was rest but I wasn't going to do that before I called Nick.

I called him with the hotel phone. His phone rang unanswered for a while.

"Nicholas speaking."

"Hey baby.. It's me."

"Hey.. I was starting to get worried."

"I know love.. I'm sorry, I decided to take a shower first." I responded while Lungile ran his fingers on my thighs.

"I already miss you."

"I miss you too babe.."

"You are coming back on sunday right?"

"Yeah.." Lungile ran his fingers across my clit making me whimper softly. I took a deep breath.

"Babe I have to get going. I will call you tomorrow morning. I'm tired."

"Ok, I love you.."

"I love you more." I hung up then looked at Lungile.

"You shouldn't do that while I'm on the phone."

He smirked then got on top of me while opening my legs wider.

"Really?" He said as he rubbed my entrance.

"Yes.." He slowly sank into me.

"I want you to myself." He whispered moved his waist making close my eyes.

"I want you all to myself.." He whispered again while he slowly moved in and out of me. I didn't understand what he meant. I mean I was with him.

"I don't want to share you.." I wrapped my legs around him as I started meeting him thrust for thrust. My body started tensing as he went deeper in me.

"I don't want anyone with you but me." He whispered again as he put his hand between us then down to my clit. He rubbed my clit as he went deeper in me. I moaned loudly as I felt it build up.

God! Why was sex with him so good? I fisted my fingers on the shits grabbing them as I felt myself reaching the end point.

"I want you to leave him." He whispered making open my eyes at the shock of his words. I closed them almost immediately when a furious climax took over sending me off to paradise.

"Lungile.." I said his name softly while shaking him. It was just after four and I really couldn't sleep. All I was thinking about was his statement. All I kept wondering was if he was serious or not.

"Lungile wake up.." I said shaking him again. He squeezed my ass a bit then whispered "what?"

"Wake up.."

He groaned before pushing me unto him while putting my leg on his waist so that now our privates were touching. See? He's all about sex nothing more, I told myself but deep down I knew he was being serious when he said I should leave my husband.

"What is it?"

"Lungile what did you mean when you said I should leave Nick?" I asked with my heart in my mouth.

"What did you think I meant?"

"I don't know that's why I'm asking."

"I meant exactly that." He said, his voice soft. I could feel him getting hard. I didn't want sex to get in the middle of the conversation but with the way he was holding me there was no way I could get out of his hold.

"What do you mean, 'I meant exactly that?' Lungile you—"

"I want you to leave him Lelo. I'm tired of this game. I think at this stage we have fully established that there's something going on between us."

"Yes! We have! And that something is sex!"

"Stop lying to yourself."

"Lungile I love Nicholas!"

"The what are you doing here? With me?"

"What?"

"If you really did love him then we wouldn't be here today. Stop lying to yourself." He said breaching my entrance. I sighed at the delicious feeling of having him deep in me. I never got satiated with him. Never.

"I can't leave my husband.." I whispered as he pulled out slowly only to ram back in me hard making me yelp.

"Yes you can. And you are going to."

"No.."

[JANINE]

I ran past the park, pushing myself harder and harder. My mind had completely zoned out of my surrounding as I had just one goal in my head. I snapped out of it when I bumped into something that forced me to lose balance and land right on the ground with my ass.

"I'm so sorry.." The guy I had bumped into apologized as helped me up.

I cleared my throat while I dusted myself. "It's ok."

"Are you ok?" He asked rubbing my shoulder. I moved back uncomfortably.

"Uhh I'm ok. I'm fine."

"Miguel.." He said stretching his hand.

"Janine.." I responded putting my hands behind me. He smiled then ran his hand in his hair.

"Nice to meet you Janine.. And again I'm sorry."

I smiled politely already turning. "It's ok." I started walking back home. I didn't even turn. Getting home the first thing I did was to check if I had a missed call or a text from King. There was non. I sighed as I swallowed my pride dialing his number. The phone rang for a while before it was answered.

"Hey.."

"I'm in a meeting."

I bit my lower lip. "I'm sorry."

"Oh.."

"I'm really sorry babe.. I just.. I don't like the fact that you are busy talking to your ex wife behind my back."

"She called me using the police phone. She had been arrested so I told her I would buy her out from the company. Because she was desperate she agreed. I gave her the money then she went to her family in New York. That was the only time I spoke to her and I made it clear that I don't want her."

"I'm sorry but I just wish you could have told me."

"I'm sorry." I took a deep breath out of relief.

"I miss you."

"Me too.. But I'm probably going to come back tomorrow morning. There's a deal I'm trying to seal with the government."

"Ohh.. I'm happy for you baby.."

"Be happy for us. And one more thing, mom is coming in a few days. You can talk to her and hear her plans."

"Ok, I love you.."

"I love you more.." He hung up.

I sighed then dialed his mother's number.

She answered after a while.

"Janine sweetheart.."

"Good morning Joanne, King tells me you plan on visiting us for a while."

"Yes.. Unless that's a problem my dear.."

"Oh no it's not. We would love having you around."

"Great, I hope you had those tiles removed hunny, they chase guests away."

I smiled tightly getting irritated. "I did. So when do you plan on coming?"

"I'm still planning but I'm going to be staying for a while. I miss my son. Ever since he relocated to that foreign land of he never visits or calls." I rolled my eyes.

"He has been busy lately Joanne."

"My poor baby.. He's probably overworking himself. I'm so worried about him. If only he didn't relocate now look what's happening."

I sighed. "As soon as you have your plans in order please inform me."

"King will tell you. I will keep him updated."

"I'm sure, good-bye." I said then immediately hung up. When I said she had her moments, this were one of her moments. I exhaled out then walked to the bathroom. I caught a glimpse of my reflection on the mirror. I went and stood in front of the mirror.

I looked beautiful if I said so myself.

"Shit work!" I muttered as I dashed under the shower laughing at my own silliness.

26

[LATOYA]

I held Quinton in my arms as Luthando took out the baby carriage from the boot. I put Quinton inside the carriage then started pushing it with Luthando besides me. I smiled as we approached them at the backyard.

"Ntwana!" Some guy said fist bumping with Luthando.

"CJ.."

The guy cleared his throat then looked at me. "Hi, I'm CJ.. You

must be thee Latoya that got my nigga going crazy."

I chuckled. "It's nice to meet you."

"The pleasure is all mine babe.. The pleasure is all mine!"

Luthando wrapped his hand around my waist making CJ laugh.

"He's jealous.." He mouthed then winked and walked away laughing.

"Are you ok Toots?" Luthando asked kissing my cheek.

"Yeah.." I looked at the small crowd taking a deep breath. "I'm good let's go." We walked towards them and now they were all looking at us.

"The fuck are you staring at?" Luthando asked making everyone laugh.

"LT we are staring at the beautiful lady, not you so chill." Some guy said coming towards me. The guy took my hand and kissed it.

"Hi baby, I'm Trevor but you may call me T." He said introducing himself.

"I'm Latoya.."

"We know babe.. We know, we have been knowing for some years now." He said making me laugh.

"Anyways let me introduce you.. Ummh that over there," he said pointing at the lady with the dreadlocks who was sitting on a campchair. "That's my wife, Tanya." She gave me a polite smile.

"And besides her it's Caroline." The white lady with the short curly black hair waved at me. "And that over there besides her, is her husband, Collen. And after that we have Akhona and Nkosi, then Puleng over there who's CJ's wife and then Nicholas.." I looked at Lelo's husband surprised at the fact that he was also

friends with Luthando's crew. "His wife unfortunately is not here. We also have Lungile who is not here but you will meet them at the trip. Now guys.. This is Latoya, Luthando's only and I mean only woman with their son Quinton over there."

I smiled. "It's nice to meet you all. I'm sure by the end of the trip I would remember everyone's name." I said making them laugh.

Soon enough I was back in Luthando's arms. The past few days he had been treating me like I could break and he was still at it.

"Can I see your baby?" CJ's wife said smiling. I dragged the carriage's shade back exposing my sleeping baby. He was so cute, he reminded me of Ocean when she was his age. I smiled at the speechless facial expression she had.

"Oh my word. This baby is so beautiful." She said kneeling down besides the carriage and holding his tiny hand.

"Thank you.."

She smiled then got up. "Well.. What can we expect from having such a beautiful mother." I laughed pulling up the shade trying to protect him from the sun.

"Thank you.. For the compliment."

After a while I had found out that Caroline and her husband had four kids, Nkosi had two from his previous marriage and non with Akhona, CJ and Puleng had non. Trevor had made a joke about it but I could see the joke didn't sit well with Puleng.

Trevor had one. The crew was lively to be around with, at least there was no preparing of salads or marinating the meat. Puleng had everything prepared by the restaurant she had hired to cater for us.

"I once read an article about you running Collop." Caroline said

as I fed Quinton who was now awake. Luthando was busy drawing circles on my back gently, he had been on my side ever since we arrived and he wasn't willing to move.

"Oh," I responded not sure of what exactly I was supposed to say.

"Yeah.. It's so nice meeting such talented people right in person."

"So now what do you do?" Puleng asked.

"Nothing yet."

There was silence for a while.

"I'm really sorry about your daughter. You know, my Aunt's daughter also lost her child due to cancer. She —"

"It's life Akhona and I will pull through. I hope your Aunt does too." I said smiling. I could see the way her husband looked at her made her sit back.

"Anyways so the trip.." Tanya said changing the subject.

"I see the party has started without us." A voice said making me turn. I looked back at my son who was in my arms. I wasn't going to be part of Luthando's drama.

"Hey Nikiwe.." Akhona said standing up. I put Quintin's milk aside then put him back in the carriage.

"Luthando so you don't invite your wife?" I heard Juliette's voice say in a nonchalant manner but I knew what she and Nikiwe were trying to achieve but unfortunately for them, at this stage in life I really didn't care.

"Juliette you are starting." Luthando said getting up. I remained sitted while humming a song to playful Quinton. I didn't blame him for being too playful, last night he had kept both Luthando

and I awake.

"Starting what? Nikiwe is still your wife and you just left her with the kids."

"Juliette you are really pushing my hand. You are really pushing my hand."

"Luthando calm down. It's not her fault." I heard Tanya laugh. The way she just laughed made it hard for to suppress my chortle. She stood up from where she was sitting then sat where Luthando had been sitting.

"I can't believe you are with this prostitute that mom never even —" she fell silent immediately. I knew he had slapped her but I didn't bother turning. I kept my eyes on Quinton.

"Iwewe shaa.. You are boss. Your calmness haa I surrender." Tanya whispered laughing. I chuckled shaking my head.

"I know what I'm worth. And it's definitely not arguing over non relevant things."

"Non relevant things like what? Luthando has to support his kids." Nikiwe screamed making me laugh. I stood up and looked at her.

"You really love attention don't you?"

"I want my husband to support his kids."

I smiled. "And like I said yesterday, we will support the kids."

"You and who? I don't want you anywhere near my kids."

"That's still ok. Plus I never said I wanted to go anywhere near your kids." She chuckled as Julie looked at Luthando with tears in her eyes. She was still under confusion.

"Luthando you slapped me?" She prompted.

"Next time you think about saying something about her, you will

think twice. And as for you.." He said looking at Nikiwe. "You are still here?"

"Luthando where do you want me to go? You know I don't have a job."

"What exactly do you want because I'm giving you money every month end."

"You rarely see the kids ever since she —"

"I will not hesitate putting you in line."

I turned then took Q's bag from the the ground. I didn't have time for Nikiwe and Juliette's pathetic games. I started pushing the baby carriage.

"And where do you think you are going?" Julie asked with a sharp voice. I stopped walking and looked at her.

"I think you have a problem with me. A personal problem and this is the right moment to say it."

She laughed shaking her head.

"You don't remember do you?"

"You can always remind me."

"Remember Sbusiso?"

I looked at her while my body cringed.

"You killed him didn't you?"

I took a deep breath. "What are you talking about?" She took a step towards me. Nobody knew. Nobody knew expect me.

"Sibusiso, Latoya Wanju Thagane Samuels," She said slowly. I looked at her wondering how much she knew.. If she knew. "You killed him don't you. You know where his body is don't you?"

I swallowed hard as I tried to fight off that feeling, that feeling I had long buried.

"I'm lost."

"Juliette we get that you don't like Toya but right —" she cut CJ short.

"Sbusiso!" She screamed startling Quinton. "You killed him!" My heart was already beating fast as I looked at her. My own tears were flowing. Nobody was supposed to know.

"You killed him. You killed him. Why?" She whispered as her own tears left her eyes. "Why? Why why why? You don't deserve to be happy."

"Stop.." I whispered.

"Why? Why? You killed him Latoya Wanju Thagana Samuels! You killed him. You murdered him. You are a murderer!"

"Stop.. Stop.." I whispered again. I couldn't help the tears that were gushing from my eyes. Quinton was now crying.

"Murderer! Bloody murderer!" Julie screamed.

"Juliette!" Luthando said pushing her away from me. "Starting from today Nikiwe is your new family. You need help, and I'm sick and tired of this shit. Latoya is here to stay, she's not going anywhere. And you.." He said pointing at Nikiwe. "If I hear you saying in your husband one more time, I will slap you to hell."

Luthando said taking the Carriage from me.

"She's a murderer! Bloody murderer! She killed him!"

Luthando took my hand and dragged me out of CJ's house to the car. He unlocked the car then quickly put Quinton on his baby seat and strapped him. After securing Q he put the carriage back in the boot then took my hand and helped me in the car. Getting on his seat, he started the car almost immediately and drove out. I could still hear her voice as she

screamed murderer. I could still hear her scream his name in my head. I covered my face with my hands as a sob escaped my lips.

I didn't realize the car had stopped till I felt Luthando pulling me onto his lap.

"I had to.." I cried. "I had to.."

[NOMPUMELELO]

"You can't possibly ignore me forever Lelo." Lungile said as I packed my bag.

"I'm not leaving my husband. I'm never going to leave him. I love him."

"So all along—"

"All along we have been having sex! We have been fucking! That's all. I'm not going to leave my husband for you." I closed my bag then put it down ready to leave.

"Look.." He started, his voice soft now. "I know I'm putting much pressure on you and I'm sorry. It's just this sharing game doesn't sit well with me. I love you babe.. And I can make you happy. Happier than he can ever make you."

"Lungile are you listening to yourself?"

"I am.." He pulled me towards me by my waist then smiled.

"Babe I can make you happy. I love you and I know you feel the same too. We can make this work."

I laughed shaking my head. "Lungile!"

"Listen.. I know all this is scary. Babe but listen..—"

"Lungile no! I'm not going to listen to any of the bull you are saying. I love my husband! I'm not going to leave him. I made it

clear to you that I love him from the very the first day. He is my husband and I LOVE HIM!"

"He can't make you happy."

"He is your friend!"

"Acquaintance, we are acquaintances."

"I don't want to to this anymore." I said more resigned. The affair had gone on for too long it had to stop.

"What?"

"I don't want this anymore. You and I are done."

He chuckled. "Ok, now you taking it far."

"No I'm not. We are done. We are over. I don't want this anymore."

He took a deep breath. "Babe look..—"

"No! We are over!" I said grabbed my suitcase and started walking towards the door of the hotel room but before I could get my hands on the door he grabbed me by my waist and yanked me on the bed.

"Look we can make this work. I love you.."

"Lungile I'm someone's wife! I'm a married woman!"

"We can make this work.." He said unzipping my dress.

"Lungile no.."

"Yes.." He pulled the dress off my body followed by panties. He flipped so that now I was laying with my stomach.

"I love you.." He said then made me kneel while pressing my chest on the bed. He rammed into me hard.

"Lungile.. Stop.." I whispered.

"No.. I'm not going to stop. Till you leave him."

He started pushing into me roughly. This was the first time he

had been that rough with me. He kept smirking my ass so hard from time to time again. It was painful yet so good. On and on he went till we exploded together.

"I love you.." He whispered.

I stood by the door for a long time wondering what I had become. There was no way I could love Lungile because I loved Nicholas to death. I loved him so much, he was my husband. My happiness. I felt tears warm my cheeks as I stood right by the door with my bag.

"Babe!" His voice took me by surprise. I looked at him as he stood by the door smiling. He abruptly picked me up then started spinning me.

"Babe I missed you so much."

"I missed you too.." I whispered.

"Are you ok?"

"Yeah.." I smiled. "Just tired."

"Come.. I will run a bath for you." He said taking my bag and my hand. This was the man who loved me unconditionally. The man who loved me for who I was. I was hurting that same man.

Getting inside the bedroom I sat down on the bed and watched him as he walked to the bathroom. Seconds later I heard the water running and he was walking back inside the room.

"Today I was with the crew and guess what?" He said with a naughty smile.

"What?"

"I saw the lady you like. She's also coming with. She's dating the thug."

"Latoya?"

"Yeah.."

"That's great."

"You know babe I really don't like that guy," Nick said taking off my shoes. "I don't like but I tolerate him because he is your brother somehow but the way he loves that woman.. He would do anything for her."

"I know.." I whispered as he started taking off my dress. I stood up so that he doesn't take much time.

"He chose her over his sister and baby mama with two kids. Not a lot of people can do that."

"Aww?"

"Yeah.. He just chose her without second thoughts, without reluctance. Yes I dislike him somehow but I want to be that kind of a husband to you. I know lately I have been.. Neglecting you." I wrapped my arms around his neck.

"It's ok, you have been busy."

"Yes but I should be able to squeeze you in my tight schedule. Babe I love you."

"And I love you more.." I said with my voice breaking. My lips were already quivering and tears were stinging my eyes.

"Lelo what's wrong?" He asked looking so concerned.

"I love you so much Nick.." He smiled then kissed me.

"I love you too baby.."

I looked at my ring as it shone because of the moonlight. I took a deep breath and smiled. I had destroyed everything that I couldn't even think of a happy moment in my marriage without Lungile popping up. I couldn't even think about my wedding day. Every good moment Nick and had, somewhere Lungile had to be

there. I slowly took the ring off my finger as I remembered the day he proposed. How could I do this to him?

"Nicholas I love you.." I whispered softly.

"I never meant to hurt you."

I quickly slipped the ring on my finger when he said something I couldn't hear in his sleep. It was just after midnight but I couldn't sleep. After a while I had made up my mind. I was going to put a total fullstop to the nonsense I was doing. I was going to stop and focus on my marriage.

"Babe!" Nicholas said waking me up. The sun was already coming out. I sat up right and looked at him. He was holding my phone, my heart leaped in my mouth.

"What's wrong?"

"Your phone was ringing.. Some unsaved number. The moment I answered the person dropped the call." I gently took the phone from him to check the number which had called.

My heart stopped beat momentarily. What was Lungile doing?

"I don't even know this number. If it's important the person will call back." I said putting the phone away and getting off bed.

"Come here.. There's something I want you to see.." Nicholas said taking my hand and leading me out of the room. Getting outside my hand fell on my mouth.

"I told you not to.."

"But I did. Do you like it baby?"

"I love it. Thank you.." He gave me the keys to the car that I have been wanting. My inner self gave me a look of "you fuck with his friend, after he does it all this for you. After he does everything in the book to make you happy you still cheat,"

I closed my eyes briefly chasing my tears away. I couldn't breathe. Guilt was strangling me.

"Thank you.. I love it. I love you so much."

"I love you too baby, you are my priority starting from today. I love you."

I wrapped my arms around him.

27

[JANINE]

I took the hairbrush then put it in one of the evidence plastics.

"What do you think happened?" Orlando asked as I handed him the plastic. I looked back at the lady.

"Murder.."

"You think?"

"Yeah.. The marks on her neck even the mess in the house.

There was a struggle here." I said looking around the mess in the hotel room. "I wonder what caused it though. Did the hotel give you the CCTV film?"

He nodded. "Yeah.. But there's nothing. There are no cameras in the passage leading to this room or any other room."

I walked back towards her then kneeled before her. Her neck was bruised together with her face. "I think before he strangled her, he beat her up first."

"He?"

"Yeah.. He. There's a condom."

"We already took fingerprints so we will catch him."

"Yeah.. This is so sad. Who is she?"

"28, Gail Phakadi."

I sighed then stood up. "Such a shame.." I walked to the bathroom. Everything looked in order. I looked at the corner of the room and sighed out loudly.

"Orlando!" I called. He walked in seconds later then looked at what I was looking at.

He chuckled shaking his head. "Wow!"

"I know right.." I walked over to the lady who was lying in the bathtub.

"I don't think she's dead." I said looking at her.

"Should we call the paramedics in?"

"Yeah.."

We walked out together then summoned Riley to take the pictures of the girl who was in the bathroom. We walked to my car as I took off the gloves.

"How far do you think he has ran?"

"Not very far." I responded throwing the gloves away. As we got to the car, the guy from run the got out of the car which was besides mine. I stared at him for a while wondering who exactly he was.

"What's going on?" He asked looking fairly confused.

"An incident happened." Orlando responded.

"Ohh.. Nice to meet you again." He muttered walking inside the hotel. I shook my head then got in the car with Orlando.

"Know him?"

"Yeah.. I bumped into him when I was taking my run. You know I can't help it but to have a certain feeling about him."

"What feeling?"

"Just a feeling.. A bad feeling."

I started the car then drove back to the station. Arriving there I walked straight to my office. Gail Phakadi couldn't seem to leave my head. She had been killed but for what? I slightly had an idea of how she died though it made me feel somehow. We had found her on the bed, naked. The mess inside the hotel room could have proved something else but I couldn't help it but to think it was just a mess caused by drunk people. There were also drugs inside the room. Cocaine. My theory was that she and the man who had killed her together with the lady who was in the bathroom had a mini part. Got drunk. The lady who was in the bathroom had probably decided to go to the bathroom and for some reason she had passed out. Now that left two people, the man and the woman. They were probably having sex and he had strangled her to death during sex. Probably after seeing what he had done, immediately he dressed up and left.

"What are you thinking?" Orlando asked startlingly me a bit.

"Sorry.." He said walking inside my house.

"It's ok. I think she died during sex." I said looking at him. "He killed her by mistake during sex then immediately ran after he understood what he had done."

"That's a quite a revelation."

"It is and it is the truth. The bruises were because of squeezing her neck tightly."

Orlando chuckled. "This is the most saddest death I have ever come across."

"Tell me about it. Did they find the other girl's name?"

"Yeah.. Terry Mbenje. She's awake, she had just passed out."

"I want to talk to her."

"You run the show.." I chuckled then stood up grabbing my car keys.

Riley stopped me as I got inside my car.

"Hey.. Wait."

I got out of the car then waited till he approached me. "Is everything ok?"

"Yeah.. Uhh Today we are going out. All of us from the station."

"Oh? What are we celebrating?"

"Nothing.. We are just going out."

I smiled. "That's really nice but my mother in law is arriving today and I have to get home earlier."

"Oh.. It's ok I guess. Next time."

"Yeah.." I got in my car and started the engine.

"Hi," I said opening the door slowly. She looked better awake but I could see she was disoriented.

"Hi.." Her voice was so croaked and husky. I walked inside the room taking out my ID.

"I'm detective Adam.. Detective Tejero, I was hoping we can have a little talk." She immediately got alarmed.

"Oh no don't panic.. Everything is ok. Why don't you just relax.. You are not in trouble. I'm just enquiring something."

She nodded but she was still tense. "Terry just relax. You are not in trouble. Everything is ok."

"Ok.."

"Good. Do you know Gail Phakadi?"

She nodded. "Is she a friend?"

"Yes.."

"How long have you known her?"

"A few months, we met at some business event."

"You are into business?"

"No. I was a date to someone."

"Ok. So yesterday.. You and Gail were together?"

"Yes. We went to Brian's party together."

"Brian?"

"A mutual friend."

I smiled. "Ok. Who did you leave the party with?"

She kept quiet for a while. "Terry relax. You can tell me. No one is in trouble."

"We left with Brian and some guy called Vince."

"And you went to the hotel with them I suppose?"

"Yes but Brian had to leave the moment we arrived."

"So you were only left with this Vince guy?"

"Yes."

"What happened after Brian left?"

"Well I had the urge to vomit then I went to the bathroom."

"And?"

"That's all I remember."

I smiled. "Thank you so much for your corporation. Uhhh this Vince guy.. All you know is that his name is Vince?"

"Yes."

"Does Brian know him?"

"Yes. I think so."

"Ok, thank you once again."

"Is everything ok?"

"Everything is perfect. One last thing.. Where does Brian stay?"

I looked at the time as I drove to Brian's house. It was a few

minutes before six and Joanne was arriving at seven. I had to cook and make sure everything was in order before she arrived. I pressed the hooter when I got to the huge house. I wondered how old this Brian was. The gate was opened after a while. Getting off the car I looked at the huge paved yard. Some guy was already by my door the moment I got out.

"Good morning Mam, how can I help you?"

I took out my ID. "I'm Detective Tejero, I'm here to see Brian."

"Oh, Brian is not here Mam."

"Really now?" I said looking at the guy who was standing by the double door only in sweatpants.

"Uhh.. I—"

"I'm just doing my job Sir, I wouldn't like it if I had to arrest you for standing in the way of the law."

He nodded then motioned I go. I walked towards the door till I was standing a few meters from the man I supposedly thought was Brian.

"Hello.."

He smiled. "Hi.."

I smiled back. "I'm Detective Tejero, Sir or should I say Brian, I would like to have a little talk with you."

His smiled immediately got wiped off. "Is everything ok?"

"Yes. I just want to ask a few questions."

"Ok..". He closed the door then stood before me. I could tell he didn't want me inside the house which made me wonder what he was hiding.

"Go on.."

"Do you know Gail Phakadi and Terry Mbenje?"

"I know Gail.."

"Terry?"

"I don't know."

"I'm sure your party was lit yesterday." He narrowed his eyes.

"Am in trouble?"

"Why would you be in trouble unless you did something?"

"Look Detective, get to the point."

"Do you know Vince?"

"Yeah.. He's my homie."

I slowly nodded. "I think I would really appreciate it if you tell me what went down last night with you, Vince and the two girls."

"We left my crib. Went to a hotel. Then I had to leave so I left."

"Why would you go to a hotel when the party was in your own house."

"Every room was occupied."

"You mean to say even your own bedroom was occupied?"

"Fuck! Look lady, Vince wanted a threesome so I organised one for him."

"I see.."

"Can I go now?"

"After you tell me when I can find Vince."

I hurried inside the house then put the food I had ordered on the kitchen counter. I put the food in the casseroles then quickly set the table. After everything was in order I rushed upstairs already stripping off my clothes.

I took a quick shower then wore my new green dress. I quickly fixed my hair then ran lipgloss on my lips. Getting back downstairs I fixed the cushions in the living room.

The moment I heard the gate opening I walked to the door and opened it fixing my best smile. I walked to the car slowly as Joanne and King got out of the car.

"Ohh sweet Janine, how are you my dear?"

"I'm fine, and more fine that you are here."

"Ohh don't flatter me Janine." She was wearing a formal dress with heels. I wondered if she never got uncomfortable in the plane.

"Hey baby.." King said kissing my lips while carrying his mother's bags.

"Hey love.. Joanne, please come in."

We walked inside the house. I ran a quick eye on everything. Everything was in order. The cleaning company I had called on my way back from Brian's house was really good. She sat on the dining table looking at the food carefully as King walked with her bag to the guest room.

"I'm so famished!" She exclaimed. I sat down besides her smiling. "You can dig in."

King soon came back and joined us. Joanne always found something to add on the food I always cooked for her but today she was quiet till she was finished.

"Oh darling, the salad I just ate was so delicious, is it finished."

"Uhh yes.. You want more?"

"Yes, if you could prepare it for me." I looked at King with the help me look. The fact that I didn't cook it was not an issue, the real issue was the fact that I didn't even know how to cook it.

"Mom.. You know what doctor said about too much food."

"The doctor said I need to eat more healthy food plus I loved the

salad. It was delicious."

He smiled. "Yeah.. But what will happen if you eat too much whilst you are tired. You can try out that chicken." He said dishing for his mother. I could tell she wasn't happy with her son's intervention but she just kept quiet. I took a silent prayer thanking God. Immediately after dinner she went to bed leaving King and I clearing the table.

"Don't order good food next time.."

I chuckled. "You know she always has something to say."

"But look what the good food almost did to you.." He said wrapping his arms around my waist.

"I missed you.." He said kissing the corner of my lips.

"But you saw me in the morning."

"It's never enough." He whispered making giggle.

He kissed me softly as his hands went down to my ass. He picked me up and placed me on the kitchen counters. My body was yearning for him so bad. He pushed my dress up as his hand went between my thighs. I sighed his name as he brushed my clit on top of my panties. I shuddered at his touch the moment his hand got inside my panties.

"So wet..." He whispered as he opened my folds. He dipped his finger inside making me moan softly.

"Lord! What are you doing?!" His mother's voice was like cold water with ice on my libido. I quickly pushed King's hand away then got off the kitchen counter.

"This is so unhygienic. Janine I'm so disappointed in you!"

"Shouldn't you be sleeping mom?"

"Well I couldn't possibly sleep King. Janine I don't like the sheets

on my bed. They make my skin itchy. Change them Janine." I took a deep breath then smiled. "Of cause Joanne. Let me change them."

[NOMPUMELELO]

I tried by all means to conceal my smile as I replied Tshidi's message. She had a knew man in her life and he was driving her nuts between the sheets. The moment I put my phone away my eyes met Nick's. He was looking at me intensively as if he was seeing what he only could see.

"Baby are you ok?"

"Yeah.. Who got you smiling like that on the phone?"

I chuckled as I got under the duvet while fixing my doek.

"It was Tshidi. She's telling me about her new man."

"Oh?"

I smiles then kissed his chin. "Yeah.."

"Did you manage to sort out the problem you had today after work?"

"Yeah.. Let's sleep." I lay my head on the pillow while he just sat on the bed staring at me.

"How's your new receptionist baby?"

"She's fine why?"

"Yesterday you came back late home because she was sick."

I cleared my throat. "Oh yeah.. She's fine now."

"Really?"

"Yeah.. She's fine."

"I called you at work today. I called the gallery wanting to talk to you because your phone wasn't going through. I was surprised

when I heard you didn't show up at work today because you had called saying you were still sick. What was so funny was the fact that yesterday apparently you left work in the morning coming back home because you were sick. But then you arrived home late because you were at work."

"Uhh.."

"Uhh what?"

I took a deep breath then sat up straight. "I have been trying to pull up a surprise party for our anniversary since I didn't remember it. You have been nothing but a wonderful husband to me and I thought I would do the same in return. I left work earlier yesterday saying I was sick in case you called. I went to look at the venues the event's planner had then today I was finishing up every last detail because the party is tomorrow." I took my phone and handed it to him. "The password is 'LeloNick', you can check the messages or anything you want. Goodnight." I said then lay back my head on the pillow and gave him my back. I closed my eyes tightly. When did I become such a liar?

I felt his hands on my waist after a while and his lips on my neck. "I'm sorry babe.. Sometimes I just get scared. I love you so much I don't want you to hurt me."

I turned and looked at him. "And I would never. I love you so much more Nicholas. You are my life." He smiled then kissed me briefly.

"I'm sorry for doubting you."

"It's ok. I understand.. I mean if it was me.. You would have been dead by now."

He chuckled then pulled me on top of him. "I can't wait for

tomorrow.." I whispered as I lay my head on his chest.

"Me too.. I think this vacation is exactly what we need."

"Yes.. I love you Nick.."

"And I love you too baby.." I raised my head then kissed him. I pulled my lips away when my phone started ringing. I took it then switched it off without thinking twice. Lungile had to understand that it was over and I didn't want him anymore. I wanted my husband.

"It's Tshidi, she will tell me all about her new dick tomorrow. Right now.. It's all about us." I whispered then kissed him again.

[LATOYA]

I closed the zip of my bag. I walked to the vanity mirror then took my sunglasses.

"Ready?" Luthando asked walking inside the room. I nodded then I rubbed my lips together staring at myself. Luthando walked towards me then hugged me from behind.

"We still have some time before —"

"No. Forget it."

"Toots.." He begged making me chuckle.

"Forget it." He squeezed my ass making me push him away.

"We should get going."

He turned me around so that now I was looking at him. The new haircut looked good in him. I rubbed his mastuche smiling.

"You know I was thinking..." I said looking into his eyes. "I..." I sighed not even knowing how to explain what exactly I wanted to say.

"What is it?"

I took his hands into mine. "Do you ever think about going to a new place where nobody knows you and just starting a new life?" He looked at me with a blank expression making me smile. "Luthando... I want to be happy. I want to close the painful chapter in my life. Maybe I will live to tell the story one day but right now, I want to be happy. I have never wanted to be happy more than this moment. I just want to start all over again on a new slate. I want to start living my life to the fullest and just be me. I just want to be Latoya. A Latoya with no expectations. A free Latoya. Luthando I just want to be happy. I'm not saying you should stop your life for me." I said wiping my tears away with my arm. "I know and understand that you have a life here. I appreciate you so much. I love you. I have always loved you but I don't want to be here anymore. This place is suffocating me. It makes it so hard for me to breathe. I want to move to another country. Another continent. I want to meet new people. I want to learn new things. I want to wake up in a place I'm not used to. I want to breathe in new fresh air. I want to live and be happy." I sighed then rubbed my tears away. He was just looking at me blankly.

"I'm going to move. With or without you. I'm not so sure where I'm going to move to.. I was thinking maybe Italy. I will start my own magazine there. A fashion magazine."

He wrapped his arms around me tightly that our bodies were flushed against each other.

"We are a family."

"I know but—"

"But nothing. I want to do whatever that you want."

The first instinct I had was to scream. To scream really loud but I couldn't find my voice. He wanted to start a new life with me. There was nothing that completed me more than knowing that. He was willing to start all over with me. To leave his life and start a new one with me. I wrapped my arms around him and held him tightly.

"I love you.." I whispered in his arms.

"Hello.." I said as we approached everyone. They were all there, including Lelo and Nicholas.

"Oh my! Look at that!" Lelo said as she hugged me. I chuckled.

"Hey.."

"You look beautiful." She complimented making me smile. I looked beautiful and I knew it. I had relaxed my short hair with easy waves and I had small curls. My short black dress made me feel more lively and more my age.

"Thank you. You too.." She laughed then stood besides her husband. Trevor came towards me and gave me a hug but it was an awkward hug because Luthando had his arm around my waist.

"Finally, the it couple is finally here.." Trevor said chuckling.

"Anyways the last time we met, Lelo and Lungile were absent. So uhh Toya, I believe you and Lelo know each other."

"We do." Lelo said smiling. She still was beautiful.

"Great. Ummh so Toya, that over there is Lungile." I looked at the Lungile guy. Rockelle's ex husband. The world was definitely a small place. Everyone was connected to one another one way or the other. I smiled politely at him then just nodded. He returned the smile.

"Ok, now that's out of the way. I think we—"

"I think maybe you need to keep quiet. You are making noise."

CJ responded while holding Puleng's hand.

"Ehh Rachel Kunutu, sit down." Trevor shot back making almost everyone laugh. I just smiled, definitely I had missed the joke.

"Luthando don't you think we need to call your Aunt to check on —"

"Toots we did that before we left home. Quinton is fine."

I sighed. I didn't feel comfortable with leaving him behind. "Ok."

"See? We could have done something more useful than coming here earlier."

"Something useful as what?"

He smirked. "Something we haven't done in a while. I'm facing a serious case of sexual frustration."

"But Sir I thought you didn't want to be used as an alcohol."

"I lied. I want to be your alcohol. We can always find a perfect corner. I want you so bad." He whispered while squeezing my waist.

"I miss you too but too bad you acted as if your dick inhaled flavoured air." He held my waist with both hands then kissed me hard. I missed his lips so much that the Victoria falls was suddenly between my legs.

"This is not a fucken hotel room! Get a room!" Collen said making me pull my lips from Luthando's.

"Father Christmas, know your place." Luthando responded draping his arm around me. Somehow the kiss had left me feeling all sorts of neediness and suddenly I was aching between my legs and only Luthando could help. I wanted him.. Oh crap

that! I needed him in any way I could get him. The crew laughed at Luthando's come back.

The image that was before my eyes made me feel so emotional. The crew was more like a huge family than just a group of friends. All my life standing in the midst of such loving, funny and stupid people I felt the sense of belonging I always yearned for. I knew this were the type of people who would stick with me when I needed them. They were exactly the family I needed. Everyone was laughing. It wasn't just laughter of having to have made fun of another, it was that laughter of after every shit that we have been through we deserve to laugh. It was laughter of we are a family and we were forever.

Moments later some lady joined us. She looked so familiar I knew I had seen her somewhere but I couldn't seem to remember where exactly. Lungile walked right towards her then took her hand.

"Guys! The puzzle is complete. This is Namhla, she's the lady in my life. Babe this are my friends. Team LT over there," Lungile said pointing at Luthando and I. "Team TT over there," he pointed at Trevor and and Tanya. "Team NA," he said pointing at Nkosi and Akhona. "Team CP," CJ did a mini bow while Puleng just flashed a smile. "Team CC," Caroline waved. I could tell that the poor girl was utterly confused. "Then NL.. And lastly us. Team LN. This is the squad." She nodded smiling nervously. "Hello.." She said before letting Lungile take her off the spotlight. Just then our plane got announced. Maybe at first I had doubted the trip but as we walked to our terminal I knew the short vacation was going to be exactly what I needed. Luthando

kissed my hand.

"Are you ok?"

I giggled. He had been asking that question a lot. "I'm awesome!"

[NOMPUMELELO]

The moment we settled in the plane my eyes fell on Lungile and his floozy. I couldn't help it but to look for her flaws. I felt more annoyed when I found none, her dark complexion made her look beautiful. I knew he had done it to annoy me. This was the same man who was confessing to loving me.

"Hey.." Nick said shaking me. I pulled my eyes off the floozy then looked at Nicholas smiling.

"Babe who's that?" I said looking at the floozy.

"I really don't know. I'm meeting her only today. I think it's just someone he looked for so that he doesn't get lonely."

I smiled. "Yeah, do you think she will last?"

Nick chuckled. "I don't know. Why are you so concerned?"

"I don't want to befriend someone who will not be part of the crew in a few weeks. Like you said, we are a family."

The air hostess started going through what we should do.

"Yeah, I get your point but I really don't know if it will last. You never know." I nodded then put on my seatbelt. Somehow the fact that he was Rockelle's ex husband didn't move me.

Obviously he was someone's ex husband, he had been married before but there was nothing more that surprised me more than that floozy who happened to be Janine's best friend. I hated the way she giggled, she sounded like a high school kid who her

crush had bought candy for.

The moment the plane left the ground I closed my eyes tightly chastening myself to stop. This was what I wanted. I took rapid deep breaths to just calm myself down. Opening my eyes I had a game plan. Lungile was going to regret ever bringing her along. After a while everyone was consumed in their own own little bubble. I couldn't help but to smile at Latoya and Luthando. They looked so good together, their love was so strong I even felt sorry for Nikiwe. She had called me yesterday as I tried to pull off a wonderful dinner for Nicholas and I.

She was crying as usual, the fact that she still had hope made me want to laugh to death. She was still going to cry because when it came to Latoya, Luthando didn't need to think twice. It was like yesterday when he held a gun on me for Latoya.

I took a deep breath then closed my eyes. I didn't need to be awake to witness Lungile's childish moves with his floozy. I moaned softly as I stretched my body. Nick chuckled as he walked with our bags to the hummer limo that was parked at the airport parking lot. I watched Nick as he walked away together with the rest of the crew.

"Hi!" I said walking towards Namhla who was behind everyone else busy on her phone. She smiled putting her phone away.

"Hey Lelo.."

"I didn't know you and Lungile knew each other."

"She chuckled. "I think God finally answered my prayers."

I laughed. "Certainly he did. Well I hope you enjoy this trip. Feel free.."

"Thanks. You guys are really nice and funny."

"Welcome to the family." We were now walking towards the white hummer limo. Getting inside everyone had already taken their seat. I sat besides Nick putting my hand into his. The moment the door got closed the hummer started moving. It was so beautiful inside with the white seats. Puleng handed me a glass of wine. It seemed as if everyone was already holding their glasses.

"To a stress free and fun vacation!" CJ toasted before we all raised our glasses.

The whole journey to the hotel we were going to sleep at was just filled with the guys teasing one another. I kept stealing glances at Lungile here and there. The way he kept brushing Namhla's thigh was irritating me. I wanted him to stop. The moment I put my glass down the limo came to a stop.

"We have arrived?" Nkosi asked.

"Yeah.." CJ responded.

Soon the door was opened and were all getting out. I was really tired, I needed a long bubble bath and a bed but not before I spoke to Lungile.

"Guys we are going to sleep here tonight but tomorrow we are going to a guest house at the country side. I guess we are all tired and we need to rest." Lungile addressed everyone. Walking inside the hotel I felt Nick's lips on my neck. He was walking besides me holding our bags.

Every couple got their room but I had been listening very carefully that I knew Lungile's room number.

"Uhh babe.. I think I dropped my bracelet." I said rubbing my wrist as Nick opened our hotel room.

"You had a bracelet?"

"Yeah.. I think I dropped it down at the receptionist. Let me go and check it."

"Ok, I will run us a bath in the meantime."

"Ok." I turned and walked to the elevator. Getting to the second floor of the hotel I stepped out then quickly walked towards Lungile's room. I knocked on his door as furry took over.

He opened the door after a while but my breath caught as I looked at the half naked sexy man. I took a deep breath as I tried to pull my eyes from his wet chest. He was so sexy, or even beyond.

"Lelo.."

"Uhh can we talk?" I whispered. Go to your damn room you whore! The voice in my head screamed.

"Yeah.." He closed the door then stepped out. I couldn't help but to wonder what he was doing with Namhla or if he was going to fuck her like he did with me.

"So you brought her to spite me?"

Lungile chuckled. "And why would I want to spite you?"

"I don't know.. Because I don't want to leave my husband."

"Look Lelo, go to your husband and leave me do what I want."

"You are so pathetic do you know that?" I was getting pissed.

"Well then leave me be. Go to your husband."

I took a deep breath trying to control my emotions. I was more hurt than pissed.

"I thought you loved me." I said softly.

He laughed. "Lelo you don't want to leave him. What should I do?"

"You just can't expect me to—"

"Shh baby.. It's fine. But all I know is that I'm not going to play this hide and sick game with you anymore. It's either you are mine or you are not."

"I don't want you with her."

"Neither do I want you with him."

I closed my eyes tightly as I felt tears sting them.

"Babe you can't have your bread buttered on both sides.." He whispered while gently rubbing my lips with his thumb. My whole reacted to his touch.

"I love you.." I whispered. I loved him but I loved my husband too. I loved them both and I didn't want to let go neither of them.

"Good. Now leave him."

I shook my head as hot fresh tears rolled down my cheeks. He wiped them off then kissed me. As the kiss deepened he pulled away.

"It's either me or him.. Not us both. The ball is in your court." He said then walked back to the room. I wanted to sink down on the floor and cry but I found myself walking towards the elevator.

Getting inside I let it lead me to the floor where my room was.

Getting inside the room I bumped into Nick by the door.

"I was about to come after you."

"Sorry I took long." I said walking to the bathroom. The bathtub was already filled. I stripped then slowly got inside the warm water. I felt like death. I knew he was probably fucking her the way he fucked me. I kept thinking if he loved it with her more than with me.

"Babe are you ok?" Nick asked as he got in the bathtub behind

me.

"Yeah.. I didn't find it." He kissed my shoulder blades.

"We will get you a new one ok?" I nodded closing my eyes. How did I end up loving two men at the same time? I wasn't going to leave Nick. I was never going to leave my husband. Besides the fact I didn't want to hurt him, I didn't see a future without him. He was my life line and I could never leave him. I loved Nicholas with all my being but then there was Lungile. Lungile and I had great sex. We had this connection I didn't have with Nick. This amazing chemistry. Lungile listened to me. He gave me undivided attention. He loved me in a way Nick could never do but I loved Nick. I loved him. He was the love of my life. He was my husband. He was my ride or die. Lungile on the other side was more like my soul mate.

I wasn't willing to let go of neither of them. I wanted them both.

28

[JANINE]

I sat down while looking at him. I could sense King's tension from afar as he stood foot to foot with Miguel. Joanne had long stopped eating and she was just staring at him. Her expression was completely unreadable. This man was her ex husband's illegitimate child. Joanne was beautiful and her beauty left me wondering how someone like her still ended up with someone like Big Daddy. King had told me they met when they were young and only divorced when Miguel was born. I guess she couldn't stand the betrayal but I suspected she had left for more reasons that King refused to talk about. I knew those 'more

reasons' were the reason why he hated his father so much, even in death.

"King.." Miguel said then looked around till his eyes landed on me. He smiled politely.

"I'm sorry I missed the wedding."

I kept quiet because I wasn't so sure about how King was feeling at that moment or what this man was even doing here or how he even knew we resided here.

"Miguel what are you doing here?" King finally asked.

"I'm doing some business here. I thought how about I check on my brother whilst I'm at it."

"You..—"

"King!" Joanne called, her voice so quiet and serene. "Miguel you may come in."

I could see how much King was getting angry by the minute. Miguel walked in then sat down on the dining table besides Joanne. King walked away leaving me with his mother and his mental case brother. Somehow my brain thought of him as a whole mental case and the fact that I had bumped into him twice didn't make things easier.

"Excuse me.." I said standing up wanting to go after King.

"Give him space to cool down Janine sweetie.." Joanne said motioning that I sit down.

"With all due respect mother, King is my husband and I will stand by him. If he won't sit at this table with this man, neither will I. Excuse me." I walked away and went straight to our room where King had headed. The moment I got in our bedroom he was putting his phone down. I could easily see the fury in his eyes. It

was the first time to see him this angry and I didn't even know how to act.

"King—"

"Go and eat." He commanded not even looking at me. Now I was more convinced that there was something more to the hate King had for his brother than what met the eye. I stood still not knowing what to do. "Janine I said go and eat." He commanded again and this time his voice firm.

"No. I'm not going if you are not going to."

"Janine damnit why can't you ever do as told?!" He roared but I didn't move. He was my husband and I wasn't going to be intimidated by my husband. There was only one thing I could do, only one thing I thought of doing. I walked towards him taking off my dress. By the time I was standing before him I was only left in my panties and bra. He stared at me with a confused look.

"Let me help you calm down.." I whispered as I stood on my toes cupping his face. I wrapped my arms around his neck then brushed my lips with his. He grabbed my waist then kissed me hard biting my lower lip painfully. He roughly removed my panties. My heart was beating so fast, this was a side of him that I had never experienced before and it scared me. The moment my panties were discarded he picked up placing me against the wall. As I still tried to get my heart to calm down I felt him tearing me apart roughly.

I pressed my lips together as King helped me dress. For the first time ever, King had been beyond rough with me and I loved it. My mind couldn't seem to let go of what he had done to my body a few minutes ago.

"And that smile?" He asked with a smirk. I blushed shaking my head. I wanted to tell him I wanted again but then we still had a visitor in the dining room and we had to deal with that.

"You are beautiful.." He said as he kissed my lips briefly.

"You need to shave."

He chuckled. "What do you mean?"

"You need to shave and cut your hair. You look like Jesus."

He laughed. "I will catch you for calling me Jesus."

"I want to tell you something." I said feeling my heart beat rise. Nobody knew expect me and the doctor.

"What is it?"

"Yesterday I went to see the doctor. I have been feeling weird lately."

"Is everything ok?"

I chuckled then took a deep breath. "Yeah.. Everything is ok. The doctor said we are fine."

"Huh?"

"Yeah.. Me and our baby are doing good." Excitement popped in his eyes making him pick me up.

"Baby what!"

I giggled. "Put me down.. King!"

He put me down then his hand fell to my belly.

"I'm 12 weeks pregnant. I'm not showing yet."

"Baby you have made me the happiest man on earth. Baby we are pregnant! We are going to be parents. Shit I can't believe this.. We made a baby.."

I smiled. "We made a baby babe.." He hugged me tightly making laugh. Just then there was a knock on the door followed by the

door opening slowly. I pulled away from King's suffocating hug then looked at Joanne.

"King sweetie you —"

"Mom I'm going to be a father. You are going to be Granny!"

Joanne screamed but soon held her mouth. She walked inside our bedroom then hugged me.

"Oh my.. I can't believe this. I'm going to be a Granny!"

I nodded wiping away her tears. "You are going to be a very beautiful Granny."

"Oh Janine this is the most.. Beautiful gift anyone has ever given me. Thank you so much."

I couldn't seem to help my own tears too. My emotions were now even acting up.

"And I can't believe you have been eating those unhealthy things! I'm going to move in with you guys to help you." My evil twin raised her head. Nyaa ausi! Ware move in? Kae? She screamed.

I smiled. "I would take any support I can get."

"Yes mom.. You can move in. I can't believe this baby. I can't believe there's a little me here.." King said brushing my belly. I sighed thinking about the 9 months that was ahead of me.

[LATOYA]

My toes curled as I felt my body fall into a mild sensation. I felt my fingers curl in the sheet as I bit my lower lip. Certainly my body had woken up before my brain. I felt my muscles clench deliciously while I let out a rather whispered moan. I opened my eyes slowly and they soon fell on Luthando's head which was

between my thighs. I wrapped my legs around my head as I came hard at his tongue. My body was yearning for him. For his touch. It had been a while and I needed him. He got on top of me parting my legs. We hadn't done anything last night and I knew it wasn't long till I could let him between my legs. I wanted him too. He kissed me as his hands cupped my breast. I was totally naked but I hadn't slept naked. I guess he couldn't really hold himself. His lips left mine and went straight to my neck. My pussy was throbbing wanting him buried deep within me. Before seconds could pass I felt his slippery head at my entrance.

"Luthando.. I'm not on any method of birth control." I whispered hurriedly as I opened my legs wider. My body was overpowering my brain.

"I will pull out." His voice was deep and husky. I knew there was no stopping him at this level. He shifted his hips slightly putting one hand under my waist raising my ass up. I moaned loudly scratching his back as he plunged unto me stretching me so to accommodate his length. The feeling was so delicious. He was in so deep, I could feel him twitching deep inside me. He withdrew slowly then sank back in. I rolled my hips in response. My whole body was yearning for him, I was sensational all over. He started rolling in and out of me hard in full force while groaning. There was nothing that turned me more in as his groans. I loved the sounds he made every time we were together like this, I loved the sounds he made enjoying me. I kissed him as he started going faster. I moved my hips in rhythm to his thrusts then bit his lower lip hard as I tilted my hips sending him much more deeper. I could feel intense pleasure tightening

around my center as he hit me harder and deeper. I dug my fingers on his back feeling tears on my cheeks. He continued with his unforgiving blows that sent me right over the edge. I came with a loud scream all around him locking him with my legs.

"Fuck!" He groaned giving me one last powerful thrust and I felt his hot release shoot deep in me. I took a deep breath closing my eyes out of exhaustion. I felt his lips on mine sucking on my swollen lips as he dropped his weight on me. He let my lips go then buried his face on my neck. There was nothing more I needed to know that I loved Luthando. I felt so content with my heart that moment, everything felt perfect. It was just us. No third party, just us.

"So much for pulling out.." I whispered making him chuckle raising his head.

"How could I have pulled out when you had me imprisoned with your legs." I laughed.

"I think you need to admit that your pull out game is weak."

"We will get you something." He said shifting, pulling out leaving me empty. He got off bed then picked me up.

"We are leaving early.." He said as he walked with me to the bathroom. He put me down then pulled a towel and put it on my head draping it around my head.

"Uhh Luthando.. You once mentioned something about Lelo and you having a relation."

"She's my half sister."

I laughed. "Really?"

"What's funny?"

I laughed again shaking my head. "You fucked your sister that's what is funny."

"Mxm.."

"Next time you will keep it in your pants. Now look, you fucked your own sister." I said laughing. I opened the tap and let cold water wash us. I knew he was annoyed but it wasn't my fault that he had to sleep with his own sister. But that also applied to men who threw their seeds everywhere.

I put on my sunglasses as we stepped out of the hotel. I let the cool fresh air hit my skin softly, it felt good being in a different place. The guys put our bags in the car while chatting. I had been getting some weird vibes from Akhona but I didn't even care. Firstly, I wasn't here for her and secondly, she was below my grade, giving her attention would have been a disgrace to me.

"Hey." Lelo said standing besides me.

"Hey, slept well?"

"Yeah.. I feel so brand new right now." She said laughing. "I can't wait till the real adventure starts. I heard Switzerland has really beautiful mountains."

"Yeah.. I feel this vacation is exactly what I needed."

"I know. Don't mind Akhona.. I noticed the attitude she has been giving you. That comment about this beautiful skirt you are wearing was pretty lame."

I chuckled. "I will not grace her with my attention. She's too pathetic and childish, like your friend. I think my silence is communication enough."

"What friend are you talking about? Nikiwe is an acquaintance."

"Whatever.. Lelo, no offense and not that I like being forward but.." I stopped walking and looked at her squashing the image I has seen yesterday. "Nick is a very good man." She smiled watching him as he laughed about something with CJ and Trevor.

"I know, he's wonderful."

"Sex is good. Sex is amazing but don't lose a good guy all because of good sex. You will regret it." I said then walked towards the Limo leaving her standing there. Every lady was already in the car.

"I like your hair.." Lungile's date said making me smile.

"Thank you."

"I wonder how Niki is feeling, it's kind of hard raising twins alone." Akhona said as the guys joined us together with Lelo.

"If you care about Nikiwe so much how about you get out of this limo, take a cab to the airport and go home? You are so irritating Akhona. Always judging and talking shit yet you are nothing but a home wrecker. Imi sisi imi muti kwanire, you are going far now. We always have known that Latoya was there. That girl you call Nikiwe was the one applying herself where she was not needed. I guess the muti you gave her didn't work. Just stay in your lane!" Tanya said leaving everyone shocked. Everyone was just looking at Nikiwe in shock. I couldn't help it but to laugh.

"Muti?" I asked laughing. I couldn't believe that Nikiwe was that desperate. I felt sorry for her.

"Mxm.. We are sitted with witches here Toya but some of us we are tired. This girl never have anything positive to say. Last time it was Rockelle and today it's you."

"Lord your daughters!" Lelo exclaimed chuckling. The tension that was looming in the limo was almost palpable. Nkosi looked so angry. I looked at Luthando and tried so hard to stifle my laughter but I just couldn't hold it.

"Wine?" CJ asked trying to break the tension.

"Someone stop the driver, Akhona is going home." Nkosi said after a while.

"What!" Akhona exclaimed.

"You are going home."

"Nkosi you—"

"Will someone stop the God dammed driver?!" Luthando said, his voice loud that the driver heard him and the Limo soon came to a halt. This situation was no longer funny, especially for Akhona. She still had the shocked expression all over her face.

"I think I need a glass, CJ," I said trying to keep a straight face.

"Me too.." Caroline added.

"Nkosi you are not being serious." Akhona's voice came off as a whisper.

"You and I are not married, take road and make dust Sisi!"

[NOMPUMELELO]

Switzerland was indeed heaven. It was beyond beautiful.

Everyday was full of adventure and fun. When we moved from the hotel two days ago we went to this place which was between lakes. The water always just made me want to strip and dive in.

The mini boat cruises were so awesome I didn't want it to ever stop. Everything was going so well, not even Akhona's drama was getting on the way.

She hadn't left much to my disappointment. She had just started crying really loud right on her seat. I guess the incident was a lesson taught because now she never spoke unless needed to. I didn't even feel sorry for her, nobody did and according to Nick, apparently Nkosi wanted to fix things with his wife as soon as we went back home.

I took a deep breath as I followed behind Nicholas. We were walking on a small narrow road built on the side on the mountain. Yes, the gorge was breathtakingly beautiful but my heart was beating so fast. I didn't even want to look down. Luthando and Latoya were the ones leading the way, they seemed unaffected by anything. Lungile and Namhla were behind us.

I hadn't spoken to Lungile since the day at the hotel and he too had been ignoring me. I guess it was over and somehow I still found myself hurting over it. Watching him with Namhla felt like a knife stabbing my heart repeatedly.

"Babe you good?" Nick asked, I could see he was enjoying the adventure so much.

"Yeah. The height is making me uneasy though but I'm good." He turned and held my hand. The man made built road was so narrow, we couldn't possibly walk side by side.

"Hold my hand and don't let go." He said smiling. Maybe Lungile was better off with Namhla, or maybe not.

I squeezed Nick's hand trying to get rid of Lungile from my head. After passing the gorge, our next adventure was the scenic train journey. Getting in the train was something I would take over viewing the gorges while walking on the side of a mountain. The train passed by a long viaduct that made my heart leap in my

mouth momentarily.

I yawned as I closed my eyes. I was so tired of walking. Resting my head on Nick's chest instead of falling asleep I thought of what Latoya told me. I had been stressing over it wondering what she knew. What she saw. I could never ask her, I wasn't about to be judged by her or anyone else.

"Baby.." Nick said softly nudging me.

"Mhhmm.."

"Look.." He whispered. I raised my head. I looked out through the window and we were passing a mountain. Taking my eyes from the scenic view my eyes fell on Lungile who was kissing Namhla. All energy got drained from me as I watched him kiss another woman the same way he kissed me. I quickly wiped away the tear that had left my eye and looked at Nick.

"It's beautiful baby."

"But not more than you.." He said then pushed my weave back.

"I love you.."

"I love you more.." I said then captured his lips with mine, thrusting my tongue inside his mouth. Two could play this game and I certainly was not going to be the one to lose. Pulling my lips from Nick's, my eyes met Lungile's. He looked angry but I didn't care. I looked back outside the window and focused on the trees and mountains.

"Nicholas I have something to tell you." Lungile said making me look at him almost immediately. A few people looked at us but the whole crew was now listening. Even Akhona.

"Should I tell him or you will do the honors Lelo?" He asked looking at me. My heart started beating so fast, what was

Lungile trying to do. My palms suddenly started feeling sweaty. Nick looked at me smiling.

"What's going on babe?" He asked.

"Your wife hasn't been that much of a good wife. Should I tell him? I think he deserves to know or what Nompumelelo?"

Lungile said standing up.

I bit my lower lip as my eyes got clouded with tears. He couldn't do this to me. Nicholas was going to leave me.

29

[NOMPUMELELO]

I held Nichols's hand with my shaking hands. Tears were streaming down my face as I looked at Lungile with begging eyes. He couldn't do this to me. He knew how much my marriage was important to me.

"Babe you..—" Lungile cut my sentence short.

"Come on Lelo.. You can't possible expect the truth to stay forever hidden."

"Stop! Stop.." Nicholas was just looking at me with a concerned expression.

"Lelo what's going on?"

"Good question Nick. Ask your lovely beloved wife what's going on."

"Lungile stop.." I took a deep breath then looked at Nicholas.

"I love you. I love you so much baby.. I.. I..—"

"And I love you too. Why are you crying.. What's going on?"

I cupped his face. "I.. Don't leave me. Don't leave me I love you."

"Nompumelelo quit it! Stop lying to the poor guy."

"Stop.. Babe... Thando.. Thando tell him to stop.." I begged but Thando just stared at me with a blank expression.

Nicholas was just looking at me, waiting for me to tell him what was going on.

"Ok, since you don't want to do it. I will. Nick—"

"Hold it. She will tell me if I need to know anything. I think we should just drop this. We are in the midst of people. Whatever I need to know, whatever that you need to tell me.. Lelo will tell me on her own. She's my wife and this is our marriage." More tears gushed from my eyes as Lungile laughed.

"Ok. Fine. But I just want you to see something.. Just see.. I won't say anything. Lelo is your wife and if there's anything you need to know she will tell you personally." Lungile said taking out his phone. Just then the train was coming to a stop. Lungile gave Nick his phone and played a video. My breath caught as I heard my voice. I was moaning. I looked at the phone's screen and there I was. Lying on the bed on my front with my hands cuffed while Lungile was fucking me hard from behind while smirking my ass.

"No.. Lungile what's this?" I asked.

"There goes your sweet innocent wife. There! She doesn't love you. She never loved you. Remember CJ's engagement party.. It started there. She doesn't love you. We even fucked on your wedding day. You can ask her and we are still fucking. That trip to London, it was for us.. There was no business shit she was doing." Lungile said taking his phone from Nicholas. I stared at Lungile speechless. A sex tape! I took a deep breath then looked at Nicholas.

"It's not what it looks like.." I whispered. "I can explain."

"Lelo tell me that is not you babe.. Tell me you have never slept with him. I don't care what anyone will say.. Tell me it's not you. Tell me you didn't sleep with him. I will believe you. I promise I will believe you. I will believe every single word you tell me. I will believe you baby.."

"I can explain.. I can explain.." I whispered wiping away my tears clumsily. He took my hands then wiped away my tears gently.

"Don't cry. Tell me. I will believe you. Tell me."

"Babe.."

"Yes?"

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry.. I'm sorry.." He chuckled then stood up.

"And what the fuck are you sorry for?"

"Nick.. Please.. Let's go and talk. In private babe.. I love you."

"Did you or did you not fuck him?"

"I'm sorry.." He sighed then started walking out but only to turn around along way. He walked towards Lungile and punched him hard.

"My wife! I thought we were friends!" Nicholas roared. "I thought we were fucking friends! And you were out here fucking my wife behind my back!" Lungile wiped his bloody lip. He didn't look bothered by anything. I stood up from the sit then walked towards him.

"Babe.. I'm sorry. I ended it. I ended it." I said cupping his face.

"I love you and you only.. Don't let this break us.. I.. I love you."

"Nompumelelo.." He whispered. "I loved you. I fucken loved you dammit!" He screamed pushing me hard that I fell.

"I gave you everything. I tried giving you the best life. What the

fuck is it?!"

I stood up crying. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry.. Babe.. —"

"Shit Lelo! Fuck!" He said as tears left his eyes.

"I loved you! I loved you.."

"And you still do.. I love you too baby." I was now up and in front of him again.

"Babe just..—"

"You.." He bit his lower lip rubbing his tears. "What is it?"

I shook my head. "Nothing.. It was a mistake. It shouldn't have happened.."

"All along.. All along I have breaking my skull trying by all means to make you happy.. To give you everything you want. Don't tell me it's nothing! It damn is something!"

"Love... Babe, look.. We can fix this."

"I'm done with you." Nick said walking away. I grabbed his T-shirt.

"Wait.." Nick swung around then slapped me hard that I landed down. He continued walking as I scrambled to my feet. I ran after him. That was when I finally realized the train didn't have anyone anymore expect the crew. He walked to limo. I grabbed his hand going down on my knees.

"I can't survive without you. I love you. It was just sex.. I don't love him. Nick.."

He pushed me then got inside the limo. I didn't care about the way anyone looked at me, at that stage I was already over the embarrassment phase. I stood up slowly and got in the car.

Almost everyone was inside but Nick was sitted at the front sit with the driver. The whole journey back to the Interlake lodge I

was just numb. Everyone was silent. The moment the limo came to a stop I was the first one out. Nick was already walking inside the lodge. I ran after him to our room. Getting inside he took his suitcase and placed it on the bed and started throwing his clothes inside. I held his hands.

"Nick babe.. Let's talk. Please. Let's talk."

"Let go of me!"

"No.. Not until we talk. I can explain. I'm sorry." He grabbed my neck the pushed me against the wall squeezing my neck hard.

"I loved you! I fucken loved you! Everything I did! I did it for you!"

"Nick.." I gasped as tightened his hold on my neck.

"You whore!" He roared letting go of my neck. "You are nothing but a dirty fucken whore! A dirty cunt! I want nothing to do with you."

"You don't mean that love.. You are just upset right now. We worked so hard to be where we are, you can't just throw that away.. We should be trying for a baby."

"I mean it. I don't want you! You threw our hardwork away over sex.. I'm going to talk to my lawyer when I get home."

"No.. You are being irrational right now. Listen.. We can fix this. I can fix this."

"Can you? You were busy fucking my friend! If it was someone else I would understand but my own friend!"

"We can fix this.." I said trying to hold his hand which he pulled away from me.

"You are not worth it. You are nothing but a public toilet where anyone can go to. You have no self respect. You are disgusting."

"I love you.."

"Too bad." He said closing his bag and walking out. I followed after him.

"Babe please don't do this.." He didn't say anything but just walked out. The crew was just looking at us when we passed by the lounge.

"If you leave me I'm going to kill myself!" I said as we stepped outside.

"Go ahead, either way, the world will be a much better place without you."

I could taste my own tears. He started walking to the limo. I ran back inside the lodge then rushed to the dining room. Our lunch was already served. I grabbed the huge knife that was on the table.

"Lelo no.." Latoya said standing up. I ran back outside and by then Nick was getting inside the limo.

"I'm going to kill myself if you leave me. I love you." He stared at me as I stood a few meters from him shaking with knife in my hands.

"You are pathetic. My lawyers will call you." He said then got inside the limo and closed the door.

"Nick please.." The limo started reversing. Without thinking I raised the knife and stabbed myself jabbing the knife on my chest hard. I gasped at massive pain that came from the act. I looked at my hand which was still holding the knife. My white t-shirt was stained with blood and the knife was half way buried on my chest.

Latoya's screamed as I got weak. I fell to the ground as her screams got louder. The pain was slowly dissolving. I could taste

blood in my mouth.

An image of Zuko and I when I was still young flashed in my head. That moment felt like it was only yesterday when I was a kid and he was a bit older. It felt like only yesterday when he used to give me piggyback rides. It felt like only yesterday when he would play with me because I had no friends and be my only source of happiness.

"Babe.. Shit!" I looked at Nicholas as he kneeled before me. I tried to speak but mouth was full with blood. He picked me up slowly. I stared at Nick with a blurred vision wondering if maybe I had a father I would have been a different woman.

I relaxed my body in his arms. I hoped he knew I loved him. That I loved him so much. I hoped that one day he would forgive me. I knew that day wasn't anywhere close but I prayed that one day he would forgive me.

"Babe.. Look at me.. Look at me." Nick whispered as he held me in his arms. I was aware that I was in the car and the car was moving. I stared at him as tears warmed my cheeks. He wiped them off.

"Don't cry. We will fix this ok? We will fix this babe. We will fix our marriage ok? I'm not leaving you. I'm right here with you.." He said while gently caressing my face. I looked at him and there was nothing but pain and worry caressed with love. I raised my weak hand and held his hand.

"I'm sorry.." I choked.

"Shh.. Don't speak. It's ok. I forgive you. I love you. We will fix this. It's going to be ok.." I smiled slightly looking at him. He was handsome. He didn't have that huge body but he was sexy in his

own way. I gave in to the heaviness of my eyelids then fell into the darkness.

[LATOYA]

I sighed as I looked at Nicholas who had long been sitted on the floor with his head buried between his legs. Lelo had long been gone with the doctors. I wasn't sure if it was a good thing or not but all I knew was that she had lost a lot of blood on our way here.

"Luthando.." I whispered.

"What?"

"Why didn't you do something?"

He pulled me on his lap then held me tightly. "Because I wanted her to learn. I long told her to stop and she didn't listen to me."

"But she's your sister. Regardless of anything.. She's your sister. By blood. She's family."

He sighed. "I know.. I just.. I was angry too. How could she be fucking her husband's friend?"

"We don't chose the family we have. If we could then most of us would have awesome families. But we don't. It's your duty to protect her. Do you think her brother back at home would have just watched? I'm not trying to guilt trap you or anything I'm just trying to make you see your fault. She messed up. Big time. But you should have at least stood by her through all slaps and pushes she got. He was manhandling her, yes he was angry but still.. You should have done something then. The same way you would do for Juliette. I don't know if you have any other siblings out there but there's only one Nompumelelo who's your sister. If

you don't protect her then I don't know who will."

"I know.. I guess I should have done something."

"Yes but now that's no longer the issue. She's going to be fine and you will have ample of time to make up for it. Sometimes I wish I had a brother.. A brother who would stand up for me. I always listened to people complaining about their overbearing brothers and I too yearned for that. Be the brother you are supposed to be to your sister. Blood is thicker than water."

"You are amazing do you know that?"

"No.."

"You are amazing. Beautiful in and out."

I smiled then rested my head on his chest.

"I can't believe I went to varsity with Julie.. I guess I was too caught up in my shit that I never noticed her."

"Don't worry about her. I will sort it out."

"No, I will talk to her. Sibusiso wasn't what he portrayed himself to be." I whispered. "Killing him was a mistake but one mistake I didn't feel guilty about. It was either me or him that night. One of us had to die. He was a monster. He used to cover it up with the money. The reason I was even sleeping with him was for money. He was going to kill me.. I had to fight."

"I believe you.. And ohh Latifar called." I raised my head from his chest then looked at me.

"She did?"

"Yeah.. After you left with Lelo and Nick. I think they will enjoy their holiday wherever you said we are moving to."

I snuggled closer to him putting my head back on his chest.

"I love you.."

He chuckled. "Good for you."

I giggled. "That's my line!"

I raised my eyes as Nick stood up. The doctor was walking towards us. I got off Luthando's lap then walked towards the doctor. As we walked towards the doctor, the door that led inside the waiting room opened and the crew walked in with Lungile leading. I looked at Luthando, I knew having Lungile and Nicholas in the same room was a beyond bad idea.

"Doctor is she ok?" Nicholas asked.

"Fortunately yes. The knife missed her heart with just a few inches."

Nicholas visibly relaxed. "But she lost a lot of blood."

"Does she need a transfusion. I can donate for her." Lungile said.

"She's my wife and I'm he husband. I will do it."

"She needs blood, doesn't matter who the fucken blood is from." Lungile roared.

"I will give it to her, Doc what's the procedure?" Luthando said stepping in front of the two angry bulls. "I'm her brother."

"I can also donate.." I said standing next to Luthando.

"Me too.." CJ said.

"All of us!" Trevor said with a chuckle. I guess he was trying to lighten up the mood.

"Ok, we are going to have to run some tests to see who's a match."

"Ok, so there were two matches. The first one is uhh Luthando Maphoto and Lungile Mokwena." The doctor said.

"I will do it." Luthando said standing up from were we where sitting. Lungile sat still as Nicholas walked to the doctor. I sat still

on the couch that was in the waiting room with the rest of the crew.

"So much drama! I could have never guessed!" Caroline said shaking her head.

I smiled looking at her. "As Nicholas said, Nompumelelo is his wife and he is the husband. This is their marriage, if anything should be said, it will be between them so let's all just focus on our issues and leave the married couple alone."

"Thank you!" Tanya agreed. "Honestly some of you are just annoying. Learn to mind your own shit!"

"Do they sell coffee here?" CJ asked looking around.

"They probably, go and ask at the reception." Trevor responded.

I stood up. "I will go and ask."

"I'm coming with." CJ said. We both walked to the receptionist.

"You are a really nice person."

I laughed. "Who? Me?"

"Yeah.. Killing them with kindness."

"Some battles are just not worth it."

"I'm glad my boy found you. You are the perfect woman for him."

I smiled. "Yeah.."

"He likes messing up. Please don't leave him."

I laughed. "I won't."

We got the reception.

"Ummh Mam do you guys sell coffee?"

"Yes, at the cafeteria."

"Thanks.. Uhh I want to put myself under birth controlling method. Is there a doctor I can see?"

"Yes.. Uhh and lucky for you she's free right now. Dr Nancy is

free."

"Great. Can I see her?"

I handed Luthando his coffee as we stood by the Lelo's door.

The crew had gotten inside.

"Are you good?"

"Yeah.."

"I saw a doctor."

"For?"

"I got an injection."

"Ok, I'm sure we don't want a child right now."

"We don't."

He chuckled. "Toots do you think Nick would have believed Lelo is she said she didn't fuck Lungile?"

I laughed. "Stop it!"

"I'm just asking. Do that shit to me I'm killing everyone including myself."

I rolled my eyes. "I won't. It's disgusting. But maybe she cheat because you know.. She wanted love and affection. She didn't grow up with a dad."

"We all didn't. I didn't. You didn't. But you are not busy opening your legs for everyone."

"People are different. He won't leave her."

"Obviously.. After this he definitely won't."

"Plus you should stop blaming Lelo alone. Lungile played a part in this."

"I seriously don't understand what his problem is.. Now he loves someone's wife."

"I didn't see Namhla, where's she?"

"I don't know.. Packing her bags."

"I feel sorry for her. This trip was full of drama! First it was you getting bewitched. We need to discuss that."

"I'm starting to wonder if those kids are really mine."

"Didn't you do DNA tests?"

"I did but she was the one who collected the results. For all we know maybe those are Lungile's kids."

I laughed. "Stop! We will do another test when we go back. Are we still going back on Sunday?"

"Yes. You and I are. If the rest are going back tomorrow or today, we are not." I hugged him feeling his muscles against my body.

"I love you.."

"I love you too toots.. I can't wait till we get back home." He said as his hand went down to my ass.

"You are a pervet." I whispered giggling.

"Your pervet."

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[JANINE]

"I did not kill her!"

I sighed. "Still don't want to talk?"

"I want to call my lawyer."

I laughed. "If you did nothing wrong then why would you want to call your lawyer?"

"Detective it's been hours. You keep asking me the same damn question! I didn't kill her!"

"The autopsy is coming in on Monday. If you don't want to talk then I guess I will see you on Monday."

"You can't lock me in here. I'm not guilty till proven!"

"I have enough evidence to keep you here. Your finger prints on her neck. I have proof that you slept with her."

"Dammit I didn't kill her!"

"Well see you on Monday." He rubbed his face. I had gotten him today and still he was refusing to talk.

"Look Vince, I know it's a bit embarrassing to kill someone during sex but it was mistake right? You didn't mean to.. You can get off with a lighter sentence if you just tell the truth because look, this wasn't a planned murder or those kind of sinister murders. Just tell me the truth. I will help you. You won't be here for long. Just tell me the truth, I'm trying to help you here.."

"I didn't... Shit!"

"Tell me.. What happened after Brian left."

"We.. I.."

"It's ok, relax. You can tell me. I'm on your side."

"I didn't mean to. She.. We were having fun and next thing I know she's not moving."

"You strangled her?"

"Yes.. But not that much.."

I nodded slowly. "Don't worry, after you realized she was dead what did you do?"

"I called B, he said I should leave immediately."

"B Brian?"

"Yes.."

"Then you left."

"Yes.."

"The other girl?"

"I didn't even think about her. I just left."

"Ok, see..? We could have done this earlier."

"Can I go home now?"

"No, but your trial will start immediately. Then—"

"You don't have the right to be interrogating my client Janine!"

Celia said as she walked inside the room. I smiled then took my recorder.

"I'm done. The police will escort you to your cell." I said walking out.

"Did you talk?" She asked as I stepped out. Orlando started clapping his hands as soon as I stepped out.

"Really now?"

"That was good. We got him."

"Yeah.. I have to get home."

"Ok, see you on Monday."

"Yeah.." I walked to my office after handing him the recorder.

Getting inside I quickly took my bag then stepped outside to my car. It was just after 1900hrs and I knew I was going to hear it with Joanne. I started the car then quickly reversed.

As I drove home my phone started ringing. Since it was connected to the car it answered itself.

"Hello.."

"Janine can you get me a plane ticket? Tonight?"

I laughed. "Namhla you are supposed to come back on Sunday not Friday."

"Lelo is fucking him!"

"She's fucking who?"

"Uguy! I can't believe this.. I'm so upset."

"Wait.. Your guy is Lelo's side?"

"Can you believe it? And her husband is a very good man. That girl is the biggest evil whore of all time!"

"Shit! Does he know?"

"The whole crew knows! She stabbed herself now everyone is at the hospital. You should have seen how Lungile went after her. I'm so hurt, worse he loves her."

"Wait. Look let's —"

"And God he's good in bed! I don't blame her but still.. How could she? And now.. God I'm so upset."

"Namhla wait.. Who's uguys name?"

"Lungile."

"Lungile who?"

"Mokwena."

I sighed. "Wow!"

"What is it?"

"Nothing. So is she ok?"

"I don't know but I hope she dies. While we are looking for good men she keeps playing with them."

"I'm on my way home. I will see what to do when I arrive."

"Thank you," she said then hung up. I took a deep breath, I was so glad I wasn't part of the drama. I slowed down as I got to a road block. Looking aside I saw a Golf on the side of the road upside down and on the other side was a BMW which looked beyond destroyed. It was so squashed.

I rolled down my window as I parked my car besides the road. I took my ID then got out and walked to the police officers who were standing by the golf.

"Good evening.."

"Mam you are not supposed —" I raised my ID.

"Boss!" The other one said making me laugh.

"What happened here?"

"They collided, the BMW ignored the red traffic light."

I looked at it. "Did anyone survive?"

"From the BMW no, they all died. A lady and a man."

"And the golf?"

"One lady died on the spot, the other was rushed to hospital.

The babies, twins, are ok. No scratch. No nothing."

"Oh my God!"

I looked at the golf then walked towards it. My hand fell to my stomach. Somehow I couldn't even imagine the babies in that car.

"Ok, let me get going." They give me polite nods as I walked away. Getting in my car I cautiously drove home. The last thing I wanted was anything happening to me or my baby. Arriving home Joanne was standing in the kitchen.

"Janine do you know what time it is?"

"I know and I was delayed by an accident I saw on my way home. Hey babe.." I said giving King a brief kiss.

"You are pregnant for God's sake! You need—"

"Mom.. Janine is fine. She's home now."

"Maybe you need to quit your job and focus on the baby."

I looked at King who gave me the "don't listen to her" look. I sighed, I knew at some point I had to quit and focus on my pregnancy but that time wasn't yet here.

"I'm tired. I'm going to bath."

"Ok, I'm glad you are ok. I'm just worried sweety.." She said hugging me.

"I'm fine. Thank you."

"King go help Janine as I dish for her."

"Ok," he took my hand then led me to our bedroom.

"Hey." He said kissing my neck while unbuttoning my shirt.

"Hey.. I'm so tired but the case is over."

"You caught the criminal?"

I nodded. "Yeah.."

He took off my bra then went down to my pants.

"I know mom can be too much but just so you know, she means well. She just wants to be part of this journey with us."

I smiled as he pulled my pants down.

"I know but just so you know, we are going to have constant fights."

He chuckled taking off my shoes then finally making me step out of my pants.

"So when are you going to stop going to work?" I knew Joanne had probably discussed this with him and the last thing I wanted was to fight with King.

"At five months."

He stood up. "Ok, I hope you are not going to be dealing with guns and things that will require you to overwork yourself."

"I won't. Orlando and Riley won't even let me."

"Good. Let's go bath." He said leading me to the bathroom.

"Hey.. Is your crazy brother still here?"

"I don't know and I don't care. If I see him anywhere near you I'm going to kill him and bury him." I rubbed King's shoulders. "I'm

sure he won't. Babe do you think maybe he's the one that took over Big Daddy's operations?"

"I don't know.. Maybe or maybe not though he's not into that kind of stuff. He might be crazy but he lives a genuine life and makes genuine money.. As far as I know but you never know."

"What I just don't understand is the reason he's here. In SA. It's not you.. It's something."

"And you curious?" He asked with his eye brow raised.

I sighed. "I just.. I can't really help it. It's in me." He leaned down and kissed my lips.

"Curiosity killed the cat."

"Because the cat let curiosity kill it."

He chuckled before staking full claim of my lips.

[NOMPUMELELO]

Slowly I opened my eyes and the first thing I heard was the constant beeping sound. I closed my eyes a bit trying to adjust to the light that was reflecting at me. Looking around I didn't need to be told that I was in the hospital. I tried moving but only to still immediately when I felt pain on my chest.

"Don't move, let me get the doctor." Latoya who I hadn't noticed said standing and rushing to the hallway. I took a deep breath as my brain took a drastic turn to what had brought me here in the first place. Seconds later Latoya stepped inside the room with a doctor and a nurse.

"Welcome back Mrs Dumisa," she said smiling. She started checking me. She sighed after she was done.

"Everything seems ok, do you remember what happened?" I

slightly nodded. Of course I remembered. I remembered perfectly how my marriage was over. I felt tears sting my eyes. "Hey.. Don't cry, everything will be fine." Latoya said caressing my face gently. I wanted to laugh but I just lay still. Nothing was going to be ok. My marriage was over because of me. I had destroyed my own marriage.

"We are going to remove your catheter in a while." The doctor said smiling as the nurse tried helping me sit. My chest was so painful but not more than the pain that was in my heart. I had lost the only man who had ever loved me unconditionally. I drank the water slowly then gave back the half cup to the nurse.

"We will not keep you for too long. You will be fine."

I nodded then she walked out followed by the nurse.

"Where's Nick?"

"He went to the lodge to change. I had to force him out of here. He's going to be happy you are awake. I never thought you out of everyone would try to kill yourself." A tear fell from my eye.

"I don't have a reason to live anymore. I destroyed my marriage, the only good thing I ever had."

"Don't say that. Nicholas still loves you. You have Luthando and I and your family."

"He hates me, I don't even blame him anymore. I did all this. No one forced me."

She took my hand into hers. "Nicholas loves you so much to hate you. I'm sure you guys will fix this and everything will be ok. All he needs is just space."

I shook my head. "You should have seen how he looked at me. Nick.. I.. Can I please be alone?"

She smiled then took her bag. "I will be back later ok? We all love you." I just nodded then she walked out. Slowly I lay my head back on the pillow. My head was buzzing with all thoughts. I drifted to sleep with a lot going on in my head. Opening my eyes again I wasn't alone, Nicholas was standing besides the bed looking at me. I couldn't read his facial expression.

"Nick.. Babe you are here." I whispered. He blinked a couple of times then looked at me again. He now looked relieved.

"Shit.. You are awake.. Baby are ok? Do you want anything? Should I call the doctor?" He asked while taking my hands and squeezing them. I felt warm tears leave my eyes. I couldn't believe he was really with me.

"Hey don't cry baby, it will be fine ok?"

"I'm sorry.."

"It's ok, we will fix this. I was so scared, I thought I had lost you forever baby. There was a lot of blood.. And.. I'm glad you are awake. I can't believe I pushed to that."

"It's not your fault.. Nothing is your fault. I'm sorry, it's me. I know you don't want me anymore and it's ok. I don't blame you. I'm just going to disappear from your life. You will never hear from me again. I understand."

He cupped my face. "When I said for better or worse I meant it. The first time I met you.. Hearing your voice.. It was so beautiful. You were so beautiful. You know after you left I regretted talking to you the way I had done. I knew there was something about you, something special. Something I could never find in other women. I loved you even before we met at Paris. You are an amazing person but you are human too. You are not perfect and

I'm not perfect too. I too played a role in all this. I have always neglected you, even before we got married. All I kept thinking was making it in life and giving you everything you desire but that's not love. You needed attention and affection and I failed to give you that. You wanted me to shower you with love not gifts and failed that. The reason why you seemed attention somewhere else is because I wasn't doing enough. Baby I know you love me and I love you so much more. I love you in both the good and bad times. Right now we are in the bad times and I still love you so much. I have thought about this and I decided we start seeing a therapist. We are not going to throw away what we worked so hard for. We are going to fix this because I know you didn't do it because you didn't love me. I know you don't love him because if you did then you would have long left me. It's going to take a while to fix this but I love you enough to be patient. We are going to save our marriage babe.." He said then kissed my tears which were falling from my eyes. I never expected him to say all that. I had been expecting being told about the divorce. I reached for his face.

"I love you so much. I love you Nicholas.."

He kissed me a slowly, exposing my emotions. He only could only make me feel this way because I loved him. I loved him so much. No doubt I loved Lungile too but I loved Nicholas more and I was going to do everything go fix us. He glided his tounge in my mouth. My body vibrated under his touch. The door opening made Nick let my lips go. I wanted to pull him back but the smile which was on the doctor's face made me feel mortified.

"Hello, Mr Dumisa."

"Doc, how's she?"

"She's doing ok, I want to remove the catheter." She said putting on her gloves.

Nick didn't go anywhere through the whole procedure. He stayed even through non visiting hours. Somehow I was glad I didn't die but if we had to rewind the time, I still would have done the same thing. Nicholas was my life, he was my everything and I loved him.

"I'm going to get coffee ok?" He said standing up. It was a few minutes before the evening visiting hour started.

"Ok,"

"Love you.." He said as he kissed my forehead.

"I love you more." He then walked out. I lay my head on the pillow with a smile on my face.

"You are awake." Lungile's voice said. I raised my eyes and looked at him. I took a deep breath. I was so content with what I wanted and it was my marriage.

"Hey.."

"Lelo babe I'm sorry. I was just—"

I raised my head. "It's ok. You don't have to apologize. The truth was bound to come out at some point."

"I know but not the way it did."

"It's ok, it doesn't matter anymore. Nicholas and I are going to fix things. We are going to fix our marriage."

He laughed. "You are what?"

"I'm fixing my marriage and you know what that means."

"I don't think I do.."

"What was going on between us has ended. For good this time around."

"You know what, you are the most selfish person I have ever seen. You think you can just use people then throw them away?"

"I'm sorry.. Lungile you..—"

"Lelo tell me you don't love me. Tell me that you don't love me right now. I want you to tell me you don't love me."

"Lungile —"

"Tell me you don't love me.."

"I love you." I said.

"Good. Good, because I love you too. Babe you don't need to fix anything with him."

"I love him more. I love him so much more and I'm not going to leave him. We are meant to be." He laughed stepping away from me. "I'm sorry."

"Babe.. You are just confused with what happened. And I understand that.. Lelo I have never loved anyone the way I love you. All my life, I have never loved anyone the way I love you. I'm willing to do anything for you. For us. I can take care of you. I can love you, you know that. I'm just not going to walk away from our love like this. I don't care what anyone says anymore.. I love you baby, I need you. You know I love you." He said rubbing my lips with his thumb. "I love you. You are the only one I love." He brushed my lips with his. "I love you. It's not about sex and you know it. I love you.."

"How about you step away from my wife?" Nick said getting inside the room.

I took a deep breath as I tried to sit upright.

Lungile chuckled. "I'm sorry it has come to this.."

"Mokwena step the fuck away from my wife." Nick said but I could tell he was angry.

"I'm not going anywhere. You better get used to it. Babe I will see you." Lungile said then kissed my cheek. As he walked out Nick walked towards him then punched him. Lungile laughed as rubbed his lips.

"I'm not about to fight with you. Had you loved her the way she deserved we wouldn't be here. Unfortunately for you, I love her too." Lungile pushed Nick then walked out. I took a deep breath.

"I didn't know he would come baby, I swear. It's over. I—" he smiled.

"It's ok, I know. He has been saying that shit for a while now but I don't care. I know you don't love him. I was thinking maybe we can go to Hawaii for a while, just us two of us. I think it will be good for us."

"Yes.. I will do anything.. I love you."

He put his coffee down then kissed me hard.

"We will fix this.." He whispered.

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[LATOYA]

Luthando switched on the lights as soon as we stepped inside the house. Everything was in order, I sighed as I walked to the living room. I sat down with Q in my arms as Luthando took our bags up the stairs.

"Hey baby.." I said kissing his cheek. He giggled pulling my top. I

took off my shoes then lay on the couch placing Q on top of me. Thando soon came back but now he was only in his shorts. He made me sit up right then sat where my head was and put my head on his lap.

"I don't like this house." I said quietly. This was the same house he used to fuck Nikiwe in.

"I know."

"Good. Tomorrow I want to go see Grace."

"About the possibility of you guys being relatives?"

"Yeah.."

"Is it ok if I call you Wanju?"

"No, don't call me that shit."

He chuckled. "Where exactly are you from? I don't think I know you are from here."

"As long as it has two legs and a vagina."

"As long as I love you."

"I'm not from here but I grew up here."

"Where are you from?"

"Kenya.."

"Shit! Almost four years and I didn't know that!"

"It's a shame. I was born here, raised here, grew up here. Since my parents passed on I have never went home, I have never visited. The only relative I kept in touch with from my father's side is Aunt. My mom was the one who was from here. She's from Durban and that's where we stayed. Aunt Edith also stayed in Durban so was my cousin from my mom's side."

"So your dad is a true Kenyan?"

"Yes. Thagana is my grandmother's surname, my father's

mother. She was not married to my grandfather so my dad kept both surnames. His name was Bernard Thagana Samuels. I didn't take the Thagana surname on my birth certificate but I use it regardless of that."

"So if I want to pay your bride price, I have to go to Kenya?" I chuckled then shrugged.

"I don't know. But I don't know why.. I just.. Cut them off. I have long been my own person."

"So Grace might be from your mother's side?"

"Yeah. Obviously. I just don't want to associate with my father's family. I don't think they ever cared for us. Aunt Edith didn't want to take us in when our parents passed on. She claimed to had her own child to take care of plus she had recently gotten married to her second husband."

"Did she abuse you?"

I chuckled. "No. She just didn't care."

"What do you mean?"

"When Albert started rapping me she didn't say anything but I knew she knew. There was no way she couldn't have not known." I felt Luthando's body tense. "What?"

"It went on for too long. It started when I was 12, he said I was beautiful and that he liked beautiful girls. He used to buy me sweets though I used to give them to Latisher and Latifar. He used to like me so much. Then he started touching me inappropriately. I knew it was wrong but I was too scared to tell. Rapping me was another issue but the biggest issue was that Aunt Edith always just looked at me and say nothing. Sometimes she would just beat me for no reason. Or shout or throw me out

of the house. Sometimes she would deny me food. She hated me and she never pretended to like me. She knew what was happening inside her house but she always kept quiet."

"How long did it go for?"

"4 years. When I was 15 I got pregnant. He made me drink some pills and the baby died. After the baby died I then killed him but nobody ever knew it was me."

"You killed him?" I chuckled.

"Don't be too surprised. Everyone can kill if they want to. So yes, I killed him and set myself free. That's when I met Zamo. My neighbour's son. He was doing his first year in varsity. He liked me, I liked him too. He used to say I was beautiful, the same way, Kenneth, Aunt Edith's husband used to say. We used to kiss only. Until one day he asked me to visit him. He was alone at home. I told him no, but he just never stopped. This time around I told Aunt Edith. I told her but she said I was trouble maker so she sent away to my prostitute cousin."

"Zamo never got caught?"

"No, his full name was Zamo Sibusiso Khumalo. He never got caught. I moved with my cousin. I was only 17. She took care of me as I went to school but when I reached 18, she said she couldn't do it anymore so I had to help out. She introduced me to the way she made money. We would go to a club together then she would hook me up with an older man. She never took my money. She made her own. Everyone kept their own money. I used to sleep with anything that had a dick, as long as I got paid. It didn't matter. Varsity came, I had to take care of my own fees and Aunt Edith was complaining. She said she couldn't keep

taking care of my siblings that's when I started sending her money. I met Nothando at varsity. She was the privileged girl. The one with money and a car." I chuckled. "I lied to her. I told my parents were rich and a lot of more lies. She only found out later that I was nothing but a prostitute and she tried to make me stop but she didn't understand. I had siblings that needed money. That's when I met a friend, Sarah and through Sarah I met Zamo, again. I was doing my third year in varsity. He was done with school so we hooked up. I mean, he was now.. Well off and I needed money quick. Zamo was abusive. He used to beat me or let his friends gang fuck me while tied to the bed. This other day he beat me till I lost conscious and then locked me inside the house. I had to get out or else he was going to kill me. It was either me or him. So I killed him. Then ran. Sarah introduced me to big Daddy. And the rest you know.. I don't know how many times I aborted. Or how many times I fucked or how many men I fucked. Somewhere along the line I lost count. I don't know what you see in me or why you love me.. Maybe it's the pretty face you see.. I know I'm pretty, that's how I used to get man and money. I have done it all. I did heists, I pick pocketed. Was once locked in jail and a whole load of shit but it wasn't because I wanted to.. I had no choice. That's the thing about life. It really doesn't matter about no shit because it keeps going. At some stage I stopped crying. I had no tears no more. At some stage.. I just didn't care, I didn't even care about people's opinion about me or what anyone could call me or write about me and I never corrected anyone. If you ever one day just think about marrying me or anything like that, I wouldn't care if

you pay bride price or not."

"I'm thinking about it."

I laughed. "Thinking about what? Marrying me?"

"Yes."

"You want to marry damaged goods?" He pulled my head from his lap then stood up. I looked at him blankly, whatever he was thinking had him taking Quinton from me. He was already sleeping. I took a deep breath as I sat on the couch placing my feet down. Luthando walked away with Quinton. Looking around the house nothing had really changed. I doubted he had renovated it. I took a deep breath when he walked back in now without Q. He took my hand then pulled me up from the couch. I sucked in my breath the moment our bodies touched. There was just something so strong between us, a strong pull of force between us.

"I love you. I loved when you were still married. I loved you when you left. I loved you when you replaced me. I loved you through the loss of our daughter. I loved you when you found comfort in alcohol. I loved you on your worst. I love you even more for the woman you are. I love you even more because you have my heart and there's nothing I can do about it. I love you so much because you drive me crazy. I love you right now. I know I'm going to love you tomorrow or any other day. And I'm going to marry you. Because I love you." He cupped my face. "I love you and we will move wherever that you want us to move to. Where was it again?"

I wrapped my arms around his waist. "I have decided that we move to Dubai."

"Anything is still ok with me."

"I love you.." He leaned over and kissed me picking me up. I wrapped my legs around his waist. It was a kiss of extreme need and love. He slowly sank to the couch with him on top of me. He humped on me digging right into me. I moaned in his mouth kissing him harder. His hands went under my T-shirt and up to my breast squeezing them through my bra.

I wanted him and I wanted him right there and there, everything else he was doing was just delaying me. He let go of my lips then sat on the couch while unbuttoning my jeans. He pulled them off together with my panties. He quickly yanked my top off me then unclipped my bra hurriedly. By the time my bra was off me, my hands were on his shorts. I kneeled on the couch then pulled down his shorts and his briefs. Nothing turned me on than seeing him that hard for me. I got off the couch then kneeled on the floor while moving my hand up and down his length. I opened my mouth then took him in my mouth till he hit the back of my throat. He groaned fixing his hand in my short hair. He couldn't really fit all in my mouth but I took as much as I could. In and out, I took him pleasuring him the best way I could. His hold in my hair tightened as he started moving in my mouth deeper. I relaxed my jaw pressing my lips against him. He started going faster and deeper. I was starting to have trouble with breathing so I started caressing his balls.

"Fuck!" He groaned as he jerked in mouth then I felt him in my mouth, his hot release. I swallowed most of it as he pulled out of my mouth then threw himself on the couch.

"Fuck babe!" He whispered as I licked my lips standing up. "I

swear the best head giver goes to to.. Ting ting ting! Latoya!" I chuckled as I straddled him. He opened his eyes lazily placing his hands on my waist. I slowly sank in down, taking him all the way in. I started moving squeezing my muscles together. I swirled my hips as I moved up and down. Again and again I did it. I could feel it build up. I started moving faster but definitely wasn't faster enough for Thando because he held my waist then drilled me from beneath. He took me straight to heaven. I felt all emotions all at once as he owned my body. I felt myself tense then I came all around him while he continued drilling me. He pulled out then stood up with me and placed me on the couch making me kneel. He pressed my chest down making me ache my ass. He thrust in me hard making me grit my teeth. He started fucking me holding my waist making me meet him halfway while his other hand pressed on my back. My toes curled as he went harder and harder on. I shut my eyes tightly as my climax hit me unexpectedly, pushing me over the edge. "Ohh myyy Goddd!" I moaned loudly as I relished on the unforgiving pleasure. "Mhhmmmm..." I whimpered as he gave me one last stroke before shooting his load deep in me. "Shit babe!" He groaned softly then thrust back in me slowly then pulled out.

He picked my weak body then lay on the floor placing me on top of him. It took us a while to calm down. I kissed his chest as he tightened his arms around me.

We were silent for a while, comfortable silence.

"Luthando are you—" my sentence was cut short by a knock on the door. My body cringed. I wanted him to just ignore it but that

was till I heard Julie's voice. I tried getting off him but he tightened his hold on me.

"Luthando!"

"I don't want to see her."

"She's your sister. She's always going to be your sister. Accept that." I said getting off him. I grabbed my clothes then went to his bedroom leaving him lying there sulking. I walked inside the room then went over to his closet. I pulled out his T-shirt then boxers and put them on. Walking to the bathroom I stared at myself on the mirror. A naughty smile crepped on my lips making me laugh. I walked inside the room when I heard my phone ringing. It was ringing from my handbag. It was on the bed with the other bags. I quickly took it off then answered the phone.

"Hello?" I said. There was silence.

"Hellooo?" I said yet again. I removed the phone from my ear and that's when I realized it was a private number. I hung up immediately then threw the phone on the bed.

After a while I walked back down the stairs and surprisingly Julie wasn't alone. She was with the police. I chuckled.

"There she is.." Julie said pointing at me.

[JANINE]

I threw myself on the chair then sighed.

Namhla chuckled.

"That bad?"

"You have no idea."

"What happened?"

"Apparently all I'm supposed to eat is rabbit food. This woman is

really getting on my fucken nerves!"

Namhla laughed. "She's trying to protect her grandchild."

"I'm already tired and the fucking vomiting is irritating."

"You will be fine."

"Yeah.. What's going on? Lunch on a Tuesday afternoon is unlike you."

She sighed then gulped down her wine. "I can't stop thinking of Lungile. Friend he has been on my mind since I came back."

I raised my hand summoning the waiter. "I feel he's bad news. I mean, he was already stringing you with a married wife. A married wife he's definitely not willing to let go. Do you think you stand a future with a man like that?"

She kept quiet as the waiter approached us. I quickly ordered then she walked away.

"That's the thing Janine, that's the thing. But I can't stop myself. I know he's bad news but my heart.."

"You need to be careful, he will break your heart."

"Oh God! He's so hot. His dick game just goes off the hook and his pocket is also huge but.. The heartbreak that comes with that man.. I don't think I can handle it. The married woman he's having an affair with, Lelo, she's beautiful. I can't compete. While we are looking for love, some people are not even struggling."

"Maybe he's just not the one. You never know." I said as the waiter placed my food before me. I immediately started eating.

"LT's girlfriend is Latoya."

"Oh.. Look maybe that crew is just not your crowd."

"Yeah.. I want a relationship like Latoya's. I want a nigga who would drop everything for me. A nigga willing to do anything for

me. You should see them together. I just want a man who can love me Janine."

"And you will find him. You are not that old. You can still have the family you want. Whoever gave it a time frame is wrong. It really doesn't matter if you get married at 40 or not. It's your life."

"I'm just sick and tired of being grilled about getting married every time I visit the village. It gets frustrating."

"Then don't associate with such people. Not getting married is not a sin and getting married is definitely not an achievement. You are talking about Luthando and Latoya, Are they married? They are not but they are happy than most couples."

"Yeah.. Has the new busses arrive?"

"Yeah and they are so beautiful. King suggested I also start doing air traveling too."

"Getting an airport?"

"Yeah, it would be something local though."

"That would be a great idea."

"Yeah," I pushed my plate of chips and chicken aside taking out a few notes from my handbag.

"Anyways I was thinking that maybe —"

"Wait.." I said taking out my phone. I hesitantly answered the Private number.

"Hello?" The person didn't respond. "Hello?" The person then hung up. I looked at my phone in confusion till a text alert appeared on the notifications bar.

One two testing, baby are you ready for the nice game?

"Is everything ok?" Namhla asked.

"Yeah.. Someone just sent a text," I said showing her. She

laughed.

"That must be King. You guys are cute together."

I smiled. "You think it's him?"

"It is, King is an amazing husband."

I laughed. "You are right about that." Before I could put my phone away, another text got in.

Keep them safe. The clock is ticking.

"Uhh I don't think it's King." I said now completely sure. It wasn't King.

"Who's it then?"

32

[NOMPUMELELO]

I took a deep breath as I sat besides Nick. The counselor looked at both of us with a smile. It was the first time to see one.

"Good morning Lelo and Nicholas right?" She said. She was probably someone on her late sixties but she looked younger than that and beautiful.

"Morning," Nick said settling on the chair. My heart was beating so fast as I sat on that chair. I had all thoughts jumping in and out of my mind. We had arrived in Hawaii two days ago but instead of having to be excited and happy, the atmosphere between us had been so suffocating. I tried reaching out to Nick but he was so distant, so reserved. I wondered what he was thinking.

"I hope you had a safe journey." Nick smiled.

"We did."

"Good. Lelo, how are you feeling?" I fkeeked my eyes towards

her then forced a smile.

"I'm fine thank you."

"The first stage to healing between a couple is seeking help and I'm glad you guys are here today. I'm Dr Ava, but just call me Ava." I just nodded then took a deep breath.

"Your husband explained to me the situation and why you are here." I looked at Nick briefly then at Ava. "How did you guys meet?"

"I wanted him to work with my gallery and he was one of the people that was in my shortlist." I said smiling.

"You guys have been married for a year now?"

"Yes, and she's been cheating on me before we even got married." I swallowed as the words left Nick's mouth.

"Lelo?" Ava called. I looked at her. My lips were quivering.

"I—"

"I just want her to tell me why him? Why it had to be my friend out of everyone else."

Ava just looked at me. "I'm sorry, it was a mistake babe.."

"A mistake that happens repeatedly? You even took a sex tape."

He whispered. I knew I had hurt him but the fact we were here showed that he really wanted to fix us. "They even fucked on our wedding day. You fucked him everyday before coming home to me. Business trips that you used to sleep with him. You fucked in my house."

"I messed up and I'm sorry. I'm willing to do anything so that we fix this baby, I'm sure Ava will help us." I said taking his hand into mine.

"You know.. The most painful thing is the fact that I left my job

for you, so to start a company. I wanted to give you better life. I worked day and night thinking of the life I was going to give you but little did I know you were busy with my friend."

"I know I have hurt you. I won't deny it. I'm admitting to everything I did and I'm willing to do anything to fix us."

"That's a good place to start Lelo," Ava said. "Admitting to your wrongs. Most people fail to do this. I'm going to try to help you guys fix this but all this is not important if Nicholas is not willing to forgive you. If you don't forgive Lelo then you are never going to be able to fix this. You guys are as good as dead. Lelo? You can tel him why."

I took a deep breath.

"I.. Lungile was different from Nick. I love making love with Nick but Lungile was rough and he liked exploring."

Nick laughed. "So you like it rough? Couldn't you have said it? Couldn't you have said it that you started fucking my own friend? I always asked you if there's something you would like to change about our sex life and what did you say? You said it was ok and you loved it. So what was I supposed to do? Guess work you don't like it?"

"Nick I think you need to calm down." Ava said softly.

"I'm calm. I just want to understand. I always asked her if there was something she wanted to change and she always said no. Ok, fine. Let's say you did cheat because I lacked skills in bed."

"Babe that's not—"

"No, let's say I lacked skills in bed, it's almost three years since we started our relationship. Why did you marry me then? We had been having sex before we got married. You started fucking

Lungile at CJ's party. If Lungile did it for you why did you marry me then?"

"Because I loved you. And I still do."

"So you cheat on me because you loved me?"

"No.. You know—"

"Ok so all along you have been cheating because I'm weak in bed? Or maybe you have been cheating because you wanted to?"

"Nick babe.. It's over. It's been over."

"I can't help it but to look at you and think of what you have done. You lied about you wanting to surprise me or my birthday.. You were fucking him then. You used to come back home late, while you were fucking him. Wake up early because you had early clients, I guess he was your early client. You fucked him anywhere."

I took a deep breath. "I'm sorry. I love you."

"Funny how you came every night at home and told me you loved me after fucking him."

I felt tears on my cheeks. "Did you also love me when he fucked you?"

I kept quiet. He chuckled. "You know I thought we could work this out, I thought we could fix our marriage but you know what.. I can't stand you. I can't even look at you because you disgust me. You disgust me to the core. I can't even believe I still love you after all this. I can't even believe I married you."

"Babe.. I love you too." I said going down on my knees. More tears were streaming down my cheeks. "I love you so much. I want to fix us. I will do anything. I'm willing to do anything."

Please don't give up on us. Please."

"I can't. You.. I feel like vomiting looking at you. Do you realize how much you disgust me?"

I nodded. "I know.. Ava?" I said looking at her. Things were not going the way I had imagined they would.

"Maybe you guys need some time out. Some space. Some separation period to think things through because right now you are too emotional and angry."

"Damn I am angry! I have a whore! A fucking damn whore of a wife. A dirty cunt of a wife!"

I bit my lower lip trying to stop myself from letting out a sob.

"Yes and that's why you need some time out. One of you will move out of the house and just stay separately. After a while, you can now sit and talk."

"That's fine. I will move out." Nicholas said. I was relieved he was willing to try fixing us but also hurt at the fact that he was more than willing to move out.

"Lelo?"

"It's ok." I said getting up and sitting on the chair.

"You will talk it out after a while then try fixing things."

"Yeah.. Thanks Doc," Nick said standing up.

"You are welcome." I stood up then we walked out. Getting back to the beach hotel we were silent. I didn't know what he was thinking but there was just a huge distance between us.

"I'm not going to stay here longer. You can stay, everything has been paid for." Nicholas taking his bag and placing it on the bed.

"You don't have to leave.. I can move to another room and —"

"I don't want to see you. I'm going back home. I'm going to talk

to my lawyer. He will contact you."

I looked at him confused. "What? What lawyer?"

"I want a divorce."

"Babe I thought we were fixing this.. Let's try out the space thing then—"

"My lawyer will contact you. I just want everyone to keep their shit. I know we married in community of property but can we please have clean divorce?"

"I don't want a divorce."

"Then I will take you to court."

"Nick listen.." I said trying to touch him. He moved back. "Don't touch me."

"Ok, I'm sorry. Listen we can separate. You know. You won't see me.. We will talk when you want us to talk. I will wait. I will for as long as you want me to wait."

"I don't want you anymore. You can go to Lungile all you want. Let him be your new husband."

"Nick.. Babe please.." I said going down on my knees.

"I'm begging you. We can fix this."

"If it happened once I would understand but everyday. In our one year marriage you have been fucking him. And you want me to forgive you. Just how much selfish can you be?"

"I know what this looks like.. I'm willing to wait."

"I want a divorce. I will drag you to court if that's what you want. I don't care."

He grabbed his bag then walked out slamming the door behind him. A loud sob escaped my lips. Everything was just falling apart. After a while of crying I stood up when the hotel phone

began ringing. I hurried towards it then cleared my throat.

"Hello?"

"Mam there's a call for you, should we forward it?"

"Yes yes." I prayed it was Nick.

After a while I heard Tshidi's voice. U sank on the floor disappointed. "Lelo.."

"Tshidi, hey.."

"Hey, something happened."

"What?"

"There's a sex tape.. Your sex tape on social media."

"What?"

"Its gone viral and some artist wants to pull out."

"No.. I.. What?"

"It's bad." I placed the phone down with shaky hands. What was happening to me?

"How long might it take?"

"Well two years or more.. But you might just want to cooperate with him. He has a valid reason to want to divorce you. There's a sex tape, your sex tape with another man rotating around."

"I don't want a divorce."

"Well then get ready for the bumpy road. Thank God you don't have a child."

"Now I wish we had. I will be back by tomorrow. We can meet tomorrow and discuss this. He left today so I got an early flight tomorrow."

"Ok, call me when you land." I hung up then put the phone away. The sex tape was going to ruin my image but deep down I knew Lungile hadn't leaked it. His reputation was also on the line. Just

then there was a knock on the door. I walked towards the door then opened it.

"No!"

He pushed me inside the room also getting inside. "Hey."

"Lungile what are you doing here?"

"Can we talk?"

"Lungile.. I'm tired. Please.."

"I just want to talk."

"Lungile my life is a mess right now. I'm getting a divorce. I have a sex tape circulating around. My gallery is crumbling down. I'm tired."

"I know. And I didn't leak it."

"But you took it. Why?"

"I shouldn't have done that. I'm sorry."

"It doesn't matter does it now? Now the whole world have seen what a whore I am."

You are not a whore baby."

"I'm tired."

"I still love you. You know I do. I know this whole situation is messed up but I love you. But I won't force you to be with me. So I want you to chose, either me and him."

"Lungile I'm not leaving Nicholas. I love him. I'm going to fight for my marriage."

"So you chose him?"

"You knew this already."

He sighed then nodded. "I should get going."

"Bye." He walked out. I sat down on the bed then took a deep breath. I was going to fight for my marriage. I wasn't just going

to give it up just like that. He was my husband and I wasn't going anywhere. I loved him. I looked at my huge ring and recoiled our vows. "Till death do us apart" besides death I wasn't going to let him go.

[LATOYA]

I walked to the car with Luthando. He was angry I could tell and he was having a hard time trying to hide it from me.

"Oh, I see justice has failed us." I looked behind and there was Julie. I felt Luthando tense.

I looked around then back at her.

"We are all only human, I'm human, so is your brother and so is you and we all look at people differently, we all look at things differently because we are different. Through the challenges of our own lives and experiences and pain, and a whole load which makes us different. But that's why we easily judge those who do not live and do as we do.

But who are we to judge people without knowing them? We don't even know a damn shit about them but we find ourselves judging

I have lived all my life having people misjudging me while they didn't know where I was coming from. Nobody in this world is perfect. I'm not perfect and neither are you.

"We all have our flaws, we have all done things that we know aren't right, perhaps maybe I have done more bad things than you. Maybe my sins are much bigger than yours but if there's one thing I know, it's that I did it all for a reason. You might be recording this but I don't care. I killed him. I did it because he

wanted to kill me and I chose living. I will not try censoring your mind so you believe what comes out of my mouth so I won't even explain myself but I killed him and it was self defense. Judge me all you like, call me every name in the book. If it helps you get by the day, go on.

Life is much too short for us to dedicate to bringing others down, but if that's what keeps you going. Go ahead but I promise you life will not be nice for you." I said then walked to the car leaving her there. Luthando was behind me. He unlocked the car then opened the door for me. Getting inside the car he closed the door for me. The moment he got inside the car he drove away.

"Hungry?" He asked. It was just after 9 in the morning.

Yesterday I hadn't left with the police, Luthando wouldn't have allowed it. Today in the morning we had driven there. Apparently it was just Julie's word against mine and there was no proof of me killing him. Of course there was no proof because I had burnt his body.

"Yes please."

"Can we pick Q up later?"

"Yeah.." We had dropped off Q at Puleng's house. She was so fond of him and she certainly didn't mind.

He drove us straight to the Kasi. To the pub he first took me when we met. We got out of the car then walked inside. As soon as we stepped inside my eyes fell on Motlatsi.

She was walking out with some girl. Her make-up had improved and I just had to admit she looked beautiful in her yellow jumpsuit and long weave.

"Thando? Is that you?" She said taking off her sunglasses while smiling. "Oh my God!" She walked towards him with her arms open but he moved back slightly making her chuckle and move back too.

"Hi, Latoya." She said looking at me.

I smiled. "Hey, you look good."

"Thank you, you too."

I laughed. "Obviously. I will go and order." I said kissing Luthando's cheek and walking away but before I could take more than two steps I heard her talk.

"Didn't know you guys were still together." She said. I rolled my eyes shaking my head. "We are still going strong." I said loudly while walking away. I quickly ordered burgers for us. As I got our order Luthando was already by my side. I handed the lady R200 then walked away.

"What did she want?"

"She wanted to say hi, she has a child."

"I'm not surprised."

"I want to pass by the garage, if that's ok with you."

"It's ok, is Zulu still around?"

He chuckled opening the door for me. "Yeah.."

Driving to the garage I was eating. By the time we arrived I was done.

"LT!" Zulu said as Luthando got out of the car. He still looked the same. I smiled getting out.

"Latoya, Mam.."

I smiled then walked towards him and hugged him. "Hey.."

"It's always good to see you." I let him go.

"You too.. Wow!" I said looking around. The garage had completely changed. It looked bigger and more eye catching and clean too. Zulu was even putting in an uniform. A navy jumpsuit printed LT Garage.

"This looks nice."

"You can tell your rich friends about us."

I laughed. "Definitely."

"You look beautiful." Zulu whispered shyly. I laughed.

"Thanks."

"Toots, come." Luthando said taking my hand. I rolled my eyes as Zulu laughed. We walked inside the garage and straight to his office.

"There's a car I need to fix quickly."

"This place is big, don't you have workers?"

"I do, but they left it for me."

"Ok," I sighed then sat on his chair. His office was also nice, it didn't look the way it did the first time. He walked out leaving me alone. I held my breath as my eyes fell on Ocean's picture frame on his table. I bit my lower lip as I took it in my hands. It looked like she was in this office on the table. She looked so cute and alive. A tear fell but I quickly wiped it off. I placed the picture frame on my chest and silently cried. It still hurt. I wondered how she would have turned out. I put it down then quickly took my bag and stepped out of the office. I walked towards where Zulu and Luthando were. They were busy working on a car together.

"What time is the owner picking it up?"

"In 30 minutes,"

I stood there leaning on the wall staring at them fixing the car.

Sometimes I wondered how Luthando felt about the loss of our baby. I wondered if he blamed me or himself. I never apologized for blaming him. I took a deep breath. I had to accept Ocean was gone but how could I ever accept that my baby was no more. That she was dead and never coming back. Sometimes I dreamt her and sometimes it was like I could hear her in my head calling me. Sometimes I wondered if maybe she had been introduced to the ancestors if she could have lived. I held my bag tightly, my heart was beating so fast.

"Toots are you ok?" I fleeked my eyes up and they were met with Luthando's eyes. He looked so concerned and worried. "What's wrong babe?" He said wiping the tears I hadn't felt before.

I shook my head. "Nothing.. I'm fine."

"I hate it when you say "I'm fine" whilst you are not. Tell me.."

I smiled wrapping my arms around him. "Can we go see Ocean after this?"

"Ok," he said now calm. I sighed then stepped away from him.

"Go and fix the car."

"If you need anything tell me ok?"

I nodded. "Yeah.. Can I call an estate agent in Dubai?"

"Yeah, anything is ok." He kissed me then walked back to the car. Just then my phone started ringing. I took it out and again it was a private number. I didn't answer the phone. The moment it stopped ringing a text reported in my phone from the private number.

One two testing, baby are you ready for the nice game?

I looked at Luthando who had his body under the car then back at my phone. I reread the text over again trying to understand

but then shook my head dismissing it, probably was a wrong number. I put my phone away then walked to the chair that was a bit far from the car Luthando was fixing and sat down.

After about 45 minutes he was done and God he looked so sexy looking all greased and dirty. He was now wearing the jumpsuit. Some car pulled up outside, I could see through the glass walls. It seemed it it was the owner. I chuckled when Mthunzi Brown walked in. His eyes were on me the entire time. This man was hot I must say especially in his casual clothes but Luthando still took the crown.

"Latoya," he said walking towards me.

"Mthunzi." I stood up as he approached me. He gave me a brief hug.

"You look good."

"Babe come," Luthando said putting his hand on my waist then pulling me unto him. He gave me a deep kiss then kissed my forehead. "I'm done, go wait for me in the car so that we can go collect our son then go home." He said. I wanted to laugh, he was just jealous. I could tell he didn't like Mthunzi, not even one bit.

33

[JANINE]

I lay on the small bed then pulled my top up revealing my huge belly. There was my huge bump, I looked like a whale. King held my hand as the doctor put some cold gel on my belly then started moving her device on my belly with the gel. We were focused on the screen.

"Ok, there is the legs.. The hands.. The head. Do you want to know the sex of the baby?"

I looked at King who nodded almost immediately. "Ok, it seems like we have.. Uhh a girl." I smiled as I took in a deep breath.

"And lastly.. There." Her heartbeat. I took a deep breath as I listened to her heartbeat loud and serene.

"The third semester is always a bit critical but, the baby is fine and so is mommy." The doctor said stepping away. King took a wiper the wiped off the gel off my belly. I sat on the bed while fixing my loose top.

"Any illness?" The doctor asked. I shook my head no. The morning sickness had long stopped but I still couldn't stand eggs and chicken.

"Then we are good. You may get more supplements and I will see you next time."

"Thank you." King said as he helped me down. Walking out I took a deep breath. Now anyone could see that I was pregnant. The belly was so visible I could no longer hide it. At 28 weeks there was really nothing I could do. Then there was another issue I was dreading. Leaving my job. King hadn't brought it up yet but I knew today he was going to. I didn't want to sit at home and let his crazy mother drive me mad. That woman was so crazy I couldn't stand her any longer and the more she kept addressing every situation with "it's the hormones" was pushing me. On the other hand I had King who didn't want to have sex frequently because it would hurt the baby. I was just upset and so frustrated and my job was the only sane thing that I had.

"Are you hungry baby?"

"I want to go to Namhla's house."

"You are supposed to go to the yoga center with mom remember?"

"King drop me at Namhla's house. Please."

"But—"

"Drop me at Namhla's house dammit!" I screamed. A few people looked our direction but I didn't care. I didn't care at all. "Drop me at Namhla's house or better yet, let me call an uber."

"Ok, it's ok. I will drop you there." We continued walking to the car. I didn't wait for him to open the door for me, I opened it myself. He sure wanted his mother to kill me. I was tired of that woman— do this, do that, that's not healthy, you are not supposed to do that, that's not the way you are supposed to do it! I was tired. It was bad enough that they were starving me and I had to eat what I wanted behind their backs.

The moment he started the car I took a deep breath. I couldn't wait to vent all I wanted. The minute he parked in front of Namhla's house I immediately got out.

"I love you!" He called out after me. I just ignored him then got inside the gate. He was probably wondering what he had done this time around. I banged on Namhla's door. I knew she was still in her house, it was Saturday. She opened the door after a while and she was still in her morning gown. I pushed her aside and got inside the house.

"Can you believe it? King's mother said I couldn't eat Bacon because it's unhealthy. I'm so sick and tired of King and his mother. I don't think I want to keep on doing this. They are driving me crazy. I'm tired. I'm hungry. I'm sexual frustrated and

angry and pissed. You know that I —" I stopped talking as I entered the lounge and there was a young man dressing. He probably was his mid twenties or something.

"Hi," he said then walked out but not before giving Namhla a kiss. I looked at her with my mouth wide open.

"What?" She asked sitting down.

"He's a child!"

She rolled her eyes. "No he's not and he can fuck real good."

"I can't believe you."

"What did King and his mother do this time around?"

I sat down then sighed. "Namhla are you ok?"

"Yeah. Look, I met him yesterday at some club, we came here and had fun. There's nothing wrong with having fun."

"Ok,"

"Do you want some bacon?"

"Please! I don't want to go back home. King is really driving me mad. His mother makes it all worse. I'm tired."

"Calm down.. I will prepare you your breakfast." She said standing up. I stood up then followed behind her.

"So this young man.. What's his name?"

"I don't know and I don't care. It was just sex."

"I hope you used a condom."

"I did obviously. Anyways how's your whore friend's divorce going?"

"Stop calling her a whore. We don't know what happened and how it happened."

"Mxm.."

"Anyways they are still working on it though she's contesting."

"I don't know why she's even contesting. The judge will rule in her husband's favour. She has a sex tape."

"Can we stop talking about Lelo. The reason you hate her so much is because of Lungile."

"I just can't believe I lost a very good guy all because of a whore."

"He was never yours to begin with so you didn't lose him. He was Lelo's. It's a shame that she was married but he still loved her and probably still does."

"Why? She's a pretty but not that much. It's just her complexion that works in her favor and her reserved character."

"I don't know why. You really need to get over it. Lungile is not the one. You will find someone, just be patient."

"I can't believe she even stabbed herself. She was trying to guilt trap Nick. Funny how it didn't work."

"You are really upset. Prepare my bacon. I'm hungry." She sighed then started cooking. What had happened between Lungile and I was in the past but I knew him enough to know he didn't love Namhla. Maybe he loved Lelo but definitely not Namhla. If he did then he wouldn't be still chasing after Lelo even though she was facing a very messy divorcing that could possibly leave her broken or depressed. Everyone knew her private business. People wrote what they wanted and to the extent of even harassing her. She had lost weight, the divorce was really draining her. Just then my phone started ringing. I took it from my pocket but placed it on the kitchen counters immediately. I didn't want to deal with Joanne at the moment.

[NOMPUMELELO]

I stood in front of the mirror putting on my wedding gown. It was now lose, it was big. I blinked as I tried to fix it but it still remained oversized on me. I took a deep breath then sat on the huge bed that I used to share with Nicholas. I still found myself retracing my steps sometimes, I wished I hadn't slept with Lungile the first day but I knew what had happened had happened. There was nothing I could possibly do now than accepting my fault. I felt tears wet my cheeks. The ugly voice in my head kept screaming, "see!" over and over again. I knew I had been the one who caused this mess and now I was lying on the bed I had laid. I stood up then took off the dress and placed on the bed. I walked to the closet and took my red dress. I put it on with my red heels and tied my hair into a normal back bun. I walked out after grabbing my handbag and went downstairs to the Range Rover. Today was the last day of court and I was going to find out if my marriage was really over or not. I started the car then drove straight to court. Arriving there I knew Nick's family was there. They now hated me. They couldn't stand me anymore especially Nick's mother. She had called me names some time ago, even slapped me. From my family I was sure no one was there. They were disappointed, especially my mother so I had no one but myself. Stepping out of the car journalist started taking pictures of me.

"Nompumelelo what do you think is going to happen today?"

"Why were you sleeping with your husband's friend?"

"Is it true that he wasn't keeping you satisfied on bed?" I quickly walked trying to escape the media. Walking inside the court my

eyes first fell on Nick's family. They gave me some hostile looks. Even Mayra was sitted besides Siya. I looked away then went to sit besides my lawyer. As suspected there was no one from my family.

"Morning, how was your weekend?" the lawyer said.

"What do you think is going to happen?" I asked ignoring his question.

"Well apart from the obvious, you guys are likely going to share everything."

I sighed then kept quiet. I was hoping Nick could change his mind but I feared he wasn't. He still hated me. When his mother had slapped me, he had just stood there staring at me. I let my eyes fall to my hands trying to think about my future. What I was going to do after the divorce. We all stood up when judge walked inside. Sitting back I held my breath as the judge started talking. I closed my eyes when he ruled in Nick's favor. I didn't raise my head to look at him.

"Well at least he wants you to keep what you bought." The lawyer whispered. I slightly nodded. That everything I had was nothing without Nicholas. My life was an empty void without Nicholas. The moment the judge dismissed us I ran after Nicholas. I knew with his family there, there was going to be trouble talking to him.

"Nick!" I called out. They all stopped and looked at me. He kept a blank expression.

"I just wanted to say I'm sorry. About everything. I really am. Just that I hoped we could fix things but I guess I was wrong. I know I wronged you and nothing I can do can ever make you come

back to me. I just wanted to wish happiness and that maybe one day you find someone who will love you as much as you love her. Someone who's not like me. You are a good man and I love you. I hope maybe one day you will forgive me." I said then walked away. The moment I got inside the car my phone started ringing. I immediately answered when I realized who it was.

"Latoya.."

"Hey, how did it go?"

"I'm submitting the divorce papers tomorrow."

"I'm sorry."

"It's ok, I have learnt my lesson."

"Anyways, Janine's baby shower." She said changing the subject.

"Next week right?"

"Yeah. I will be there by Friday since Thursday Luthando and I going for some wine tasting event. I will be there on Friday so that we can view the venue."

"Ok, I guess I will see you when you arrive."

"Yeah, Luthando and Q send their love."

"Well tell them I love them."

She chuckled. "I will definitely."

"Ok, bye.."

"Bye." I hung up then put my phone away. Starting the car I drove straight to the gallery. I couldn't go home, if I went there all I was going to do was cry. Arriving at the office I walked straight to my office then locked myself inside after brushing off Tshidi. I needed some space.

I sat down on my chair then switched on my laptop. The moment

it sprunged to life I went to my pictures with Nicholas. I started with the ones we took before getting married till to those when we were married. I had really messed up a good thing and it hurt. I had taken a very good man for granted. Till today I really didn't know the main reason for me cheating on Nick. If he had stayed I knew it was going to be a disaster. I stared at our wedding picture. He looked so happy, I remembered the day he had proposed or how I had moved out of his house because his mother couldn't let me be a wife to a boyfriend. I remembered the excitement of planning our wedding. I wiped away my tears, I had no reason to cry. I had brought the mess to myself all by my own. All I hoped was that one day he met the girl of his dreams and that his dreams could come true. Deep down I knew I was always going to love him so much. I looked at my ring then slowly took it off. I held it in my hands as tears left my eyes. Maybe in another life we were going to be together but it was definitely not in this life. I stood up then took off my shoes and walked to the window. I looked down on the road as cars and people moved up and down. Everyone's life was just mystery and wondered if that's what someone else thought when they looked at me. I couldn't help it but to feel I had failed my family. I had failed those who loved me and I had failed myself mostly. I was never going to find someone like Nick.

I pushed my legs from the window then sat on my chair. Taking the office phone I called Khethiwe. She didn't take long to answer.

"Lelo,"

"Hey.. How's my day looking?"

"Well you were supposed to go and view Anaya's work today."

"What time?"

"At lunch."

"Great! Remind me when it's time."

"Ok," I put the phone away then fought so hard to not to cry but I failed miserably. I broke down and cried hard. It hurt.

After a while I felt arms around me. I didn't need to be told who it was. I knew my brother. He pulled me up from the chair then let me cry on his chest. I cried till my head was aching so hard.

"This is not the end of the world, you still have a long way to go. Consider this as your dawn. A new start to be precise. Yes right now it hurts but it won't hurt forever. This was lesson leant.

Broken is never bad. You can still pick yourself up and be that Lelo you were once. Or maybe you will be a better Lelo. You never know. Don't let this be your downfall, let it be your lesson. I'm on your side. You are my sister and I'm always going to be here." He wiped away my tears.

"Let's go out. You need some fresh air." He said pulling me up. He helped me put on my shoes then took my handbag and led me out. We bumped into Mayra by the door.

"Hey.." She said. I looked down as tears stung my eyes.

"I'm sorry Lelo. I just realized.. Family comes first."

I took a deep breath. "You are getting married to Siya. That family you left is your new family. They are your in-laws but they are your new family. And family comes first, they come first. I will be fine, go back to your family."

She looked at me for a while. "Go.. This is not way to act. We are sisters yes but they now come first."

"Ok.." She whispered then hugged me tightly before walking away. Zuko didn't say anything but just led me to his car. I didn't ask where he was driving but just kept quiet and looked outside through the window. Tomorrow was another day. I opened my palm and my ring was right there. I threw it in my bag then focused on the road. Life still went on.

[NIKIWE]

I dropped the kids at the R&K preschool early in the morning before going to work. I had get to work early and fix my bosses files. I had worked overnight through them and I was still not done. I got in my mini cooper and drove straight to work. Arriving I immediately rushed inside to my desk. I was a personal assistant to Mr Brown. The fact that he was coming today made me feel uneasy. I needed the job because of my fees. Latoya only sent money which was enough for the twins and she also paid the house I stayed in. After settling on my desk I immediately started working on the files. Time seemed to be flying, just a few hours later, everyone was at work and at their relative work stations. Finishing up with the files I walked towards his office then placed them on his desk and did the final touches. The moment I sat down, he was walking in. I swallowed standing up, Mr Brown was a very good looking man. He was very handsome and neat. Just the way he carried himself automatically instigated respect.

"Good morning Mr Brown and welcome back."

"Nikiwe," he said with a nod. I sighed as he walked inside his office. I had to follow after him. I took my notepad then followed

after him to the office.

"Any important messages?" That meant only urgent messages. The rest I sorted them out.

"Yes, Ms Ntwagi called. She says she wants to meet up and draw the contract."

"What else?"

"Mr Dumisa invited you to a golf course."

"When?"

"Today."

"What else?"

"Your ex wife called."

"And?"

"She says she's coming this side and might need accommodation and that she tried —"

"What else?"

"Mr Williams invited you to his wine tasting event. Theme red and black. Mr Simon will also be there."

"What day is it?"

"Thursday Sir,"

"When is the wine tasting event?"

"Tonight, start at six."

"What else?"

"Markus called and he—"

"Anything else?"

"Some lady called Nandi called and —"

"Anything else important?" He asked with his brow raised.

"No Sir,"

"Do you have any plans for tonight?"

"Oh no, well.. I have to go for my evening class."

"What time does it start?"

"Six till seven."

"You only have one class?"

"Yes,"

"Take,"

He said handing me his gold card. "Go buy something for event. You are coming with me."

"Uhh I don't think that's.. I—"

"We will stay for a while then leave. Either way, I have to go to Durban. We will leave after you are done with your class."

"Ummhh.."

"Anything else?"

I smiled shaking my head then immediately walked out. I went over to my desk then packed my things. I walked out and went straight to my car. My phone started ringing as reversed, I answered almost immediately when I realized it was Mr Brown.

"Sir,"

"Please get something classy but appropriate. And I have just texted the code."

I cleared my throat as I glanced at my mid thigh nude skirt. "Yes Sir,"

"Mthunzi." He said then hung up. I took a deep breath sighing. I quickly drove to the mall then started strolling through the shops. At moments like this, I wished to call Carol. The accident had left me so wounded. Nothing was the same and nothing felt the same. We had been driving from Pretoria when we got in the accident. Carol had went for her job interview. Losing her came

as shock, she had been more like a sister to me. Out of everyone, she was the only person who always had my back. Through thick and thin she always supported me. Losing Carol made me realize how maybe Latoya felt when she lost her daughter. It must have hurt and God I felt so guilty for everything I did to her and more stupid for the fact that she never gave in to my insults. She was more a woman than I was, than most people were. Her calmness and silence spoke volumes, her character made her so beautiful. The looks were just a bonus. I realized that I hated her because she was a better person than me, I didn't blame Luthando for loving her. She was a diamond.

After hours of searching, I finally got the dress, appropriate yet classy. It was long and beautiful. Swiping the gold card felt good, I knew he had more than enough. After the dress, I went to the saloon and got a new weave then lastly the beauty parlour for a manicure. By the time I was done with everything, it was just after 4. I drove to the nursery and picked up Thando and Lwandle. My kids were my source of happiness and I was more than glad Luthando was ok with arrangement we had. He took them in for the holidays and I kept them during school days. But then every time he took them, I didn't worry that much. Latoya could never hurt them.

Putting the twins at the backseat I could easily see how they were tired.

"They were really active today," the owner of the preschool said, Kelly. What made me more comfortable was how she was so involved with the kids. It was a big preschool but she tried by all means to be more active and available at all times. I couldn't

even complain about the fees, it was worth it.

"I'm sorry for bringing them before the preschool opened in the morning." I apologized.

"It's ok, see you tomorrow." She said walking to some car. I got in my own car then drove away but as I passed the car she was getting in, I saw Nicholas or thought I saw him.

I shook my head as I drove to my two bedroomed apartment. Arriving Nozizwa was already there. She was my live in nanny. Yesterday she had left for home in the evening because her mother was sick. It was an unexpected emergency.

"Hello hello!" I said walking inside the house with the twins in my arms.

She took Thando then walked to my room where they slept. They were asleep. After placing them each in their baby beds we walked out of my room.

"Hey, how's your mother?" Nozizwa was a few years older than me with four kids that her mother took care of.

"She's fine,"

"That's great. Today I'm going to some function with my boss so I might come back later. Don't cook dinner for me."

She nodded. "Ok,"

"Great." I walked back to my room then quickly changed into jeans and a t-shirt. After dressing I took my school bag then stashed my assignment that I was submitting today. The varsity wasn't that far from my house. In 20 minutes I was already sitting in my lecture hall waiting for the lecturer.

"Hey," a voice said startling me a bit. I looked besides me then back at my laptop.

"Hi."

"I'm Andrew you are?"

"Nikiwe."

"Well you are beautiful Nikiwe." I looked at him. He looked at least a few years younger than me. I couldn't help but to notice his cocky smile. I smiled politely at him.

"It's nice to meet you Andrew and thank you first the compliment. Don't get funny ideas with me, I'm not your type nor your age mate."

I looked back at my laptop and right that minute the lecturer was walking in.

"Right!" He said. He was Ghanaian and was very strict. "We continue right from where we left of. All phones off and if your mouth gets itchy or your buttocks, walk out right this moment. If you don't and I catch you doing what you shouldn't be doing I will embarrass you that you feel very embarrassed in your blood veins."

Immediately after submitting my assignment I dashed to my car. What I liked about my lecturer was the fact that he was straightforward. His lessons were lively and fun because yes he was strict but wasn't uptight. I drove back to my apartment and arriving I took a quick shower. Mr Brown hadn't called yet. After taking my shower I finally changed into my dress. It hugged my body well. I took more time applying make-up. The last thing I wanted was to embarrass Mr Brown at an event that had most business partners.

"Wow!" Noziswa said as I walked out of my room. I had my purse in my hands.

"How do I look?"

"Beautiful."

I laughed. "Thank you."

I took my phone from my purse which was ringing, it was Mr Brown. I quickly answered after taking a deep breath.

"Mr Brown,"

"Send me the directions to your house."

"Ok."

"Are you ready?"

"Yes."

He hung up leaving me sending him the directions to my House. Mr Brown intimidated me but in a respectable manner. After 30 minutes he had sent a text that he was outside. I walked out trying to keep myself at check.

Getting outside his car was parked right in front of the house. He got out in his red suit. Mr Brown was handsome but that suit didn't do justice on him. It left me wondering why his wife had divorced him. He looked so handsome in the suit.

He looked at me for a while, I kept wondering if my look was acceptable or not.

"Hi," he said.

"Mr Brown.."

"Mthunzi please."

I looked down. "That sounds inappropriate. I'm sorry but—"

"Call me Mthunzi, like I call you Nikiwe." He insisted. Calling him by his name felt so wrong but he was the boss.

"Ok,"

"Can we?"

I looked at him. "Yes." He took my hand then led me to the car. He opened the door for me.

"Thank you," I said getting inside the car.

"Welcome.." He closed the door then walked to his side of the door. The moment he started the car Tigi by Sands started playing. I smiled looking outside through the window.

'Vani, vani, lalelelela Udlala kabi um' udlala ngenhlitiyo

Ung'tsintsa kabi, um' utsints' imizwa yami

Udlala kabi uma uts' uyangtsandza

Keph' uts' angkhulume ng'tsini

Uma song'tsintsa le nalena

Inhlitiyo yam ishaya tigi gigi'

"You can sing along, it's ok." I looked at him then chuckled.

"What are you studying?"

"Bachelor of Architecture."

"And how far are you?"

"I'm doing my last year, I had frozen my studies a while ago."

He just nodded then continued driving. A while later the car was parked at the parking lot's venue. He got out of the car then opened the door for me. I got out of the car then let him take my hand. His hand was soft but I quickly chastened myself. He was my boss.

We walked inside the venue and right that moment I knew I had stepped into a completely foreign world.

I inhaled as Mthunzi led me further inside. The event was on going. We were immediately given our wines. My eyes skimmed around accessing everyone. Everyone was dressed in a very elegant manner and I knew their lives were basically as elegant

as their dressing. We listened to the man that was speaking or at least I tried to. After he was done people clapped their hands. I was definitely lost but was glad Mr Brown— Mthunzi kept by my side.

"Wait for me here," Mthunzi said walking away to some man. I took a deep breath then sipped ony wine. I almost spit it out. Damn! This shit never tasted the way it smelt. I swallowed hard then looked around wanting to see if anyone had been looking at me. As I looked around my eyes struck Latoya making my heart leap in my mouth. She was wearing a red to pink dress with a slight vent on the front. It was not so tight against her body but it hugged her full figure so well exposing a bit of cleavage. She had her hair tied into a bun. I quickly looked away, I couldn't have her seeing me here or worse Luthando. He was probably going to ask what I was doing here with his kids at home. Sometimes I just wondered how Latoya did it, Luthando was just something, a monster. An arrogant rude monster. Sometimes I couldn't help but to think he really didn't care about the kids but we had done the DNA twice to prove they were his. I looked over at Mthunzi and he was busy talking to some man. I gave my glass of wine to the waiter who was passing and started walking out I was going to call a cab to drop me home but I knew I was putting my job on line.

I felt a hand gripping me as I walked. I quickly turned but only to regret it. Why was she so beautiful and perfect?

"Hey, where are you running to?"

"Look, my boss invited me here. I couldn't say no. I'm sorry, I know the kids are too young to—"

She laughed. "Hey, relax will you?! We all need a break at some point. I left Q with my sisters. I need a break too so don't feel guilty for being here."

I smiled feeling relieved. "Ok,"

"You look beautiful." She commented.

"You are the one looking beautiful."

She laughed rolling her eyes. "Anyways who's that?"

She said looking at Mthunzi who was now looking at us.

"Ohh my boss." She giggled.

"Girl stop playing. What boss?"

"Yeah.."

"The problem with us is that we like to wait for men to make the first move while we sit on the veranda sipping on lemonade.

Approaching a man doesn't mean you are forward or anything. It means you won't let your fate be decided for you. I'm feminist and I believe in equality in both sexes. Something a man can do I believe I can do it, the only thing that can possibly stop me is fear but besides that I believe I can do it. So I can hit up on a nigga if he can. Don't let good men go cause of some believe. Grab ya man Sis," she said then walked away. I stared at her as she walked towards Luthando. He was the only only one who was not in a suit and ladies gentleman, I could proudly announce that my baby Daddy was a whole meal. Not that I wanted him, no, I was over that. I knew how much he loved Latoya, everyone knew but just that the truth was the truth. He was hot, end of story.

"Hey, come, I want you to meet someone." Mthunzi said placing his hand on my waist. I followed after him as I tried to keep my

breathing normal. Maybe Latoya was right but my boss?

'She fell

She crushed

She broke

She cried

She crawled

She hurt

She surrendered

And then...

She rose again' — Nausican Twila

[JANINE]

I changed Dawn's diaper quickly but her constant movements slowed me down. After I was done I started dressing her. She was going to be with Joanne today then we were going to meet at the reception. King entered as I dressed her.

"Hey."

"Hey, are you done?" I asked as I handed him Dawn.

He chuckled. "I have long been done baby."

I sighed looking at him. He was already wearing his suit and he looked so good. I looked down on myself and I still had a towel wrapped around my body.

"Let me change."

"You will find me downstairs." He said walking out with Dawn. I quickly walked to the closet and took out the dress Derrek had made for me. It was so beautiful and long. I dropped the towel then wore my panties and bra before changing into the dress. It was so beautiful though the diamond sparkly details which were

on the waist and shoulders were really not necessary but then, this was Derrek we were talking about. I sat down in front of the mirror then started doing my make-up. Namhla had finally taught me but I just knew a few things and either way, make-up never really interested me.

Thinking about Namhka made me think about her new man too, Emeka, who was Nigerian. I could smell that man's shadiness from afar. I knew he was a criminal and I had tried telling Namhla about it but I guess she was really turning in a blind eye or she just knew and was trying to protect him. She never stopped talking about him, not that I didn't want her to be happy, she was already 34, I really wanted her to be happy but her hand just kept picking the wrong men. Emeka definitely made her happy but who knew what he was capable of? After the Lungile drama I just thought maybe she would just take a break but no. My friend was already jumping from dick to dick.

I looked at myself on the mirror and I was good to go. My weave had been styled yesterday by Derrek. I stood up then wore my shoes. I could definitely look behind and calmly admit to the fact that I wasn't that Janine I was before. I was a whole new person and it felt good. It felt so good being the woman I was now.

The birth of Dawn made me see all that. After 12 hours of labour the doctor's had thought my baby was dead when they couldn't detect her heartbeat. I had never been so scared in my life than that moment. I already had this strong bond with my unborn baby and losing her wasn't an option. The contraction pains had long stopped and the doctor's kept saying the baby wasn't

ready yet. The baby was a week earlier. They had to give me an inducer though it was risky but at that stage I was willing to do anything. The contractions had started soon after that and I gave birth to Dawn. She was my beginning and I called her Dawn. Dawn Lebogang Tejero. Joanne had been against the Tswana name but I wasn't having non of it and King had stood by my side. I didn't care if she looked white or not but Lebogang stayed as long as I was her mother.

I long had the name in mind, it was my mother's name. I wanted her to just see where I was and just how much happy I was. She had died too soon but I finally got my happily ever after. I had King and our beautiful daughter. They made me happy. When they asked me what I wanted to name my baby at the baby shower, I just said it. The baby shower Lelo and Latoya had planned for me. The same baby shower that had left Namhla upset because the two ladies never informed her. I guess what had made her more upset was the fact that Lelo was also part of the plans. But what had really shocked most people was the way Lelo had picked herself up. She came to the baby shower looking like she hadn't just got divorced. I still didn't know if she really had it all together or was fronting. She had left a lot of people gasping but with Latoya by her side nobody dared said a word. The bond that was between us really went deeper than I had imagined. Yes I hated Kevin so much, even when he was now six feet under but what came out of the marriages we had we with Kevin was so precious and beautiful. They were more like sisters to me.

King walked in as I took my purse from the bed. I smiled as he

pulled me unto him. Sometimes I just wondered what exactly could have happened if I didn't meet King at the restaurant's parking lot the day I did, I wondered if I would be standing today with the man of my dreams. Of course he was not perfect but he loved me and so did I. I was glad I had met him after going through what I had gone through. Lungile— I was glad I had met him. I was glad that I had learnt a lesson through him.

Sometimes, just sometimes all glitter wasn't gold. No one was perfect, if you wanted a perfect person you could look for clay and make him. He was far from being perfect and he loved me. I was glad I had met Kevin before King. Somehow every challenge I went through made me realize just how amazing I was so I too could sing, Thank you, next.

King hugged me tightly while kissing my neck.

"Hey," he whispered.

"Hi,"

He pulled his head from my neck then kissed me sweeping his tongue in my mouth. I wrapped my arms around his neck as he deepened the kiss. Just that feeling of love between us was enough for me. It was enough to make me happy.

"Are you ready?" He asked after pulling his lips from mine.

I smiled as I fixed his bowtie. "More than ready."

"I love you.."

I smiled. "I love you too." He looked at me for a while, I could feel the spark between us. I didn't know if it was normal to love a human being the way I did but I did. I loved King so much it even hurt.

"Let's go," he mouthed taking my hand. We walked out and went

downstairs.

"Morning," I said as I got in the lounge where Joanne was with Dawn. I wanted to roll my eyes at the way Dawn loved her granddaughter. Joanne loved Dawn, she loved her more than King. Dawn had her wrapped around her tiny finger.

"Morning Janny, you look beautiful." She said. I had to, I had worked so hard to lose the baby fat.

"Thank you, we will see you guys later."

"Ok," she said not even looking at us. I waved at Dawn who was just staring at me then let King lead me away. We got inside the car then he immediately drove straight to the venue. I took my phone and called Orlando. He picked up after a while.

"Janine," he answered.

"Hey, did you call the prison?"

"Yeah and I also assigned someone to guard her there at the hospital."

"This woman never really take a break. It's tiring. Her little threats are as useless as her."

Orlando chuckled. "She wants money."

"Well she won't get it. She's going to be in jail for 33 years more, by the time she walks she would have learnt her lesson. In life there's no easy way to success."

"Yeah, look I have to prepare. I don't want to be late. I also want to come out on TV not as a detective but as a handsome somebody."

"This is a small wedding and the media was not invited."

"You know how you guys are always the talk. The media is going to sneak in."

I laughed. "We will meet you guys there. Say hi to Steffi." Him and Steffi were already married. They just went to home affairs but we celebrated with them.

"Yeah bye." I then hung up. King glanced at me.

"Don't worry, I was just telling Orlando to make sure Lana stays in her lane."

"Did she stop with the threats yet?"

"Yeah.. Latoya visited her and I'm sure she was put in her place. And right now she's in the hospital. I'm sure she won't try anything."

"Ok," I sighed as King took my hand and kissed it.

After a while we were getting out of the car. I took a deep breath as I looked at the venue. I laughed out loud. The way Latoya kept saying the wedding was going to be a small gathering definitely didn't look like it. The ceremony was happening outside on the green lawn at a hotel. The white glassy chairs had been set in line and in the middle of them there was a white carpet that led to the alter where there were flowers all around the arch. King and I walked to our seats and sat down. Most people were already seated. I looked around, there were tiny white flowers everywhere. It looked like it had been raining the flowers. Even on the chairs they were there.

"This looks so beautiful,"

"Not more than you." I chuckled rolling my eyes.

"Do you want to have another wedding?" He whispered.

"After what happened on the first I'm good love, enjoy."

He chuckled then kissed me. Gina was still in New York. I was glad she was far from me because the last thing I wanted was to

be charged with murder. Not only was she in New York but she was married to someone's son.

"Hey.." I looked up and there was Namhla and besides her stood Emeka. He had the looks but his eyes told me a lot. He smiled a perfect smile, the way he was careful made me want to laugh but I held it. Just for today I was going to lay off my detective instincts and enjoy Latoya's day.

"Namhla, Emeka," I said smiling.

"Hello," King greeted.

"We are sitting at the last role." She announced.

"Ok," they then walked away. I could feel King's eyes on me.

"Why are you looking at me like that?"

"Is he criminal?"

"Yes and I will let it go but let him hurt Hlahla, I will lock him up before the word Igwe escapes his lips." King laughed. "I think I need to start a TV show, I will name it 'My Wife Is A Detective' or something like that."

"You want me to call Bra Mazibuku?"

He laughed harder. "Go ahead, I have a defense force at home."

I chuckled then rested my head on his shoulder and sighed.

"Yesterday I went to view the house." I said softly.

"And?"

"It's beautiful."

"So you love it?"

"How can I not love home?"

He kisses my forehead. "I'm glad."

"I love you,"

"I love you too Mrs Tejero."

[LATOYA]

I quickly got my handbag then stepped out of the uber. I walked inside the hotel taking out my phone from my handbag. I had a million missed calls from Luthando and Grace. I put my phone away then got in the elevator that led me to my room. Getting inside Grace was there pacing up and down on the phone. She turned and looked at me.

"God Latoya do you want to kill me? People are already gathered at the back."

I threw my handbag on the bed then walked to the bathroom silently. I undressed quickly then stepped under the shower. I didn't mind the cold water, I welcomed it fully. After bathing I stepped out already wrapping a towel around my waist. Grace was now sitting on the bed.

"Luthando is worried."

"He likes worrying." I wiped myself dry then took my white lingerie which was placed on the bed for me.

"I can't really blame him. What were you doing in Port Elizabeth?"

"I—" I was cut short by the soft knock on the door. I picked up the towel which was on the floor and rewrapped it around my body. "Go and open," I said to Grace who reluctantly stood up and walked to the door. Grace was my mother's sister's daughter. It seemed like my mother had a twin and they looked exactly alike. At first after I saw her I just wanted to run, it felt as if my mother was right there in front of me staring at me. The way she talked and everything else was like my mother. Before

Grace introduced me to her she had said my name. Apparently after my parent's death, she was denied taking us in though she had wanted to. She even had pictures of us with her. I didn't care if she was my mother's sister's or not but to me and my siblings she was my mother. She loved me and my siblings and that was enough. Grace and I were officially siblings and that's why she acted overbearing a bit. She always clashed with Luthando and they didn't like each other but they had to tolerate each other. Luthando had finally met his match and thing with Grace was either she cared or she just didn't give two fucks. They couldn't stand each other but that wasn't my problem.

I sighed as Grace opened the door wider and my eyes fell on Miguel. Damn out of all the days? Grace looked at me.

"If you don't want to see him, say the word."

I smiled then looked at Miguel. "It's ok, plus he knows what happens when he messes with me. This time it won't just be a wound but death."

I had told Grace about Miguel sometime. Her eyes fleeked at me in surprise.

"This is the crazy dude?" She asked.

"Yeah, it's ok."

"I'm outside. 5 minutes. We are going to be late." She said then stepped out. Miguel walked in the room, he was putting on a suit and I wondered why he was here.

"Hey,"

"Hi."

"Congratulations."

"Thank you."

"Latoya I just wanted to apologize. I'm really sorry for the way I acted but just so you know I really loved you. But thank you for what you did, I needed it. It made me realize how I was going to keep losing the people I loved if I didn't change my ways. So I sought help."

"And I'm happy for you."

"Yeah.. I'm not here to hurt you or ruin this day for you, I'm here to support you as a friend so don't worry about me. I'm drinking my pills and I'm good."

I smiled but this time it was a genuine smile. "I'm really happy for you."

"Yeah.. I should get going. I will see you."

"Yeah.." He then walked out but only to meet Luthando by the door. He was in a suit too but damn did my nigga look good! He looked at Miguel then me while unbuttoning his jacket.

"He just came to apologize." I said already feeling the tension.

"To apologize? Apologize for what? Shouldn't he be where he belongs?"

"Luthando can you stop?"

"Angizwanga?" I took a deep breath.

"He was here to apologize. And to say he's taking his pills."

"And so? How's that your business? Ehh Mlungu—"

"Babe.. Please let him go." I said pulling Luthando from Miguel who was just looking at him not even looking moved.

"Miguel bye."

"Bye." He then walked away. Luthando was looking at me with the "better explain," look. I closed the door then looked at him.

"I went to get Julie. She's your sister and I wasn't about to have

this day in her absence. You love her you know that, no matter what you will always love her. I had to get her."

"Where's she?"

"She had to buy her dress so I dropped her off at the mall though she will be here."

"And him?"

"He just came to apologize. If he wanted to hurt me then you would have found him dead."

"I don't want to see him anywhere near you. He will regret it."

"I know you have something to do with the reason why Lana is in hospital today."

"If they want to see the devil in me let them provoke you. She won't do anything to you."

I sighed then sat down on bed. "You need to leave so that I can change." He looked at the door before he walked towards me then got on top of me pulling my legs apart.

"You know what I want to do?"

I bit my lower lips as he humped me. "Stop. I have to dress." He kissed me hard as his hand went under the towel then straight between my legs. I still had no panties. He rubbed my clit making me moan.

"Thando!"

"Shh.." He said as he parted my folds then sank his finger in me. She closed the zip then looked at me.

"Done?"

She nodded. "Yeah. Look," she said making me turn to look at the mirror. I gasped as I stared at my reflection. My dress was all lacey. It was more of a white short dress with a long lace that

was flared. It had the longest tail ever but the veil was longer. She fixed the dress.

"You look beautiful."

"Thank you, we should get going."

"All for dick we are starting the wedding two hours after the initial time."

I laughed. "Dick is good."

"Nx.. Let's go."

No one was walking me down the aisle except my sisters. My Father's family was here together with my mother's but my siblings deserved to walk me down the aisle. Aunt Edith had been livid about it. She claimed to have raised me but she didn't raise me, I had raised myself. The moment we arrived at the side where the ceremony was taking place I took a deep breath. I wasn't nervous, I was way past that stage. He was my love and now we were just putting a legal stamp on it.

"Hey.." Latifar said as she walked towards me with Tisher. They looked beautiful in their white dresses.

"You guys look beautiful.."

They laughed. "Get out of here! You look so beautiful. This gown is the it!"

I laughed. "I know."

"Ready?" Latifar asked.

"More than ready."

Grace hugged me one last time then walked away. Latifar stood at my right and Latisher at my left. They linked their hands with mine though with Tisher we had to do it skillfully because that was the hand holding the flowers.

Beneath your beautiful started playing as we walked to the white carpet. I had my afro styled in a way that left me with a crush on myself. The audience stood up as soon as I came into view. We had booked the whole hotel for the wedding. I tore my eyes from the crowd then fixed my eyes on my man. He looked so handsome and like he hadn't just fucked a while ago. My heart beat faster as we approached him. It felt like I had waited a 100 years for him and I finally was getting him. Latifar and Latisher kissed my cheeks then walked away after handing me to him and taking my flowers. I didn't have bridesmaid or anything like that. I wanted to keep the ceremony personal and private. I had up to 50 guests and I was good like that. My heart warmed as Luthando took my hands into his. I couldn't bring into words the feeling that overpowered me every time he held me. It was that feeling that completed me.

"Dear beloved, we are gathered here today to witness the joining of this two young people, Latoya Samuels and Luthando Maphoto." I smiled. I wasn't that young no more, I was now 30 and my mans was 34. We were pretty much grown or what? It had been exactly four years. It was four and we were still counting. I wasn't listening to anything the Rev was saying. I was just looking at Luthando, he had captured me with his eyes. I knew I was home, with him I was home.

We could have just gotten married but he had insisted he wanted to do things the right way and that meant a trip to Kenya with Aunt Edith. My grandfather was still alive but old. I couldn't seem to erase the image of him crying when he saw me. Even if he was old I could see my father in him. And because he was still

alive the negotiations ran smoothly. All I knew was that Luthando had paid a lot for me. And that he had also paid for the death of Ocean together with the twins. I had overheard Aunt Edith telling my father's brother not to forget that.

"You may now say your vows," the Rev said pulling me from Luthando's gaze.

I looked at Luthando, I wasn't about to go first. I had told him not let the Rev include this part but he had insisted.

"I don't regret telling the Rev to include this part. I love you and I'm more than willing to tell the world that." He said squeezing my hands. "I don't regret being here today. I don't regret loving you. You have completely swallowed me baby and you know that I'm completely yours. All I ever needed was you and baby now that I've got you I'm never letting you go. Not now not ever. I'm going to love and honour you till I die and I'm going to live to love you and our family." I smiled as I felt tears well in my eyes. "I love you Toots, don't kill my baby." He whispered the last part looking at my belly. I knew I was in for baby number 2.

"I love you too." He grabbed my waist then pulled me into him crushing my lips with his. I didn't stop him, to hell with the tradition. That moment I simply didn't care about anyone else expect me and him. I was happy. I had him. I had my son who turning two and I had my sisters and the baby I was about to carry for the following 9 months. Moving to Dubai had been a perfect move and so was building a hotel there. We were not perfect or even close to being perfect but we were good.

Nothing else mattered than our love for each other and that was it. Sometimes, just maybe sometimes love was enough.

[NOMPUMELELO]

I took a deep breath as I gulped down my wine. It was my third glass so far but I could feel that the wine was moving me. I shifted my eyes and they fell on Nicholas again. He was with Puleng's friend. I had met her on a few occasions but I knew she was the one. He seemed happy enough to me. I stood up then walked towards them. I met Janina's gaze, I knew she didn't approve but I wasn't going to cause drama. I stood at their table. We were now at the reception. The ceremony had been so lovely it had most of us in tears.

"Hi," I said. He turned and looked at me. Kelly just gave me a polite nod before she looked away. She was pretty, pretty enough.

"What do you want?" He still hated me but I couldn't really blame him. I was responsible for his hatred towards me. I had cheated, and broke my marriage and I had long accepted that. At some point in life I stopped hating myself for it. Hating myself for it wasn't going to change anything. So I made the best out of the situation. I took charge of my life and just cut off men from my life. I couldn't really stay miserable for the rest of my life. At some point I had to turn the page and start a new chapter.

"I'm not here to cause drama. I just wanted to say hi and I'm happy you are happy. I know what I did must have left you doubting yourself but I just wanted to say you are an amazing man. You are a very good and amazing man. You have a huge heart and I know you might hate me now but I hope one day you will find it in your heart to forgive me. I know right now you won't

believe me but I love you so much. I don't think I will ever love anyone the way I love you but that's ok. I hope you find someone one day and that you love that someone without holding back because of what I did to you. You are a good man."

"You look beautiful." He said making me chuckle looking down on my black and gold dress.

"Thank you. You look good too. Kelly too."

He nodded. "I will always love you regardless of what you did. And I long forgave you."

I smiled. "Thank you. Bye."

"Bye."

I sucked in my breath then walked away. I looked at the main table and Latoya was just looking at me. I chuckled then winked at her before I walked out of the hotel to the parking lot.

As I approached my car there was car besides mine and the owner was just sitting on top of it looking gloomy.

"Hello.." I said unlocking my car.

"Leaving early?" He asked.

"Yeah.. There's really nothing for me here."

"Me too. What's your issue?"

"My ex husband is in there with his new girl. It's painful to watch."

He laughed. "Well the woman I love is now married. It's painful to watch too."

"Time for a new start I guess."

"Yeah.. I'm Miguel. Miguel Thompson."

"Nompumelelo Sikhosana."

"Where are you headed? I don't think I want to be lonely alone."

I laughed. "Well there's this place I know.."

—————THE END—————