



Banele Series: Two Queens and a King

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1

Nonhle

Life has a way of knocking you down a couple of sizes right when you think you're too big. See that moment when you feel like you're on top of the world? Enjoy it, because it doesn't usually last long.

I never would've believed you six months ago if you told me I'd be in my father's house today, using cow dung on his newly built rondavel. I was on top of the world.

I had a fiancé, I had a successful business and I had a promising future. I had done everything my father was against and

succeeded. I was the family's black sheep still, but at least I had everything I wanted.

Mom walks in the room, she smiles at me and I can tell just because she's my mother that she wishes she could help me, but because she's married to the man who fathered me, she can't.

"Usakwazi ngempela ukusinda mntanami." She says still with that smile of pity.

Ukusinda is the process of using cow dung on the floor, you basically smear it using your hands and try to follow a pattern and when it dries, it leaves the floor hard and I know it sounds gross but the smell goes away

.

"Yebo mama." That's all I can come up with to say to her.

Don't get me wrong I've always been rebellious but I rebel in silence, and in ways my father doesn't expect. However since being humbled right back to this place, I have even less words.

“Well, the queen is here to see you, I don’t know why but your father is stalling her so you can bathe and get dressed.”

“Did he do it?” I don’t expect an answer but I have to ask.

“Please just don’t keep her majesty waiting mntanami.” She says simply and goes out the door.

That means he did it. My father has enough money for me to live here and just be his daughter but no, he decided it’s best to disgrace me further and apply for me to be the queen’s personal assistant, I told him I don’t want that job, besides he’s a member of the council I’m not eligible. A little fact I’ll just have to politely remind the queen of.

I don’t understand why she’s even here. She could’ve sent anyone really or asked me to come to the palace.

I head out fo the staff quarters and ask Luna to finish up the roundavel for me while I get ready, It takes an offer to give her fifty rands for me to get a yes, but I expected it. She’s like my one best friend here yet she’s only eighteen years old. I’m

fourteen years her senior but you wouldn't tell when we're chilling together and chatting away.

I shower in the cold water, I literally have no time because I've also already seen one of the Royal AMG's by the big house meaning the queen is really here and waiting just for me.

I brush my teeth – for the second time today. Then I wear a simple t-shirt dress with pumps and tie my faux locks back before walking to the main house.

I still won't accept the job yet I can't help but feel nervous. I've actually met the queen before, I was with my parents a few months back at a Charity event she was doing. She's gorgeous and you'd only guess she was thirty-five at most not forty-seven. Her and her doppelgänger of a sister in law can't seem to age. All her sisters and family seem to be the same case too. Well maybe I follow them that's why I know all this.

26, 26, 0.3); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">I walk in to the house and she's sitting where dad usually sits, mom and dad are opposite her looking like they're totally fanning out. Dad gives me one strong stern look and I almost roll my eyes. I know

better than to do that though, hence I find other ways to get back at him.

In a way I blame him for not loving me enough. I blame him for choosing my ex even when I always knew I loved him more.

I grew up with so much love for my father, all I ever wanted to do was make him proud. Which I managed with my grades and being the best daughter I could've been. Me and my two sisters, we all tried our best to make him happy. We all knew he could be very mean and just decide to hit us for the smallest things, but we kept going back to him. When he'd hit mom we'd hate him for less than a day because he would bribe us so easily with chocolates and chips.

Love became tolerance for us. At least that's what my psychologist said when I went to see her because I thought I was losing my mind. I had terrible nightmares of my mother screaming regularly and even felt like I was still that little girl every once in a while. I'd curl up on the bed or sit with my knees up in the bathroom whenever I heard the screams.

Well according to my then fiancé, I would sleep walk into the wardrobe or bathroom and do this. The ex said he didn't notice

till I did it after sleeping on the couch that I actually would be sleepwalking.

Something that luckily stopped after sessions with my psychologist and of course, sleeping pills.

I honestly didn't move into the big house when I came back home because I don't know if my father still hits my mother. I don't want to hear it either because she won't even admit it and lock him up. She's very good at hiding it and has never ever addressed it with me, not even when I started seeing the psychologist and wanted to help her get out. She's never spoken about any of the abuse to me or my sisters.

I smile and greet the queen as politely as I can and then wait for her to address me so I can tell her I'm not eligible for this post then she can let me go back to my cow dung, while I disrespect my father once more and rebel against him. I'm a far cry from the daughters of his who married into wealth and elevated him. My older sister Hlengiwe married a doctor and my younger sister Sbahle married a Chartered Accountant. I'm the only unmarried and disgraced daughter.

I know he expects it, but I also know he knows how much I respect my queen so he thinks I'll take the job.

“Nonhle, I'm here to ask you to come to the palace this Saturday. I know it's already Wednesday but I didn't know how to find you and if it wasn't for your application to become my assistant, I wouldn't have found you since I didn't know your father was Mr Jele from our council.” The queen says and smiles at me.

Side note - she's a gorgeous woman. To tell the truth if this was before my rise and fall from grace, I'd have said yes already.

“Apologies my queen but as you've said, my father is a member of the council, I'm not eligible to work as your assistant unfortunately.”

I can feel the back of my skull burning from my parents' eyes. I'm sure my father would've thrown something at me already if it wasn't for the queen being here.

“Oh no, you’re not hired Nonhle, I know I can’t give you a job. I will explain what I need from you on Saturday, please just arrive at nine in the morning if you want to know. It’s something I’d rather not discuss publicly.” The queen.

I’m confused but I say yes and with that she’s out. I think she took only one cookie from the ones my mom brought out. Actually, as poised and gorgeous as she was, she looked a little nervous. Of course my dad walked her out and I clear out the table so long while waiting for him to come back and yell at me about the “stunt” I pulled.

Father walks in a few minutes later and just shakes his head at me and walks away towards his bedroom. My mom gives me a look and goes after him.

“Get out Nonhle.” My mother.

Those words are exactly what I needed to hear to bolt out of here and go find Luna. I’m sure she’s done and probably reading one of my books in my room already.

Indeed I find her nose buried in *The Alchemist*. I lay on the bed next to her and take out my phone.

2

Nonhle

“So, what was the queen like?” Luna.

I knew she wasn't really reading this book for the fifth time, she just wants gossip.

“Ah, aren't you reading missy?”

She closes the book quickly and flips over on her stomach and rests her chin on her palm.

“Definitely not. Now what was she like and when are you working at the palace?”

“Only because it's you, I'll budge. Well... She just invited me to the palace, no real explanations why. She was nice, as always. However I have a feeling she doesn't like my father much.”

“Why would she face an issue with him?... Wait! What if....”

She takes too long a pause for my liking so I end up hitting her with one of the pillows.

“What if what wena?”

She giggles, “ What if she wants you to represent this family as a member of the council now?”

I sit up straight and look at her.

“Wait can she do that? That would be epic!”

“I mean I don’t know but she’s the queen, surely she knows how to get her way.” Luna,

This girl might just be on to something and I might just be taking away something that man loves and cherishes a lot. I mean what Luna is saying is completely unfounded but I can't help get excited over it. She's just made me think about it and now I want it. I want to take it away from my father.

Saturday could not have come sooner. Early morning and I've had breakfast and ate then got dressed in the most appropriate dress I own. It's one of the ones my ex bought for me from Zara. It's long, chiffon and white with yellow polka dots. I choose to wear flat sandals once more because I don't want to seem like I'm trying too hard. I then put on a necklace... From the ex too and do very light makeup, that's from being influenced by the queen I won't lie.

My father would normally let me drive myself there but I can tell he doesn't want me to fuck up with the royals so he's taking me there myself. Well he basically told me he's taking me there without even asking if I needed him to do that. Since I moved back here, there's never been a day when I was ever offered a ride anywhere or help with petrol even though he knows I'm

living with my last savings. Him providing a roof over my head is said to be enough.

I get in the car, put on my seatbelt and look out the window. He doesn't start the radio when he gets in meaning I'm getting a lecture the whole way to not embarrass him or my family name.

Surprisingly he doesn't say anything. I look at him, we actually look like him. We took our mother's more brown skin yes, but we look more like this light skinned old man than her. All three of us. Prettier versions I'd say.

I look back out the window and unfortunately the silence doesn't last.

“Nonhle, I know we don't see eye to eye and you think I hate you but that's not true MaGasa. You're my daughter, my second born daughter and you remind me so much of myself. I could never hate you. I just need you to understand that no matter what the queen summoned you for, you're there representing the whole family...”

Of course that speech was just so the lecture would be camouflaged. I won't listen beyond this point nor will I reply and he knows it too. When we reach the palace at least twenty minutes later he's finally stopped trying to lecture me and we're both silent. We drive in and park where we're pointed to by security. I can never get over how beautiful this old mansion is. The flowers near the entrance are so beautiful too. The door is opened for us and behind it the queen is already waiting. She looks so gorgeous, all the damn time. She's in a very casual Adidas dress and sneakers. Nowhere near the woman who came to my home the other day looking for me.

We greet her and she asks to take me with her while my father goes to the the council meeting.

Is that why he's here? There's also a council meeting today?

I follow her while dad walks to another direction. I guess he knows his way around this place or at least to wherever the meetings are held. She takes me to an indoor outdoor garden in the middle of the four wings of the house. There's a pool here and she sits me on a bench with her.

"This place is gorgeous. Everything about it really. You too my queen, you're gorgeous." I blurt out before I can stop myself.

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serif;">She smiles and takes my hand,

“Please call me Banele.”

I smile and nod, “Yes, Banele, your palace is gorgeous.”

“Well it’s the Ngubo palace really. I just did some remodeling and interior decoration here and there.”

I know she called me here for a reason, not just to hold my hand and look pretty while staring at me so I have to ask.

“Your majesty... I mean, Banele why am I here?”

She sighs deeply with her eyes closed before speaking,

“Almost twenty three years ago I sat here with a young girl who was promised she’d marry my husband. At that time I knew there was no way she could possibly marry him because I wasn’t going to allow it. I know Khulekani would choose me over his people any day. Today, I sit here with a young woman, and I’m the one in need of her in my marriage, to save my son’s life. My husband, the king, he needs a wife. His great grandfather demands that he marries another woman and if Khulekani doesn’t marry, we might lose our son.”

Wait a damn minute...

“Are you asking me to marry your husband?”

“Please Nonhle. I have to save my baby.”

I’m puzzled. How am I saving her baby and why me?

“I’m sorry but I don’t understand.”

“I have been pregnant for six months now and no one can see it in this entire palace but the royal traditional healer who Khule and I consult with. As you know Khule is a doctor too but he’s also never found anything. Pregnancy tests come out negative but I’ve started feeling him move. I’ve felt his kicks and seen him move only when I’m alone. The healer told me I’d know who the family wants when I saw her and as soon as I saw you at the charity event, I knew. Please Nonhle I know you don’t understand but please help me save my son.”

I don’t know if the room is spinning or it’s my head. I don’t know what to say to her. This woman has a child in her belly and yet I can’t see the belly. She said six months meaning when I met her she was three months pregnant. I don’t understand how this happens but I can’t believe it’s because I should become the king’s second wife. How is that even possible? Also, why me? Why would they choose me?

“I don’t want to know what happens if my due date arrives and this isn’t sorted. So please Nonhle, please help me.” The queen again.

I look at her and I swear I didn't plan on opening my mouth and saying yes but somehow an okay slips out and next thing I know she's hugging me tightly and thanking me. She takes my hand and leads me out to some room and seemingly we interrupted something from the looks we get. My father looks mortified at me. The king is looking at his wife with confusion and she leads me, her hand still pulling mine to the middle of the room with all the people in here looking at us.

"MaVezi, is something wrong?" The king.

He's older. Older than her and way older than me. He still looks like a whole meal though I won't even lie. His muscles seem to be fighting with his shirt to get out. Some of his hair is grey and damnit his brown eyes are the sexiest set I've ever seen.

Marrying him wouldn't be that bad I'm sure. Nah... Scratch that thought Nonhle. The way this man looks at his wife just tells me there's no space for anyone in his heart.

"My king, members of the jury. After years of fighting about it and not agreeing, I've found the second wife we've all been arguing about. I personally asked Nonhle Jele to help save the kingdom and my family by marrying the king. She agreed."

Holy fucking shit! This woman just told everyone in here I said yes to marrying the king! How the fuck am I supposed to decline this now? I can see the veins almost pop out of the king's forehead.

“MaVezi, a word please.” The king.

She looks at me, still smiling and points me to a grandma here before letting my hand go and walking out with her husband pulling her hand.

I go straight to the old lady. I don't even look at my dad as the room is left in complete silence before becoming noisy just as I sit next to the old lady.

“MaJele, I'm MaCele Ngubo, the queen mother.” The old lady.

Holy fuck. What am I doing here?!

Banele

Khulekani is the love of my life, and though I knew I would one day have to share him, I never thought I would be the one making it happen. In fact, I was happy living in the world the two of us created. A world where I would be his only wife and no one else. We agreed on it together and were supposed to fight till the finish.

Unfortunately though, in this world whether you believe them or not there are supernatural forces. Supernatural forces who once took away my son from me, leaving my triplets as twins. It's been many years but I still wish they had taken me and not Sbongakonke. I will be damned if I allow any supernatural force, great grandfather or not to take away another child from me.

To think I thought I was done with babies after having four and Manelisi still being just eight years old. To be my age and pregnant is actually rare and I honestly didn't plan for this baby. When my periods stopped I thought I just had early menopause, actually Khule still thinks it's that. I don't blame him anyway, he's a doctor and wouldn't believe I'm pregnant

just because some healer says so and I can feel something move in my belly.

If I hadn't seen Nonhle on the day of the Charity event, one day after I was told I would know when I meet the woman the ancestors want, then maybe I'd also still not believe.

Unfortunately I couldn't find her after the event and I didn't know she had come with Mr and Mrs Jele or I would've went to get her the next day. It's just my luck that when I was looking for an assistant, her application was among the others. Her CV luckily had her photo on it too so everything just fell into my lap.

I know it wasn't the proper way but it was the one way that would've made sure Nonhle doesn't get jitters and bolts from doing this, so I stormed a council meeting with her and presented her as a future fellow queen of Magobeni. To say Khulekani is angry would be an understatement, but I will do anything for my children and he knows that by now, so there's no way I'm backing down from this.

“Banele what was that?”

“I found her. Khule I found the woman you can marry to appease the ancestors and maybe even yourself.”

“Who said I need another woman to be appeased? I’m happy with the wife I have. Why can’t people understand that? I thought you understood that.”

“Khulekani Hakeem Ngubo I will do anything for my children. Anything in the world and so would you, I know you don’t believe he’s in here but do it for me then. Agree to prove me wrong. Divorces happen all the time and if she isn’t the woman you can love...”

His face changes.

“Of course she isn’t! You are.”

“If Khulekani she isn’t the woman you can love, maybe not like you love me if that’ll make you happy, but at least still love her to an extent that you can be happy when you’re with her and she can be happy too, then you can divorce her. However I’ll

take every chance, even the one that maybe I'll lose you to her over sacrificing a child of mine. Sbonga was hard enough to lose."

He hates this. All of it and I can see it in his face. He can't even hide it. He's disgusted. I'm just praying he loves me enough to listen to me.

We walk back into the boardroom and he goes back to his seat, I take Nonhle's hand and we walk out leaving them to discuss whatever they were discussing. She stops in the middle of the passage as I'm leading her to the garden again.

"I don't think the king likes me, let alone believe he'd marry me. Why don't we just forget this?"

I can't come up with any words to dispute her thoughts on Khule's reaction but I need her, the family needs her and I can't let her go so I pull her to another direction. The gallery.

"Come with me."

When we get there I show her the pictures of the royals that are up on these walls, the sad ultrasound scans of the boys MaCele lost and then I stop at Sbonga's picture. Taken just a few moments after his birth and before his untimely death. It's next to Nobuhle's picture. She passed on at eighteen years old already and was MaCele's first born daughter.

"He was yours wasn't he?" She says looking at Sbonga's picture.

"Yes, I was never going to have twins, but triplets."

"He looks like his father."

"Losing him has hurt me all these years. You might think since I have Kai, Namiko and Naoko and Mane I'd be content and his space wouldn't be there. It's still in my heart. It's still right there and I can't imagine losing another baby."

I turn to her,

“I need you Nonhle. I know it’s selfish of me but I beg you to please marry my husband and save my unborn son.”

“I’ve never lost a child. I’ve never been pregnant before. My gynecologist told me I can have children and everything is fine with me but I still couldn’t conceive for my ex fiancé. He started to resent me for it too. In fact until he married and impregnated someone else behind my back, I was still trying for us. I wanted a child in my arms so bad every time my period came I’d literally cry my eyes out. It’s not the same

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but it’s the only way I can understand why your children matter so much to you... I’ll do it.”

I give her a tight hug. Whether this works or not, I will never take her sacrifice lightly. It’s not easy agreeing to marry a stranger, who happens to be a king and happens to show that he doesn’t want to marry you. I’m also hoping that Khulekani will open up his heart. Even if he doesn’t necessarily feel like she’s the love of his life, he can still love her in another way. The old me would never say this, but I guess hearing that healer speak about how it’s inevitable and dangerous for my family not to become polygamous, I’ve gained perspective.

“Thank you Nonhle. I promise if you need me or my help I’ll be here, however I have a feeling you’ll be great all on your own. Thank you for saving my family.”

I know Khule is mad at me when he’s late for dinner and still not in bed by ten. He’ll be here though soon enough and we’ll talk. That’s not his thing, expressing himself with words. It’s mine though and I want us to talk. I stand in front of the mirror and look at my body. There’s absolutely no signs of a pregnancy. Which is funny because I used to want that for myself because my sister in law Thandi has never had a pregnancy that shows.

Now that I’m here... I want nothing more than to see a big belly with an ugly black line going down. I want nothing more than for my husband to see him. I feel my baby move and smile. I wish you would appear my baby. Just appear for mommy.

Khule walks in the room and doesn’t even look my way. He gets in the shower and I wear my nightie then get in bed and wait for him. Dark or blue we need to talk.

When he walks back out I was already half asleep but I get up and sit on my ass with my head resting on the headboard. He still won't face me as he gets in bed.

He doesn't turn off the light so I know he knows we're doing this right now. He just lays on his back and stares at the ceiling.

"Why MaVezi. Did we not agree we'd never allow them to get to us? Why then did you betray me?"

"I already explained to you why. I just need you to trust me. Not the healer, but me. Trust your wife. We need Nonhle."

He sighs and sits up to look at me.

"Fine. I'll marry her. For you. You can't make me touch her though. I won't."

"I don't know what you and her will do but you owe her a good marriage at least if you won't let yourself love her."

“You’re getting the wedding, I don’t know about a marriage.”

I know this I can’t help him with. I trust Nonhle and I believe it’s her, but he doesn’t have any reason to do that so I understand that is a journey their marriage will have to endure. I can only be grateful he’s trusting me with this, even though at this moment I wouldn’t be surprised if he decided to step down. Which unfortunately wouldn’t work because being the king here is his birth right.

My back aches as soon as I open my eyes in the morning. I wonder what’s wrong. I use my hand to wake up Khule who’s spooning me from sleep. He is a doctor so he better fix my damn back.

“Khulekani man! It hurts!”

He mumbles and gets up quickly. One thing about my husband, he hates it when I’m in pain. He removes the cover from me.

“Oh my fucking God. What the hell?” He says and I sit up on my ass quickly then I see it.

My belly just popped out of nowhere! My pregnancy shows! I look at him and he seems deeply disturbed and interested at the same time. I touch my belly and he kicks. Tears threaten my eyes and I pull his hand so he can feel it. The look he gives me is priceless.

“He’s here. I told you he’s here.”

“I’m so sorry I ever doubted you my love. I’m so so sorry I didn’t believe any of this would happen. We’re having another baby?! Me and the woman of my dreams, just like it’s supposed to be.”

I smile and give him a kiss on the cheek. I’m so excited and happy I whip out my phone and call Nonhle. He looks at me weirdly.

“Hey! Nonhle! Good news! The belly is showing all thanks to you and Khule for agreeing.”

She sniffs, "I'm very happy for you."

"What's going on? You're not okay I can tell."

"I am.. I am I just had a disagreement with my father."

"So you're crying? Okay no I'm coming there."

"I..."

I don't wait for her to finish to end the call and get up.

"You're not going anywhere MaVezi. Not when you're pregnant and haven't even had one checkup. Send someone there."

"Send someone? I literally told her I was coming. I'm not going to drop her. Don't you realize she's the reason for this pregnancy finally appearing? How many times did we see doctors? How many times did you do ultrasounds yourself and still nothing?"

“Okay fine I’ll go. I’ll go if you promise you’re not going out of this room till I come back. The staff and even the family will not understand this.”

“If you hurry and I don’t go hungry before then, I promise I won’t go out.”

He gets out of the bed quickly and walks to the bathroom. To this day, since I met this man, he sleeps naked. I always see his morning boner first thing in the morning. Still a sight for sore eyes might I add. I hear the shower run and literally five minutes later, he’s done and brushing his teeth. He walks in, still naked and puts on drawers and black jeans. Then he puts on a white t-shirt. My man is fine fine!

“Okay, I’ll go check out what’s going on there and send someone to give you food to the door. Mane might just run in here in a few minutes and he’s the only one allowed inside.”

“You know he’ll do just that. He loves coming to us as soon as he wakes up.”

He gives me a kiss and walks out of our bedroom. A few minutes later Mane runs in and jumps on his daddy's side of the bed.

"Morning mama." He says giving me a kiss and hug.

I hold him tightly right back before giving him a kiss on the top of his head. I never realized till Khule pointed it out but I always hold Mane a little longer and smother him a little more than I should because I haven't forgiven myself for going through postpartum depression after I had him. It was hard for me to hold him, nurture him and be a mother to him. I struggled and when I finally got myself out of that dark place, I started feeling guilty and doing just a little too much.

Khule practically forced me to get Mane to sleep in his own bed. I had him on our bed for almost an entire year when he had spent his first few months in his own nursery. I just felt like I had time to make up for. I never realized that it was smothering. Must be true though because all my kids love me but if it was any of them here instead of Mane they would've asked where their father was already.

“Morning my boy. How did you sleep?”

“I had a dream mama. Want me to tell you about it?”

“Of course my boy, what did you dream about?”

“Mkhulu, he came to me when I was in my treehouse and he gave me fruits! Then he said to always share with Thami before he left. Mama who is Thami?”

I’m frozen. I don’t know what to say to him so I take out his iPad from my bedside table so he can do these puzzles while I call the traditional healer. My baby might’ve eaten fruits in a dream meaning someone may be trying to kill my child. I can’t have that! She has to come here and help him as soon as possible. After I tell her what Mane told me she laughs and says,

“They’ve released the boy that’s all. They also named him Thami. I don’t know why.”

“Wait so the dream Mane had has to do with why my belly grew overnight?”

I can only imagine my mother looking down at me and wondering since when has her daughter been so superstitious and calling traditional healers for stupid dreams.

“It did? Well yes, they gave you your baby because you found her.”

Again, Nonhle will never know how thankful I am that she chose to help my family. Speaking of family, only my best friend knows about this, I need to tell them all. Starting with telling my kids their father is marrying another woman because I asked him to do it. I don't know how they'll react but I'm most afraid of Namiko's reaction. She's a bit dramatic and temperamental if she wants to be. She might just make Nonhle uncomfortable the most out of them.

Nonhle:

Yesterday was a whole trip on my emotions. I don't know what I agreed to but I do know from what I remember, I'm marrying someone's husband to save an unborn baby. I'm marrying someone who clearly is deeply in love with his wife. Honestly I don't quite understand how I said yes, not saying I want the unborn prince's death on my hands, but I don't understand exactly how the words came out of my mouth, especially the first time.

Yes, I agreed to marry the king, my king, twice, to his wife's face. Well she was asking me to do it but still. Who does that? Not the asking, many women have done that for different reasons, it's me saying yes that I don't understand fully. I came back home in a silent ride with my father because I told him I don't want to become a queen, he got pissed.

I mean it's true though. I don't want to become a queen. I like money and all the nice things sure, but having strangers poke into my life and think they know who I am because they see me on Instagram isn't a part of my life plans.

I love being low key. I love being able to drive myself wherever I want to go, I mean sure money is a little tight right now but I loved eating at restaurants alone chilling with a book or going to café's just to quietly get myself coffee and drink it by myself. I love walking barefoot or in socks when indoors. I love my pants, I love wearing comfortable joggers at home. As a queen there's no way I can wear pants in that palace and it's supposed to be my home.

I walk into the main house for breakfast and mom made waffles. I love waffles. With any and everything. I already know this is about the queen thing. I sit on the table next to mom and we say a little prayer before eating.

“My daughter you should really think about agreeing to what the queen asked. You know, if you did that I would be directly related to the king and at a better chance to become his advisor and not that Michael man who knows nothing about our people.”

I am honestly tired of this man. I can't believe him right now. I should marry the king just for him? How selfish could one be? He's not asked me even once how I feel about it. I mean sure

I've said yes already but he thinks I declined afterwards. Why is it so hard for him to just care? Care about how I feel. What I want. It's always about him. His way.

"Well dad, you should save your breath, that's not happening..."

"You useless child! Get out of my sight before I do something I'll regret to you! Right now damnit!"

I get up slowly and he throws his cup of tea at me. It burns some of my arm and back so bad I cry instantly. It fucking hurts! I run out of the house to the outdoor cold ass shower and without undressing I open the water so I can cool the burning. The tears are still coming. I can't believe he did it. He literally could've burnt my face. I guess he doesn't care. Anyway it wasn't too hot so nothing will be permanent at least.

I close the taps and walk out now sniffing from both crying and being cold from the water. I walk into my room to find Luna. She realizes immediately that I'm going through something and

so she gives me a towel to dry my hair I guess. I take it and undress then wrap the towel around my body.

I go sit on the bed. Hair still dripping. Luna is looking through my wardrobe for an outfit when I get a call from the queen. I take a deep breath and take it.

“Hey! Nonhle! Good news! The belly is showing all thanks to you and Khule for agreeing.” The queen.

I sniff once and force myself to smile, I don't know why because she's not here.

“I'm very happy for you.”

That didn't sound convincing at all Nonhle what the fuck?

“What's going on? You're not okay I can tell.”

Well fuck me. I don't know what to say so I say the truth. Well part of it.

“I am.. I am I just had a disagreement with my father.”

“So you’re crying? Okay no I’m coming there.”

“I...”

She ends the call before I can even finish my sentence of lies and trying to convince her not to come here. I look at Luna who has blue jeans and a black t-shirt with her.

“Well, the queen is coming here.”

She looks a little confused then I guess she remembers because she screams. I already filled her in last night before bed on what’s up. Sometimes we sleep on the same bed talking and cuddling. She’s literally like my best friend in the world right now.

“Okay I need to go get dressed. I’m not a Jele and could definitely be her PA, while you join her as queen.”

“As if I’d leave you here. I promised MaMnguni I’d take care of you. There’s no way I’m leaving you in this home.”

“Thank you Nonhle. Since having you here I can’t imagine living here without you.”

“I got you for life, trust me.”

Luna’s mother was our nanny growing up. She’s one of the only people who knew about my father’s abuse towards not just mom but us too sometimes. She always protected us whenever it was possible. She unfortunately fell sick a few years ago and passed on leaving Luna with no other family but us. She moved into her mom’s old room here and stays there for a few minimal tasks around the house here and there. She’s actually never faced any abuse from my father and I’m thankful because she’s just an orphan child. I’d hope he wasn’t that crazy to hit her.

Her mother told me before she passed on that she conceived Luna through rape and she asked me not to ever tell her, so all

everyone but me knows is that Luna is her love child with a foreign man. Luna is light skinned like her mother with extremely curly hair so the lie works.

I really wanted to take Luna to university or college but I unfortunately couldn't after losing everything.

My arm has a little bump filled with water and I know now this is as worse as the tea burn will go. I am not about to use a needle on this to cut it open and let the water out because needles scare the crap out of me. I get dressed in the jeans and t-shirt picked by this one who's decided to just stare at me and ask me questions about the queen.

I hear a car outside so I hurry up because if the queen finds out I sleep in the staff quarters, all this regard for me will come to an end. Who sleeps in staff quarters in her own home really?

I walk out feeling more confident and praying she won't notice the tiny water bubble trapped under my skin, or the redness of my skin that's apparently there according to Luna. I can believe her because if I shower with water that's too hot parts of my skin does become red rather than brown.

I walk out my door and towards the house when the biggest shock walks right out the house and looks straight at me. That's not Banele. It's the king. Why is he here? I don't know what to do, should I turn back and go chill with Luna in my room? Oh but it's too late, he's seen me. I walk towards the house and he just waits right by the door and looking straight at me. I spot some of his security around the yard too.

"Where were you?" The King.

The question surprises me, especially because according to his tone, he's angry but according to his facial expression, he's annoyed. Something about fine older men tickles my bean I swear. Most kings have pot bellies and look like they only eat braai meat and drink beers. This one... Well all I can say is damn!

"My bedroom. I went to change thinking the queen was coming here." I reply simply.

"Where exactly is your room?"

I want to try look inside the house but this man has his muscles flexed by the door, plus he's tall so I don't even know if my father can hear me or not.

"It's the first room there by the staff quarters." I point at it.

He turns and goes back inside the house. I follow him in and my parents are sitting on their own couches looking like naughty school kids. I didn't notice this yesterday but the king walks like calculates his steps, hands besides him, posture right and everything.

"Mr Jele how did you say you don't know where she is if she sleeps in the staff quarters?" The king.

I don't know what I'm doing. This man scares me but for this issue, I chose to stay there. His tone is accusatory towards my father who is the reason I'm there but not in the way the king thinks. I stand between them and look at my father, the king is behind me.

“Your majesty that’s not his fault. I chose to sleep there myself. My father just probably didn’t think I’d be in my room right now.” I turn back to the king.

Fuck me! He’s staring at my arm. I know he can see the water that’s under skin but I’m just praying my skin is no longer red.

“Why is there a burn blister on your arm Nonhle? Your arm is clearly water burnt.” The king.

Shivers go down my spine. I don’t know what to say so I turn back to my father. He must get me out of this

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I don’t want to lie to the king so he better say something real quick.

“With all due respect my king, this is my house and she is my daughter. You haven’t paid a single cent and therefore can’t question me about my daughter.” My father.

The king taps my shoulder,

“Let’s go.” He says simply and walks out the house first.

I stay and sit on the couch opposite them.

“Mom are you going to be okay?”

She looks at me like I’m crazy.

“Of course I’m going to be okay. Why not Nonhle?” Mom.

This is how she always reacts when we tried to find out about how she was doing after dad hit her. She’d lash out like this at us. I don’t know how to help her when she’s so damn focused on saving her husband.

“You better move back to your old room as soon as today and stop asking silly questions.” Father.

The king's car hoots twice and you know what? I'm going. Whether dad gets mad or what, that's up to him. I go out and he yells my name but I ignore him. There's no way I'm spending the whole day moving from the room I actually like to my old one. I get to the car and the security guard opens the passenger door for me. I get in and find the king already inside. The car drives out following another one with security.

I don't know what kind of king this one is because he should know he's really not creating good relations with my father by taking me from this yard. However I'm okay with pissing my father off so I don't mind.

We drive into the royal palace in less than fifteen minutes, trust me I'm not surprised with the way the car was flying. I need to try out driving like these people.

The king said nothing to me but kept to his phone. When we park I try to open the door but it's locked, the king's side opens and when I try to follow he stands by the door,

"Sorry but you're going elsewhere. MaVezi will talk to you on the phone later." He says.

“I can’t leave the whole area. What about Luna?”

“Who is Luna?”

“My goddaughter. She’s back home.”

“Fine, I’ll send a car for her. You must wait in here. My children can’t meet you today.”

With that he closes the door and walks away. I hear them lock. The key is in the car and the air conditioner is on. I could literally steal this vehicle right now. I mean I wouldn’t get far but still.

Someone gets in the car and drives,

“Where are we going? Luna isn’t here yet.”

“I’m taking you to her MaMthiyane..” The driver.

I hate that shit! My dad calls me by my clan names when trying to act decent. I hate being called MaJele or MaGasa or any of my clan names.

“My name is Nonhle.”

“Unfortunately the king asked me to address you as MaMthiyane.”

“Unfortunately I’m asking you to call me by my name.”

“You can discuss this with the king MaMthiyane.”

What an annoying guy! What the fuck man?!

“Oh fuck you.”

I can see him looking at me through the mirror and I know he's thinking this one can't be queen. However I don't give a flying fuck. If I was queen he'd listen to me and there'd be no need to curse him out.

When we get to my house I'm again locked in this bloody car while the driver goes to knock on Luna's door.

I see my father go out the door and follow the driver. I can't see further from here but I'm not surprised when he appears once more behind the driver and Luna yelling at them.

"Where is my daughter? Ngubo can't take my daughter without paying so much as a chicken for her! Who does he think he is? I'm a respected man ..."

Luna gets in on my side with my bag and hers, I wonder when she packed whatever is in here. She gives me a tight hug. The driver closes the door with my father yelling at me now since he saw me. Apparently I'm the disgrace that I've always been and I'm disgusting and he's disappointed. All the old shit he says to me. We drive out from the yard and I'm not sure I'm fully with this plan but I'm already in this car, already have my

Luna and already on the way to wherever we're going since we're not even going toward the palace now.

"Why are we leaving? What happened?" Luna.

"Honestly? I'm not sure exactly why I'm being sent wherever we're going." I say a bit loudly so the man driving this car hears me,

"Does the king know your dad hurt you?"

As much as I'd like to think he cares that much for me, I doubt it's that.

"He couldn't possibly know that. Speculate maybe, but he won't know because I'm not talking about that with him, neither should you. Or you big head." I say that looking at the driver through the rearview.

"Why not? Weren't you against your mom protecting your dad? You're doing the same thing."

This child will just make sense randomly. I hate it.

“Just... I don't want to have someone fight him for me you know?”

I can handle my dad. In other ways, like how I'm doing now. Getting under his skin is my best revenge almost always.

“Then what's the use of having a husband if he won't fight your battles?”

“That man doesn't love me. It's going to be a cold marriage of sacrifice not love so no, I don't want him in my business.”

“Says the woman halfway to wherever, in his car, with his driver and no idea why.” Luna.

Mxm. This girl is annoying at times really. Too smart for her own damn good. I hate it.

“Okay you need food in your system. Did you bring my purse?”
I’m diverting our attention because she’s right.

I know nothing of where I’m going or exactly why I was taken from my home, yet I’m now halfway to wherever I’m going and without a damn clue where it is.

“Yes, it’s in your bag.”

I look through this bag that clearly Luna was told she has ten seconds to pack. Honestly everything was just shoved in.

“Driver, please drive into the next petrol station. I want to get this smart little missy food okay?”

“Yes MaMthiyane.” He replies and I want to strangle him.
Ghraaa!

When we get to the petrol station he parks and gets out of the car. Our doors are still locked because when we try to get out, they don't open. I used to love an AMG A45 S. Now I think every time I see one I'll be frustrated. I see the driver on the phone. I'm guessing asking his boss if we're allowed to eat. He walks back to his door and opens it,

“MaMthiyane, it's the king for you.”

I don't understand why I can't just be let out of a car so I grab the phone and answer as politely as possible given my current mood.

“King Ngubo sir, how may I be of assistance?”

My tone wasn't exactly polite but I'm hoping he doesn't catch that.

“Don't be cheeky. You're going to be behind schedule if you take too long, you don't have much clothes and there's still

groceries to be bought where you're going, I advise you to tell Vumani whatever he must buy and he'll get it for you."

"You do realize I don't even..."

He ends the call before I can finish my sentence. I don't know where I'm going or even who the driver was till like a second ago. I don't understand why I'm being dictated to yet it's being made to sound like I have a choice. Why didn't he call me? Or Banele at least? She's far nicer than her man. I know he's old enough to be my dad. I mean twenty years isn't pap and vleis but I'm not his child.

I sigh and give the driver, who I know now is Vumani his phone back.

"I'm no longer hungry. What do you want baby?"

"Uh Steers, a burger." Luna.

I look at Vumani and he nods then he closes the door and walks towards the Steers.

“Are you okay?” Luna.

“I think I’m marrying a dictator.”

“He’s such a fair king though. Everyone loves him in Magobeni and...”

“Lunathi if you’re going to be on that man’s side rather not say anything.”

“Shu! Okay I’m sorry ke.”

I roll my eyes. She’s not sorry at all and she thinks she’s right. We stay in silence till Vumani gets back. He has food for us both. I roll my eyes, he doesn’t know me if he thinks I’ll eat that. I’m a size thirty-six woman but I eat like a size thirty or thirty-two. I’m not going to eat this food since I’ve told myself I’m no longer hungry. This one can enjoy it himself.

Luna on the other hand doesn't give a fuck and she indulges as soon as it arrives. We get back on the road in silence.

My sister Hlengiwe of all people is calling me. I wonder what her father has said to her.

"Hey Hle."

"Hey stranger. How are you doing mntakama."

"I'm fine, how are you?"

"I'm okay, I was just checking if you're home I'm thinking of coming there to see you."

"Hle, I know you know I'm not there. He's told you I left and he wants you to talk me into coming back."

“You don’t sound surprised at that. I mean I was. Dad actually wants you back home? After he talked so much shit about you coming back?”

I guess dad didn’t tell her why he suddenly wants me to stay at home. He didn’t tell her he wants use me to elevate himself.

“That man is something else, I’m not going back there yet. Maybe tomorrow or something.” My eyes are on Vumani as I say this and he glances at me.

I think he’ll tell his king I said I’m going home tomorrow.

“Well he’s breathing fire and even called my husband to bother him with this can you imagine?”

“Definitely ! Your dad is weird.”

We both laugh and I ask about her kids before we say our goodbyes. Sbahle sends a text and she’s shocked that dad wants me to go home. We text back and forth for a while and by the time I raise my head to take in my surroundings we’re at the Umvoti Ultra City getting petrol. Where exactly we’re going is still a mystery to me but I don’t want to ask Vumani because I’m as angry at him as I am at both the king and my father. Men ruin everything!

5

Nonhle:

The next time I raise my head we're driving into Lifestyle in Ballito. He finds a parking and gets out, then he gets my door,

"Please leave your belongings in the car MaMthiyane." Vumani says when I grab my purse. I roll my eyes and leave it.

Luna opens her own door and gets out while Vumani closes mine and leads the way towards the shops. He takes one of the Woolworths trolleys and we go into the shop.

"The king would like you to get whatever groceries you think you'd need for at least a week. However if you need anything more I'll be available to drive you anywhere you wish MaMthiyane."

I don't answer him but instead I lead the way putting whatever I feel like I want in the trolley. Luna who currently has my phone is busy snapping and walking behind us. I buy a full

chicken, because there's no way I'm cooking and a salad. That'll be dinner. If Vumani doesn't like that, he'll be strong.

One thing I know now is that I'm going to a house. I'm guessing it's the King's house somewhere. Maybe here in Ballito? I mean that would be awesome.

When we get to the cashier Vumani gives me a card,

“Then pin was sent to you by the king.”

I look at him weirdly and ask for my phone from Luna. There really is an unopened sms with a message. It's four numbers. I'm guessing this is the king's number that sent this. I shake my head and wait for the cashier to finish scanning everything before paying. After that we go to the car and put everything in the boot.

“We'll come back tomorrow to shop for now you've been asked to buy cosmetic products you think you need most.”

“We? Haha. Quite funny.” I say to him as I walk away towards the Clicks with them following me.

Honestly if Luna wasn't here I'd run with this card and show Vumani and his king flames. I'm not crazy. I'm actually quite reasonable but if you don't tell me what the fuck is going on, how am I supposed to feel? Who operates that way? Mxm.

“Luna don't annoy me! Stop taking selfies and pick a damn toothbrush!”

She doesn't do her normal smart mouth shit. I guess she can tell I'm really not in the mood so she quietly gets a toothbrush. I pick a towel set and she does the same. I take a couple of packs of pads because I have a heavy flow and so does Luna. I get toothpaste, shower gels and skincare products. The last thing I grab is a pack of gum and we go pay.

To be quite honest I love the faux locks on my head but I want to do braids so tomorrow maybe I can buy extensions so Luna can braid on my hair. I did the ones she has on now and that's our thing. We braid each other.

After paying we go to the car, climb back in and drive out. I'm getting hungry now and the car still smells like Steers. I've already told myself I'm not touching it though so I ignore it. Luna has given me my phone and I now have a text from Banele. My mood gets instantly lifted. I can't wait to tell her what her husband did today and I'm hoping she tells him to have manners. He's so disrespectful really.

As we text I can tell she's not going to tell him anything about this talk. Even if she does she won't tell him to stop treating me this way because she keeps saying she can't get involved in "our personal relationship." I mean what relationship sis? Her man is dictating to me. There's no relationship there. I guess she just knows him better and maybe this dictator shit is who he is. Maybe that's why she's clearly not taking sides and telling me to talk to him. After everything he's done today, she's asking me to talk to him.

We drive into an estate in Zimbali and park in a big and beautiful home. Luna looks at me and I can tell she's excited. I partly am too I mean is this where I'm spending the night?!

I still don't show my excitement though because I don't want this one to tell his boss I was excited. We get out and I take some of the Clicks bags with Luna while Vumani gets some of the groceries.

Before we even reach the door from the garage to the inside someone opens for us. It's an older lady with a smile on her face.

"Sanibona, ninjani kodwa?" The lady.

"Sis Florence unjani? Has her majesty said anything to you?"
Vumani.

"Yes, me and the ladies have cleaned up this old place for the future queen and her goddaughter."

She's looking at us smiling when she says the last part. I smile back just to be polite. Luna is just looking at the gorgeous place and probably hasn't heard anything since getting here.

“Let me help you with that MaMthiyane. I’ll set these up in your room. Follow me young girl, I’ll show you your room too.” Florence.

She’s already taking the bags before I can reply and so I agree and they walk upstairs.

“I’ll get the rest and go to the granny flat to rest. I’ll see you tomorrow when we’re scheduled to go shopping. There is security all around the house and you’re safe okay?” Vumani.

With that he’s out the door and I’m left here standing alone. I walk toward the large lounge and look around then I continue on to the large kitchen and dining area. It’s open plan so if I turn around I can see Vumani walking in with the groceries walking towards the kitchen to leave them on the counter before walking all the way back towards the lounge and out.

The stairs are on the side of the house with massive windows that probably show them from outside. The large sunken lounge has steps going down to the seating area with the television. I walk back towards the lounge area and check out

what's behind the only wall here. It's a pantry. I mean with the size of the house it feels a bit far from the kitchen however at the same time, it's literally also a chef's kitchen I guess to be away from guests.

I check behind a door not too far from the pantry and it's a laundry room. The other door is a half bathroom. Well the great thing about this house is that it's not that close to the ocean. I can see it but it looks like this house is on a hill and far from it. I'm definitely afraid of the ocean. How do you sleep knowing if a Tsunami started, you don't even have five minutes to try and run away? This is better and still has an ocean view so I'm not complaining.

Vumani is done with the groceries I guess because I hear the door lock after his third trip into the house with bags of food. Luna runs downstairs and comes to hug me. I giggle because of how giddy she is even though I'm not sure why.

“This is the best thing that's ever happened to me! I love this whole house! Thank you so much for taking me with you Nonhle!”

She squeezes me until we're both giggling.

"I'd never leave you. Even though I didn't even know where we were going, I was never going to let you stay there without me there for you."

"This house is awesome! Mam' Florence says I can do whatever I want and there's people who clean here. We literally just have to live."

I smile at her and watch her talk about everything she wants to do here include go into the pool and spa because she can. She wants to start learning how to swim at eighteen. I don't even understand why because I personally would never but hey, apparently she's been told she can do whatever she likes. Long as she doesn't drown I don't mind.

Sis Florence walks back downstairs and starts putting away the groceries and I ask to help her since I'm new here and want to know where things are.

“You can always change whatever you’d like to change MaMthiyane. This house will soon be yours too.”

I don’t know how much employees like her who don’t stay at the palace or close to the royals know so I don’t tell her I’m probably not going to marry that dictating jerk. The only good thing about that man is that he’s attractive because honestly that’s the only way others don’t realize how controlling he is. They’re all mesmerized into not seeing him how I do.

After packing away the groceries and being told I can press a button for help at any hour, I can get a chef and I can literally have anything done for me but have any of the staff in the bedroom anymore. That’s the only room the king doesn’t allow staff in and Banele cleans that herself. The same goes for Luna’s room because she’s the king’s goddaughter too now. Meaning the rules that apply to the other children, apply to her.

I wonder how she’ll feel about that. I’m not sure it’s wise for Sis Florence to say such things given I’m not even yet a queen or married to the man of this house. I don’t want Luna to think that man will love her or care about her because he won’t. You can just tell he isn’t planning on having a relationship with me

and that's okay but I don't want Luna mixed up in that. She's been through enough.

Florence takes me to my room upstairs and tells me if I need help finding anything I can call her. I thank her and walk in. It's beautiful in here. The bed is sunken like that lounge. There's a closet in here. I say closet because it's big enough to fit three rooms in here. It's empty so there's only open shelves and rails with hangers. The shoe section even has LED lights like the stairs that come up here.

I've seen stuff like this only in movies and Instagram. I've never thought I'd even have such. Sure I hoped I'd be rich, just not this rich. I walk back out and the other door leads to the large bathroom. This could literally be another bedroom. The three shower heads are a bit much. The largest square one is in the middle and I can see the stars on the glass above it. Now that's a cool feature.

The tub is black and large with jets. I can't believe this honestly. Huge double sinks and my new towels and stuff is all here. I guess Sis Florence came in here for the last time to drop these. I walk out and sit one of the two couches here. There's a small

table with two books. I get up to see if there's a balcony behind the curtains and there is one, a huge one at that. I can see the backyard garden, sunken pool and sunken fire pit. I go back inside through the stacking doors and lock. The key was already hanging here so I take it from the door and put it on the table.

I've seen enough of this room and I don't want Luna wandering off in this big ass house so I go back downstairs and find her talking to Vumani. They're sitting on the kitchen high chairs laughing about something. Heh I know Vumani is younger than me but he's definitely way older than Luna so I hope he's not going to try it.

"Oh hey Nonhle, isn't your room sick?! I love it! Vumani came in because he forgot to bring in our bags from home." Luna says as I walk towards them.

I nod and stop a few feet away from them near the counter, "Yeah it's nice. Please reheat the chicken baby, we put it in the microwave already and then take the salad from the fridge and plate for us three. Vumani, a word please."

I say this and walk all the way back out the open garage door. This house is too big for a dramatic entrance. There needs to be a way to not speak and then have your words entirely processed and understood by a third party by the time you get out.

A few seconds later Vumani walks out and closes the door behind him.

“MaMthiyane?”

I can't help but roll my eyes but I don't have time to stop these people now. Clearly they've all been told to call me that because even Sis Florence did it.

“Vumani I hope you're not thinking of trying anything with Luna. She's a child.”

I don't understand the look on his face. He looks rather surprised, then he smiles

“I wouldn’t dream of it MaMthiyane.”

“Good. Thank you let’s go eat.”

“Don’t worry about me, the drivers and the security eat with the staff.”

I nod and walk past him then into the door. I close it behind me and walk back to Luna. She’s cut the chicken and put it on a plate with the salad then she took out the dressing and other sauces from the fridge so we can use whatever we want.

“I almost didn’t find the fridge. Everything looks like cabinets.”

I laugh because without Sis Florence I never would’ve found it either. Probably would’ve used the one in the chef’s kitchen/pantry.

“Yeah this house is going to take some getting used to.”

“Tell me about it! I’m so excited though. If only I had a phone again I’d post all of this.”

“You can use my phone for your social media for now mos.”

“I know, I already did. Just wanted to see if you’d say I’m allowed to or not.”

“Only after you’ve done it? I have a feeling uMaMnguni stole my DNA to make you.”

We both laugh because her mom always used to say we’re alike in so many ways and at sixteen years old I was sure she was just grasping at straws. Luna was only two years old then, there was no way. Even after she was fourteen and I was twenty-eight years old at the time of her mother’s death, I didn’t see it. Yet now, now both Luna and I agree her mom was onto something. Difference is the smart mouth from Luna. I don’t really do that.

“Well I’ve been getting notifications so much today! Followers, friend requests the works. Even DMs from those who know me

from high school asking if I'm back online and saying I've become a city girl. Isn't it cool?"

I shrug and frown. I don't understand how city girl is cool. From how they use it on Twitter, I don't want her being called that. Anyway I'll let the teen be a teen.

"City girl doesn't sound very nice from how I've heard and seen it being used. Also, I know you're ranting about social media because you miss having a phone so I'll look for something tomorrow for you to use."

She literally jumps from where she's sitting to come hug and thank me. I shake my head and giggle. She thinks she's so slick! I love her for it though. We have to wash these dishes and get to bed. I personally am tired, however I can tell the city girl wants to watch television and luckily for her I know how to operate a remote better so I find her something on Netflix and tell her to try it out by herself to switch to Showmax or another film. It's the only way she'll learn.

I head upstairs and into the bedroom. As soon as I step in about to go shower I get a call from Banele. I wonder if she's finally on my side or still standing by not getting involved or taking sides.

"Hey Nonhle. How is Zimbali treating you so far?"

"I guess it's okay. I do need to leave tomorrow though, dad despite being a prick is right, I can't be kipiting so to say at my big age."

"Ugh girl, from what Khule said to me, you're going to have to stay there till this coming Thursday. Saturday the negotiations happen and then Sunday you travel back."

"Banele what are you talking about? Negotiations where? For what? Don't tell me I'm the last to hear that someone is paying Lobola for me."

"Hau the letter arrived at your dad's doorstep a few hours ago."

"Now see there's no way because he would've made even more noise about me having to be home, and probably

would've told my sisters by now who would've called to ask me who I'm marrying if he doesn't tell them himself."

"Well I don't know everything, I told you I wasn't getting involved in your marriage with Khule, so maybe you should ask him why there's no more noise from your father."

"You do understand that this can't happen anymore right? The king has only spoken to me once, otherwise he's talking at me. He told his driver to not let me pay and he took me here without telling me where I was going or why. Also, the man doesn't even look at me. He's all about you, which is fine but how do I marry a man who doesn't even understand me?"

"Look, there's a reason you're supposed to be with him and you're supposed to be a part of our family. You've already helped me with my son and as happy as I am, I'm afraid if you two don't marry, things could still go wrong. It's selfish of me to want you here just for that but I'd rather be selfish than not even try to save him."

“I hear you Banele, and I don’t blame you. I just wish to be seen. Otherwise tell him I want an open marriage.”

She laughs loudly,

“I know I said I wasn’t getting involved but that I’ll definitely tell him.”

She’s still laughing when we say our goodbyes and I don’t understand if it’s that funny or there’s an inside joke between them about open marriages. Maybe they tried it before. I mean you never know with rich people.

I go take a long hot shower and wear only panties to bed. Why is this so? Because when Luna took her ten seconds of packing our bags, she left my pjs. I don’t blame her though, Vumani didn’t give her much time. I’m praying for a clearer mind tomorrow. Honestly I need to plan either a rebellion or how to convince the king I need a side bae because he clearly wouldn’t touch me even if you paid him to.

Banele

When my children came home unexpectedly a day after I stormed a council meeting with their father's future wife, I knew they heard somehow about it and came to find out what's going on. In a royal family few things that happen publicly can be hidden, especially if there was some family members present. MaCele for one is known for talking about things so I wouldn't be surprised if they say they were told by grandma.

The moment Kai walked in then her brother and sister followed in the bedroom, I knew they knew so I secretly sent their father a text while they were looking for the courage to ask me what's going on. I could just tell with the small talk. Or maybe they just wanted Mane to go out of the room before asking. I surprised them first before they could say anything by removing the pillow from my belly and getting up. I was no longer in the night dress anyway and Mane is a kid so he didn't notice anything different with his mother, he was buried in the iPad when I came out the closet.

All three of my older babies looked shocked to say the least. Kind of like their dad had been, that's before they changed from that to being excited for another sibling. That's when Mane heard them and got angry then he stormed out the room.

I still have to have a talk with him about how it'll be great for him to be a big brother like Musa is to him.

Anyway, Kai being a doctor was first to ask why it hadn't shown for so long and that's when I explained why we need a second wife in the family, and the ancestors demand their polygamous marriage. Surprisingly they actually understood even though they don't like the idea of having a step mom at twenty-three and twenty-two years old. Of them three though the one who clearly seemed to think the hardest about it wasn't my usual diva Nami but her brother.

As the future king, I understand why he just seemed to go into a shell after I told him everything. His father tried to resist but even for the mighty Khulekani Ngubo something had to give. That could only mean if he resists something similar might happen or maybe with him even worse. These things don't come the same way.

We're having a family dinner, just us and the children before they go back to Durban and Cape Town respectively. The twins live in Cape Town, both studying. Musa will be working in the family company NMV holdings while Nami is studying and practicing photography. She's a great writer but I guess she just chose to do something else for now. Being born into royalty and not just that, the wealth her father accumulated by himself – she can literally study for the rest of her life if she wanted.

“So dad, I know how you feel about mom but do you like love Nonhle too?” Musa.

“No son. Unfortunately I do not love her.” Khule.

“Yet, he doesn't love her yet. I'm hoping he'll at least learn to care for her, because at the end of the day, she's important to our family.”

“You're okay with that mom? I'm a little uncomfortable with that.” Nami.

“Yeah, me too. I don’t really like it.” Kai.

“Well the old me would’ve felt like you two and maybe even worse but I’ve learnt so much since having Mane and being helped by the royal traditional healer.”

“So basically the past eight years you’ve relearnt yourself while understanding more about the family?” Musa.

“Yes Bongumusa. I’ve grown to understand where the tradition of polygamy in this particular royal family comes from and that sometimes the ancestors just want something. Whether you do or not.”

I can just tell Khulekani is over all this talk from his face and it’s so beautiful to see because it’s proof he loves me and even when I let him be with someone else, he doesn’t want it. I do however need him to see the bigger picture like me and well from what I understand, I’m the only woman who can get him to do anything, for now.

“Well Naoko has no issues being polygamous, don’t you bro?”
Nami.

We all laugh except Musa. He pinches her and the ever dramatic princess screams.

“Not at the dinner table Namiko.” Khulekani.

Nobody dares call Nami by her first name, Abongiwe, why? She forbid us all and if you know her wrath, you listen. Well of us except her big sister. Kai doesn’t care about her sister’s anger because they’re literally similar and have the same temper, just that Kai isn’t as loud with hers as her sister. I’d say Kai is like Khulekani. Quiet but still as deadly.

Both my boys are sweethearts though. Musa and Mane are just gentlemen and though I know Musa is a playboy

I’m still certain he treats ladies well. Mane is way too young for girls but I’ve heard him talk about one girl from class since kindergarten. He says she’s not his girlfriend because they’re too young but when they’re big like Musa’s age, then he’ll ask her out.

It's the cutest thing but I know just five years from now he'll change his tune. They always outgrow being cute and start having girls attach themselves to them.

We enjoy the rest of the dinner laughing about other things and genuinely I feel this couldn't have been a better time to do this. Sure Mane is young but he's old enough to understand if I explain things properly to him. Getting him to like Nonhle won't be too hard. It's accepting more siblings, I'm hoping Nonhle can have kids with Khule, that might be the issue. Mane's been the last born for eight years already. He's bound to get jealous.

After dinner we get drivers to take the twins to the airport and Kai back to Durban. I called Nonhle on my way to the bedroom while Khule was making calls to the pilot at the airport who'll take the jet to Cape Town.

She asked me to ask Khule for an open marriage on her behalf and it was the funniest thing ever.

Why? I don't care how much he doesn't care for now, Khule is not sharing a wife. Not even if he doesn't love her yet. It will never ever happen and it's actually such a brilliant way for me to get him to make an effort.

I'm sure Nonhle thinks I'm taking his side on things but for the most part I don't want to discuss their relationship much with Khule because I don't want him to feel coerced into loving her should that happen. I'm definitely on her side about him moving her from her father's house disrespectfully and not even discussing with her where she was going. Or at least telling her but that's Khule. I love him exactly as crazy as he is and I know she'll learn to love him like this too. He's not hard to fall in love with. I would know.

When he walks in the bedroom I'm waiting for him under the covers with my back against the headboard.

"Khule, Nonhle asked that you agree to an open marriage."

I say simply when he joins me in bed. The look he gives me is enough for me to burst out laughing.

"Is she mad?!"

I keep laughing and trying to talk through it,

“Well she reckons that’s fair since you don’t love her, she can get love elsewhere and attention.”

“Who’s giving her love right now? Which man? Isn’t she single? Now that she’ll marry me she’s in need of a man?”

I have tears forming already in the corners of my eyes and I can’t help but laugh my damn ass off. Nonhle is definitely not getting this wish.

“Well I’ll let her know you’ll think about it.”

“You should’ve told her she’s crazy the moment she said it. Nx.”

He’s so worked up and as sexy as an angry Khule is, I kind of want him to show that side to Nonhle so I won’t even initiate sex. He’s already angry, I’ll let it build up.

“Go to Zimbali in the morning and talk to the woman. She’ll see that you see her.”

He doesn’t answer immediately but eventually sighs and says alright.

I know how to win without fighting with this man and tonight I’m proud of myself for being able to set this up for Nonhle and him.

In the morning I’m planning a family lunch in my restaurant with all my NMV holdings family. NMV is Ngubo Micheal Vezi holdings. Mike said he wants to take the power away from his dad and not make the company a part of his father’s legacy so he opted for his name not his surname, Boateng. Originally before the company was formed, we called ourselves the NBV families.

Vezi is my family surname but represented by my brother and the one who came out of the toughest situation out of all three of them. If I hadn’t met and married Khulekani, my brother would’ve still been successful but not as much as he is now. He didn’t have trust funds like Khule and Mike. Our father wasn’t rich, just middle class. We dreamt of money but not the billions

we now have access to. Honestly if and when God favors you, nothing can stop Him.

Other people involved in NMV include Khule's little brothers, Mfundo and Khulani plus all our children. Well Khulani doesn't have children yet he's only twenty-three while Mfundo is married to my sister. Mike of course is with my best friend Lwazi and their kids. Then my brother and his wife plus kids. Lastly without a stake but still an honorary mention, my sister Fanele and her husband Matthew, they also have one biological child and a newly adopted daughter. Also Khule's only sister Zendaya and her husband Connor with their two children.

The company hires family, based on qualifications and work ethic only though. One of the princesses who is Khule's little sister Nosigcino also works there. She keeps an eye on the boys for us too because she's on their floor. We also hire the general public. Well I say we but Mike is more hands on that side. He's also retiring soon and the best option for who takes over from him right now is someone who doesn't even have shares there but has experience and till the boys grow up a bit, Gcino will take over.

Anyway, the lunch is so that I can show them my pregnancy and we can explain to them about the polygamy, and how I ended being the one who pushes for it to happen while asking that they accept Nonhle. I'm hoping like with the kids, it's easier than I currently expect. The family will be together for my niece Owami's wedding so it's the best time to get everyone together. The negotiations will actually be happening during my niece's wedding.

Yes, the wedding must happen quickly because I'm being extra cautious for my baby.

I'm distracting myself with this lunch business really because I don't want to call Khule to ask him how things are going with Nonhle. I'm sure he's in Zimbali by now and either charming the panties off her, or frustrating her entire being. There's no in between.

Nonhle

You know something? I wish he didn't come here. I don't understand why he's here if he won't say anything. He arrived way too early for one and just opened my curtains without warning. I almost ran out of the room opening my eyes to a man sitting on one of the couches in my room staring out the glass doors.

I still haven't gotten out of bed because I'm only wearing panties and I don't know how I'm supposed to carry this heavy ass cover to the bathroom. I choose to use the sheet but before I can even move he speaks for the first time since we said good morning then just stared at each other. His voice is a baritone and too loud for the damn morning too.

"Just get up. You're wearing a red lacy thong and nothing else. You sleep like a six year old so I already saw everything the moment I walked in the room."

I choke on my spit and cough. What the fuck man?! Is this guy nuts? Firstly, how dare he say I sleep like a six year old?! That's insulting! Secondly, why is he describing my underwear in detail? I know what I'm wearing.

I still get the sheet off the bed and cover myself then I walk to the bathroom. He takes out his phone when I do this and seems to be on it. Today I buy sleepwear. That's if I'll still get to go shopping with Vumani since this man is here.

I take a quick shower and brush my teeth, then I do my minimalistic makeup, tie my faux locks in a high ponytail and wrap a towel around me when I walk back into the room. He's still sitting where I left him. Like he's a portrait for Vogue or some shit. How does he find the time to be in perfect lighting, the perfect place and move the perfect way all the time? Must be exhausting!

“Wear something casual, like me.”

I don't understand. He knows I don't have clothes here yet right? Also, how is an outfit that could pay the deposit for a Ferrari casual? The brands aren't flashy but I know these clothes. It's clothes even my ex has saved on his Instagram as

part of his wishlist. I'm talking Nike x Dior sneakers, Nike sweatpants and t-shirt with a Nocta collection jacket and the "icing" I can tell is a real diamond chain and that watch is blinding me so it also has to be Patek or Rolex or whatever.

I don't want to talk so I shut my damn mouth and go look for something from what Luna could pack. Heck I don't even have a change of shoes so if he has issues with my flats, he'll be strong. I find a good pair of jeans from The Fix and a plain white t-shirt. This is the best he gets really. My stuff is back home but even if I was there there wouldn't be much of a change to this outfit maybe the shoes would be sneakers and a branded tee.

I walk out of the closet and avoid his eyes. I don't want to see him judging me because I'll curse him out with my last breath I swear.

"You have to do the bed, sweep the floor then mop and take the sheet in the bathroom to the laundry room where you'll iron that t-shirt so I'll go wait for you downstairs. Do you like porridge? I do. I'll ask Florence to make the three of us some while you do that."

Oh my fucking God he's a fucking terrorist! Dictator isn't it, it's terrorist! I want to curse him out as he walks out the room but

I'm defeated so I watch him with my mouth open till he walks out the door. I jump on the sunken bed, no time for steps, grab the pillow and scream into it. Is he fucking kidding me?!

When I finally calm down and take it off my face it has some of my make up on it which annoys me further so I throw the damn pillow towards the door. Fuck him! I'm not doing all that shit!

A few seconds later I get up, take the cover and the sheet from the bathroom, then I grab the pillow on my way out. I take out the pillowcase and throw the pillow back on the bed then walk out. Tears are threatening my eyes. I'm so fucking pissed.

When I get to the laundry room on the far end of the passage there's a lady here. She smiles at me and takes it from me. Then she asks for my t-shirt. I'm confused so I ask as I take it off and give it to her.

"How do you know?"

"The boss said you're going somewhere today. I've worked for him long enough to know no one goes out with him wrinkly."

I shake my head.

“Is he a cruel boss? You can tell me, I won’t tell.”

She laughs and shakes her head.

“The only people who have it tough from him are the security. That’s only because he wants his family safe, all the time.”

I don’t believe that but I shut my mouth. She’s just being nice because she’s afraid of losing her job. I never would’ve snitched. She takes out one of those irons I’ve only seen on television on those Verimark adverts. It irons clothes on the hanger.

“You’ll knock on my door when you’re done please. I have to go sweep.”

She opens a door with cleaning supplies and hands me a fancy Verimark broom and one of those fancy Verimark mops too. I thank her and take in her instructions for the mop. Then I go back to my room with this shit and start by sweeping the large ass room, after a while I mop the floors including the bathroom and walk out taking the supplies back.

The lady who helped me gives me the t-shirt and lets me know when I come back the bedding will be dry if I want to use it again or I can get some on the bottom closed shelves in the closet of my bedroom.

I'm not going back in there for the damn bed.

I'm going downstairs but I don't tell her that, I just thank her and walk out with the t-shirt and walk downstairs with just my bra and jeans on. I put the t-shirt on in the middle of the steps when I see the crazy look the king is giving me. I don't understand, he said he already saw everything already and I didn't even have a bra on while in bed.

I don't ask though when I reach him and Luna. I greet Luna and she greets back.

“Morning Nonhle, your porridge is in the pot.” Luna.

She’s almost done with hers and the king is done with his but I don’t see the bowl he used unless he didn’t even have any which would piss me right off.

“How are you here so early? You slept late.”

“Baba woke me up and told me to clean my room, and get dressed so I did.” Luna.

I look at him. He did not tell Luna to call him dad. Honestly. What is wrong with him?!

“I woke her up first, she chose to clean the room before showering.” The king.

I’m guessing he thinks I’m looking at him because I didn’t see Luna cleaning at all. I don’t even care about that.

“I see. How was your night Luna?”

I’m angry at him. I don’t actually want to see him nor address him because I’ll be disrespectful I know it.

“I was just telling baba that it was awesome. My room has this cool lamp that makes it look like the sky is on my roof. I love it!”
Luna.

“Well I’m glad you like it here Lunathi. It’s your new home, you can stay here as long as you want. However I’m going to have to ask you to move next year because you have to start school.”
The king.

I look at him. Directly at him for the first time since I came downstairs. He’s not even looking at me but at Lunathi who’s next to him. She’s already hugging him and thanking him.

“Thank you so much baba! I’ve been wishing I could go to school as study but I had no luck with bursaries.” Luna.

“Don’t worry about all that. You’re getting an apartment in one of our buildings and going to whichever University or College you want.” The king.

She’s already in tears and hugging him constantly. The smile on her face is priceless and his looks so genuine too. I can’t help but catch a lone tear too when she comes to hug me.

“Can you believe it Nonhle?! I’m going to school!” Luna.

I nod and hug her back. Nothing makes me happier than seeing her so excited. She’s so giddy and though I was angry at him just a minute ago, I can’t help but be thankful for this so I say an audio less thank you to him while he’s looking at us hug. He nods.

Luna spends the next five minutes while I eat talking about how happy she is and how she can’t wait to move out and be a city girl, that earns her a look from her newly found “baba” and she shuts up immediately.

“Seems you’ll have to share with Khanya. She’s one of your sisters. You’ll love her. By the way, you can’t call Nonhle by her name anymore. She’s going to become a queen. I’m taking both of you from Jele’s care and you’ll both be introduced to our ancestors. You’re going to be our daughter, fully so you have to get used to calling her mom.” The king.

I don’t think Luna is hearing this for the first time because she doesn’t look surprised, just excited. As for me, I don’t know how to react because as beautiful as it all is, he’s only showing affection to Lunathi. He’s really a father with her but I don’t think he can be a husband with me. Not from his words and body language thus far. All I know is he cares for Luna and right now, that seems enough to make me want to give this thing a shot.

Lunathi washes both my bowl and hers after we finish then the king stands up and says let’s go. I swear Lunathi is the force that pulls me out of the thought of rebellion because she’s quick to follow this man to the front entrance. For the first time we’re going out through this large ass door. He opens and holds it for us before following us out.

The only car parked by the fountain nearest to the door is a Ford Ranger. It's matte black and I can tell he customized it because the windows dimmed too. He gets the door for me then Luna before going to the driver's side and starting the engine.

Okay – maybe he's a terrorist but he's a damn sexy one. The way he handles a steering wheel is... Perfect. Calculated. Just like every other movement he makes.

We drive out and within minutes we're at the Ballito Junction.

"A round of shopping then breakfast or breakfast first?" He asks looking at me.

I'm still full and I think Luna is too so I look away and pretend to wipe something off my face before answering him. He puts on a cap and sunglasses. Hiding from paparazzi I see.

"A round of shopping, we just ate."

He nods and gets out of the car first. Then he gets my door but Luna is out before he even gets to hers. She's so eager my goodness! I'm afraid the king will get annoyed with it but he doesn't seem to mind more than that he's first to offer her his hand and she takes it. He offers me his free hand to help me jump off the car and I take it. I want to break our hands free after that but he does it first and closes the car door. Then unexpectedly, he does take my hand again and we walk together towards the entrance. I don't know how to feel about this.

We go straight to the iStore and he tells us to buy whatever phones we want. While Luna is off to choose I decide to address this now.

"Please don't spoil her. I want her to be happy but I don't want her to be some brat or think she'll just ask daddy for anything. Which by the way you did not tell me you're asking Luna to call you dad."

"I'm a father to four other children. I spoil my children and I also teach them the value of the things they are afforded. As for Luna deciding to call me her father, it was completely her

decision after a conversation she and I had. I did not ask anything.”

“You don’t know how hard life has been for her. I’ve tried to give her a good life for four years now but I had to do it in secret because my ex did not want me doing it. So to see her get all this, I should be happy but instead I don’t want her to crash in case we don’t work.”

“MaMthiyane go choose a new phone please, I don’t have time for your insecurities about this marriage. Which even if it doesn’t work out and you divorce me, Lunathi is still going to be our daughter. She’s going to be a Ngubo.”

I’m at a loss for words. I really am because I want to understand what he means if the marriage doesn’t work I’ll divorce him? How is it already me filing for divorce and not him? Also, Lunathi is ours? Uphambene yazi. He’s gone loco. Lunathi is my goddaughter.

I don’t want to fight at an iStore so I zip my mouth and go join Lunathi. We end up buying the same phone models, different

colors. Hers is red, mine is grey. Well by buying I mean the king buys the phones for us.

I don't even know where my cards are because when I checked my purse this morning, there wasn't any just the hundred rands cash I had left in there plus the two rands.

After getting the phones we go sit down at a restaurant and order breakfast while I back up the phone and Luna basically starts afresh. She's already taken so many selfies with us and alone, I already know she'll have a field day posting. Regardless of not being able to post her new "baba" yet because he's not your average joe and he's not yet married to her new mom.

Now that I think about it, Luna has yet to call me mom but already refers to the king as dad. Wonders shall never end in this world. She's only spent this morning with this man by the way.

"What exactly am I supposed to call you?" I ask a little unexpectedly, even for myself.

“To you, I’m Khulekani. I’m sure you’ll be able to gauge situations where you’re supposed to call me the king or his majesty and all the other crap.”

Won’t lie I’m surprised he is willing to let me call him by name. I’m even more surprised he curses.

“Alright Khulekani, did Banele tell you about my request?”

“Forget about that. If you’re my wife, you’re my wife. There’s no open what what here.”

“You do understand it would take some of the strain of keeping two women happy off you. I mean not that you plan on making me happy.”

He stares at me like he wants me to shut my mouth.

“Did I tell you I’m strained?”

Now how do I answer that because clearly he did not.

“No, but...”

“Then don’t speak for me.”

I shut the hell up and thank the waiter for my food when it arrives. We all get our orders and begin digging in silently. Well silently for me. Khulekani, yes I’ll definitely call him by his name, and his daughter because that’s what he called her, are talking about her high school experience at the newer King Khulekani High School, she attended at the school he built basically.

“Yeah it was both good and bad I won’t lie. I mean the education and facilities are top notch especially for no fees but then some of the male staff just... I’ll say weren’t ethical.”
Luna.

I see Khulekani’s whole demeanor change. I know this story, I wanted to fight but as I said before, I let my ex made me feel I

shouldn't be doing anything for Luna in the past. He said I must focus on business and that if I left he'd take over the business in my absence. I mean he did do that while I was right there but that's a story for another day.

"What did they do?" The king.

She sighs. I can tell she's already ready to cry and she hasn't even started talking, her voice breaks from the first sentence,

"One of them, he's probably just a little younger than you dad and he groped me in his classroom." Luna.

"Okay sweetie listen, you don't have to tell the story now in public just give me his name for now." The king.

She nods, tells him the name and he goes to hug her and give her a kiss on her forehead before walking out. I go sit next to her and hug her. I feel so guilty that I didn't fight that pig till today. We continue eating after she's calmed down fully and Khulekani comes back. He doesn't even sit down,

“I’ve paid for this, when you’re done here go to any of the salons, do whatever hair you two want, do your nails, everything. Then you can go shopping. Use this card. I’ll be back to fetch you guys when you’re done.”

He gives me his card, briefly side hugs Luna and walks away. I check my phone when a text comes in from his number with a different pin from yesterday. I just save his number and send a simple thank you. I don’t know what else to say to him. He’s so complicated and mysterious. I think he’s supposed to be some sort of movie character. A black James Bond maybe? I don’t know.

I wonder what it is he’s going to do. I wonder a lot of things, including why he was here with us this morning because really, he hasn’t said anything about that. When Luna finishes her food we go out in search for the salon. Not really sure I know where it is so I use the mall search thing and find one then we go so we can get our hair done and do Luna’s nails for the first time ever. It’s such an awesome experience that I try my best to document her.

By the time we've gotten glammed up here, I got to get braids as per my wish and Luna got a cute twelve inch straight weave, she looks so good! I love it on her so much especially with the nude and short stiletto nails. She's almost really a city girl. Not sure how Khulekani will feel after his reaction to her saying she'll be a city girl this morning. We didn't go crazy with the hair and everything because we don't want to take advantage of Khulekani's kindness. We go back to shopping, for clothes now.

We're at Mr Price when Khulekani calls me. He's probably back.

"You looked at the Sports scene but didn't take anything, not even a few sneakers for Luna, why?"

Now how the hell did he know that? I look around but I can't see him anywhere.

"How do you know that? Plus, that stuff is expensive and we're not trying to take advantage..."

He cuts me off, “You can stop shopping if you don’t want to but give Luna everything she wants. Did I not say you two can get whatever? You can fucking buy a plot of land if you want.”

I don’t believe what I just heard so I take the phone off my ear, stare at it and put it back.

“Fine, no more limits if that’s what you want.”

I end the call first this time and it feels damn good. I go find Luna tap her and tell her we’re going back for sneakers and tracksuits and whatever else we want.

I’ll even go as far as getting us some real jewelry at Sterns or Browns for icing on the cake. He’ll probably take away the card after I’m done with him today.

We’re walking around with two trolleys filled with just clothes and getting stares from others. I don’t really care. I bought my first designer bags and shoes today plus, Luna got to experience the same. They can stare at us, it’s a free country after all. I’m pretty sure though it’s weird to them how we dressed like we aren’t really loaded but buying like we are.

Luna's fit is even better than mine since she has Chuck Taylor's on with black jeans and a black t-shirt.

Khulekani calls me and tells me he's outside where he was parked before so we go to find him. He looks far less tensed than he was earlier. He's helping us out the bags in the car but only asking Luna about the shopping experience. He's really good with her. He even compliments her new hair and all. I love this for Luna, however I can't help but worry what happens if his kids reject her as a sister? The truth is, his older three are in their twenties, they don't even have to accept her but still, it would hurt if they didn't.

We get in the car and drive out. I guess it's time to go back to the house.

"Are you cooking tonight or asking the chef to cook?"

He's asking me that question and it's so weird how he expects me to know I have such options. I choose the chef though. Cooking isn't something I love doing. I'm good, don't get me

wrong mom made us cook since we were nine years old. I just don't like to do it and jobs are scarce, let the chef work.

"Do I have certain duties in the house? I mean it's seeming like you expect me to know things I've never been told about."

"It's your house. You can do whatever you like except have employees in my bedroom."

We park in the garage and I turn to Luna,

"Go in baby I have to talk to this man."

I regret the words after I've said them but it's too late now, he's already mad and I already said them. Soon as Luna gets out I turn to him,

"You do not! I repeat, you do not call me 'this man'. Not when the child is present, not when she isn't. I swear to God if you test me, you'll regret it."

He roars at me. I don't understand if I'm supposed to be scared. He'll only go as far as roaring mos. I grew up getting a slap across my face. I don't care for rants.

"Whatever, look, you can't expect me to know things if you don't communicate with me. How the hell are you going to say I can do whatever then put an exception plus say it's your bedroom when I sleep in it?!"

"That cheekiness will be checked real quick, keep disrespecting me. You're told what you need to know only because you cannot be trusted. You still haven't told me your father threw a cup of tea at you. Why not?"

I'm confused so I lean back. He couldn't possibly know that...

"Who told you that? Also, you never asked!"

"So in front of your parents, in your living room, I did not ask you why you had a blister?"

I open my mouth but no words come out so I close it right away. I'm done with this conversation so I try to open the door but it's locked. Okay this shit of locking me in cars ain't it man.

"You and I are here because according to Banele my family needs you to be a part of us. I don't know why you but we're here. I'm here getting you out of that house and speeding up the process of our marriage because I can tell if we let it linger on, it will never happen. You think being disrespectful is some cute shit but it's not. I suggest you learn to respect me and if you tell me what you're going through, trust me I'll start talking to you too. For now, learn manners. There's something in the cubby hole for your blister."

With those words he opens the door and gets out. He goes to the back, grabs some of the bags and walks into the house.

I'm left in the passenger seat wondering why my pussy moist and I'm angry at the same time. He said I think being disrespectful is cute. Me. The woman who's kept her mouth shut through so much bullshit going on around me in the name of that man. Also, why do I forget things when he's here? There's no way that's normal. I haven't even asked about my cards.

He walks back into the garage with Luna. They're talking about something as they grab more bags. They make about three more trips before they're done.

I'm still in the car wondering what the fuck my life has become. All because I let Banele convince me I should marry her husband. I decide to call Banele. Maybe I'll get somewhere with her today. Right off the bat she asks about the open marriage concept.

"He told me no. I don't understand why not because it's literally the best solution."

"What about if you want kids or at least one kid?"

"I haven't thought that far. Besides God doesn't want me to have kids because as much as I was told everything is okay down there, I never fell pregnant in two years."

"Well whatever the plan is, you can't be married to him having someone else's kids. We're royalty, the ancestors would be so

angry. I mean I know lately I sound like their spokesperson but maybe you can meet the traditional healer yourself and hear from her.”

Dad has a traditional healer. He creeps me the fuck out so I’ll just take her word for it because meeting with one isn’t in my plans.

“Don’t worry. I understand I just also want someone to love me.”

She tries to make me feel better, even says that things might change but I know she’s just saying that to make me happy.

Honestly I still don’t know how I put myself in this mess. I said yes to something I planned on saying no to. How?!

Nonhle

I've been in this house for three days now, tomorrow I'm going home for the Lobola negotiations. I knew about that before my own future husband told me. He actually dropped by today to tell me that I'm going home and I should pack appropriately, if I don't have a nice dress, he can take me shopping now, I told him I'm okay.

I think he knows what he did wrong, but he still hasn't apologized for not telling me himself sooner. I think it's either not in him to apologize or he doesn't care much how I feel.

I'm sitting by the tanning chairs watching him and Luna talk by the pool. They both have their feet dipped in and seem deeply focused on whatever it is they're talking about. I'm still surprised my sisters haven't been told what's going on. I know they don't know because they would've called to tell me not to marry the king because I'm sure they know there's no love here. I also might just listen to them so I won't say it.

I get up to prepare them lunch because clearly Khulekani isn't leaving yet and I hadn't asked the chef to make anything for lunch since it was just going to be Luna and I. When it's just us two, we make food whenever we feel like it and don't bother anyone about making us anything really.

I don't know if he'd be happy with sandwiches but I guess I'll find out. I decide on club sandwiches.

Banele walks in just as I'm getting all my ingredients. Wow! She wasn't joking. Her belly got big. I'm so intrigued that I stare at it as we greet each other. There are no hugs but she squeezes my hand. I can tell in a way she's thanking me for saying yes for the hundredth time. Or it's pity because her husband doesn't even like me? I'm not sure.

"Where is he?"

"They're outside. Him and his daughter."

I air quote daughter. She laughs at me.

“He’s told me about her. Says she’s a brilliant young girl.”

“She is, I guess I’m just a bit jealous he tries so much with her but barely anything with me.”

“He’ll come around, I promise you. What are we making?” She asks already washing her hands.

I’ve read somewhere that she’s a qualified chef so I’m sure she’s not going to be impressed with this.

“Club sandwiches.”

“Okay, I’ll make you a sauce for that, trust me, you’ll love it.”

I guess it’s an okay choice then.

“So are you here to check up on him?”

“Him? Why would I do that? He does the checking up in this marriage. The man knows if I step out of the palace immediately. As for me trying to do that, it would be a waste of time.”

“You know, the other day when we were shopping he said some stuff he wouldn’t know unless he was in the mall which I know he wasn’t.”

“You’ll know sooner, rather than later that he has security for you, and Luna because you’re now a part of the family.”

I roll my eyes. That’s dramatic. I’m barely in the family for now, so why the excessiveness?

“The drama!”

She laughs at me and I can tell there’s more but she doesn’t say anything. I hope he doesn’t have cameras in here because I masturbate in the bedroom sometimes. I don’t want anyone seeing that.

When we're done with the sandwiches I call the bonding duo inside. Banele wasn't lying about her sauce. It slaps on these sandwiches.

"Oh hey love. You're finally here." The king.

He goes over to her and kisses her forehead then he sits next to her while Luna and I sit opposite them in the dining area.

Khulekani introduces Luna to Banele and tells her to call Banele mom instead of her majesty. Honestly it must be nice. He barely even acknowledges me in this table. Even when he eats he talks about Banele's sauce and even Luna compliments it.

I don't know am I here to be wallpaper and give this man Luna as a daughter only? It's all so strange how he acts.

Banele wants to talk to Luna so they go outside leaving me and this man to stare at each other. I just get up first and get the plates so I can put them in the washer and wipe down the dining table.

“There’s no turning back after Saturday.”

I look at him, he’s looking straight at me so I go back to what I was doing to distract myself from his face. The man is very fine even if I have to admit it to myself.

“Women have turned back at the alter before.” I reply.

“Yeah but you won’t. Look, I can’t give you the love you desire. I love my wife and I’ve been with her for twenty five years now. I’m not saying I can’t learn to love you eventually, I’m saying it can never compare to what my wife and I share.”

I know all this. Well not the part about him possibly learning to love me someday, but I know that he has Banele. To be honest they’re good. Their marriage is the last one to need another person involved. The only thing screwing them over is stupid royal traditions and ancestors.

“I’m never going to be Banele to you. Ever. I know that. I am however hoping to be Nonhle to you. Myself.”

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“Alright, I can promise to give myself time to know who Nonhle is. We have to rush the wedding though because Banele doesn’t want to take risks with the three months of her pregnancy that are left. After we’ve gotten married, we’ll go away, just us and hopefully we can become friends.”

Friends. Sounds far better than whatever this is.

“I’d like that.”

The silence starts once more. This time however, less awkward. I don’t feel there’s much more to say. That conversation was all we needed for us to calm down and just do what we have to do.

Well at least it’s what I needed. He seemed to already be on the mission. I was just not sure. Heck, I don’t think I’ll ever really be sure even after I walk down the isle but I know now I’ll see this through.

It's stupid of me, but no matter how much I think of an escape plan, I still see this ending in me being the wife who goes to the palace only when she's needed.

Less than a week ago I left my home in a man's car completely aware of what I was doing to my father but purposely choosing oblivion. Today I enter the yard with the very same car I left in, but looking so different from the woman who left. I have Luna right by my side and I hold her hand as Vumani gets the door for us.

I should be more confident with a security guard here just for me right? Khulekani said he doesn't trust my father so he let me come here with a female security guard posing as my personal assistant.

"Don't worry MaMthiyane, I'll be with you." Siza says from behind us.

She's quite petite and you wouldn't know she's a trained fighter just by looking at her. She has a toned body but you wouldn't

really think she can fight. According to Khulekani though she's really good at her job. What I don't understand is what exactly she'll do if my father throws burning oil at me? How is she protecting me from that?

I nod, take a deep breath and knock. Mom opens the door almost immediately.

"You're back! I'm so happy to see you my children, come in." Mom says hugging me and Luna.

We look at each other. I don't trust this niceness at all. Not saying mom is evil but she'd never betray my father by being nice to me if he's furious. Speaking of father, he appears from the passage and smiles at us, okay this house is weird. He greets us and calls us his children. He even greets Siza and says she should feel at home.

I'm so confused so I haven't said anything. Luna who has the ability to reply to almost anything also has just been nodding and fake grinning.

Mom takes us to my old bedroom where I'm supposed to spend the next two nights with Luna. They offer Siza my younger sister's old room and she only takes it because it's closest to mine. As soon as mom walks out of my room Luna and I look at each other.

"Okay who are those people?" Luna.

"I honestly wish I knew hey."

We burst out laughing. This cannot be right. Khulekani replaced my parents with robots because really there's no way.

"My children? Did you hear that? Mr Jele has never, not even once referred to me by anything other than my name."

"At least he's never insulted you, how many times have I been called useless? A disgrace? What happened to all that?"

“Let’s just do what we have to do for the next few days and get out of this place.”

I don’t answer her. I don’t know why but every time I realize more and more that she is really into the idea of going, something makes me nervous. What if we’re not accepted? I mean I can take it but she can’t. She’ll be miserable in that family and it’ll be my fault for putting her through it.

My mother walks in and shares the most interesting information about a teacher at Khulekani’s school, the same one Luna went to.

“Did you hear about Mr Smamane’s death Lunathi? He was on the way home apparently and he crashed.”

I look at Luna. She doesn’t really seem to care but entertains the conversation. I mean I don’t blame her not caring, he’s the one who groped her but what I find interesting is that he died just a day after Luna told Khulekani about the incident. I have never been an idiot. There’s no way this is coincidental and I want to confront him as soon as possible so I send him a text asking if he heard.

He says he heard a teacher crashed but he doesn't know which one. I don't believe that but I don't ask anything further because I won't get the truth. I know it. I just choose to push it back and I'll ask in person. If my theory that he did something to the man's car is correct, I'll know from how he reacts.

For some reason I'm bothered that it doesn't bother me that the man I'm about to marry, might just have hired someone to kill a man for Luna.

The next day goes by quickly, maybe because it's not really a day and I'm stuck in a dream. I mean that might explain how my parents have been so nice throughout. Luna and I have been laughing about it the whole time while feeling like it's weird. Dad should be furious I left. He isn't. Mom as always should be on his side.

Saturday morning comes and I think I go on autopilot. I know exactly what to do. I've seen my sisters do it twice. The difference is they're also paying Lobola for Luna, not for marriage but so she can become a Ngubo traditionally. She's even changing her surname with new documentation and the

works according to what she says her “baba” told her. For me the information is news.

When everything is done and we’ve served the Ngubo delegates they leave and dad brags about how they paid everything in full for us both. He’s more excited than I’ve ever seen him before. I wonder if he even remembers there’s things we have to pay for that are part of the wedding. The family is royal so of course the wedding will be big, whether people are told with short notice or not.

Luna, Siza and I are in the kitchen cleaning up so I personally can go to bed and wake up tomorrow. I can’t believe what happened here today. Even more crazy, it’s not like how the novels say it is. There’s no love of my life calling me to check up on how everything went or that I could’ve sneaked out to see and have a mini celebration that we’re about to become one.

The man I’m marrying is watching his niece get married today from what he and Banele have posted today. They’re with their family having the time of their lives. I’m the only one who had any stress today. Anyway at least it’s done, I will be known as the king’s fiancé from now on.

I wonder if I'll get any neighbors and people I grew up with here try to become friends with me now so they can gossip about my marriage.

The following day, the driver gets here early morning and waits for us. Mom and dad insisted on breakfast so we have a meal before leaving. Dad doesn't even ask why I'm not staying at home or when I'm coming back. He just says he'll see me before the wedding and that's it. No words of disappointment nothing. It's all strange and new.

Nonhle

I deserve to be on Real Housewives now, it's the only thing that makes sense. When I came back to this house I found some new appliances and more clothing for myself and Luna. I swear Khulekani hired a personal shopper who just went out and bought all these things because there's no way he did it. I'm very appreciative of the clothes and jewelry and everything but I kind of wish he would have said something first. Luna on the other hand is just happy to post and dodge questions from her ex classmates on how she's affording the phone she has, the clothes she casually takes pictures in etc.

I open my Instagram for the first time today and to my shock I've gained hundreds of new followers and have lots of DM's. When I open them I immediately regret it. I don't know how it got out but clearly people know about my wedding because I'm getting messages calling me a home wrecker and side chick. Some are comments on my posts and I panic so I delete the whole app.

Then it starts, my sisters calling me and I ignore them, I don't know what to say. I didn't even inform them about last weekend and the negotiations. Khulekani and Banele call too but I don't answer. I don't know what to do really, do I ignore all those comments? Do I say something? I don't know how to handle this thing especially since it's online. I'm just thankful I no longer use Twitter because that app is worse. I don't even want to know what they're doing to my name.

I switch off the phone when Banele calls for the fourth time. Luna runs downstairs and I can tell she's kind of nervous. She must've seen it by now. I sigh,

"I'll be okay baby."

"Are you sure?" She asks giving me a hug.

I nod and just as I'm trying to cuddle my only best friend in this world, her father calls. I roll my eyes cause I know he's going to tell her to give me the phone and indeed he doesn't disappoint.

“I’m so sorry Nonhle I didn’t know it would be like this.” Banele.

I’m confused. I was ready not to reply back to Khulekani but I didn’t expect to speak to Banele.

“It’s okay. People love you two, they’re bound to be some unhappy fans.”

“Still, I thought if I announced it myself and told everyone how excited I was to welcome you, they’d get it and back off.”

I sit up. This makes more sense. There was a public post by Banele talking about the upcoming wedding hence the sudden influx of messages.

“You have over a million followers. No wonder it’s so many people harassing me. I mean I don’t blame you, you didn’t expect things to go that way, I guess it’s okay. I’ll have to deal with it sometime I guess.”

“Don’t let them get to you. I have asked people to stop it but obviously some think they know better than me about my own life.”

“Yeah it’s cool. I’ll just stay off my phone for a while.”

We talk a bit more with her telling me these people won’t do anything to me and their opinions don’t matter before we get off the call and I give Luna her phone back.

“They’re defending you. Her kids, especially the doctor one Kai.”

I look up at her. How does she know this? As if she’s reading my mind she answers my unasked question.

“It’s on Twitter. People were asking them why they’re allowing you into their parents marriage and they all defended you and stated that it’s culture. Kai went as far as saying they need to leave you alone and focus on their lives.”

I half smile. That's nice of them, especially since they haven't even met me.

"So what about you? Any fire clap backs from you?"

She laughs.

"I don't know why you say I have a smart mouth, but yes, I have been telling them to stop judging from outside the club they can't even get in. Earned myself a follow from my siblings except Nami and they don't even know it's me."

"That's my warrior! Let's go look for something to eat baby, I'm hungry now."

We get to make ourselves something when I get the shock of my life as Raina Mthembu walks in with a little baby on her arms. This must be the little one her and her husband haven't even posted online yet. Just little feet here and there.

"Mom pinch me! That's Raina."

I look at Luna. Did she say mom? I know Khule said she should but she's never actually called me mom till today. In fact she avoided both my name and calling me mom.

"Hey guys, so sorry to just burst in here like this, I've just gotten used to it when it's family. How are you guys? I came here to check up on you. Trolls are the absolute worst!" Raina.

We greet her back and Luna takes the baby from her then goes upstairs. I guess to give us privacy. I'm actually shocked she let her take him or her I don't know what gender this one is.

"Wait so Banele asked you to come here?"

"She didn't have to. You're a few blocks from me. I want to be here."

"Who would've thought Raina Mthembu would be in my house someday?"

I honestly love her. Heck who would've thought I'd have a "house" a few blocks from hers.

"Little me? You're about to become a queen miss! You'll know actual celebrities not just us with fake fame just because people want to follow our lifestyle. Without money or the relation to royalty my husband would just be another man."

Yeah but he's not just another man nor is she little.

"We were just about to make lunch, I don't know if you mind a pulled chicken sandwich? We don't really get anything prepared for lunch cause it's always just us two."

"Looks like mayo and chicken, I love it!"

She gets up and helps me prepare the rest of it. We call Luna downstairs and she comes back with the baby asleep.

Raina puts him on the couch and we eat out sandwiches.

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“You know the best way to maximize having a private chef is asking him to do meal preps for you and then put them in the refrigerator. That way even if he doesn’t cook and you do, everything is right there. You just have to tell him what to prep and that’s it.”

“Oh great idea, thank you. I’ll try that out. We’ve just been having sandwiches for lunch and preparing easy meals for dinner.”

“Trust me, your chef will make even the most daunting meals easy.”

“Thanks hey. You’re really nice to come here.”

“Don’t sweat it. You’re family now. Both of you.

I see Luna’s face light up and it makes me even happier. We spend about two hours just talking with her advising me on the royals, what to never do when I’m there. Apparently the royals

take pride in doing work themselves. Which means when I'm there I should never live the city mom life.

Well it's not like I mind work, they just have to be less bossy about it than Khulekani.

When she leaves she says Thabiso, her husband can be a bit of a baby when she leaves for long but she promises to see me soon. I'm honestly happy to have made a friend in that family already. I mean maybe we're not friends yet but you know what I mean. Having her in my corner means a lot to me.

"Oh my goodness she's a goddess in person!" Luna.

That's the first she says when I come back from walking Raina to her car. Which speaking of cars Khulekani promised to get mine from my house. He hasn't come to collect the keys yet though or at least sent Vumani.

"Honestly, I still can't believe she came to see me, plus she took a picture with me by the car."

"Will you post it?"

“I said I don’t think I should post it yet, she airdropped it to herself and said she will.”

“Some trolls still call her trailer trash and second option to this day. I’m sure she hates them and doesn’t give a fuck anymore.”

“Don’t swear please. I don’t want Khulekani saying it’s my influence on you.”

“It is though, is it not?”

“Okay keep talking and you’re losing your phone for a week.”

“I would’ve bet you’d be the fun parent.”

This child! I playfully run after her and we chase each other all the way to the pool and we end up saving each other from falling in and laughing on the floor. I honestly don’t know how my life would be without her in it and I don’t want to know.

Later I take my sisters' calls finally. They're both shocked and worried about me. I completely understand why. I don't know this man and no matter how many times they ask me why I said yes I can't give them a reason other than that Banele asked me. According to Sbahle I'm being bullied. I mean maybe she's right, but it's late now. I've taken so much and even involved Luna. It's hard to stop anything now. After talking to my sisters I downloaded Instagram again. Raina already posted us so I share it on my story. As for all the noise by people who don't know me, I'm ignoring it. I don't even want to block them.

This routine of starting by cleaning this large ass room before breakfast is getting easier. I grew up in a household where we'd wash our faces, get breakfast cereal and then go back to cleaning our rooms. If we were going to school, mom would clean for us but we'd have to make our beds. Well at that time I was just a kid and I loved what I thought was a normal life up until I got older and my mother's screams kept me up at night. It then made sense why our rooms were always locked at night with little buckets in case we needed to pee.

I won't lie and say mom was being abused every night, however my memory must've suppressed any "good" or rather "better" nights that were quiet.

Today I'm cleaning all the way to the walk-in closet. I woke up a little earlier because I got a call from Khulekani that one of his children was coming to give me and Luna some papers to sign. I'm not up for the papers, I'm up because he decided seven in the Goddamn morning was the best time to call me.

I honestly hope to set some ground rules here. There's no way I'm being tested like this just for marrying someone who doesn't even love me. I'm sweeping and unpacking my new clothes and shoes and bags properly in the closet before coming back to mop. If the child arrives I know Luna will come and get me.

By the time I walk downstairs about three hours later because that was more work than I thought, I find Luna and a handsome young man eating sushi.

I'm so confused that I pause for a bit before walking down the rest of the steps.

“Lunathi?”

“Oh hey mom, this is Kofi.”

I think I recognize him from social media I’ve seen this blue-eyed boy. I don’t follow the kids but I’ve seen this one. Though I know he’s not a Ngubo so I can’t quite put my finger on who he is.

“Athi aunt Nonhle, my name is Athenkosi. Uncle Khule sent me here to give you the paperwork to sign.”

I see Luna roll her eyes a bit when he corrects his name.

“Oh I thought Luna would come get me when you arrive.”

“I’ve been here for about two and a half hours already, even got time to convince this one to try sushi, she’s still not sure if she likes it or not.”

I can hear the chef in the kitchen behind the wall. He must've made this. Didn't even know he had the ingredients for it.

"Don't worry we didn't bother the chef with that, he came in to make you breakfast." Luna.

I guess she saw me looking at the kitchen side. I'm seriously not sure what to do because these two... There's something suspicious about all this friendliness.

"Well nice to meet you Athi. Where are the papers?"

"Right here." Athi.

He gets up and gives them to me his eyes must be his way of getting the girls. How many black boys have actual blue eyes?

I notice his pinky ring has a B on it and I think I remember seeing something similar on Nolwazi Boateng's page. He's Mike and Nolwazi's son then. They're basically a couple that's best friends to Khulekani and Banele. I've always found his dad to be a little suspicious after all the times he's been investigated by

the police, but they've never found anything. He's either really good at hiding or really innocent. One thing is for sure though, he's always been really hot.

I thank Athi for the papers and go sit by the kitchen eating area. I don't think I'm very welcome next to him and Luna. They seem... Cosy. She's laughing louder than I've heard her before and clearly she has no issues randomly touching this guy. I don't know about this. I think this guy is what? Twenty-one or twenty-two? She's only eighteen. Or I'm just being overprotective? Hopefully that's all it is.

Banele

I forget how annoying and vile human beings can be from time to time but they remind me and I remember why I've never liked humans all over again. I posted Nonhle, called her my sister wife and expressed my excitement for her joining my family. Mostly because I thought if it came from me, they wouldn't bother her. Boy was I wrong.

People out there really believe they're fighting my battles when they don't know a thing about me! It's so weird and confusing.

After we had announced Nonhle to the family at a family lunch the day after Owami's wedding, I felt the rest of the world had to hear it from me too to accept. My sisters couldn't stop asking me if I was sure about it. Even way after the lunch they were both still checking up on me. I'm sure by now they're the most convinced because of how many times I had to repeat that I even saw her fit for the family.

I've had a checkup already and Thami, as I've grown to call my unborn son, is doing good. He's apparently healthy and

everything. I just had a lot of medication to catch up on, plus my husband is making sure I take it easy because he doesn't want any mistakes with this pregnancy. I mean it kind of explains my need to have sex with my husband so much more than normal because it's even worse now with the belly showing. He doesn't mind that at all.

MaCele walks to me sitting by the garden in my swimsuit. I felt too hot so I decided I'd go swimming today. I haven't went inside the pool yet though.

"MaVezi, how are you and the little Ngubo doing?"

"We're okay Ma, how are you?"

"I'm okay too. My child I know you understand that it's necessary for Khulekani to marry the young girl, but are you ready? She's younger, she's new and your husband is..."

"Ma, I don't think like that. I know my husband is only a man and being allowed to be with another woman, he'll definitely at

some point be aroused and have sex with her. She's going to be his wife. I can't stop that from happening and if I start to think about how she's younger and everything, I'll have resentment for her and I don't want that. Unless she is unkind to me, I will never be unkind to her."

I know where she's coming from. I know the similarities between her and MaSodi and me and Nonhle. I know how MaSodi's arrival made her feel insecure and until Ngxabi passed on, she never really even tried to get along with her. She felt MaSodi was younger therefore didn't know anything. I saw them, I know about it and I don't plan on being in such a toxic environment.

"You don't want to lose him to her."

"Ma, I can never lose Khule to another woman. I am his first wife. His only choice of a wife and I will never be shaken by the possibilities between him and Nonhle."

I can tell from her face she's offended. Which I quite frankly don't care about because she decided to come bother me with

this. She honestly forgets she was a second wife to Ngxabi too. There's no need to be nasty about Nonhle.

"I hear you my child. I guess men will always love their first wives a little more."

I almost say exactly but I bite my tongue and smile at her. A pressed lipped smile as she gets up and leaves me alone.

I've never had to feel like anyone or anything could threaten my marriage. That's why I don't like to think of Nonhle as competition. She's here to fulfill a certain purpose, just like mine was loving Khulekani. Maybe she'll be better equipped at helping him with connecting even more with the people since she's from here. Her own purpose in this family.

I get in the water and swim, a few minutes later Mane runs to me, he's back from school. I used to fetch him most days but now it's part of the things Khule wants me to let go of.

"Mommy I also want to swim! Please mommy."

“Okay my boy ask auntie to change you into your swimwear and come join mommy.”

He knows he can ask any of his aunts all around the house so no need to specify. I love how much this little boy loves me and I no longer even feel like I don't deserve it. I've forgiven myself for the postpartum depression. It was a journey and a half to just getting rid of the guilt. He runs back out a few minutes later and jumps in. I made sure he takes swimming lessons at school like his siblings so I don't worry about him in water at all, however being a mom I still keep an eye on him.

Later at dinner with my husband and son I get to tell him about the talk with MaCele.

“She probably just thinks it's the same situation that she faced. I'm sure she didn't mean you should be unnecessarily rude to her.” Khule.

“I know she thinks it's the same but it's not. Ngxabi chose MaSodi because he loved her. Same as he did for MaCele herself. Nobody had to make him take any wife. This journey is

hard enough for all three of us. It's an adjustment and I've decided to not make it any harder on anyone."

"Yes but if you look at it, she thought she was helping you but she didn't understand that absolutely no other woman would ever take your place in my heart."

That's a fact and exactly why I'm not shaken. I'm the love of his life at the end of the day. I've seen many young girls throw themselves at him, I've equally seen him reject them each time. I've been told about instances where I wasn't even present. I've been sent literal proof straight to my DMs from eager followers praising him.

Nonhle, I want him to love or at least care for her enough to just give her a good marriage. Those, I'm afraid don't always come from love. Sometimes there's a surplus of love between a couple but they don't work out because the love isn't enough to make them good together. So a good marriage can come from them regardless of how little love if any there is. Am I worried about losing my husband to her? Absolutely not. Maybe before I saw her and something just told me she's it.

Maybe when I thought I couldn't handle him with someone else.

In any case, it's selfish of me but the one thing I know and find comfort in the most, is that when push comes to shove, Khulekani will always choose me before her, always. He might love her someday, but he will never love her like he loves me. This much I can bet everything on.

"I love and appreciate her but I think I know exactly who I am in my marriage, and that's queen."

Khule just smiles and shakes his head before giving me a kiss prompting the child that wasn't even attentive a minute ago to close his eyes and laugh. So funny how just two years back he hated it when his father kissed me, he'd want to hit him even and come hug and kiss me. It's the best thing because Kai and the twins were always more of daddy's kids and I used to get the looks for kissing him.

I get a call from Nonhle very early the following day, she's going a little crazy and if Khule wasn't busy today I'd send him there

because he wouldn't want me going. He's only let me go there once to meet Lunathi, she's basically my new daughter since she'll be traditionally adopted and become a Ngubo. She's a great young girl who was Nonhle's goddaughter originally. She's quite smart, attentive and kind of similar to Nami with regards to her style. Hopefully they get along. She's only four years younger than the twins anyway.

"How am I expected to do this? Three weeks Banele? How?!"

I'm guessing Khule told her their Umembeso is in three weeks time.

"Honestly? Hire someone. I have people I can get you in touch with but if you'd rather find new people that's okay."

I'd have freaked out like her too twenty-four years ago. Now, things that other people can do for me are easy. I've always been the lazy type and my husband accepts it.

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“I don’t even have the time, I know you trust your people so please give me their contacts.”

“Sweet. They’ll do everything you want for that day I promise you.”

“Thank you so much! When I got that text my head just spun and I didn’t know what to do.”

“Don’t worry about a thing sweetheart, you can even let them do whatever they see fit and never have to worry about it again. They’ll deliver.”

“You’re heavenly sent because I don’t know what I was going to do really. What about the blankets and reed mats though?”

“Personal shopper. I’ll give you her number too. You literally just have to sit pretty for three weeks and take care of your skin so your makeup will be flawless.”

“Damn I feel like I’m on Real Housewives.”

I laugh at her, “Well just minus the melodrama you kind of are living that life.”

“I don’t know hey, there is some drama here so I’m not sure if I should subtract it really.”

“Oh please don’t tell me you’re counting overly eager strangers who think they are members of our family just because they see us online. Unless you’re talking about Khule and Luna, then you guys will strike a balance eventually.”

We end the call after discussing what Lunathi wants to study and where it’s best for her to get in next semester. Plus when the kids are coming to meet her.

I’m in my Ballito home a day before the kids and I go visit Nonhle, I wanted the Cape Town two to have time to rest and also so I can fill them in about Lunathi’s existence.

“So mom, are you and her getting along?” Kai.

She's the only one here because she's closest and got some days off work.

"Yes we are baby. She's not my friend yet or anything but we're working towards that."

"I commend you for sacrificing your happiness with your husband for his family and all, but I don't wish to find a prince, ever."

"You do know not every kingdom has polygamy as a requirement right my baby?"

"Yeah but I still choose to play it safe."

"Unfortunately love doesn't give you a choice. You'll know that when you meet the man you'll marry."

"Yeah well so far love for me is my work."

“It won’t always be that way.”

The twins walk in with their father following them. He went to fetch them from the airport himself. He wouldn’t say it but he just misses them a little more since they moved.

“Mommy!” Nami shouts running to me.

I think she forgets she’s no longer the last born. Even further from it now with Thami in my belly. Speaking of last borns, Mane is doing his homework in his father’s study. Apparently we’re too noisy for him to do it in the dining or living room.

“Hey my baby girl!” I reply hugging her when she gets to me.

“Hey sis.” Nami goes over to sit next to her sister.

They have the weirdest relationship. They get along for the most part till they fight but then you can’t get in between their arguments because they’ll fix things really quickly and you’ll be left out.

My boy comes to give me a kiss on the cheek,

“Hey mom, looking gorgeous.”

Oh he’s such a sweetheart!

“Thanks baby. Your dad’s taking care of me.” I reply and Khule walks over to give me a wet kiss.

“Where’s Mane to ask you to stop kissing his mom?” Nami.

Khule and I laugh,

“You three should be used to this by now. This is my wife and I’ll kiss her wherever I want.”

I smile and look up at him, I want him right now and I know exactly how I show him that. A hand in his pocket and he knows to make up an excuse to follow me after I go to the bedroom.

Nonhle

Today Luna and I meet the kids, Banele and Khule's kids. I don't think so much nerves are normal. I mean I am nervous to meet the kids yes but even more nervous for Luna to meet them. She's never even had a sibling at all before so four is a huge transition. Also, I don't know if she's strong enough to accept it if they just don't like her.

Today I made use of "Ok Google" and well of course Luna overtook my choice of music, for her own music so I don't even know the songs playing but I'll give her one thing, it sounds so nice. She said something about it being called Neo Soul.

The chef will be making us lunch and I got some company Raina referred me to that does decorations for intimate lunches to help with setting up for us outside.

I had to put in extra effort for this. I'm definitely hoping that the kids don't hate me.

I hear a car drive into the garage and I take a deep breath. Lunathi better come downstairs immediately. Indeed she runs downstairs. The door opens and first in is a tall boy who looks more like the king than the king himself.

“Sanibona.”

Lunathi and I greet back as she helps him with the groceries but he kindly declines and takes them to the chef’s kitchen. A female beautiful version of the king walks in, followed by another one. They should’ve been the twins. They also greet and make their way into the chef’s kitchen as their brother walks out to come to me and Luna who’s now holding my hand.

The queen and king are last to emerge with a light skinned little one asleep in the king’s arms. He walks upstairs with the boy while Banele comes to give me a hug, for I think only the second time ever then she goes on to hug Luna.

“Well kids, this is Nonhle she’s technically going to become a mom to you guys too in a few weeks, and this cutie is your new

sister, Lunathi... Guys these are the kids, Kai, Nami and Musa. The sleeping prince upstairs is Mane.” Banele.

“There’s no pressure to refer to us as mom or sister. I’ve never been a mom to anyone before myself and till last week even Luna called me by my name...”

Khule interrupts me as he walks towards us,

“There is actually. I’m king and you all know you’re royalty yourselves. My family should always be united so there will be no calling anyone by name. Lunathi is your sister... Nonhle is mom.”

“We wouldn’t be disrespectful dad, we know the importance of this to the family.” Musa.

“I just want you guys to accept me and Luna because you want to not because it’s expected of you.”

“Don’t worry about me, I like you already!” Nami.

Banele and the other kids suppress laughs while the king shakes his head. I think there's an inside joke why it's funny.

Nami takes my hand and leads us outside saying she wants to sit next to me. The others follow us and we all sit at the outside eating area that I got decorated. Luna seems to be talking to Kai and Musa. That's a good sign.

I text the chef so he can go do his thing while we talk out here.

"So mom, who is your photographer for the events? I mean you can't have just one it'll be such a big deal but can I recommend the company I did my internship with? They're pricey but worth it." Nami.

Mom. I'm actually mom to five children? They're actually adults really except one.

"I really don't know much about what'll even be happening, but if that company is in this province, I can ask the planner?"

“You know something? I like how bold you are honestly. Unfortunately they aren’t around but I know good people around here too so that’s okay.” Nami.

I want to ask how I’m bold when Mane runs out to us and goes straight to his mother. Nami is first to tease him about being a mama’s boy before the others join in.

“Leave my baby alone nina. Nibadala.” Banele.

Looking at him Mane looks like both his parents unlike the three copies of Khule. He’s also lighter in complexion than all of them.

“What are you going to study Lunathi?” Kai.

“Definitely not sure yet. I aced Economics in high school though, maybe something there?”

“That works. You can maybe work for NMV, dad would love that.” Kai.

“And you know this how?” Khule.

“Come on dad, you’d love to have more of your own in the company. We know.” Nami.

“Well that’s not a bad thing Namiko.” Khule.

“I’m thinking of specializing too next year so maybe we can stay together.” Kai.

From what I remember Kai – I don’t know her name in full just that she’s also Nokwanda, is a doctor.

“Really?! I’d love that!” Luna.

I’m happy they’re trying with her. I don’t know what I’d do if they hated her or something.

“That’s a good idea Kai, you both can stay at home that way.”
Banele.

“Yeah well I’m thinking of moving in with Leano rather so that’s
where Luna and I can be.” Kai.

“No way. I can’t trust Leano with her. He’ll be told she’s family
but I have a feeling he doesn’t have much restraint on women
in general.” Khule.

“I agree with you dad
maybe Khanya? She’s alone since Owami got hitched.” Musa.

“Okay relax guys, you’re bashing my boy already and next year
isn’t here yet. Lunathi can stay with whomever she’s
comfortable with.” Banele.

Her boy? Who is this guy they’re talking about?

“Who is Leano? He sounds fun.”

Nami nods, I guess she's agreeing with me.

"He's my sister's son. Tad bit of a Casanova." Banele.

"Tad bit?" Khule.

They all laugh before Sis Florence and two other helpers I've never even seen in this house come out carrying the food, I did not plan that but I thank Florence and her team.

After the lunch we all move back into the house, just me, Banele and Khule on the couches, the kids went to the cinema in this house, one I and even Luna hadn't discovered yet. Banele is sitting between me and her husband.

"Umembeso I wish could be a small thing, but I know that won't be possible, so can I get a small wedding for the white one? I mean way after the traditional and necessary wedding."

“You should discuss this with your fiancé, I’ll go check on the kids.” Banele says and gets up.

She’s throwing me under the bus but that’s okay, I honestly want a small wedding for the white one, no need for anything big. Before I can even talk again, this man comes for me,

“I don’t know where to start with you. Firstly, you went against me in front of the kids when I told them they have to call you mom, then you went on to display in front of said kids your nonchalant attitude towards the upcoming wedding. I don’t know if it’s in you to just say anything but I don’t have the time to help you watch your mouth for now.”

I have probably been looking at him like he’s lost his mind since he started talking. I swear I don’t understand why I should’ve kept quiet about thinking the kids can call me mom if and when they’ve accepted me. As for the apparent nonchalant attitude, he has it too so I see no reason to hide that I don’t know what’s happening with the preparations for our union.

“Well, I said that because I don’t want the kids to feel forced. Also, we both aren’t excited to be getting married so why must I lie to the kids?”

“We both aren’t excited but we both are doing this and our family is involved. If we show that we aren’t united to them, how do we expect them to accept the blended family? From the first day I met Lunathi I treated her and took her as my daughter. You granted are new to parenting, but try not to let the kids be your friends but your kids.”

“Okay smart man, what should I have done? Said I know what’s being planned? I don’t!”

I see rage in his eyes. His face has veins popping out and his fists are clenched exposing more veins in his arms. I swallow and immediately regret opening my mouth.

“I’m going to enjoy watching you squirm and beg and learn to respect me so much! It’s the only thing I can finally look forward to marrying you for. Till then, keep adding to your own punishment.”

He gets up, walks to the stairs, and up the stairs without me moving. I don't know how to move really. My mind is still trying to process what this man is talking about and I'm almost certain that this man just told me he'll fuck me hard after we get married. Right?

I only move when I hear Musa running downstairs.

"Ma, come join us, we're watching Lupin together." Musa.

He goes to the pantry. Snacks I'm guessing. I get up and help him carry the snacks then he gets the cold drinks and juice for everyone. We walk upstairs together.

"You know, I didn't know what to expect with a new sister and step mom but I don't know if I'm wrong maybe, you seem pretty chilled and so does Luna."

I'm glad he thinks so. I really am.

“Thanks Musa, I don’t want to lie, I was nervous as hell too but you and your siblings have been so great. Though I’m not sure Mane even understands what’s happening.”

“He’s a smart kid, mom and dad explained things to him especially yesterday and I trust he gets it, even if it’s in the reasoning capacity of a child.”

We get to the cinema and I get the door for him because he’s holding more stuff before I give everyone whatever snack they want and go sit next to Kai. It’s the only space I feel comfortable sitting in.

“Announcement, no spoilers if you’ve watched! Especially directed to Musa.” Nami.

We all laugh and Musa asks how many times he’ll apologize for one Blood & Water episode slip up. Nami says forever and we laugh again. They’re really twins alright. They’re so different yet so alike in a way. Banele is blessed with good kids. I don’t know if I can even be a good mom. Mane is just sitting next to his dad and on his iPad. I’m pretty sure he lost when they voted on

what to watch because his suggestions are probably kids shows.

I don't think Khule and I have been alone in a room together since that day he threatened me with his dick. Well maybe that's not what it was but I'm pretty sure he was talking about punishing me with sex. Which is pretty dumb considering, I love sex too.

Now he's called to say he's fetching me we're going somewhere. Luna will be taken to Banele's house and stay there till we get back. It's funny he just barks orders at me. You know what? I blame myself for actually listening to them.

I don't know where we're going but one thing I know, I'm not changing my clothes for shit! I'm wearing leggings and a t-shirt plus sneakers. My ass isn't crazy big but it's got a nice shape and I have hips. Nothing crazy nice like Banele's or anything but they look good and my ass is bigger than hers. Does that matter? I think not because honestly that woman's body is a perfect hourglass. I don't have much boobs.

I wear a watch and that's about all the bling. I tie up my braids and walk downstairs after his call saying he's here. He closes his

eyes for a brief second when he sees me. I don't know if he likes what he sees or he's just not surprised he's disappointed at what I'm wearing. Probably the latter. Well he's also casual so he better not say shit.

“Let's just get in the car and go. Where's Lunathi?”

I call her downstairs and he hugs her before walking out. I tell her to behave and she promises to then I follow the king.

When we drive out Musa drives in. I guess to collect Luna.

“Where are we going?”

“To your house, Lunathi's paternal family is there.”

12

Nonhle

I'm downloading my Google Drive, checking if all my documents are there and still asking myself if this is real. Part of me thinks dad hired people to come claim Luna just to fuck with me because honestly how is this happening? According to Khule her family arrived at my house asking dad who he is to give away their daughter.

I mean trust me dad just tolerated Luna but he's far more of family to her than they are. They've never even met her! At least her maternal family didn't want her but they knew her, they can point her out in a crowd. These ones? Who the hell are they and where did they crawl out from?

"I don't want any nasty surprises, did these people ever pay maintenance for Lunathi? Were they ever present? Does she know them?"

“No. I don’t know who they are. MaMnguni only told me she was conceived through rape and that I should never tell her.”

Khule looks at me,

“You didn’t tell me that.”

“Not even Luna knows it Khulekani. It’s also not something one just says randomly.”

“Are we even sure they’re her family?”

“I don’t know. I hope not. I can’t afford to lose her. I can’t Khulekani.”

“That’s not happening. We’re not losing her. Dark or blue.”

For some reason unknown even to myself, I believe him. We won’t lose Luna to these people.

It's almost five when we get to my home. There's an unfamiliar feel to my own home now. Like I didn't come home to this very place for many years. A Toyota Fortuner is in the yard. Not one of dad's so I guess it belongs to Lunathi's alleged family. My car is still parked by the staff quarters. I want it back honestly but right now isn't the time.

When he fetched me there was one car, but now, there's three with us. I won't even ask. Vumani gets my door, another guy gets his. I follow him into the house. He's tall-tall, everyone in this room is sitting so he seems even taller.

I look at their faces. There's an old man, about dad's age, about his complexion too. I look at the man next to him, maybe just a bit older than me and light too with extremely curly hair. I see Luna in him. They're not lying about being her family. I look at Khule, I don't know what this means. He takes my hand. His hand is big, warm and I can't believe he's touching me.

"Mkhwenyana, please sit." My dad.

It's so shocking how he's become so nice really. I wonder where it comes from. Khule doesn't answer him but he pulls me to sit next to him and opposite the three of them. Mom and one of the helpers, MaZwane put food in front of us and disappear.

"My king, I'm here with my uncle to get his only living child. We were told she lives here but when we arrived, Jele told us you paid Lobola for her." The younger man.

"Yes, she's my daughter now." Khule.

"She is my child, not yours and we've come to get her. She's the only child I have left and you can't take her. She's a Shezi, not a Ngubo." The old man.

"Is she now? So when's her birthday?" Khule.

The man and his uncle look at each other. They don't know what to say clearly. I wonder if even Khule knows her birthday though. Who am I kidding? He does.

The more I look at the old man, I know him. He used to come by when we were kids and give us sweets. He was my dad's friend. After a while he stopped coming but that was before even Luna was conceived so I don't know why he was here when he raped MaMnguni.

"It shouldn't matter. She's our blood." The younger man.

"What has being your blood done for her? What did she get out of it? Love maybe? Acceptance? A family?" Khule.

They look at each other again.

"Okay, we will take the matter to family court." The younger man.

"Go right ahead, please I beg you. You don't even know she's eighteen years old and can choose what she wants to do."
Khule.

He's right but I never want it to get to that. She'll know he raped her mother and I don't want that to happen.

"Culturally and traditionally she's ours." The old man.

"You literally stated that I paid Lobola, traditionally and culturally taking her as my daughter." Khule.

"You can't claim her..." The younger man.

I don't wait for him to finish,

"He can. He's the only father she's ever even had and she loves him. She's happy with us. As for you old bastard, you deserve losing every child you've ever had and being left with the one you got by raping a woman. You'll never even know that child I promise you."

"What the hell are you talking about? My uncle isn't a rapist!"
The younger man.

“I have proof, a letter from her mother that I scanned and saved years ago. I can send it to you right now! You come close to our daughter, and I’ll be forced to show it to her.”

And that’s on Google Drive!

The old man looks down. Clearly he’s hurt but I don’t give a fuck,

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“I am not proud of how she came into existence but I deserve to be in her life.” The old man.

“Are you fucking insane?! You raped her mother! It’s not something you can say sorry for and it’s gone.”

His nephew is no longer saying anything just looking at him in disbelief.

Khule gets a call and he takes it. His hand is still holding mine. He hasn't let go since we sat down. He looks at them as he speaks to whoever is on the other end, then he hangs up without saying goodbye.

"We're leaving... Jele, the deal is off."

I see dad's face change to the man I've always known him to be. He is angry with Khule who leads me outside and all the way back to the car, he gets my door then goes to his side and Vumani gets his door.

I look at him,

"What happened?"

"Your dad tracked down that man and his nephew. He told them about Luna to try and get her taken away from us just to hurt you."

"Just for that? He went to find them for that?"

“Yes. I made a deal with him, he treats you and Luna well and he keeps his status as a respectable man and council member. Now, all bets are off. He’s out of my council.”

“I’m sorry to say this only now but even if you had kicked him out then, I personally would’ve been far happier than having him give me fake love.”

“You two don’t like each other I see. He asked me why I didn’t want your younger sister when she was single, apparently she’s a better woman.”

Mxm. Of course she is. She’s my little sister and best friend. She’s a greater woman than me vele.

“My father knows nothing about women except where to hit them or hurt them. I don’t care what he thinks about me.”

“When did he start?”

I look at him and sigh. Probably before I was even born I'm guessing. I don't think he learned to hit my mother when I was five years old. I don't think he learned to hit me and my sisters when I was six. It must've been way before I came to earth.

"To hit women? I don't know. Probably before I existed. To hit me? I was six. I had been hit before by him but that was more of spanking because I had done something naughty. Then when I was six, I played with a little girl who was visiting at my neighbors house till late. When I entered the door, he pulled me by my arm to my bedroom, locked the door and started kicking me, slapping me and even choking me. He punched my gut. I was only six years old."

"He's a monster."

"That's a very mild story compared to... I'll tell you later, can we get food? I'm starved."

I can speak about all the things my dad did without fear except for one, only one that I personally will always remember and hate him for. More than him hitting our mother, she at least

has always had chances to take him down but never took any. More than having to help my sisters when they bled because of him and vice versa.

“Sure, Vumani will drive through a KFC or something.”

“You eat KFC?”

“I eat six times a day and work out every morning or evening, I only rest on Sundays.”

We really do get KFC and he tells me about meal plans and some more other bullshit I’d never do. I mean it explains why his body looks like that at least. I personally love the body God gave me. No need to torture it for what I want. Well the truth is I’ve never worked out before, why would I start now?

When we get back to the house it’s really late. I think he’ll drive to Banele and I’ll just go to bed but he offers to go inside with me to say goodnight. The house is quiet, it’s always quiet but

right now it's just me and him in here. That's never happened before so it feels quiet. He looks at me,

"I could tell whatever you wanted to say hurts you, you don't have to tell me about it yet but when you feel ready, you can tell me."

I nod. I appreciate him not forcing me to talk now. I would give him a goodbye hug but we're not that familiar with each other yet.

"Tell the kids goodnight for me, and Banele too of course."

He smiles, nods and takes a perfect walk all the way out. I don't know if I'm going to be able to not fall in love with this man much longer. The way he spoke about Luna, protected her, I was amazed. The way he shows love is so different. I think it's a protective kind of love. Probably falls under acts of service. It's beautiful to see. However it's dangerous for me to start softening up towards him. I need to remind myself this is the same guy who locks me in cars like a child.

I get a call from Banele saying she'll send Musa since I'm alone here. I'm in a big house alone I'm not okay! However I tell her I'm just fine and I know there's security outside. She agrees not to send him reluctantly then tells me Luna gets along well with the others and even refers me to their Instagram stories before we say our goodbyes and hang up. If Luna is enjoying herself, I'm definitely not going to bother anyone to come stay here with me.

Vumani walks in through the door from the garage scaring the crap out of me.

"Vumani fuck you! I almost died!"

"Sorry MaMthiyane, I just came in to see if you're okay, I know Luna isn't here."

Yeah of course he knows Luna's movements. I roll my eyes. He's being sweet though so I won't be hard on him for almost killing me.

“I’m fine Vumani, I need to go to bed now though.”

“No issues, goodnight MaMthiyane.”

I give him the middle finger and walk upstairs. My name is Nonhle short and simple. I don’t understand why I must be called MaMthiyane. Nx.

Nonhle

It's the day I haven't been looking toward to. The day a lot of people are coming into this yard to congratulate me even if they've never seen me before let alone know me, they're here to drink alcohol and eat meat. It's a royal event after all. People are flooding my useless father's house to congratulate him too, make him feel important. I'm thinking of having him arrested myself after the wedding.

I mean I know it's just wishful thinking but I wish could jail him. Losing his seat in the council did nothing because people think it's because his daughter is becoming royalty. Sbahle told me this because she stayed in the main house for the few days we've been here. Me? Khule had the room in the staff quarters prepared for me and Luna. We haven't even eaten anything prepared in this yard. Security collects food from Banele in the palace and gives it to us.

He wouldn't admit when I asked but I think Khule reckons dad can poison me or Luna. There's no other reason for so much

excessiveness. Khulekani and I are in a better space now. I mean sure there's still not much communication, but at least he told me about the sleeping arrangements an hour before I got home. Still no apologies or anything but at least I was told, even though it was late.

Him and Banele... I'm sad I could never have that. No matter how hard I try, I could never have love like theirs, much less with him. Luna couldn't stop raving about the cute moments that happened in the house when she was with them. I don't blame her. The man clearly loves his wife. It's written in his eyes when he looks at her.

My sisters walk in my room and I scream. Especially for Hlengiwe, she wasn't here! I hug her right and we sit on the bed. I haven't seen Hle in an entire year! I've missed her so much!

"You already did your makeup? This is really happening huh?"
Hle.

“You’ll add a new blanket to your home inventory in a few hours.”

She gives me a pity smile. I guess she can’t tell I’m not exactly happy.

“Don’t bother trying to talk her out of it, her and Luna have been taken over by aliens. Everything is about the king and the queen.” Sbahle.

“Come on Sbahle. We’ve talked about this.”

We really have. She’s asked so many times why I won’t turn back and though I never answer that, she knows now I’m not letting Banele down.

“Well I won’t talk you out of anything. Your father looks proud outside with some extended family.” Hle

Reverse psychology. She knows I don’t have any desire to help my father impress anyone.

“Of course he does, he thinks his daughter is marrying into royalty. I’m not his daughter though. I’m his disgusting, disrespectful, worthless, disgrace of a thing and I’ll show him flames, just you wait.”

“Nonhle uyambeswa today. There’s no need to think about him even. After the wedding day, you can denounce him publicly if you want.” Sbahle.

“Guys why is mom still here? He’ll kill her someday.” Hle.

“That’s her fault. I tried to tell her to report him so many times she’s never even admitted he beats her let alone gone to any lengths to try and get away.”

“Maybe she loves him that much. To risk her life and maybe she even knows in the end he’ll kill her but she loves him so she stays.” Sbahle.

“May that kind of unconditional love never locate me!”

“It won’t. You’re marrying someone you don’t love.” Sbahle.

I give her a defeated look. She got me there I won’t lie. Luna walks in with her make up done and Hle’s first born little six year old. She’s my makotshana. The Ngubo family is here with all the things they’ve bought for my underserving parents and extended family. If it were up to me, my sisters would be getting everything.

I wish Luna and I were going home after this but no. The traditional wedding is in a week from today. Why? Because Khule wants us to “go away” for a week and come back to Banele since she’s pregnant and he wants to be there for the child’s birth and last few weeks of her pregnancy. I completely understand him, but I just feel it’s high pressure. Sure a traditional wedding is simple, I wear a heavy ass isidwaba I get bridesmaids, from God knows where, get young girls to help me with the songs and we practice ukusina. The rest is simple enough. I just have to choose him esigcawini after being asked three times if I take him as my husband.

“Sbahle please go see if everything is going well.”

“Aren’t you the one who told me to relax? There’s people for everything?” Sbahle.

“Well now I’m anxious. Now go.”

“If you hadn’t been the one running around while this one was ready to pop a baby during my own Umembeso I wouldn’t be going anywhere.” Sbahle.

I give her a huge smile as she walks out my room.

The makeup artist peeps in and says she was paid to do five people and I guess Banele counted my sisters so Hle excitedly volunteers to go first. Me and my makotshana change into our dresses and so does Luna, but she goes out to check on the Ngubo family after that.

I have to stay confined here till the Ngubo sisters come to fetch me and then give me a dress to change into before I have to come back in here and change into that.

A few minutes later Hle comes in looking beautiful with her makeup done. She even tells me her husband's jaw dropped. I love it for her so much! I had seen the decorations for the whole thing already but Hle being herself still shows me pictures she took. According to her, it looks like decorations for a minister's wedding. She's kind of right, everything just looks so good, I can't fault Banele's referrals at all.

Hle goes out again to check on the food being prepared in one of the rondavels and a small tent. The rondavel is for preparing the meat that's been "blessed" by the ancestors and dumplings being boiled in water and salt only. While the tent is for preparing the meals for the masses. I made sure it's not too fancy. People here are old school and just want a simple beef or chicken curry with yellow rice plus salads. Gourmet wouldn't work for my people. In fact they wouldn't eat it.

There are many people in the yard and that I can tell by the noise. Well I don't blame them, free food and free booze is guaranteed, what more would you ask for?

I hear whoever it is that's calling my family members to get what's theirs from here. Of course because normally something

as simple as Umembeso has a large ass sound system because this one includes royals. The tent they're in isn't even in the yard exactly but on my fathers vacant land because it would've been too big to be on the yard.

I even hear when she says she wants them to fetch her new wife. I'm thinking it's one of Khule's many sisters then playing MC.

I hear the singing get closer to my room, Luna comes in first to get me to come out. I just look at her. She's happy, she's gained a family even if I ever was going to stop this nonsense, I can't any longer. For my Luna.

She takes my hand and we walk out.

How does a family consist of such beautiful people? I'm not saying my family has ugly people but there's an uncle or two I just can't believe are related to my dad.

"Uthe ubhut' asizomlanda, umakoti! Uthe ubhut' asizomlanda, umakoti! Sizomlanda..."

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serif;">They're singing and being goofy together. The girls here have different skin tones yet each so gorgeous I cannot even phantom it. We walk to the tent. I spot Sbahle talking to one of my aunts and doing something by the rondavel. I think they're starting a second fire outside.

When we get to the tent I'm barely listening. I didn't even see Khule or Banele but I did see Musa with some of his cousins including that blue eyed Athi.

I've even seen Khule's little brother, the only one I haven't seen is the middle one. The female hosting is his sister. The one that looks like Banele. Well they're clearly different people now that they've gotten older but they still pass as twins. I'm honestly fascinated at how Khule's mind works to not see how weird it is.

I'm given a dress to change into. Marc fucking Jacobs. I don't know who's idea it was, but I'm not complaining.

I'm taken back to my room to change before coming back out to the tent and getting rolls and rolls of money and gifts from the Ngubo family. They are putting the money in a big ass basin and I wouldn't be surprised if it's filled with the way they're going. Banele is last to stand up, she gets to me and gives me a

smile before putting in a few rolls on cash in the basin. Money ain't a thing to them I see. I'm freaking out because I'm definitely sharing this with my sisters. I know they're doing well but a little extra never hurts.

When I go back to the room everything is done. People can now eat and be merry. Sbahle walks into my room following me.

"It's ridiculous how much expensive shit they gave your parents. What the fuck?!"

"I don't even care. It's the last time dad gets anything because of me. He better enjoy it."

"And the money?! Also, I seen the man in person now and I understand sis!"

I shake my head. This one is a little crazy.

"You are sometimes crazy."

“He’s a hot old dude. The wife still looks young too it’s not photoshop. I don’t understand how your ugly ass will fit in there.”

“You’re so annoying! I’m not giving you any of my money.”

“Mine wasn’t even a quarter of this and I shared so you’re crazy if you think I’m not getting any.”

“Well you and Lunathi can count it then? I have to go check on my guests now that I can go out.”

Luna walks in and I push her to Sbahle and leave them in the room. I find Hle and check on whether the food is getting to the guests and the important people, Khule’s family and the guests.

Mane comes to me and says,

“Mkhulu said he’ll come visit me. Isn’t that cool?”

I smile at him and say, “Yes it’s great my boy.”

He runs somewhere else just as quickly as he got to me. I’m going to kill my dad. I find Banele and Khule then sit next to them, Khule in between.

“Please don’t let the kids call my dad mkhulu. Mane just told me he said he’ll visit him which will happen over my dead body.”

“Nonhle, calm down, you’re literally starting to sweat, he won’t have access to any of the kids.” Banele.

She gives me her hand to hold in front of Khule and I take it.

“Just sit down now. I spoke to your dad’s brother and he’s going to make sure everything goes smoothly.” Khule.

“Yes, please relax. You’ll be out of here in a week I promise you.” Banele.

I look at her. She's unreal and so supportive I don't think I could've done this with any other woman. Honestly it feels like she'll be my rock in all this because at times, I don't know what the hell I'm doing.

The hired photographers have been taking pictures of us like crazy since I sat here.

Kai sits opposite us with Luna. Clearly they're about to ask for something.

"Moms, dad Luna needs new hair, can we go to Richards Bay like tomorrow maybe?"

"I mean almost everything is going to be cleaned by the company we hired tomorrow, I think it should be okay unless you need her tomorrow." Banele replies and looks at me.

I don't necessarily need her, my sisters are here she can go be a kid.

“No it’s okay, you can come get her in the morning Kai.”

“I was thinking she can come sleep at the palace maybe? Just to make it easier.” Kai.

“That just sounds suspicious. I’ll let you get away with it though.” Banele.

“Dad?” Kai.

He gives them a look, I’m not sure he trusts this, I don’t either but then he nods and Kai is first to jump out of her seat, say thank you and pull Luna out the tent with her.

There’s a table with just the younger boys. They’re loud, they look good and anyone with eyes can see the girls who aren’t their family – including my cousins are trying to be at that table. It’s hilarious to watch.

There’s also one with the younger girls and the same thing is occurring there, only vice versa and the guys are actually more bold and shoot their shots.

Then there's a married people one, it has the couples in the Ngubo family, including Raina and her husband.

Of course there's security. Apparently Khule wouldn't take his family anywhere without any. Banele gives me names of the family members. Including her infamous Casanova nephew, Leano. I can understand why he's a Casanova. He's mixed and has long and curly hair, light skinned, many tattoos because I can even spot a neck one, and lastly hazel eyes. I'd be one too.

Apparently a few of the kids are missing, like the newly wed niece and her brother who lives in the States. Banele's sister and her husband too, they're Leano's parents.

Banele's best friend and her husband are here though. They're supposed to be sitting opposite us but got up to check on some of the family. I honestly am overwhelmed with the amount of people they consider family. I mean even people I count as extended family seem to be important on their side of the world.

Banele

It's so surreal how tomorrow I'll officially have a sister wife and Sunday night, my husband will be going away with her to Mozambique. He chose that because he doesn't want to be too far from me. I pushed for Santorini.

To say I'm not nervous would be a lie. I am. I know Khule would never unlove me or love me any less than he does. I just am also a little nervous about it, especially since it's so close. I get a call from the healer,

"Ndlovukazi, what is worrying you? I thought you knew who you are in this family. The ancestors would never put you in a situation that isn't favorable for you or the king."

"I don't know if I know that but I guess I'll take your word for it."

“There will never be anyone who takes your place. I told you this. You need to relax just as you’ve been doing so far, no one can move you. Remember that. Let me call your husband too, I think he’s unsure himself.”

We say our goodbyes and I’m back in business. Nonhle is important to me because of not just this baby, but because she trusted me and honestly I’m why she’s here.

I call Nonhle to check if everything is going accordingly and the hired help is doing their jobs. She sounds happy with her sisters and Lunathi as her bridesmaids. They’re all in her room and waiting for the girls that they practice ukusina with. Tonight, the practice goes on all night. Then in the morning they come here.

Things are going in and out this yard. The tent is up, prep for the food is being done by my chefs actually so I keep checking on that. The boys were sent out for some errands while my girls are here helping. Personally I hate working but when others are helping, I too have to pitch in.

Lwazi, my best friend walks in and runs to hug me.

“Hey MakaSyeza!”

“My baby is not Syeza weNolwazi.”

She laughs and we take a walk outside so we can talk. We find Sphe and Zendaya too outside.

“When are you and Raina getting tired of having kids?” Daya.

“Raina just had her third, she’s far better than this one. Five sis?!” Sphe.

“My husband is good at sex, what can I say?”

They all laugh.

“Okay TMI, where’s Zama? I’ve seen Ntombi and her troop.”
Daya.

“Probably coming later, I’m not sure.”

“So you? Are you certain about this?” Daya.

I sigh and tell them the truth,

“Well I got a little nervous today, but I just got a call from Gogo Duduzile and she reminded me that I’m not losing Khule, ever.”

“That I can believe. Khule is slightly obsessed with you.” Lwazi.

“Slightly? My brother breathes her.” Daya.

“Well, I don’t want him to not love Nonhle oddly enough. I mean the woman sacrificed ever finding a love like ours, for us.”

“She’s braver than me I’ll tell you that.” Sphe.

“Honestly? Me too. I commend and appreciate her sacrifice so much.”

They all nod in agreement. I’m glad to have them on my side through all this. I’d hope they wouldn’t have any issues with this because it’s basically at my request. Khule would never have done it.

“Well, how about you and Mane spend the week with me and Mike while Khule and Nonhle are away?” Lwazi.

“Sure but school?”

“Ten days remember?” Lwazi.

“Oh right! Mane’s school is on break next week. Then yeah, we’re coming. With Lunathi though.”

“Speaking of that, can’t y’all just come stay close to us now? I want him and Elinam to stay together.” Lwazi.

She's been trying to get me to move closer for ages. Apparently just for Mane to change schools. I know though she just wants us to raise Mane and Elinam close to each other like we did Kai, the twins and Athi, plus Azisa when they were younger.

"You really want him to go to Eli's school neh?"

"Yeah of course." Lwazi.

"I'll speak to Khule about moving us to Ballito or Zimbali then. Which would work also for being closer to Nonhle. We'll come here on weekends maybe."

"Great! It's done then! Khule does whatever you say anyways."
Lwazi.

Well I might as well move now. Raina also reckons Thami should be born then stay closer to Smiso her last born.

The following day, though we barely slept, I wake up in my husband's arms. He pecks my cheek as soon as I stir and open my eyes. We're spooning in bed and we can already hear that it's busy outside.

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"Well, after today, I don't want anything to change. I don't want you to ever think she'll ever take your place. It's impossible."

"I know."

"I love you MaVezi. I'll love you now, tomorrow and forever."

"I love you Khulekani. I'll never stop. You're my world."

"I honestly can't believe I have to do this. I mean I'll do anything for you but this? I'm not happy with this."

"I know, but please try with her."

“I’ll make sure you’re okay and taken care of while I’m away okay?”

“I’m going to the Boatengs. Don’t worry about me. I’ll take Luna and Mane with.”

“Is it? Well enjoy yourselves.”

He kisses my cheek.

“We will, you enjoy your honeymoon too.”

“I can’t even believe I’m having a honeymoon without you.”

“Ugh just go and don’t think too much about it. She’ll be your wife too.”

“Sure I guess. Let’s shower together.”

“Really? Okay let’s go.” I reply already pulling him off the bed.

I wasn’t going to let the opportunity pass me. He told me not to take showers since my belly popped and I hate taking baths because I just feel I waste too much time soaking.

After the shower my husband ate me out, gave me good dick and now I’m feeling lighter than I did when I woke up. I go check on his other matrimonial room, the one being prepared for him and Nonhle. The new bedding and everything has arrived, I just need it to look less white. I’ll have them put petals on the bed and champagne so it doesn’t look so bare. Doing this is hard but one thing I know is they won’t have sex and tomorrow they go away while I go to Nolwazi’s house.

By the time my husband and his new wife have sex, I’ll be with my son and best friend just enjoying myself. If Khule permitted it, I’d have gone on a mini vacation, but no he said he doesn’t want me traveling far without him.

I walk back downstairs where everyone is busy and I see the traditional healer. She smiles at me.

“Glad to see you’re doing good. It’s your husband I’m worried might just put a stop to everything. He’s very skeptical right now.” Gogo Duduzile.

“He can’t do that now. It’s too late. Nonhle would hate me if he humiliated her like that. Where is he?”

“He said he’s going to your old bedroom. It’s dangerous for a king to have someone who has so much power over him like you do.”

“Thokoza Gogo”

I don’t know how to reply to her statement so I just walk to our old bedroom. Before he became king, the first bed we used when we got to Magobeni with Kai. The one we used after our traditional wedding. The one we came back to after our vow renewal ceremony. The one we might’ve conceived the twins in... We’re not sure.

I knock once and enter.

“That woman told you.”

He is so rude! It’s amazing how much I love it though.

“She’s our traditional healer Khulekani. You’re so rude.” I reply laughing.

He’s never really liked any traditional healers. He’s a doctor so I understand why not

“Well I’m not sure about this Banele.”

I kneel in front of him. He’s sitting on a chair next to our old bed.

“Nonhle isn’t sure either but she’s doing it.”

“Yeah but still, I wish all three of us didn’t have to do this.”

His whole demeanor isn't one of a happy man about to get married and honestly we don't want the public seeing him this way. They'll think we're not united in this polygamy.

"Udwendwe will be starting soon. We, the three of us are already here. Can't we just embrace it?"

He looks into my eyes, "You're beautiful."

I smile. Well I didn't want to look like I'm trying too hard so I didn't have the makeup artist do anything crazy with my face or hair. I tied my afro into a bun and added a few beads only.

"Thank you. You're not too bad yourself."

He gives me a sexy smile. He's always looking good and he knows it.

“Not too bad? I’m sexy as hell woman what are you talking about?”

We both laugh and he kisses my lips and a call comes in on my phone. It’s Daya. I’m sure they’re looking for Khule. I take it and she asks where he is. I tell her we’re coming and take my husband’s hand. We walk out together. Him in ibheshu and me in a beautiful traditional print dress designed by one of the first locals I ever met when I got here, Hlengiwe. She was living with her brother Andile only when we met and they were both way too young to be living alone. A lot has changed since then and I’m very proud of her and her brother’s growth.

Nonhle

There was a short time where I thought Khule wouldn't pitch to let me in the gate and cut a cow's tail, but he pitched. Then when all the men were ready and sitting where they're supposed to, I thought once more he wouldn't pitch but he did. I still hadn't saw Banele since the cutting of the tail in the morning.

Everything went well with udwendwe and though my husband - that's who he is to me now, didn't look much excited, I didn't either.

I think the best thing was the little goat thing to introduce Luna to her new ancestors, that made me tear up. By then Banele was holding my hand and right by my side while the man that's now our husband introduced our daughter as we sat on reed mats emsamu.

Khule hadn't said anything to me still. He held my hand when he led me from isigcawu and that's it. Even then though he was

silent. During Umabo he was still so serious! They were even afraid of hitting him when they were supposed to playfully hit him with little sticks as he lies laid in a bed.

My sisters and Luna did so good! We had a week only to practice but we got it together for this, I felt like I was back in primary school.

People came out in numbers for my traditional wedding. Even someone who was my “rival” in high school showed up. I don’t know why the bitch was here really. She’s not even one of those great stories where I can say in the end I did better than her in life. Well unless I count marrying better then yes, I beat her there today.

When my sisters were leaving with their children and husbands it felt so surreal. All three of us have different surnames, different lives from each other and all of us are out of dad’s house. I couldn’t be more happier.

Speaking of being happy, mom seemed happy today. Not pretend happy but actually happy. Dad barely smiled but I don’t care about him.

The ring Khule gave me during Umabo is unreal actually. I believe it's important to mention that because the man literally got my birthstone! I don't think there are many Garnet wedding rings but I got one! I'm afraid to even ask how much it was though.

Khule is taking me to our room. That's the only thing he's said directly to me today. "Let me show you our room" is the first words my husband ever said to me. This whole marriage is going to be tricky.

Oh wow. It's beautiful in here. White mostly has been used. There's rose petals on the bed and floor. Did he organize this? I look at around the room. There's even champagne and two glasses.

"I have some stuff to do downstairs." Khule.

He's so... Proper. Like he's acting the part of Christian Grey or Simon Basset but this is how he always is.

"Can I help?"

He looks at me and tilts his head.

“Actually, yes, please go outside, tell the current clean up crew they’re fired because they’re slow and their replacement will be here in five minutes.”

Wait no! That’s so wrong of him, I know what it’s like running such a business and being stopped so early without being given a chance is wrong.

“Didn’t clean up just start? Can’t you just wait for them to prove themselves?”

He looks at me like he’s bored by what I’m saying.

“Yes it did. Just do as I say, the owner is in the tent.”

I nod. I’m still in the dress I wore after isidwaba mind you. It’s beautiful and Zulu regal looking with beads all over. I

removed inhloko and now wearing a doek over a weave. When I get to where the tent is I almost die of shock.

My old company is the cleaners here. They're the fired company and I can't believe Khule did this!

I've wanted to get back at my ex for stealing this from me and giving it to his wife but I never thought it would happen so soon.

My ex employees look at me, some wave and I wave back. They did nothing to me so I'm not angry at them. My ex and his wife spotted me already so by the time I get to them my ex is silent. His wife keeps trying to seem busy with nothing.

"Nonhle! Congratulations on your wedding." Sabelo.

"I'm her majesty queen Nonhle Ngubo to you Sabelo."

Oh my goodness this feels so fucking good!

“I’m so sorry...”

I cut in before he can finish,

“Please, leave everything and get your crew out of here. A replacement cleaning company is already at the gate. Make it snappy.”

I turn away and then realize there’s security waiting for me. Okay I’m not used to that. They were probably walking behind me this whole time.

“This is so big for us please don’t do this to these guys Nonhle. You can punish me but not them.” The ex.

I turn and look at him. Groveling isn’t a good look on him. I don’t give a flying fuck about what he’s telling me right now. He stole the company I started alone and worked hard to get. He stole it from me and gave it to the woman who could give him children angithi? He must see what he does about his employees alone.

“In five minutes you’ll be trespassing.”

I walk away. That moment and Luna’s little ceremony will probably stay the most memorable moments of my traditional wedding day. The security follows me back to the house while some of them go in the tent. Probably to escort my ex and his employees out.

Oh I love being a queen. My Hyundai i10 is parked in this yard. I’m not even sure who drove it here but I’m happy.

When I get back into the palace Zendaya rushes to me.

“So? Did you fire your ex?”

“I did.”

She squeals in excitement.

“I love you girl! You’ve got guts and that earns my respect!”

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26, 0.3); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">I laugh and thank her as she walks me to my room and tells me how she only wanted one kid ten years ago and now she has two boys because God decided she needed one kid twice. I almost got confused till I remembered her boys are twins. It's so funny how she speaks about them like they're a liability but at the same time her eyes say she loves them very much. I like this one I won't lie.

I get back to the bedroom and find Khule in bed. He's under the covers and on his phone. He doesn't even look at me as I walk in. I think he's wearing shorts because all I see is his big chest.

"Done?"

He doesn't even glance at me.

"Yes, thank you."

I don't know how he knew but I'm grateful he helped me get back at that bastard.

"Good. What's the full story there anyway? Why did you sell to them at next to nothing?"

I sigh and sit on the couch. I won't look at him incase he's going to judge me over it, I don't want to curse him out.

"He forged my signature. For two whole months I was working for his wife and I didn't even know he had found someone and got married under my nose. One day he came to my apartment to break the news to me and say I'm fired. He said that all of it could've been avoided if I had given him a child."

"I'm not done with him then."

I turn to look at him. How did he even know?

"How did you even find out about him? I never told you."

“The quicker you catch on to who you’re married to, the better.”

How do I even do that?! Who is this man exactly?

“You don’t tell me anything though.”

“You don’t tell me anything either.”

I want to argue but he’s right so I just sigh and go into the closet. Zama, one of his sisters did tell me that some of my stuff was here. I grab a silk pj set I didn’t even own a few hours ago and go into the bathroom.

I take a quick shower and change into the pjs. I walk out of the bathroom and he’s still on his phone.

I get in bed slowly. I don’t know what I’m afraid of exactly but I’m not okay just jumping in the covers.

“I won’t touch you Nonhle. Don’t be afraid of me. I’ll only touch you when you want me to. We have an early breakfast with the family tomorrow so please just get in.”

I stare at him. Part of me wants to ask if he’ll even want to touch me or he’ll be doing it because I want it?

In the morning this man isn’t even in bed when I wake up but I hear the shower running. Last night we didn’t even cuddle or anything. Plus it was the traditional wedding and there’s no tradition that includes kissing there. We’re husband and wife but we don’t even know how to be intimate.

He walks out of the bathroom shocking me. He’s wearing white underwear and I can see his bbc. He looks like damn Hercules but I don’t know why I just hide under the blanket when our eyes meet.

I hear him laugh a bit.

“You can go shower, I’ll get dressed and we can grab Banele and the kids then go to dinner.”

I peep out the cover and he's in the closet so I run into the bathroom. I don't know why his almost nakedness makes me so nervous but I laugh at myself when I get to the bathroom. Yeah no I need to do better.

Breakfast, I found out on the way here is at Mike and Nolwazi's house. They have a new house built right here in Magobeni. It's so huge! They're neighbors are still building and apparently they're the Vezi family, consisting of Banele's gorgeous brother who I think was lucky to find such a beautiful wife in Thandi because he looks too good for a man himself and three children now that the eldest is married. Another piece of land in the same area has also been marked out and will clearly start building soon that land belongs to Leano's parents.¹

We're sitting at an outdoor table near a pool. It's made with concrete and very long with concrete benches running on either side and pillows for texture I guess. We all fit. Myself, Khule, Banele and 'our' kids. Mike, Nolwazi and theirs. Bandile, Thandi and theirs too, minus the newly wed Owami. Even the one who studies in America made it here.

“Before Khule and Nonhle leave we need to confirm where we’re going on holiday this year. Please don’t say Dubai.”
Nolwazi.

“Bora Bora?” Mike.

Everyone on the table but me and Luna gives him a look.

“Leano says he’s coming with us this year and I get his vote.”
Athi.

“That last part isn’t happening.” Khule.

“Thailand?” Enam, he’s the Boateng nineteen year old.

“No way.” Thandi.

“Okay let’s agree on this first, are we going somewhere hot or cold?” Bandile.

“Cold. Why not stay put if we’re looking for summer?” Azisa, he’s Thandi and Bandile’s first son.

“Yeah besides, last year was in Dubai and that’s heat.” Athi.

I don’t even know when or how it becomes Athi vs Nami. She wants Toronto, he wants Seattle so now everyone must vote by writing down which place they choose. Personally I will vote with Nami because well now she’s my daughter. All this is happening as we eat. This big family thing is more fun than I thought.

After all the votes are counted Athi wins with Seattle by four votes. I don’t mind that much anyway because I’ve never been to Seattle before anyway. I’ve only read books that are set there. Nami also says she’ll get him next time and it seems like a competition the two of them are used to having.

Khule is first to stand up after breakfast and announces that we have to go. He gets goodbye hugs from the family and I get awkward hugs too. I don’t know how okay I am with this. I feel like I’m taking him from his wife. Especially after he kisses her goodbye and let’s me lead the way out of the garden, into the house and back out the other door. We get in a car being driven by Vumani. Mozambique here we come I guess.

Nonhle

I had never gotten on a private jet till today. I was so excited yet so annoyed I had to pretend I wasn't because God forbid Khule thinks he excites me. I'd rather be giddy inside. In approximately six hours we had landed in Maputo.

Approximately twenty minutes later we were in our deluxe room. It's honestly such a magnificent place I cannot get over it. The views are gorgeous and everything. I can't wait to go out in my bikini like a rich bitch.

Khule walks in from the bathroom. I guess he was talking to Banele who I'm texting about this place. She tells me to enjoy myself even if Khule doesn't want to enjoy himself after I complain about us barely talking.

He's wearing all black, black shirt, pants and shoes. Mourning his life before he met me I see. Well at least he looks sexy. He always has some jewelry on and he looks good all the damn time.

“Wear something nice, dinner will be here in twenty.”

There's a beautifully set table out in the balcony and I guess that's where we're having dinner. We had a light lunch in the jet already. I get up and freshen up then I wear one of the dresses the personal shopper got that I've never worn before. It's a short colorful Versace dress. I brought along mostly comfortable shoes but luckily there's a pair of Steve Maidens I can put on so I do that.

I untie my weave and iron it. I put on a bit of makeup then I walk out. Some guy is placing something on the table and he walks out. We're left alone. He opens the door to the balcony and waits for me to walk out before he closes it. He gets my chair and I sit. He then sits opposite me and gets the champagne.

We never even drank the champagne in our room back home. Not even the champagne that was in the jet. He pours me a glass and I hadn't noticed but there's a bottle of whiskey for him. He pours himself that. We're not speaking still. I just say thank you when it's relevant.

“I hate having waiters around while I have a private dinner, hopefully you don’t mind.”

“I don’t mind.”

We get to the food and eat in silence. I actually wonder what he would’ve done if I didn’t eat red meat honestly since he clearly decided on his own what we eat.

“Hope you don’t mind steak and vegetables, I just decided off the top of my head.”

“I don’t actually, I just wonder what you would’ve done if I did.”

“Had the kitchen change it for chicken.”

I forget life is that simple for him. Forget that it would probably cost him to do that.

“Alright. So, what are we going to do here.”

“Whatever you want to do. This is your honeymoon.”

“Our.”

“Well I guess, but still, I think you can control what happens more so, yours.”

“Aren’t you already controlling things? Look at this meal.”

“It’s day one, you weren’t going to get anything done because you didn’t know how to. I’ll show you how to get room service though, you can order breakfast, lunch and dinner from now on.”

I wouldn’t know what to get first off all. However I smile, I’m not letting him get to me.

“No problem.”

“Home is home but here I can get another room if you aren’t comfortable on a bed with me.”

He wants to make it my fault that he didn’t sleep here? No way. I’m definitely not happy about sharing a bed with him. I can’t even masturbate cause he’s right there.

“I’m comfortable.” I lie.

“Okay then.”

I don’t trust the way he says that. It’s like he banked on it or something.

When bedtime comes for me while he’s still having whiskey out in the balcony and making calls, I get in the bathroom to change into a new pj set and brush my teeth of course. This one is silk, short and has a lace trimming.

I look at him when I walk out and he's looking right at me while on the phone. He laughs seemingly at what the other person says to him and goes back to looking out the other way.

Ouch! I should've just worn lingerie. Too late now. I guess I'll see tomorrow. I get in bed.

I call Luna who tells me she's enjoying her time at the Boateng home with Banele and Mane.

"So what's different about being there than being with me?" I ask her.

"More people. The boys are fun to hang around with too."

"Enam and Majid?"

"And Kofi."

"Oh okay, long as you're enjoying your time with them."

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sans-serif; -webkit-tap-highlight-color: rgba(26, 26, 26, 0.3); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">"I am mom. What about you?"

I look outside, Khule walks in from the balcony.

"Mozambique is beautiful. I wish you could've been here."

"I'm sure I'll get the chance to go sometime."

I hear Athi in the background and she cuts our call short, says bye and that's it. I miss her so much. I really wish she could've tagged along.

Khule is in the bathroom, I can hear the shower running. I can't believe he's showering again. I mean what the hell dude?

When he walks out he's naked. As in birthday suit. I drop my jaw and focus on my phone. I want to peep because I mean damn that's some equipment he's got there but I don't just in case he's looking. Why the hell is he naked anyway?

He gets in bed. I don't understand why he's naked.

"So no shorts or something?"

"I've never slept wearing shorts or pajamas since I went to University. That's years of sleeping naked."

"Wait so you're telling me you weren't dressed yesterday in bed either?"

"Of course not."

Oh. My. God. He's crazy!

"How do I even sleep knowing you're naked?"

"The same way you sleep every night."

"And you're not going to end up on my side of the bed?"

“With the way you sleep, you might be next to me in the morning, but I will not make it to your side.”

Oh wow I hate him. I wonder why he had us do blood tests if he won't even have sex with me. Not that I want to have sex with him but he doesn't even want me? What the hell is that? Is he even a man? I mean I'm right here. I just shoot the question,

“So we won't have sex this whole week?”

“We will have sex when you want it.”

What the fuck does that even mean? I have to initiate it?

“But what about you? Don't you want it?”

“It doesn't matter what I want, you need to be ready to have sex with me.”

He exists to frustrate me. That's why he's alive. It's why he flew me here. To torture me.

“Bloody fucking hell! Good night!”

I pull the cover and try to sleep. He's purposely avoiding my question. I just want to know if he wants me. He's making it such a thing and for a supposed straight talker he's being very dodgy!

It's Wednesday now. Still nothing. This man is a robot, I went to bed in a lingerie set yesterday, he didn't even flinch. I got in naked too today, he didn't flinch today either. I don't know if I'm just not sexy or what. We've went to different restaurants, the market to shop for some locally made clothes, went sight seeing, I got in a bikini for the beach and in all this, every night he doesn't even touch me. The most action I've gotten is hand holding. Only.

It's getting frustrating and soon I'll just burst into tears because it's eating away at my self confidence. I mean at first I didn't even want sex with him, I just wanted him to want it. Now, I'm

not a robot like him there's no way I can look at that Mandingo every night getting in bed and not want any, I mean duh?!

He's always up first. I don't know how. He's already dressed in the morning when I get up he even greets me with coffee in his hand. Clearly we're going somewhere and I have to get up and get clean.

Holy shit! I'm naked. How the fuck am I going to walk all the way to the bathroom with him sitting right there?! I'm not as shameless as he is. He's got his shlong out every night swinging in here.

"We're going to be late."

That ladies and gentlemen is why I wanted to get up before he said anything. Now I no longer want to get up because I feel like it's a trap.

"I'm sick, can we not go?"

"You married a doctor remember? What's wrong?"

I fucking hate him. He's so annoying.

"No it's okay, it's not that bad, just a slight headache."

"Okay then, hurry, the pilot is waiting. I'll get you pills."

Pilot? We're going somewhere far? Honestly he may be annoying every other way but he's great at surprising a woman. His dates are top-tier. I'm now excited so I get up with the whole cover and go to the bathroom. I don't even look at him because I've realized he's a neat freak with OCD because there's no other way to explain someone who makes sure to tidy up after himself in a hotel. Like why am I in a hotel if I'll clean after myself?!

Nonhle

A few months ago, right when I was down and out, if someone told me I'd be married to a rich man as his second wife, having breakfast in an island that I took a helicopter ride to get to today, I'd have cursed them out as a liar. Sometimes I look around and see the things this man can afford me and I almost, just a little bit feel like love is overrated.

I mean I can get so many things I never thought possible through this man. Look at the jet we came here in, it's literally named "MaVezi". I mean what if this man bought it for Banele? It's quite possible.

However one look at this man and his annoyingly perfect, handsome face and I know I can't make it about material things.

He's complicated. He's Mysterious, a little too mysterious because it grates my fucking tits! He's got this wicked ability to make you feel like you're crazy when he talks to you. He's

frustrating and I don't understand what he wants from me if anything at all. In fact, I have a feeling he's got everything he needs already, maybe that's why he makes even having sex about whether I want it or not.

"When are you actually going to tell me things about you?" I blurt out.

He looks like an angel in a white shirt with the waves as his backdrop here. This island date is intimate, it's just us and the staff here, they're standing quite far too. We took a stroll to get to the table.

"What do you want to know about me?"

His voice! His voice will have you melting everywhere!

"Well, how was your childhood."

"It was a childhood like any other. Up until the time my father started recruiting me to join in his dirty businesses. He showed

me things. Things no other little boy should see. Taught me how to fight, how to shoot, how and where to stab. I think that's why I went into medicine. I wanted to know more about humans and how to hurt them and kill them slowly. You know, break bones. Torture. That became my thing. Still is for anyone who would hurt my family. How was yours?"

I have my jaw dropped. He's got to be kidding. He is lying there's no way he'd just tell me all that. Also why is it so creepy how he says it? Like it's perfectly normal.

"Nah I don't believe you. You wouldn't just tell me that."

"Why not? It's not like you're going to go to the police. What would they do anyway? Arrest me? They wouldn't make it to me let alone me making it to a police station."

His face is blank. Like it normally is and I think he's trying to creep me out but the problem is, it's working.

"Okay Khulekani it's no longer funny. Say sike."

He carefully pulls out a napkin, wipes his mouth, which I don't even see any crumbs on by the way, then he puts it away again and looks at me,

“Okay, sike.”

He's not joking. He just shrugs after that and grabs his fork and knife to continue eating.

I can tell... He's not joking. My whole body has gone cold. I don't know if I can still eat. I pour myself more of the mimosa and gulp it down.

“You've killed people?”

“No one that didn't deserve it. I never did my father's dirty work. He left my mother for a younger woman. I hated him and I never got directly involved in the underworld. However when your father and sister are household names in the underworld, you get enemies you never made.”

“I don’t think I can do this. I mean I suspected you with Smamane but this?! This is crazy! Even worse I can tell it’s true and you’re admitting it!”

“Smamane was a pig. He died the easy way. I wanted to get my hands on him and you don’t think you can do what? Marry me? Check your left finger.”

I want to scream! What the fuck?! Is he kidding me? He literally just admitted to being psycho.

“This ring means nothing! I can file for divorce.”

His face looks like he’s bored.

“Go right ahead, I won’t stop you, but you know you won’t.”

I stand up and walk away towards the helicopter. I need to get away from him. I need to be taken away from here. This fucking sand is fucking slowing me down!

A quad bike goes past me. I see him get on it as the other guy gets off at the table. He rides it all the way back to me.

“Get on.”

“The fuck?! With you? No!”

“Suit yourself.”

He rides past me the sand flying everywhere and he gets to the helicopter and gets in. Oh my God he’s going to leave me here. I start running in the sand to catch up. One of the staff guys gets on the quad bike and fetches me. I get on without being asked. When I get to the helicopter they help me up and I strap up next to him. He’s laughing and shaking his head. Man fuck this guy.

“Riding with me again?” He asks looking so smug.

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I wanna punch his throat. He was going to leave me in the middle of God knows where.

I don't speak to him the whole way back. He doesn't mind either because he got time to call the kids including Luna which made me smile on the inside, then he called Banele and told her I said I was divorcing him because he told me his childhood story. I don't know what exactly she said back to him but he told her I'd be okay and there's no need to call me, he'll handle it.

He said handle "it", while talking about me. I wanted to scream. We're back at the hotel and I've locked myself in the bathroom. I'm trying to understand exactly what I got myself into and exactly how crazy this man is. Otherwise my other theory is that he's trying to make me feel crazy. I think he gets a kick out of watching me be uneasy. There's no other explanation.

I want to call Banele and cry my eyes out to her but I choose not to. I know the influence she has on him so he'll really stop and I'll never figure out why the hell he's mind fucking me if she gets involved.

I look at myself in the mirror. I look a little crazy. My eye makeup is smudged, I took my weave off and my cornrows are luckily still neat but still very different from the Mrs Ngubo who walked in this bathroom. I'm Nonhle right now. The craziest child my father ever had, the child he beat up the most. I walk out and stand behind him.

He's facing the other way, his shirt is off, belt too. He must be changing.

"What exactly do you want from me?"

He turns around. His one hand playing with his ring, the "family" pinky ring with an N on it. Seems Mike and him have the same ideas.

"You're in the most beautiful state I've ever seen you in."

I step back. Beautiful? Me? When does the mind fucking end with him?

“Just stop. Tell me what you want from me. Why are you playing mind games with me.”

“I wish I was. I have never lied to you.”

“What is it with you? Everything is a struggle.”

“I could say the same about you.”

He steps forward , his hand still on that ring. I step back and swallow. I no longer know what to say. He’s looking sexy and confusing the fuck out of me. I don’t know if now is the right time but my stupid mind won’t stop staring at his body so I ask, even though I don’t expect a straight answer like with everything else.

“What did you mean you’d have sex with me when I want it?”

He steps forward again, his head now tilted with a half smile. I step back. Three more steps and I lose room to step back.

“I meant exactly that. I won’t touch you until you want it.”

“How do you know I don’t want it now?”

He steps forward and I step back again.

“Because you’re running from me.”

Yeah of course I am I don’t understand what it is you want to do to me.

His phone rings and I look at it on the bed. I don’t know how but he takes one giant step and gets to me. When I try to step back he puts his left arm around my waist, his right hand on the right side of my neck holding my face up. I swallow hard and I close my eyes. It feels like my body is tingling in excitement, butterflies in my belly. I don’t know where to look. Funny I don’t think he’ll hurt me. I feel his cheek against mine and my heart leaves my body. I feel light as a feather. He whispers in my ear,

“You will beg me to take you.”

Then he lets me go slowly, which I appreciate because I'm so woozy I might fall. My eyes are still closed. I don't know what I expected but it wasn't that exchange. Whatever that was. I open my eyes and he's back where he was when we started this conversation. His back turned away from me, only now he's texting on his phone.

I think I understand him a bit more now. I don't know what the hell he meant by saying he'll touch me when I want it, but I think he just wants me to ask. I don't know why that matters to him though. Does he want it to not be initiated by him? What does he want exactly?

I go back to the bathroom to shower. I could smell his scent all over me and it made the situation between my legs worse.

When I get back out, he's got whiskey in his hand, still no shirt and I just want him to put one on before I make a fool of myself again.

He's sitting on a couch in the lounge, the television is on but I doubt he's watching.

I decide to remain in the bedroom. I need to think about this, firstly why did his touch feel so magical on me? Also, is the sexual frustration on my side only? I mean it could be. He's had a wife since forever and with her being pregnant right now, I don't think they have a boring sex life.

I on the other hand, had stopped having sex for fun with my ex before we broke up.

As I'm thinking about my next move I get a WhatsApp text from my mom and it reads,

"My second and most troublesome daughter, I don't think you realized it but I stayed because of you mostly. I stopped loving your father years ago. I just couldn't leave him if any of you were still home.

When you had things going good for you, with your business and everything, I was ready to leave but Lunathi was there, I couldn't leave her.

I know all you kids don't know this but at times he would punish me for the things you did. You Nonhle, you got into more trouble so of course I was beaten more for you.

I still wouldn't change anything though, after what he had done to you as a teenager, I never wanted him to lay his hands on you ever again.

I am sending you this to let you know, I have left him finally. I love you so much Nonhle.”

Nonhle

I don't know what to think of this. So many emotions are hitting me at once. She could've left with us as children long ago. She's blaming me for why she stayed so long? Did I not try to help her get him arrested? If she's really left then good for her. I hope she's happy. I'm the troublesome daughter who had her beaten up more mos. She must go stay with Hle or Sbahle.

Sbahle is first to send a text in the family group. I don't know why she created this, there's just us three. She's asking if we all got one. Mxm. I turn my phone off.

Khule walks in and stares at me.

"Why are you angry?"

"She left my dad. My mother. She left him and I'd be far happier for her if she didn't blame me for her staying so long."

“She blames you?”

He looks surprised at that. I don't know why, I should've seen it coming.

“Yes can you imagine? She told me she got hit for what I did the most. She called me troublesome. How is that different from her husband? Then she goes on to use my trauma as the reason she was taking punishment for me. I never asked her to fucking do it!”

I'm literally shaking. My hands can't keep still.

“Okay, now calm down. She's left him. He's alone. Focus on the fact that she finally left and not the details she shared with you.”

“How Khulekani? How?! She blames me! How is she different from him?”

“Calm down.”

I get up from the bed and pull the sheets to the floor.

“No. I won’t calm down! She’s never stood up for us in our presence not even fucking once! Now we’re supposed to believe she did it in her bedroom? She’s a fucking liar and I always thought I wanted her in my life but I don’t! She’s as destructive as he is! She’s fucking manipulative. I hate her! Do you hear me? I hate her!!!”

He has his arms around me and repeatedly telling me to calm down. I wanted to break everything in this room. I was trying to pull the mattress from the base when he got to me. I want to get hurt. I keep trying to kick the bed just to feel pain but he’s dragged me away from it and we’re on the floor. He’s holding me from the back. I want to break fucking free.

“Nonhle! Calm down!”

He yelled at me so I stopped screaming. Tears are now streaming down my face. Someone gets in the door and they look so terrified.

“Are you okay Mr and Mrs Ngubo?” The security guy.

“Get the fuck ouuuutttt!” I scream at him and he nods then closes the door.

Khule is still just holding me and I try to count down while breathing in and out. I guess he can tell I’m calmer now because he lets me go slowly, gets up and goes to the balcony doors and locks them. I guess he’s afraid I would’ve jumped out. He comes back to me and sits behind me again. This time he rests my head on his chest and runs one hand across my chest.

“Are you back?”

I nod. I am back. I won’t hurt myself again. I won’t hurt myself because of my father ever again. I know I’ve said that before but this time I’m being for real. He won’t get to me. Not even through mom.

“I’m fine.”

“Now tell me where did that satanic scream come from.”

I giggle. He’s so annoying.

“Leave me alone.”

He chuckles,

“What happened to you, when you were sixteen?”

I look up at his face. Does he know?

“Who told you?”

“No one. I did help your mother leave though. She’s in one of my houses. She didn’t tell me what happened when we spoke, but I know it happened when you were sixteen.”

I shouldn't be surprised but I still am. He probably had the plan ready weeks ago. I wonder when he got to my mother and how.

He's already seen me go crazy so I guess I can tell him the source of it.

"My father, he took my virginity. Not in the way you'd think. He didn't rape me. He kicked me right in the vagina and I started bleeding. He immediately stopped, left the room and my mother came in looking mortified. She didn't get us out of there then. Instead she bathed me in cold water. I was in pain Khulekani, I knew exactly what had happened in there. At that age we knew about the hymen. Mine had just been broken by a kick from the man I called my father."

His face looks so intense. Like he's thinking hard.

"I'm sorry, you were just a child. He deserves nothing."

I don't answer him. I don't know what to say after talking about that. It's the one thing I don't just talk about

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it's the main reason I hate my father. It was after that day he started calling me worthless.

I don't know when I fell asleep but clearly I did, I'm waking up in bed, new sheets and I'm in pjs I know I didn't change into. I look around the room and he's not here so I go to the lounge and I find him there on his phone. He signals that he sees me and finishes off his call while I sit opposite him.

"You hungry?"

There's food on the table. I nod and eat the sticky wings too. Which I never would've guessed he'd eat. He's too neat for messy food.

"Sticky wings?"

"They always cheer Banele up."

Well I'm not complaining either. I nod and indulge.

"Who changed me?"

"I did."

Clearly he doesn't find that weird so I won't even ask.

"I have a slight headache."

"I got you pills. Your big ass forehead was burning so I knew you'd wake up with one."

I want to protest but I don't have the energy. My "big ass forehead" is aching.

"So we're leaving tomorrow?"

“Yes, yes we are.”

“Without any sex?”

“I told you about that so many times already.”

“Yeah well I want it.”

I don't know where that came from but I love myself for saying it.

“Drink your pills first then.”

I nod. He continues with his phone calls. I can tell he's working. After eating I grab the pills and drink them then I go back into the bedroom. I undress. I don't want any hiccups or being told I don't want him yet just because I'm still in my pjs. I rush to brush my teeth and get back to the bedroom.

I get in bed and wait. I can hear him still on a call. Then I can hear him moving around the lounge. Probably tidying up for whoever will come collect the dishes. Someone does come in a few minutes later and I still hear him move around the room a bit then he walks in the bedroom,

He takes off his t-shirt swiftly, then I see him turn around. When he turns back around he has a belt with him. I don't understand...

"Come here." His tone is commanding and so I bite my tongue.

I get off the bed and walk to him. Why does he have a belt with him?

"On your knees."

He's commanding. Not just in his tone but in his eyes too. I do as he says. He takes both my hands and makes me hold them out. He then uses the belt to somehow tie them together.

“Try to break free.”

I try but I can't. He smirks.

“If you want me to stop, you can just say stop or tap out if you can't speak. If you do that, I untie you.”

Is this how he always has sex? I want to ask but he distracts me when he drops his pants in front of me. His damn bbc is fighting the white Calvin Klein's he has on. I think he only has white underwear. Man this guy is sexy as fuck. I stare up at his face. He's fucking handsome too!

He lowers his underwear and it springs out at me. Precum oozing. I don't wait for instructions on this one. I use my tongue to catch the precum drip and lick it off his tip. I play with it using my tongue and I attempt to deep throat and then I pull back. I feel his hand on the back of my head and I already know he's going to push me to deep throat again so I brace myself. He strokes into my mouth making me gag and tears form in the corners of my eyes.

He stops and when I open my eyes to look up at him, he's looking down at me. I start again, from the tip, our eyes locked and he gives me a side smile as I slurp on it. My jaws feel like hell but I'm not stopping. He pushes himself in deeper twice then he pulls out and pulls me up by the belt he's tied my hands in all the way to the bed. He throws me on it and gets on. He pulls me by my legs over his shoulders, I'm literally in the air when he starts slowly eating me out.

I try to push him off when I feel myself build up from his tongue tracing along my clit but he puts his arms over my waist and keeps going. I try to hold off but just as I'm about to just let go all over his face he lets me go and I cum on his upper body causing it to drip down all over him. He doesn't even stop though. His hand is already running over my clit again as he slaps his Mandingo between my thighs. He slowly pushes himself in and I try to get up because it feels like he's going to be too big.

He pulls me down and flips me around. He pulls one of the pillows and puts it underneath me. I feel him slowly rubbing himself outside my entry. Then again, he pushes in at a slow pace and I scream into the bed. He stops and I try to look back at him but having my arms tied to my front is making it difficult.

He pushes in some more again and I can feel almost his full length in me. He pauses again then he starts stroking in and out slowly making me moan.

It doesn't take long for him to literally start pumping in me causing me to scream into the bed and pull the covers with my teeth. He doesn't have my mercy! He keeps going even after I release while he's in me. He just doesn't stop. He flips me over again and keeps going while his other hand is playing with my clit causing my walls to tighten up once more and get me to my happy place. He stops and I hear him groan then I feel him throb inside of me. Clearly pulling out was never going to happen here.

He pulls my arms towards him, unties me and kisses my forehead before pulling himself out and heading into the bathroom.

I'm too tired to move and I just feel my eyes getting heavier so I drift off to sleep.

Banele

“Mom is sending me to the shops for a few things, wanna come?” Athi.

Lunathi looks at me, I nod at her and smile. It’s cute that she thinks she has to ask, but I trust Athi like I do Musa. They’re practically both my sons. I realized though she kinda has a crush on Athi and I find it cute to be honest.

“Thanks mom.” Lunathi.

“You’re really such a baby. You know Aunty Neleh trusts me right? You’re safe with me.” Athi says as she follows him out.

I wonder if he even realizes she likes him. Probably not. Athi I’ve never heard is in a relationship, ever. He’s kind of like Leano. However even Leano had a girlfriend in England who unfortunately tragically passed on, which is part of why he has

sex with girls like it's a sport. Athi? I think he's just never been in love.

Lwazi walks downstairs and joins me on the couch.

"Lunathi has a cute little crush on Athi." I tell her.

So many years later my best friend is still the one I go to with gossip. Khule too, but he's no fun. He adds logic to everything.

"I've seen it too. She just doesn't know what to do with herself if he's in the room."

We both laugh it's so cute!

"I just wonder how Khule or Mike would react to this." I say.

"They will not be hearing it from me. I'll tell you that much."

“Same here. Athenkosi is a smart boy, he wouldn’t cross that one line anyway. It’s far safer than her liking a random guy, especially with her being princess. He once liked Zethu anyway as a teenager.”

“That was so cute shame. She kind of broke his heart when she moved to Cape Town.”

“Yeah. Mike, Akin and Khule still don’t even know about that crush.”

Mike walks in the front door with takeaways

“Wives, see what I got? No cooking for the only wife who wants to, and the one who hates it.” Mike.

I’m the ‘wife who wants to cook.’ While Lwazi is the one who doesn’t.

“If only you knew I had already thawed the chicken and I was ready to cook.” Lwazi.

“We can always just have your food wifey.” Mike says putting the takeaways in the oven then he comes to kiss his wife.

“No! No need. You’ve already bought those.” Lwazi.

Mike and I laugh. Nolwazi hates cooking! I’ve enjoyed my time here, like the good old days when we lived closer together. I think I should actually move back to the area now with Mane so he can school with Elinam. I’ll go to Magobeni on weekends, the council meetings are only on weekends too so it can work. Besides, Khule said Nonhle will live in Zimbali so it makes it easier even on him for us both to be this side.

Enam walks in through the door from VC. He travels daily from Durban North. When I asked why, Lwazi said she doesn’t know but Mike and Khule are probably punishing him for one of those things they never tell us but we know involves girls or alcohol. He’s nineteen now, they need to let him go stay on his own.

“Hey parents, did you have a good day? I did. You look really good Aunty Neleh, did I tell you that? You look really beautiful too mom. I need money for a new outfit, got a date tomorrow.” Enam.

He got through that so quick you’d swear someone was chasing him.

“A date? With which unfortunate girl? And don’t you have more clothes than all of us here combined?” Mike.

“Leave my boy alone Michael, none of us here have more clothes than you or Khule for that matter. I’ll give you my card baby.” I reply.

“Thank you best parent in the world! If you must know dad, I’m going out with Sisanda Luthuli.”

“Don’t embarrass the Boateng name there.” Mike.

“Michael, stop insulting my baby.” Lwazi.

“Thank you other best parent.” Enam.

I go upstairs with him, give him my card and he leaves for Ballito Junction. I go back to the lovely couple on the couches.

“You spoil them too much wife. The students get an allowance for a reason.” Mike.

“He’s going on a date Mike. Let him be.”

You would think he supports him because he buys a new outfit every time their shopper shows him some new men’s collection from Italy or Paris or whatever makes him have so many clothes. Khule too actually. He honestly has a bigger closet than mine.

“Next thing you hear Lukha is dating the other twin. Mxm.”
Mike.

I laugh and shake my head. I wouldn't put it past them. Lukha is Thabiso and Raina's son. Best friends with Enam so what Mike is saying, could actually happen.

"So? You and your best friend dated and married best friends."
Lwazi.

"Oh please! We didn't even know y'all were best friends. Plus, Khule met Banele first."

"*Okusalayo* it happens. Leave my boys to date twin siblings. It doesn't matter." Lwazi.

While we're talking the door opens and it's Nonhle and Khule. I want to run to them but this baby in my belly is making me a little slow so I stand up and smile as Nonhle runs to me. She seems okay. Though Khule didn't get into details he said she had an outburst yesterday and I suggested he gives her food and sex. Seems it worked if he even took my advice.

She hugs me and I hug her back.

“He wasn’t too much was he?”

“He did freak me out a bit, but I’ll tell you later.” Nonhle.

I hope this man didn’t go full “master” mode on this girl, she’s not his submissive.

“I’m here. Right here.” Khule says as Lwazi hugs him and steps aside, Nonhle steps aside too.

I give him a child like smile. I’m so happy to see him I’m not going to lie. He smiles back and takes just a single step towards me, he hugs me and I relax in his arms.

“I love you MaVezi.” Khule.

“I love you Khulekani Hakeem Ngubo.”

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“You look beautiful my wife.” Khule.

I smile at him. He looks at me and gives me a kiss. I hold on to his face. Man I missed him more than I thought.

When we finally break apart we realize they all left us in the living room to go sit by the kitchen and stare at us. We laugh at them, and they laugh at us.

“Come back guys.”

They laugh and come back except Mike who’s looking through the cabinets.

“Is the movie over? I haven’t found a snack.” Mike.

Khule throws a cushion at him and he ducks, Lwazi and I just look at each other and laugh. I whisper to Nonhle,

“They’re about to be kids and chase each other around outside. If they don’t end up doing laps in the pool, they’re going to the gym.”

“Not inside my house!” Lwazi yells when they start chasing each other.

Mike is first out to the backyard, and Khule follows.

“Aren’t these guys old?” Nonhle.

She will be around them more and sooner than later also know exactly when they’re about to be the same age as Manelisi and Elinam who run downstairs, walk slowly past us greeting and run out to their fathers a moment later. They always want to join in the chasing around.

“They’re old, only in age honey...” Lwazi.

“I’ve never seen Khule so playful.” Nonhle.

She's looking out at them running after the kids now.

Raina walks in the front of the house a few minutes later with her baby boy Smiso and hugs us all. The great thing about this particular Boateng house is that it feels as if you're outdoors while indoors and still feels indoors while outdoors. It's an effect brought about by large double front doors and a wall of doors out to the backyard from the dining room that makes it feel like you're exposed to the outside.

"I knew I'd find my faves in one place here. How are you sweethearts?" Raina.

"We're good hun. Glad to see the little one. What brings you by?" Lwazi.

We laugh. Lwazi can be so annoying but Raina and her have been friends long enough for her to take no offense but let Lwazi take Smiso in his portable car seat from her.

“Well, Uthando told her dad she’s getting married, he’s going crazy.” Raina.

“Getting married? To that boy she was with at Owami’s wedding? He wasn’t at Nonhle’s wedding though right?” I ask.

“Yup. Her dad isn’t happy at all.” Raina.

“Isn’t his dad that Whittaker businessman in jail for something?” Lwazi.

“Money laundering.” Raina.

“Wait you guys are talking about Rylan Whittaker?” Nonhle.

“You know him?” Lwazi.

“We’ll kind of, he was my client with my old company. We used to clean up after his parties. It had been about three months since the last one when I... left.”

“Really? What was the mess like after parties?” Raina.

“Honestly? I doubt he did actual parties but more of orgies because the bedrooms would always have multiple condoms according to the staff and I actually went along on a couple of clean ups, he’s wild with a capital w.” Nonhle.

“Oh my goodness Thabiso is going to die with a capital d when I tell him.” Raina.

“Maybe he already knows that’s why he’s not happy.”

“Who’s not happy? Hi MaVisagie.” Khule.

He’s dripping in his own sweat. Mike runs in and stops too, also sweating. Eli and Mane run in behind their fathers and luckily straight upstairs.

“Raina, hey Mrs M.” Mike.

“Boys you better take showers!” Lwazi yells after the two best friends running upstairs.

“Hi guys...” Raina.

I look at their faces they all are afraid to talk.

“So? What’s happening?” Khule.

It’s not like it can be hidden. Thabiso probably already texted them. I speak,

“Uthando is marrying Rylan Whittaker. Thabiso is furious.”

“Uthando is marrying who? Did I not tell that boy to stay away from her? That’s not happening.” Mike.

Khule doesn't even say anything but runs out and Mike follows. Next thing we hear a car drive out. Still drenched in sweat and racing out to someone's house. I wonder why they don't want this to happen. I mean I get he's apparently wild but there has to be more.

"Where are they going?" Nonhle.

"To Thabiso. So they can tell each other it's not going to happen ten times before they get up to either go find Rylan or find information about him to make sure Uthando stays away."
Raina.

We know them too well by now.

"It's funny because if Leano wanted to marry someone's daughter, they wouldn't mind but if someone like Leano in the sense of being wild, loving girls and having orgies wants to marry their own, they get up in arms."

“I know Leano has tattoos too but have y’all ever seen the topless pics of this Rylan boy? Look.” Lwazi shows us a picture from his Instagram.

His entire upper body is covered in tattoos. As in all of it from his neck down. One thing I’ll say though,

“Yeah but seeing this, I don’t blame Uthando, the young man is fine!”

“He’s a dark haired white guy, my favorite kind of white guy. Plus he looks like he fights MMA and that’s just sexy.” Nonhle.

Banele

It got way late, Raina left to go home already and Nonhle and I weren't sure if she was supposed to go back to her house still so I decided on both our behalves we're both staying at Lwazi's. We had dinner with the boys and Lunathi later on and they all went to bed, Mane and Elinam I had to read to and convince their fathers would be here in the morning. Honestly, I'm not sure.

Lwazi and Nonhle are sipping on wine while I take tea because they're mean. The three of us are waiting up for them as long as we can.

"Do you guys think they're issue has to do with the underworld? I mean it could be why Mike told him to stay away." Lwazi.

"How old is he?"

“Thirty.” Nonhle.

“Uthando is twenty-six so I doubt it’s age. Could be that.”

“Wait so the underworld stuff is real?” Nonhle.

She looks slightly disturbed but there’s no need to lie to her. It’s not like we’re exactly involved still. It’s a legacy.

“Yes, it is. It’s also worrying if Uthando is going into that world after our families were pulled out.” Lwazi.

“We didn’t run either when we found out Lwazi. So we can’t blame the child.”

“I’m not. Just saying it’s worrying. We still have to look over our shoulders from time to time now, how much more if that family is still deep in?” Lwazi.

Mike opens the door and walks past like he doesn't even see us, he goes upstairs. Lwazi gulps down her drink and waves bye to us. Nonhle and I look at each other. Khule walks in closes the door then he walks to us. He stands right in front of us with anger written all over his face,

“Why are you up?” He turns to Nonhle with rage, “You're here getting drunk while my pregnant wife stays up with you? Aren't you supposed to be her sister wife? Look out for each other?!”
Khule.

Okay no!

I stand up and go in front of him.

“Khulekani I'm right here! Nonhle is not my keeper! You're angry I'm still up while pregnant then talk to me. Talk to me Ngubo!”

He darts his eyes back to me,

“You should know better. Even if it were her who was pregnant I’d ask you the same thing!”

I know that and I understand that but Nonhle doesn’t.

“And I’d never let it happen because I know, however she doesn’t Ngubo. Calm down.”

He takes deep breaths. Nonhle is still just sitting there shocked. I signal him with my eyes. He sighs and looks at Nonhle again, no more rage,

“I’m sorry MaMthiyane, I just had an annoying day and I shouldn’t have taken it out on you, both of you, even though you know you should be in bed MaVezi.”

She nods. “It’s okay, I didn’t know she’s supposed to be in bed because of the pregnancy.” Nonhle.

He nods too. He takes my hand and we walk upstairs. I hate that he couldn’t just talk to her calmly from the beginning. Also,

there isn't even a need because I was right there, I'm the one who knows he wants me to rest.

We get in the bedroom and I look at him.

"I'm sorry."

"That wasn't resting though MakaNokwanda. You're up drinking tea at this hour?"

"I know, I know and I'm sorry. However I'm to blame. You should've directed your anger at me. I'm older. I'm the one who knows what your recommendations are."

"You're right. She deserves a better apology."

Glad I didn't have to make him realize that by being more elaborate.

"True. You can't expect her to just know things, inform her."

“Okay you’re being her spokesperson now. Do you two discuss me behind my back?”

Of course we do. He knows we do.

“You’re diverting.”

He sits on the bed and I stand in front him. I don’t know how I’m not heavy to this guy when I’m heavy to myself because he pulls me to his lap. His right hand brushes my belly.

“The car is being delivered to her place tomorrow. That can be my apology.”

“That’s her wedding gift, you must take us all out for breakfast tomorrow.”

That’s the best way to get my best friend and sister wife to interact more. It’s important to me that they get along.

“All? What did I do to Mike or the kids and Nolwazi?”

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“He’ll be there with his wife, the kids will be with us.”

“You do realize that’s a breakfast table for eleven people?”

“Majid isn’t here, it’s ten. Don’t act like money is an issue.”

Majid is sixteen and in boarding school with Sphe and Akin’s
son, Khethelo.

“It isn’t but the other people at the restaurant won’t like this.”

“Tough luck.”

I remember one time an entire restaurant was closed down for us because we took all the kids from NMV out. It was us and our bunch, Akin and Sphe's bunch, my brother and his wife's bunch and the Boateng's. That's twenty-six people including Khulani and his girlfriend.

The next morning he tells everyone he's taking us out for breakfast so everyone gets dressed for it, because if you know Khulekani, you know you don't go anywhere looking like you're crazy with him. When we're done we meet him outside and there's two cars, one for the adults, a GLE, the other for the kids, a V-class. Athi chooses to drive himself there. Lwazi suggests he goes with Luna just cause the boys will give her a headache.

Which is actually true, but I could also see she was going to be miserable with Athi not being there so it was a better idea. We're going all the way to The Beverly Hills Hotel anyway. It's not a short ride from here but Khule chose it because it's his favorite place to get breakfast. I'm just glad he had a little talk with Nonhle this morning and apologized once more.

When we get to the restaurant in the hotel he's booked out the entire place for us. He can be so sweet shame, it's one of those things others don't expect from him because he's rather quiet especially with unfamiliar people. His OCD also doesn't help. We get an adults table and the kids all get one big table made of other tables joined together. The noise has already started with Mane and Eli deciding what they want to both get. I don't know why individual decisions can't be made really.

We enjoy our breakfast together and drive to Gateway afterwards. We go shopping, the kids just go with security wherever they want because trying to control them wouldn't work, the teens also go shopping. Enam even returns my card. Which Khule of course asks why I was spoiling him in the first place. I just say he has a date tonight. I know he's probably not happy about it but he'll live. It's not like he can exactly do anything with me being pregnant.

Nonhle, Lwazi and I are basically hopping from shop to shop and Khule and Mike decide to let us be while they go sit down at a restaurant. We'll meet them there for lunch.

"People are staring at us." Nonhle.

“I would too if I saw people who have shops closed just for them every time they get in.” Lwazi.

“It’s honestly annoying. I thought they did those things for ministers and the president only.”

“Yeah this isn’t normal.” Nonhle.

“At all. Maybe you’ll still have the energy, I’ve grown tired of asking them to keep the shop open every time.”

“I thank God I ain’t no famous for being rich queen.” Lwazi.

“Just the famous for being rich part *neh?*” Nonhle.

“And being a gangster businessman’s wife.” Lwazi.

We giggle.

“I wonder when they’ll stop calling Mike that.”

“When hoes like her stop filming private conversations. Bitch what’s your issue?” Nonhle.

She’s already standing in front of one shop assistant who’s looking frightened with her phone in her hand.

“Hell no she didn’t. Who the fuck is the MANAGER?” Lwazi yells.

“Really? You want to lose your job for content?”

She apologizes but the manager is already behind her.

“Is there anything wrong Mrs Boateng? My queens?” The manager.

“Yes, this little skank here is recording our private conversations.” Nonhle.

“I’m so sorry, whatever you want is on the house, I’ll get you another assistant.” The manager.

He drags her away already fuming from the ears. She just fumbled her bag. For what? Maybe she was gonna sell this to the media? I don’t know what her thinking was but this is SA. Selling information on public figures to the press isn’t setting you up for life like it would in the States.

At the end of the day I ask Khule if he knows about the shop incident and he complains about us costing him money. He must’ve paid the girl to not talk about it, ever. Probably including an impromptu contract too.

“I’m honestly unhappy about that particular incident. The girl said she was sworn at. I’d imagine you wouldn’t, you’ve never been the type to do that.”

“If you’re trying to ask me something, ask me. I’ll answer you Hakeem.”

He looks at me for a while and sighs. I doubt he won’t touch Nonhle so I just say what I’ve wanted to say since he came back home.

“You did not have a burst lip to blame in Mozambique. I hope you kissed your wife.”

“I never should’ve told you that.”

The first night Khule and I spent together he didn’t kiss me. I mean he was dominant in bed but not quite how he can be and he blamed his burst lip for not kissing me. He since admitted that he did not want to kiss me that night because he generally had only submissives when he had been single. He was also afraid that kissing would mean he was completely in love with me.

I was angry at him when he told me the truth, until he reminded me we had our first kiss the very next morning careful with his lip and that, was because he felt he had been stupid for not kissing me before, because he had fallen in love with me when he tidied up my very, *very* - I've never felt the need for the second *very* but he did. – dirty room, while I slept. Granted he was snooping for my personal documents. - That's a long story. Hey

Nonhle

I really don't know how this family doesn't have a reality show on Showmax or something yet. When Luna and I came home tired from shopping with Khule, Banele and the Boateng bunch, we found a brand new car in our front yard. It had pink ribbons written "Thank You Queen Nonhle Ngubo." That's not even the best part. It's a fucking Lexus LC 500!

Now that is my dream car! I don't know how Khule knows this but I think he dug through my Facebook and found the old pictures I used to post of it then got me a newer model in white! The very color I've always wanted. Screaming isn't what I did, I was being loud as hell sounding like I went crazy. No other car, no matter how much more expensive would've made me this happy. This car was on my damn vision board when I attempted that shit.

Luna and I didn't even call, we just got into the car blasting that Sjava song she's gotten me to like, *Maduze*. When we got to Banele's they were both outside looking like Beyoncé and Jay,

Banele had her phone out already recording me drive in and hoot like mad. I went out the car and jumped into Khule's arms thanking him. I think it was our first 'happy' hug. Then I hugged Banele too because there's no way she didn't know.

Now we're at their house having dinner before we go. Mane was left with the Boateng bunch so it's just us four here. I'm sitting strategically so I can see my car while I eat. They gave this large glass door that you can't see into but can see out of.

"I think mom will sleep in the car tonight." Luna.

They all laugh at me.

"Don't give her ideas." Banele.

"It's really not a bad one."

"Don't make me drive there and drag you out of that car late."
Khule.

He would do that wouldn't he? I guess I'll just have to pretend sleep then wake up early to take Luna out.

"I have never used my new card, I'm taking Luna out for lunch or breakfast rather tomorrow!"

"That's okay just don't think that means no security will be following you." Khule.

"Banele do you want to come with?"

"I'd love to."

"Who exactly took two families out and had them shopping today? Banele or me?"

"Who exactly spent her day walking while pregnant? You or her?"

“So you didn’t sit when you entered the stores?”

“I did. I still walked though.”

Khule looks at us both suspiciously. Then he nods and eats again.

“You have to study for your learners Lunathi. Don’t forget or no car.

“A car? Me dad?”

“Yes Lunathi.”

She screams and goes over to hug him and Banele.

“Thank you so much! Thank you!”

She also gives me a hug from behind before going back to her seat. She's so excited.

"I'll hook you up with extra lessons when you're doing the license." Banele.

"Really? Thank you mom."

"You're such a lucky girl my baby."

After dinner we make it home where I find a huge bouquet of flowers from Khule. The card reads,

"Thank you for agreeing to marry me. I promise to do better in this marriage. Your husband."

I take a picture for my Instagram. I'm not calling him to say thank you at this hour. I just left their place. I put the flowers in a vase and add water, I don't know if that really keeps them fresh - I've never been given flowers before today.

I've owned a brand new car for three days now and I've found an excuse to drive out the house everyday since. The lunch with Banele and Luna was fun. I'm not sure when exactly but I know Khule will be coming to my house soon. Yes... This house is actually mine. Well mine and Khule's but I mean I stay here longer so...

It's so weird to me. Seeing the amount of money I have access to in my own bank account. I mean even after all the episodes of I blew it I've watched, part of me still just wants to go out and spend every time I see my balance. Yet every time I go out, or buy a jewelry piece it's like the balance remains the same.

Luna is busy studying for her learners test so this house has gotten so boring I'm not going to lie. I honestly can't wait for the family vacation. Let me just cook for today. I head downstairs and begin cooking. I'm not sure what I'll make yet but I'm thinking pasta, it's easy.

I play music, Luna's playlist then I move around the kitchen. Should I add bacon bits? Yes! I turn to the fridge to take them

out and when I turn back Vumani is entering through the front door for the first time since I moved here.

“Hey Vumani, don’t reply if you’ll call me MaMthiyane.”

“Hey Nonhle. How are you?”

I smile at him. I’m glad he’s finally listened.

“I’m good, glad you’re starting to listen to me. What brings you by? Your boss?”

“No. I’m here for you.”

“For me?”

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“Yes Nonhle. I’m here for you.”

I put the pasta in the oven and look at him. What does he mean? Also why is he getting on my side of the island?

“What do you mean?”

“You can’t tell me you haven’t realized I love you. You’re so different. So wild and unpredictable. I love it. I know I can make you happy. The king is a good man but we both know he doesn’t love you.”

“Okay Vumani get the fuck out! Get out!”

I don’t know where he gets the audacity but he holds my hands together. I want to be free so I fight to get out of his hands because I really want to punch him.

“Nonhle come on. You know he doesn’t love you. At all.”

“Vumani I said leave! Let me go!”

“Nonhle I love you!” He yells.

The door shuts. We both look behind and as luck would have it, it's Khulekani Ngubo.

“Vumani why are your hands on my wife?”

He lets me go and doesn't answer.

“My king I...”

“You...?”

“I'm sorry my king.”

“You Vumani. Of all the people I've ever hired, you do this? You go for my wife? Don't fucking answer, just leave. Leave before I put a bullet through your skull.”

“My king...”

“Fuck! Just go! You’re fired Vumani.”

He walks out using the backyard door. I guess he’s afraid of facing Khule but he’s leaving me here to face him. So much for the little shit loving me. I’m not looking at him. I just face down and wipe down the marble counter tops. I can hear him walking and getting closer.

I hear him speak,

“Yes... Make sure he leaves the house today or you’re all following him out... Good. Tell him he’s dead if he ever makes contact with any of my family again. Especially MaMthiyane... Okay.”

He sighs loudly.

“Are you okay?”

I look at him. I mean... I expected him to somehow blame me for this. I don't know why but I just didn't think he'd ask me how I feel.

"A little rattled. I didn't expect that from Vumani. I thought he had a crush on Luna."

"Oh? Why didn't you tell me that?"

"I don't know. I mean we barely discuss much."

"I see. Well if it concerns my daughter I'd rather know."

"Sorry I didn't say."

"Well it's all good, you didn't know."

I wonder who this is and what he did to the man I married.

“How’s it going with the Uthando thing?”

“She’s stubborn. Not surprising she’s Thabiso’s daughter but still.”

“What’s so bad about her fiancé?”

“Please don’t call him that. He’s not marrying my niece.”

“Okay but exactly how are you stopping it?”

“You’re not helping right now Nonhle.”

“I’m asking. I mean you can’t kill him, she’ll know and she’ll hate you all. Even if it isn’t your faults if anything happens to that guy now, she’ll say it’s you guys.”

“Honestly? I’m going up to see my daughter.”

He gets up and walks upstairs. I don't really care but I had to get it out there that he can't touch him. The guy can't even get hurt on his own or Uthando will blame them.

My pasta is done so I take it out and decide to make an Italian salad. I'm using Banele's cookbook for that. I didn't even know about it till we had breakfast together. She's such a great person really, it's not just fake for being queen. As for me... Let's just say Khule was angry I cursed out that hoe at the shop. Apparently he had to do damage control to keep her ass shut. I actually wish she would've told people about what happened.

I call them downstairs when I finish dishing up for them. I think this is our first family dinner in this house. Before they get down, my phone pings so I pick it up. My period trackers says I'm two days late. I blink a few times. No! No! No!

Nonhle

I'm sitting at the dinner table, barely eating but just looking at both Khule and Lunathi. He's quizzing her for her learners test. I wish I could contribute but my head is thinking way too many things right now to even bother to think about joining in. I can't be late. I'm never late. Much less by two days. Well I'm probably stressed. That apparently makes you late.

"Aren't you hungry mom?" Luna.

I shake my head. I don't know if I'm hungry or not but I feel like saying I am, will make me feel like there's definitely 'a thing' in my belly. Which I'm not trying to think is actually there.

Honestly, there's just no way. After dinner Khule and I head upstairs. Together. It was... Weird, a nice surprise for me when he said he'd join me, leaving Luna with her shows. Though part of me thinks he's about tired of HGTV.

We walk into the bedroom I expect him to be awkward but he isn't. When we got back, I found my closet, or at least what I thought was my closet almost filled with his clothes. He honestly uses sixty-five percent of the space, if not seventy. I was shocked at the amount of fresh clothes he has, clearly some haven't been worn. Plus the many shoes. He must be the diva, not Banele and clearly, Namiko is *his* daughter.

Something I noticed but didn't quite understand was that he and I, we've never actually kissed. It's odd, I know and fucking annoying. He's in the closet, doing God knows what so I follow him.

"Why haven't we kissed?" I ask walking inside the closet.

When I get to where he is, he's standing by the dresser doing God knows what with his many fragrances.

"Kissing, I simply do with a woman I love. Now I understand that you might feel some kind of way about that, but the truth is, you don't love me either as yet and that makes my entire point."

I think about it... I like him. At least I think I do. It's like a crush. However I can't claim to love him so he may just be correct.

"How do you know I don't love you?" My voice almost breaks so I clear my throat. "How do you even rank sex lower than kissing?"

He gives me a look as if I'm asking a stupid question.

"Well do you love me MaMthiyane?" I don't answer and he arches his brow like he's saying that my silence answers him. "For your second question, sex was introduced to me in a... Different way than most people. I'll just say, my bastard father took me to a house party with women, willing women of course to be... the entertainment. I was too young for that at the time so I never touched anyone. However Banele says it must've stayed with me from then."

How he is so casual with such things I will never understand. I truly believe, he is psycho. I stumble back and look down at my belly. I might be pregnant with a fucking BDSM baby? I mean...

Not saying I've never browsed the videos in porn sites, but it didn't register to me when we were having sex that I was being... Submissive. That word has never described Nonhle before.

I look up from my belly and he's looking at me like I stole something from him.

"Nonhle, do you have something to share with me?"

"Definitely not. I'll go shower. You continue with whatever you're doing there."

"I'm organizing, alphabetically."

I look at the fragrances and he's right. Chanel at the very beginning. I'd be lying if I said I recognized some of these bottles really. I don't want to even try so I nod and walk out. Sometimes he feels like... He's missing something. Like a screw maybe. Who organizes like that? I'm quite sure he doesn't even

ask the staff these peculiar things. He just does it himself because he's psycho.

I get in the shower and take a quick one, but by the time I'm done, he's outside the door already naked. Why? I do not know. He buys expensive towels just for the fun of it. I walk out, grab my towel and let him in. He steps in and showers as I brush my teeth. I really wonder how his mind works. I actually wish I can say he's chatty with Banele but I'd be lying. Happy, sure. Chatty? Well when the family is together he speaks more, but that's barely much compared to his own best friend Mike.

I go back to the bedroom and into the closet to get in my pajamas. I'm not saying I can resist him if he wants sex tonight, but I'm not asking again. He knows that I want to have sex with him now, so he should ask me. Or just initiate it. Something. I don't even need him to kiss me. I just need to feel what I felt in Mozambique again. I need to release again.

By the time he gets in bed, I'm already in, I'm already horny and if he dares to not touch me, I'm buying a dildo. Don't know when I decided this but I did because clearly, if I got a man he'd kill him, for what? I don't know.

I wait... Nothing. Mxm. I close my eyes to sleep.

“I don’t take kindly to being lied to.”

I turn around to face him. What the hell is he talking about? Why is his tone that calm psycho tone he uses to fuck with me.

“When were you planning on telling me your period is late?” He continues.

I swallow hard. How does he know? Did he see my phone? Didn’t I swipe the notification away? How the fuck does he know my cycle and is he fucking tracking it? How?

“You couldn’t possibly know that.”

Fuck Nonhle! Might as well have admitted everything.

“You’re definitely not the expert of what I could or could not know Nonhle.”

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Though I seem to be in an unfavorable situation to myself. My mind notes that I like it when he calls me by my name. This bedroom is very dimly lit now. Only the LED lights on the mini steps we use to get to this sunken bed are on.

“Well I guess.”

“What is the answer? To why I’m not told you missed your period.”

“Well, to be honest I doubt it’s anything.” I say dismissively.

“I do not care what you doubt, I asked why I didn’t know the moment you found out that you might be carrying *my* child?”

The way he says it makes me feel like I hid a whole pregnancy from him.

“Ok look, I only knew tonight myself. I wanted to know what’s happening first. I doubt I’m pregnant.”

“Of course you do, I don’t.”

Honestly? I want to punch him. I don’t know where I’m going but I want to get up so I turn myself to the edge of the bed when in one swift move he pulls me to his side, right next to him and right where my ass can feel his Mandingo. He puts his arm over my waist keeping me in place.

“You, have so much to be punished for. I’ve barely scratched the surface.”

I bite my tongue. I wanted to say something trust me, but he turned me on my back and got on top. He puts his one hand over my neck and pulls my face to his chest. I feel his hand squeeze a bit tighter.

“You’re so fucking disrespectful. I actually kind of like it. All the more reason to punish you.” I open my mouth and he moves

his hand from neck to two fingers down my throat. Two large fingers.

“You can tell me to stop.”

That’s all he has to say and the next thing my pants have been lowered. His hand goes back to my neck and without any warning, or expectation from my side, he enters me and I moan so loudly I swear Lunathi heard me. He’s still holding me up by my neck and pounding in me so the noise hasn’t stopped. It’s like every time I try not to moan so loudly he makes sure I do. His other hand is firmly on my butt squeezing hard.

He lets my neck go and my my face meets the bed. He pulls a pillow to my torso before pushing my face down and continuing to pound. The little growls he makes, they make me arch my back more, get excited more and want to be taken like a slut, as he is doing right now. It’s fucking exhilarating! I don’t know if he is a good doctor, but I can confirm he’s a fucking good fuck.

Last night I was put in positions and taken and I am still tired. The person that did all that to me is up somewhere in this

house though. Like nothing happened last night. Something is odd about him. I don't and maybe will never understand him, but I'm happy with the sex, I'll tell you that much. When he said he didn't yet love me, I don't know why something stung in my heart. I mean it's not like I got into this delusional that he loves me or would fall easily, but damn.

I'm woken up by a call from Sbahle. I've been ignoring her and Hle since mom dropped that bomb. I sigh and take it. I just want to sleep really not talk to Sbahle.

"Sis, have you spoken to mom?"

"No."

"Don't you think we should go see her? Maybe your husband can give us her new address."

She told them Khule took her to the house she stays in, it's in Richards Bay somewhere. I don't actually care.

“Why hasn’t she given it to you herself?”

“I want to surprise her with a visit. We should all do it.”

“No thanks Sbahle. I can speak to Khule for you but not go with you. I’m tired too so I’ll talk to you later.”

I hang up before she can say anything. I don’t want to see my mother. She said I was troublesome. She said she was abused for me the most. For me?! I never asked her to. Even if she’s telling the truth, why didn’t she sit down with us whenever dad was out and tell us? We would’ve been on our best behavior to save her. She’s making excuses for her disgusting enabler behavior and I hate it!

Khule walks in the bedroom dripping sweat. He was at the gym?

“Good morning.”

“Morning.” I reply just watching him.

He goes into the bathroom. I already know he's going to take a shower. He peeps out the door,

"Kindly see to emptying the washing basket please."

I stare at him. He doesn't even wait for me to answer. There's only clothes from yesterday in that basket. Is washing done daily in this house? Also, isn't it my household to run? Or is he meddling because he's just a neat freak? I just pull the cover over myself and attempt to go back to sleep. I'll deal with Khulekani later.

Nonhle

Lunathi went to see Mane and Banele so it's just me and Khule in the house this afternoon. It's been... A change to have him here for the last two days. I've realized he's awfully quiet. Most of the time you have to ask him something for him to speak unless he's instructing you. We're sitting in the living room together. I asked him to come so we can talk. Now, I'm not entirely sure what I want to talk about.

"So when are you going to Banele?"

"Probably tomorrow. If I go home, then the day after. Why?"

He turns to face me. Gosh does he have to look so good?

"You aren't worried about her and the baby?"

“Would you like for me to leave Nonhle?”

“I didn’t say that.”

He gives me a blank stare and looking at it now, he’s right, I did kind of sound like I want to see him go.

“Sorry... I just... I want us to have a conversation.”

He looks at me like he can see my soul and I involuntarily wince. What the fuck?

“What do you want to converse about?” He’s got a slightly amused, slighted annoyed look on.

“Like us.”

“Us? What about us exactly?”

Okay I'm not sure if he's getting annoyed with me.

"I don't know Khulekani I just want to feel like we're going somewhere."

"In terms of what exactly?"

"Feelings."

"Well, probably. I have a feeling you're pregnant and with that comes a feeling that I must protect you and my baby."

"I doubt I'm pregnant. It couldn't have happened. We had only had sex once."

"Did you quite grasp the way humans reproduce in school?"

I open my mouth. Did he just insinuate I'm stupid?

“Don’t be condescending.”

“Then tell me why I’m here right now to talk about feelings.”

“I’m trying to understand you and I’m starting to regret that. You’re such an asshole.”

“Your first mistake, is trying to understand me. If you want to be understood, fine. It’s not a goal of mine to be understood.”

“Why did you marry me?”

“The same reason you married me.”

He’s a mean man. Mean but surprisingly honest. Which is worse. I wish he was just trying to hurt me, but no he’s being honest.

“Khule am I so hard for you to fall in love with? You fell in love with Banele and she’s the spitting image of your sister. What about me? Am I too dark? Too ugly?”

I catch myself too late. I think I might’ve went too far.

“Never compare yourself to Banele. You’re not the same and I fell in love with Banele. It was easy because I had never met a woman like her. Yes, she’s practically my sister’s twin, but you? You’re my sister’s entire aggressive personality. If anyone between the two of you is like Zendaya, it’s you. As for your looks, if you don’t believe I see a gorgeous woman when I look at you, then that’s your own issue.”

He gets up and walks upstairs. I hear a door slam. I still haven’t moved. He said I’m more like his sister than Banele. He called my personality aggressive. He basically said I’m hard to fall in love with because I am like his sister personality wise. If Banele looking like her is okay, how is me merely mirroring her personality in some ways so hard to love? Or am I asking the wrong questions?

He walks back downstairs, jacket on and walks all the way to the garage door and slams it.

Well... I've successfully driven him out of my house and I did not mean to do that. I cling on the cushion and sleep.

I open my eyes and it's late. I can hear the chef in his kitchen. I don't know if Khule is back but I doubt it. I go upstairs and nothing in our bedroom so I call Luna just to fish for information. I could call Banele but I don't know if he told her about my comments on her looking like his sister. I doubt she likes me much right now.

From what I gather, he's with his cousin, Thabiso. Luna doesn't know much else. By the end of the call, all I know is that she's not coming back yet. I guess I'm alone in this house. Let me just drink wine. There's a cellar downstairs. I get there and it's empty. Weird. I go to the wine cooler, it's also empty.

"Where is my wine?" I ask the chef.

"The king had all alcoholic beverages moved from this house."
The chef replies calmly.

“What?!”

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The chef just shrugs. What the fuck is wrong with him? I call him but no answer. It's too late to get some now. What the hell am I supposed to do with myself? I decide to watch the damned television.

When I get in bed I'm thinking about how stupid I feel for saying all that shit to Khule. I never should've said anything to him but I just couldn't stop myself. I am bothered by how silent he is. How much he doesn't seem to even want to talk. It's like he's actually happy in silence. Which is killing me because I want to know if Banele now hates me.

The following day I get a visit from Banele. She doesn't seem angry but I can't be sure. I know Khule tells her everything so I'm not sure if she just understood where I'm coming from of she wants to watch me squirm.

“I get bored during the day when the kids are at school. Luna seems to be thinking about her learners only too so she’s just studying. I already visit Lwazi and Raina so much too.”

“I’ve never been to Raina’s.”

“Right! Do you want to go? I promise Smiso is more fun than me.”

“Yeah being around a baby right now? I’m not sure.”

“Oh? Why not honey?”

“Well your husband has a feeling I’m pregnant.”

“Yeah? You most probably are. Come let’s go buy a test.”

“There’s no way.”

She gives me a look that says she's rolling her eyes but she isn't.

"Okay."

"Banele are you close to Zendaya?"

"For some weird reason I'm thinking you mean Kai, her other name is Zendaya. I know you mean Lango though and yes. We get along really well regardless of how different our personalities are. She's more of a fireball, like you."

I flinch and smile. Is she here to torture me till I admit to what I said?

"Is it? I don't see it."

"Well maybe after you spend time with her you'll realize. She's unfiltered, doesn't do well with being told what to do. She's fun, she's honest, she's just... great really."

She said great. So maybe not trying to make me feel bad?

“You know what? Let’s go buy a test.”

She looks so excited as she grabs her bag. It’s the cutest little Balenciaga bag that probably only fits her car keys and phone. I wonder why whoever bought me bags didn’t get me bags this small. We walk out and she’s driving a Bentley. A Bentley?! I’ve never even seen a Bentley at their house. I mean I don’t know all their cars but... A Bentley? I can’t help but feel like I got a Mini Cooper in comparison.

“I prefer driving this since I’m pregnant. It’s so comfy, so much space. Though Khule thinks I should be driven.”

“It’s an amazing car.” I say stepping in. The roof looks like it has stars. I’m just in awe.

When she drives out it’s like she’s barely moving. I don’t know if it’s the car or her driving but it feels like we’re on a cloud. This car is damn nice!

“I’m so excited about this test. Thami will have a sibling close to his age this way.”

“Thami?”

“Yeah, in my belly.”

I didn’t know she already has a name for the baby.. I wonder why Thami but I don’t ask. I’m too nervous. We park at Lifestyle and make our way to a pharmacy together. We bump into a beautiful white woman with a bob cut and the most chic white suit on she looks oddly familiar.

“Chelsea! How are you sweetheart?” Banele.

“My Queens I’m okay, how are you?” Chelsea.

“I’m good hun.” Banele.

I give her a tight lip smile. I'm too nervous to be nice.

"I'm okay."

There's a little awkward pause before Banele speaks,

"How is it being married to a member of the council?" Banele.

Oh fuck! I just had an awkward moment with an important person.

"Honestly? On meeting weekends I love going down home and having the kids spend time with their grandmother." Chelsea.

"Do greet her for me please love, give the kids my love too."
Banele.

"It was nice seeing you, queens." Chelsea.

With that she's off and we go into the pharmacy. That was Chelsea Luthuli! I just figured it out. He was obsessed with her husband at a certain point in her life. She'd have taken a bullet for him. The crush was really awful to see. He only got married after he'd married Chelsea. That's how far the obsession went.

Nonhle

I gave Banele the test as soon as I finished. Then I ran to the lounge to bury my head in a cushion and wait for her. As soon as I heard her scream excitedly, I knew that it was positive. She ran to sit on the couch and shake me till I looked up. She waved the test in my face. Definitely positive. She's in my kitchen right now pouring us juice because well you can't celebrate pregnancy with champagne apparently.

"Please don't tell him."

She looks at me like I'm pitiful.

"Oh Nonhle! It's cute that you think he didn't know before us both."

What?!

“So you already knew?”

“Not even. However I doubt Khule wouldn’t. I’d be surprised if he didn’t plan it.”

“That doesn’t even make sense.”

“Yeah well your husband is who he is.”

What does that even mean?

“I have to go back home. Mane will be back soon. Honestly I can’t wait to move him to Eli’s school next year. This thing of having him home after four isn’t it.”

“He endures long car rides.”

“At least he loves it, plus his dad committed to taking him to school whenever he can.”

“Khule is a great dad isn’t he?”

“Yes, he is exceptional. I promise you.”

She looks at me like she needs me to believe her. In a way I guess she does. I wouldn’t be here without her and her selfishness. I’m not complaining don’t get me wrong but Banele is a loved woman. The queen of my homeland. She’s got everything. Then she just pulled me into her world because she needed me. I shake my head. What the fuck is wrong with me? Banele never lied to me, she admitted it was selfish of her.

“Sorry I... I was just thinking.”

“That’s okay. Let me leave you to it, I’ll see you later boo.”

She comes to give me a hug before walking out. I should’ve walked her out but I haven’t really moved much since I was told I’m really pregnant. It never should’ve happened this way. Even if I were to have a baby, why so instantly? I don’t understand.

Later Luna comes back home and tells me Banele is in labour. She drove Mane to the Boatengs. I mean I don't understand why no one told me about this but I pretend to be okay with Luna then I call Khulekani as soon as she leaves for her room. He rejects my calls. Is he still mad at me? Even so I don't think I deserve this so I try again. He rejects the call again. Okay that hurt.

I send him a text that reads, *Khule I'm sorry about the stupid thing I said about you and Banele, but I don't think I deserve this silent treatment or to not be told she's gone into labour. Text me please.*

I wait for a reply when he iMessage tells me he's read it, but nothing. Absolutely nothing. Why can't he just talk to me? I don't care how mad he is I'm just trying to talk things through and know if Banele is okay. After a while I know I'd be at the hospital already if I knew what hospital they went to. I'm honestly anxious already. No one is talking to me. I think I should contact Lwazi but I'm not close enough with her.

Mxm. Let me just go to bed. I head up and as I was about to knock on Luna's door I realize it's a little open and she's speaking to someone. Over the phone probably. I know it's wrong but I listen.

"Yes... I'll try but you know dad, I'll need a real reason... Of course I'll stay at his house with Kai... You know that would be pushing it... Okay, bye."

The giggles in between... The smile I can tell she had on the whole call... I swear to God if that bye wasn't so cold, I'd swear she was speaking to a boyfriend. I knock and go inside.

"Hey baby are you hungry?"

"Uh... Yes mom."

"You can order whatever you like. I'll pay you back tomorrow. I'm going to bed now."

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I sit on her bed and give her a tight squeeze.

“Goodnight mom.”

“Goodnight baby. I love you.”

I get up to leave and she actually replies, “I love you too.”

I stop and stare at her with a smile. I nod and rush out before tears can come make this awkward for us. I lean on her door and smile with tears falling down my cheeks. After I compose myself I go to my bedroom. I’m trying not to contact Khule so I rush into the shower incase I even think of doing that again.

Thami is the cutest little globe trotter! Honestly Khule and Banele’s kids are so gorgeous I have a feeling my own child will be compared to them which would be totally unfair. I’m not certain if I’m being paranoid but I’ve never had a child, I can’t not worry about how they’ll look. Well at the end of the day, I’m gorgeous, so is Khule. Our child will be bomb.

The family has been in Seattle for three days. It's the coldest I've ever been but also honestly maybe the happiest. Luna's Instagram has been blessed too. Speaking of Luna I don't know how he did it but her dad got her to take her Learners Test and she passed. Now she drives, with a licensed driver, which she'll soon be herself if her dad has anything to with it.

Speaking of Khule, well he forgave me. Though he made it clear I should never speak badly about Banele again, which I could swear I didn't do I just questioned something, but he insists she wants nothing more than for me and him to work. I won't lie, that did make me feel bad. Banele is the type to not hate on the other woman married to her husband. She's so... Proper. Nothing at all like me. When I told Khule I was pregnant however, he gave me a blank stare and said, "Tell me something new."

I froze.

We're all getting ready for a business thing for the company. Everyone who works there is coming, the teenagers and kids however have been left with a nannies. Well the nannies are for the kids really. The teenagers I have a feeling are planning

some sort of party. With Leano here, I'm almost certain about it too.

Nami walks in my bedroom as I'm about to get dressed, my makeup was done by a makeup artist Lwazi found.

"Namiko to the rescue mother! I know you're just worried about wearing the wrong thing."

She's honestly the best. I'm closer to her than all her other siblings. Of course except Lunathi.

"Well, I'd like to protest but you're right. Being pregnant is hard."

"You're not even showing yet mother."

"Well I feel like I am."

"Isn't it just two months?"

“Two and three weeks!”

She looks at me like there’s no difference.

“Okay look, mom is wearing Versace, dad is wearing Versace shoes and belt, you must wear a Versace scarf or dress if you don’t mind, so let’s work from there.”

“I didn’t know all this.”

“Of course not, I just chose the dress for mom. Her hips are insane since Thami and I know she’ll look beautiful. So that made up dad’s shoes and belt, now your accessories or dress too.”

“So me and your dad are after thoughts?” I raise a brow and hope she understands that I’m joking.

“Duh! Mom asked me for fashion advice first.” I give her a look so she puffs and changes her statement, “Okay I kinda bullied her and dad. He hates the dress because he thinks she’ll have eyes on her. My mission now, is to make sure you both get the attention so dad turns red.”

“Wicked child! I love you!”

She gives me a grin, “I knew it!”

She launches herself at me and we hug. Namiko has to be like her auntie too because there’s no way we just get along like this. After she helps me pick a dress she goes out saying something about promising Bhunu stolen chocolate or something. Bhunu is what she calls Manelisi because he’s light skinned. I stand by my words, I love Namiko.

Banele

Seattle with a newborn has actually been better than I thought. I honestly thought about remaining in Dubai but then again I'd have been bored and it's also hot there so I just chose to come on the family vacation. Honestly my boy has been snuggled up in the house, heated house so he's been a perfect little angel. I left him tonight for the longest time since his birth. We're at a party with some of our business associates.

"I think we should go back." He's been saying that since we got here and people had eyes on Nonhle that is. Plus the knowing looks he's been getting from the men when he introduces Nonhle. Most of them know me already. "They're looking at you two like showgirls."

"Well dear husband, you do have hot wives." Nonhle replies through gritted teeth.

“They’re not on display though.” Khule replies also through gritted teeth. I’m just sitting this one out. I remind myself. I’m not saying anything.

“We make you envious, you should love this.” Nonhle replies smiling at him.

He glares at her and she shrugs. I decide to get involved before Khule really decides to make us go home. That look on his face says he will.

“We should see the host at least Khulekani.” I say with no intention of actually approaching the pompous idiot of a host.

“Well, I’m going to Mike and Masinga, excuse me.” Khule.

I look around and spot Mthobisi Masinga too. Right by Mike. I can’t see Nombuso or Gugu anywhere.

“Isn’t he also polygamous, that guy?” Nonhle asks me looking at Mtho.

“Yeah he is. I can’t see his wives though.” I reply trying unsuccessfully to look around the room with my short self.

“Do you know them?”

I would think she does too. Well I stay away from micromanaging Nonhle but at her wedding, she should’ve greeted them. I’m sure Khule would’ve made sure. Well now that I think about it, I wasn’t by his side that day so he might’ve forgotten to introduce Nonhle.

“Of course. I wear Nombuso’s designs sometimes and Gugu’s law firm handles our corporate law needs.”

“I’ve only seen them online... Of course you’d know them.”

So should she, but I don’t say that.

“They were at your wedding.”

She whips her head around and looks at me with disbelief,

“They *were*?”

“Nonhle, listen, you’re a high profile person now. Whether you’ve actually met them or not, other high profile people will support you and any of your endeavors. It will soon not even shock you who knows and supports you.”

She smiles at me. As if I just reassured her of something and I just turn back to keep scanning the room. I’m trying not to involve myself in her and Khule’s business anymore. Reason being, my marriage will end up being about them. They’re adults and unless they come to me for help, I’d rather not intrude. Advice I got from Gugu Masinga too if I must be honest.

Nonhle was very fidgety the first week after I brought Thami home. It felt as if she had something bothering her, something that clearly she thought I knew, but even though I don’t know what it was, when she nervously started to ask if Khule had told me something, I chose to say she shouldn’t worry about it. That

it was okay. Khule too, when he told me she had questioned his love for me because I look like Zendaya. I then asked that he talks about such stuff with Mike at least, not me.

The look of guilt from Nonhle, I had to stop it so I made sure she knew I had no issue with her. I know all too well how she must've felt. I still feel guilty for roping her into my life. I am however comforted to know Khule cares for her. I think he even loves her now. It's just that Khulekani Ngubo is... Special. I'd like to say not the insane type of special but I'd be lying. He's very much insane.

As for Nonhle, well I can only hope she loves him too. Otherwise she'll still not be happy. Loved or not. I finally see Nombuso walking over to our little corner. I smile and we hug as soon as she gets to me. She greets Nonhle too.

"I honestly thought Mtho was alone after not seeing you or Gugu." I inform her.

“Well, Gugu is mad at him for impregnating her. Forget that they planned this baby.” Nombuso replies with a smile on her face. More like a grin really.

“I have a fear for Gugu’s hormones.”

“Gugu only complains because she can and didn’t want to come to Seattle. I’ve been pregnant four times, none planned.”
Nombuso.

“Well, you know she times things because of her work.”

“Yeah and I have a feeling she and Mtho plot against me so I keep having the babies.”

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“Birth control?” Nonhle.

Nombuso gives her a look. A knowing look like Nonhle should know that’s impossible.

“That’s another fight altogether and I don’t fight well with Mtho. Gugu wins better with him.” Nombuso.

“Ah, you must be the me of your marriage.” Nonhle.

I frown. There’s no way. She and Khulekani want to kill each other each week.

“You know you’re the fighter in this one Nonhle.”

“But I don’t win.” Nonhle.

“No one does with Khulekani.” I reply without even thinking about it. It’s true. No one really wins with him.

Nombuso turns to look at where our husbands are and adds,

“Well we chose to fall for freaks of nature, we shall live with it.”

I sigh my agreement. It's true. I'd do anything for Khule. He can be overprotective, calculating and everything else most women would probably run from, but I can't unlove him even if I tried. I can even say, I know exactly how to calm him down when he becomes beastly. Which barely happens anymore, I just always know I'll get it done. In fact, the situation with Uthando is bringing out that side of him again.

When I feel ready, I decide to leave Nombuso and Nonhle to get to know each other while I mingle. Sometimes the wives and girlfriends with big shots at these things are not fond of me, because I hold the title of queen. Nonhle too I guess now. Honestly, I don't give a fuck but for Khule and the family business, I smile at everyone here and be nice.

Lwazi comes to rescue me from Mr Wilson. He's an old annoying man with a lot of money, and unsettling stares. I don't like him, at all.

"Thank you friend! I almost puked." I say to Lwazi as soon as we're away from Wilson.

“The resting bitch face was unmissable”

Well, she knows me almost as well as Khule. I couldn't hide from those two, ever.

“I do still do that don't I?”

“There's a reason I used to be your only friend, you're a wall.” She replies sipping on her champagne. Lwazi always reminds me of how much I disliked humans.

“Well, thanks for being the first painting on this wall.”

“Do you think they're making new connections tonight?” She asks looking at our husbands and the other men around them. I look at them too.

“Seems so. They've been speaking to some tech guy a lot. You know that's money.”

“Well, long as we get to spend it after enduring all these events when we could be with our children, then it’s all good.”

“Speaking of children, look how grown up Athi and Azisa look in here charming the young women.”

“Thandi said she hates it when we arrived. I do too because it’s so unsettling seeing even women my age flutter their lashes at my baby boys.”

“Older women? I haven’t seen that. These are kids.”

“People are shameless.” She says then pulls out her phone. She looks at me with her eyes out. “Look at this.”

I read the text and my mouth drops. I’m pretty sure the NMV bunch is going home in a minute. I see both Mike and Khule pull out their phones. They look at each other, say something to the people around them and take Mtho aside. After a minute or so Khule starts walking towards me and Lwazi.

“You’re all going back home. Mike and I are leaving with Mtho’s jet, Bandile will stay behind.” Khule.

Lwazi and I know better than to ask so we follow Khule out as the others join behind us. Nonhle finds us and whispers, “What’s happening?”

“Not sure, it’s something about Uthando.”

The truth is, Raina said Uthando was abducted. We all need to go back home but knowing that she was taken, Khule and Mike will probably make us remain here because we’re safer that way. I just don’t want to make Nonhle panic. She’s pregnant and definitely doesn’t need the stress.

Nonhle

Surprisingly, the house was very much intact when we came back and no party was happening unless you count the kids just chilling in the basement. I think alcohol was involved but then again Leano, Kai, Nami and Musa are old enough to drink so I don't think that's a big deal. I guess Luna can drink already too but I'd rather imagine she isn't doing that. But then again here the drinking age is twenty-one.

Mike and Khule are going home but we're remaining here. I'm not sure exactly what's going on but Banele mentioned Uthando. I really think they should chill out and allow the girl to marry her guy. Three babies, body covered in tattoos and all, she loves him. Athi and Azisa join the non NMV workers in the basement when we get home.

I surprisingly enjoyed my time at the party. I still don't know why I was there but I managed to annoy Khule and met Nombuso Masinga while at it. It was an experience. She is also a second wife. A loved second wife unlike me though. Her

husband loves or at least shows love to both his wives equally. Hopefully Khule can learn from him.

Thandi, Banele's sister-in-law, and I remain downstairs in our evening gowns. For me, I'm too lazy to go upstairs at this point.

"Something is really wrong. Bandile has been in the bedroom making calls since we arrived." Thandi says flipping through the movies.

"They need to let Uthando be."

She stops scrolling and looks at me, "That life Nonhle, you don't understand how much Mike and Khule, even Thabiso have lost because of it. My own family suffered because of it. The people in the underworld are ruthless. It's not easy for the family to just look the other way with this. I'm not saying they shouldn't be together, but I'm not blaming the family for trying to protect Uthando."

"I'm sorry. I just thought..."

She raises her hand signaling that I should stop. “I understand, no need to apologize. I get your side too, in fact I probably agree with you. Just that we need to let them at least be sure that nothing bad will happen to Uthando before even considering who this boy she loves is as a person.”

“That actually makes sense. They have to make sure she’s protected and safe first.”

“Yes. Anyway, how’s the little Ngubo in there?”

I can tell she’s just trying to avoid talking about this. I wonder how it’s impacted her family but I opt to let it go.

“Well, I’ve yet to feel him or her to be honest. I’m just tired a lot.”

“Pregnancy is different for everyone. All mine never showed. At all.”

“Like... Nothing?” I’m shocked. She never had a big belly?

“Yes. Banele and Lwazi always stared with envy and made me feel privileged. Which I’ll admit I was.”

“I don’t want to lie to you, I am pretty jealous myself.”

She laughs and whips out her phone, “let me show you pictures of when I was pregnant.” She says scrolling through her phone. Then she turns it to me and honestly, not only has this woman not aged, she doesn’t look anything near pregnant on this picture, “That’s with Khwezi.”

My mouth drops, “Thandi?! Where is the belly?”

“Trust me, my back felt every child.”

“I still think I’d take your deal.”

After an hour or so of just watching some stupid movie together Banele fetches me,

“I’m very sorry but your husband prefers you to have a good night’s sleep. Kindly help me keep myself out of the firing line. It’s already way late.”

I let out a breath and follow her upstairs.

“Goodnight Thandi.” I say and she mumbles something back. I guess she’s also sleepy. “Your husband is a problem.” I say to Banele.

sans-serif; -webkit-tap-highlight-color: rgba(26, 26, 26, 0.3); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">“Yes well he has your best interests at heart.”

“His child’s really because I’m pretty sure he cares more about him or her.”

“Yes well that’s the case for both of us. We’re nowhere near being as important as the kids to him.”

“Even Luna?”

She stops and turns to me for the first time since she’s been leading the way to my room. “Definitely. Never underestimate Khule’s love for his children, all his children.” She continues walking.

“I just think that Luna is kind of new and compared to you...” I stop speaking when Banele turns to me again with a blank stare.

“Nonhle, you do know Lunathi Ngubo was introduced to our ancestors, Right? As Khulekani’s daughter. She’s currently wearing *isiphandla* because of that. She’s his daughter as much as Kai and Nami are his daughters. If he heard you question his love for her like this...” she opens my bedroom door and I get in then turn to her,

“I’m sorry. I just... I guess I don’t really understand him as much as I would like to. Or know him as much rather.”

She sighs loudly. “I said I wasn’t getting involved with you two anymore but, I understand your distress. Look, I’m sorry he’s not the easiest person to be married to. You don’t get answers from Khule without actually taking the time to talk to him. It’s easy for him to know you. Make you happy. Make you want him even. That’s only because he’s a nerd and would rather study you than talk to you.”

“Study me? How? Please join me. It’s not like Khule is here anyway.” I say in almost one sentence.

“Let’s move to my bedroom then, to be closer to Thami.”

“Literally forgot.” I think about forgetting my own baby after birth and I freeze. “Banele... What if I forget my baby?”

“Trust me, you will love him or her too much for that. I had postpartum depression after Manelisi but I never forgot him... Let’s go.”

I grab my nightwear and my toiletry bag so I can shower in Banele’s bathroom before we go to bed. She leads the way and when we get to the bedroom I head straight to the bathroom and use their walk in shower so I can be quick. I brush my teeth, get dressed in my warm nightwear and go to join Banele in bed.

“Glad to be sleeping with someone who gets dressed for bed. We can get rid of the blanket on top. Khule would freeze because he sleeps naked even in this cold.”

I cannot even imagine that. This place is subzero. I cannot imagine myself walking around naked no matter how heated this room is.

“You’re kidding. He doesn’t buy nightwear at all?”

“Never has. I bought Christmas pajamas once for a family Christmas card. He wore them that one day only and took them off for bed..”

My mouth drops. “He hates them that much?” My phone pings and I open my WhatsApp, it’s a text from Khule asking if Banele and I are okay. “Khule is asking if we’re okay. Weird. He barely texts me.” I say.

Banele closes her eyes and sighs as I text Khule back that we’re okay.

“Well, now he knows you aren’t asleep and I am going to answer why not all through tomorrow morning. Let’s sleep.”

Shit. I give her an apologetic look and get in bed. We say a prayer, that’s new for me, then we try sleeping. Which is kind of hard for me because I can literally smell Khule all over this bed and it’s making me horny. I take my phone again from the bedside table and text him that before shutting the whole thing down and trying to sleep.

I think after Banele sleeps you can carry her to the Atlantic Ocean and dump her there before she wakes up. I mean sure, I woke up to us cuddling, not really sure how that happened but she was pretty much unconscious not asleep. Makes sense that Thami only needed her at six. That's when he woke up. They're both dead after going to sleep.

I'm not checking my phone yet. I've never sent such a risky text to Khule and I'm afraid it may have been a little too much. We go down for breakfast at nine and head out for our family outing to The Museum of Pop Culture by twelve. Bandile, who is the only man still around isn't even coming with us so it's four moms and lots of kids who aren't really kids. There's literally twenty something year olds, teenagers and children plus a baby with us. That's chaos only.

The car I'm in is being driven by Azisa and has most of us in it. Namiko, Athi, Luna, Kai, Leano and Musa are in a separate car. I decided it best not to even question why Luna isn't with the other teens. I mean Majid is even older than her by a year but in the bigger car with us. However seeing how Banele trusts all her boys, I guess I have nothing to worry about. In fact, I'm worried I may be isolating Luna because of my own fears after

yesterday's talk with Banele. Luna seems happy, accepted too. I just guess I'm a little paranoid.

I finally take out my phone to check my texts because really, what else am I to do in here besides listen to the kids complaining to Azi about the music? I read Khule's text, *"I'd say help yourself but that pussy is mine so you better wait for me to come eat it."*

My breath catches and I almost choke on it. Damn!

Banele

They found Uthando. Khule says her fiancé helped them too. Apparently some mafia guy took her, he's owed by the fiancé's father. Well to be honest Khule referred to the guy as, "that boy". Clearly he blames him and as understandable as that is as he's Uthando's uncle, I still think he's being unfair because I once got kidnapped right under his nose myself. I mean sure Msweli, the guy who took me was a trusted personal security guard, it still happened.

Uthando's fiancé couldn't have known about this, therefore I say he cannot be blamed. I call Uthando just to check up on her,

"Aunty Neleh? I'm so happy you called. I thought I'd never see you or hear your voice again. Or anyone else I love for that matter."

"Hey my baby. I'm so sorry you faced such a horrible thing."

“It was terrible Aunty. Horrid really.”

“Are you okay though?”

“I’m fine Aunty, thanks for checking in.”

“No problem. So, tell me about your boyfriend.”

“Rylan.” She blushes and I know it’s over for anyone who thinks she’s leaving him.

“We met at one of his parties. I had only heard of him and didn’t even know that he was legendary for throwing them, one of my friends said she follows him and she got us invites. I didn’t know anything but I said yes and we went. Honestly, it wasn’t my scene but I didn’t really want to go and leave my friends so I just went outside and waited.”

Her smile grows, “He came out, I complained about the party to him, of course I didn’t know it was him. He listened, asked what my vibe was and then asked to take me out. That was the beginning of everything. Kind of.”

I'm also smiling from ear to ear when she finishes and I have decided, Rylan Whittaker stays. If he hurts my niece though, he's definitely dead. Forget his dad's old debts, he'll know the full wrath of my husband. That's worse than what any other person could do to him.

Uthando and I talk a bit more and say our goodbyes after a few minutes.

Uthando was only three years old when I met her after Kainoa's birth. The first time she told me her name, I thought she said Thando wrong. In fact, the first time I met her was outside my bedroom door with her other cousins behind her and asking to see the baby, that was Kai.

That day was quite eventful actually. Zendaya was thought to be dead at the time and well Khule forgot to tell his family I look exactly like her.

Long story short, the family went berserk. Some of them hated me. Kai was also named Zendaya. Kainoa is actually the name I gave her because it's Japanese for The Namesake. Then a few months later Zendaya turned up alive, we checked if we're

related and we aren't. We just share a common ancestor from long ago.

My life should be a movie. How many queens can actually say they look exactly like their sister-in-law? I mean we're older now, people can tell us apart without having to check for our eye colors. Khule's entire family, king as the last name is Ngubo, has brown eyes. Also, how many queens can say their dead sister-in-law doppelgänger, wasn't even dead.

Lunathi was really meant to be a Ngubo now that I think about it because her eyes are brown too. Not as light but still, it's remarkable that she'd have similar eyes to all my kids and she's close to Mane's complexion.

I'm brought back by Lunathi walking into my bedroom just as I pick up Thami to bathe him.

"Mama, can I ask you something?"

"Of course baby."

She takes Thami from me and clearly she's the one who'll bathe him now. So I sit back and watch, waiting for her to speak to me.

"Have you ever liked someone you knew you shouldn't like?"

I look at her and she's focused on Thami but I know it's about Athi. I've seen her look at him. I've seen him look at her too. They clearly keep a friendship but they have a liking for each other.

"Well, I love your dad. I shouldn't, really if I was sensible, I wouldn't be here. I'd have left and Kai would be our only child together." I reply to her truthfully. Khule blindsided me with the Zendaya being my doppelgänger thing. I almost left him because of it too. If I was another woman, I would've.

"But mama you guys are together."

I guess she's looking for a story where it didn't work out,

“Well yeah. I did have a boyfriend before. We broke up still in love, his family wanted a Hindu girl for him.”

She looks up at me, eyes wide open with wonder, “How did you get over it?”

“I don’t know actually. It hurt for years I remember that much. Especially because I would sometimes see him with his new wife around Stanger Manor. At a point in my life I loved him and luckily somehow I stopped and even luckier, I met your dad.”

“Years? It hurt for that long?” She looks so shocked.

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“Yes. Of course it hurt that long. However, now I know it was never meant to be, or I never would’ve met someone I love more than I ever loved him.”

“I don’t know mama. It’s not the same as someone you’ll see either way, with your family.”

I take a deep breath. I want to hug her but she's clearly not trying to be direct. I wonder what Athi did.

"Look baby, trust in that things will work out how they're supposed to."

She takes Thami out of the water and places him on the towel. I decide to dispose of the bath water in the bathroom while she helps him get dressed.

During dinner Khule and Mike make an entrance and the entire house gets excited. My dramatic baby Nami screams and jumps her dad first. As for Mike, his boys didn't want to look too excited but of course Eli being the youngest ran to him with his mom following. I had three daughters and Mane beat me to my husband. Nonhle and I got our hugs at the same time at least.

"We have a little surprise for you guys." Mike.

We all look at him, he smiles and opens the door. Tears threaten my eyes when my boy appears. Thandi literally breaks down and runs to him. I'm crying too by the time I reach his side. I haven't seen my baby in so long! Asanele is my nephew and he goes to Yale here in the States. We've seen him so minimally since he went there and now having him here makes me so happy.

"You have to come back home now." I say through sobs.

"You can literally FaceTime me whenever you like guys, I'm just in the US. You can also visit." Asanele.

I give him a look, "It's not the same as knowing you're around."

"He just doesn't care how we feel." Thandi.

Lwazi joins in my hug with Asanele, I guess she's tired of waiting.

“Okay mom tears, I’m about to be manipulated. Hey bro!”
Asanele wiggles away from us and goes to Azisa and Athi.

“Yeah Thandi all your kids look like their dad.” Nonhle says and we turn to her and laugh. “Asanele actually looks a lot like Banele.” She continues. I smile, he does shame. My brother made his kids just for me. I love them all so much!

“Well, Khwezi looks like me.” Thandi.

I want to say no she doesn’t but I’m afraid of being involved in whatever this is and so I shut my mouth.

“She looks like Fanele.” Lwazi.

“Nolwazi! Your own kids all look like Mike too.”

“Yes well Majid even has hints of his aunt Mika. Too pretty that boy.” Lwazi agrees with Thandi, which makes me happy because otherwise we’d spend the entire night doing this.

“None of you look like your kids but Banele.” Nonhle .

I wonder how I’m a part of this, I haven’t said anything.

“You won’t either. You forget Banele looks like Daya, that’s why she doesn’t have a problem finding her face in her kids.”

Thandi.

“Mxm. Do you guys realize the kids left us here and so did the men?” Lwazi.

“Yes well because you guys were arguing about silly things.”
They all look at me like a sellout.

“Okay, you’re making us chilly cheese fries for that.” Lwazi.

I look at her with a blank face, “Lwazi, just say you wanted an excuse to get chilly cheese fries.”

I go to the kitchen because really, now I also want them. They sit on the bar stools and watch as I take out the potatoes. Then in an after thought I hand them two peelers and a knife. If I’m making the fries, they’re helping.

Nami comes to us and gives her phone to Thandi. Then she says it's Owami who called before asking for fries for her and the others down at the basement. I look at Lwazi and Nonhle and they agree so I also agree. I wasn't going to make them if they weren't going to help shame.

At bedtime I find Khule in my bed and frown. I thought Nonhle was here for him during my recovery time as a new mom. I actually want, for the first time in my life to actually listen to the doctor and only have sex after three months.

"Aren't you going to Nonhle?" I ask.

"Ouch! I'm actually here to be close to my son tonight, I'll go to Nonhle tomorrow. I missed Thami." Khule.

I look at him through squinted eyes but I don't say anything. I'm just hoping I can not have sex with him, I'm almost at the finish line. Three weeks and I'll actually have stuck to doctor's recommendations. If he's determined tonight though... I'm done for.

Nonhle

Last night Khule pulled me into the hall bathroom, kissed me, had his hands squeezing on my ass, then left me there and went to bed with Banele. I've been grumpy the whole morning. I can't believe him really. I've been anticipating his come back this whole time and when he gets back, he leaves me still wanting.

Today we had something on the itinerary but we decided not to go anywhere because there's so much snow outside. Asanele because he's used to it though called us chicken. Personally, I'm roast chicken even but I'm not going out when it's so cold. The house has enough heat for me to sit my ass down.

After breakfast the kids went to the basement while the youngest two went to the playroom. Banele left Thami in my care though as she's cooking. I'm in the lounge with all the adults except the men, they're always off being dodgy, all three of them. I get up to go change Thami's nappy and put him in his crib. This baby sleeps a lot, like his mom I suppose.

I go to Banele and Khule's bedroom because it's where the crib is, and the nappies. Thami is such great practice for when his sibling comes along. I'm really watching how Banele does this mom thing closely. When I'm done I put him down and ask the nanny to keep an eye on him. When I walk out the bedroom I bump into a chest. Without even looking up, I know it's Khule. He smells this masculine and woody. I look up at him and he has a mischievous sexy smile on his face.

"Come here." He says already dragging me towards my bedroom.

When we get in he locks the door and turns to me with a smile that's so naughty I actually step back and swallow.

He halves the space between us in a split second and in a second I'm being laid down the bed. I don't know if we've ever been so close before. His expression is so warm now, so... Unlike he's ever been and it's making my heart beat fast.

Without even thinking I reach up to touch his face and he smiles before lowering himself for a kiss. I wrap my arms around his neck and meet his kiss. Our first real kiss and I don't

even realize it till he stops and looks at me but tears are forming at the corners of my eyes. He finally kissed me!

It feels like a dream and I can't help but be happy. Maybe my husband is actually falling in love with me and I can't believe it.

He kissed me again, this time on my neck, my collarbone and his hands are unbuttoning my dress, and I think he's being thoughtful about my currently sensitive breast because he isn't touching them though I feel a light kiss on them as he goes lower and lower exploring my body with his lips. I shiver in anticipation when he kisses my inner thigh. Gosh I think I prefer Khule the dom because this is torture. He's teasing me and making me squirm. I'm completely under his spell.

His hot breath down there is already driving me crazy and when his tongue makes first contact I muffle a scream and hold on tighter to the sheets. He doesn't stop when I try to move my legs away and instead he pulls my legs to hold me in place and I feel myself tighten and without even a moment's thought I release. He waits for me to stop shaking before moving up and kissing me, making me taste myself.

Without warning I feel him enter and I scream but his hand is already over my mouth which he lets go after I stop. He kisses

me while moving in me slowly, teasingly, nothing like he usually does. I just keep moaning and kissing him and digging my nails on his back. When he decides to go quicker my breath catches and I inhale as my body tightens up again and releases all while he's in me.

When I go back downstairs to the ladies, straight to the Island to try steal Banele's already prepared food. I have a permanent smile on my face and I get embarrassed when Banele squints her eyes at me and says, "Now that smile... I might just know." She's giggling and turns back to her cooking before she even finishes the sentence.

"I don't know what you're talking about and are you making Christmas lunch? How long have you been cooking?" I ask her because really she's been at it since we finished breakfast and decided to stay in today.

"Well, I am cooking Christmas lunch actually. Minus my chefs, because I want to try a little bit of everything and you guys can help shape the menu" She takes out eggs from the fridge, "Zendaya said we must come back on the twenty-eighth and not a day earlier for the New Years Ball." She replies.

Well the kitchen smells so good I believe her. I think there's even a cake in that oven and I can't wait to have some. Special mention, she keeps a clean kitchen for how much she claims she's lazy. It's got to be the chef in her.

"I've heard about those. She's done them for a while right? As her princess duties?" I ask because really, I've only been in this royal family a little over three months. I probably still know most things from Google.

"Yes. Initially it was a family Christmas thing. After the king passed on and Khule took over, she changed it to a New Year's Ball." Banele says and I think she's making cookies actually.

"Are there any other events the palace does?"

"I have a Masquerade Ball each year as a community fundraiser it's done by the palace but it's held at the community hall."

"You had that built right?"

“More like fixed. The old hall was small and still exists as a kitchen so when there’s events, the cooking is done there and the caretaker has living space on the other side.”

Honestly

her and Khule have shifted things for the better in our area. We got RDP houses for those who needed them a few months into Khule being king.

“Could I do something? I mean I don’t know what, you and Khule already gave us the shopping center, the bridge, the new school, fixed the hall. Provide pads for the school girls. Built a soccer field. So much.”

She looks up for the first time since she started mixing

“I actually wanted to talk to you about that, but Khule said after the baby. Like if you have any ideas, you can get plans drafted for you, pitch it to the council but you’re Khule’s wife they’re going to approve.”

I chortle at her words. My goodness this woman is actually very funny and she doesn’t even mean to be. The last part of her sentence got me for real. I reply after I recover,

“Oh? After the baby that doesn’t even show yet? I can at least get plans and the pitch done and continue after his precious baby.”

“Well, what do you think you can get for your people queen Nonhle Ngubo?”

I barely say my new surname out loud and hearing it from someone else is still a bit new. I smile and reply, “I actually don’t know but, I think we need a basketball slash netball court and a pool. Try grow the amount of Sport stars we have in the area. I knew a lot of good athletes in high school but now they work at your shopping center of teachers at the schools.”

“Great idea. Maybe we can get track too.”

“A sports center with all these things.”

“Definitely a great idea. I actually was about to build, with my NGO a safe house for women and children going through domestic abuse.”

She's just got so much going on but it's all so easy for her. Money makes things easy I guess.

"You're good at this. These ideas."

"I'm able to see pay people to get things done." Sentences like that are exactly what amuses me about her, "What Musa wants to do is build businesses. The people can farm, produce building blocks for the NMV construction, have the beer made in Magobeni, business is his idea in order to provide jobs for not just the locals."

"Wow. Isn't Musa like twenty-two?"

"Yes well he's also Khule's son and the future king. I tried my best to make him a kid, and he actually had a childhood but he started asking questions himself about the kingdom. He knows there's no rush though, no pressure."

"You have good kids Banele."

“Thank you, they’re ours now, you know that right?”

I nod and smile at her. With how much of a mom she is to Luna, I’d be crazy not to acknowledge her kids as my own. Especially with Nami being so much fun. I understand Kai, it must be hard for her to get used to me as their first born having spent the longest with her parents. She’s still really getting along well with Luna though and that’s way more than I could ever ask for.

Mike comes downstairs with a look I’ve never seen on him before, he looks serious.

“No more leaving the house. Whatever you need, you ask from me, Khule or Bandile.” Mike.

“Micheal?” Lwazi stands from where she was sitting.

“Nolwazi, please don’t ask me why.” Mike says.

Lwazi sits back down and Mike walks to the basement stairs while I look towards Lwazi and Thandi in the lounge. Thandi buries her face in her hands and says something inaudible. I turn back in my kitchen bar stool to look at Banele and she’s staring into space. Right where Mike stood a few moments ago. What is going on?

Nonhle

Something that I found really weird happened after Mike came back upstairs from the kids in the basement, all the boys, except of course the eight year olds went upstairs with him presumably to the office. From the look Banele, Lwazi and Thandi exchanged, we – the wives, aren't happy about it but we aren't saying anything.

“Raina just sent a text, The Mthembu's are in lockdown as well.” Lwazi says after a while.

The girls, who I guess are also worried all come upstairs to sit with us. Kai has a knowing look, like she's been here. It would be difficult to say for Nami since she's just seemingly trying to keep everyone positive. Khwezi, who I promise you is the last you'd expect it from, is cuddled next to her mother. Banele, Luna and I sit in one couch and Luna lays her head on Banele's lap. Just like me, Luna is confused but definitely senses something is wrong and would rather not talk.

The only voice in the room is Nami's as she talks about how she's always wanted to watch Frozen in a group as she looks for the movie. We settle in silence and watch together. Somehow there's some significance to this for her I can tell. I don't know why or how, but I'm certain it's not just watching a movie together as a group, it's her trying to keep her own panicked state inside.

I don't know when Nami noticed Mike but she pauses the movie and we all turn to him sitting by the steps. He takes a deep breath, I see Khule sit at the top stairs behind him.

"You all know the effects my past has had on this family..." He doesn't even finish before Banele interjects,

"No Mike! You're not doing that. Ngubo is as guilty!"

Mike sighs and looks down before continuing.

"Alright, we, as a family have ties to the underworld that aren't of our own making for the most part. Unfortunately with Uthando being in love with that boy, we ran into a situation when she was kidnapped..." Mike.

After he said kidnapped the words came out loudly and quickly and from almost every female in the room. He holds up a hand and everyone stops speaking on top of each other.

“It’s why we went back home, we rescued her and that was seen as meddling from the people who took her, now they’re after us now, all of us. Lango has already agreed to cancel the New Year’s Ball this year. None of you is going back home until it’s safe, and we’re going in two days. With some of the boys at their own volunteering.”

“No!” Lwazi. I understand her objection. She has only boys and that would mean save for Elinam, they’re all going into danger.

“Nolwazi, I doubt you can stop him but you may try. Majid and Enam are teenagers and definitely staying behind.” Mike. I see relief wash over Lwazi before panic rises again within seconds.

“I’ll just have to talk to him.” Lwazi replies, I guess they’re talking about Athi. I look over at Luna and she’s also panicked I can tell. The whole thing is some bullshit. These are kids!

“Leano? He’s only nineteen.” Banele says and Mike gives her a look. One that says he’s definitely not staying behind without even saying it. “I can’t allow Leano to go. He’s my sister’s only son.” Banele.

To his credit, Mike says nothing. If Banele thinks she can stop Leano, she may try. I already know that’s what he’s thinking because really all these hysterics aren’t bothering him. Leano is the daredevil sort, I doubt anyone can make him stay.

“I don’t want them both to go.” Thandi.

“You all can speak to your brothers, nephews, sons. Whatever you may try for them to stay behind. Khule, Bandile and I leave in two days though.” Mike says and walks back up the stairs past Khule who just watches us as we all panic. I don’t quite like the idea of Musa going either. He’s the future king for Christ’s sake.

I mean sure there’s two more boys behind him, but it doesn’t mean he should just go out to be in harm’s way. However quite clearly these boys must be as stubborn as their fathers whose

departures weren't even put up for possible discussion. Khwezi clearly just wants to try convince Asanele to stay, she says Azisa isn't going to budge but she can still try Asanele because he's the brother she grew up closer to.

Nami said something about a "twintuition" and being sure Musa will never stay behind so really it's all about trying to get Leano to stay for the Ngubo family. Lwazi... Well she clearly doesn't think she'll succeed but I'm certain she wants to beg Athi to stay behind. She even looks at Luna for help and she nods. I guess that thing, undefined as it is between Luna and Athi is more known than I thought. They find each other in a room first. It would be so amazing if their fathers weren't best friends who raised their two families as one.

The next day we had to order breakfast, lunch and dinner because no one would cook and no one thought about it because the day was spent trying to talk the boys out of following their fathers into war basically, personally I don't think I'm ready for Khule himself to go but it seemed that's not even up for discussion. Banele tried blackmail using Thami and I used tears but we both failed. With both Musa and Khule.

So now Khule's next to me, sleeping with his arm over my belly. I know tomorrow he'll spend the night with Banele and the next morning we'll barely see them off since it'll be really early.

When Banele gave up on Leano she told me about how her sister Fanele, who really wanted to deliver her own kids suffered through many rounds of IVF to have Leano. She told me how her sister called her in the morning crying and begging her to beg him. It's heartbreaking to witness the sadness in Banele's eyes and I can't even imagine what Fanele must feel like. I think she's even coming here from Oslo with her baby girl.

She and her husband apparently adopted a baby girl this year I've been told.

Thandi, well she begged her own sons using different tactics too but apparently Azisa and Asanele are stubborn like most the men in this family. Well, I'd say all because even Enam and Majid tried to fight for the chance to go. In the end she marched up to her husband, in front of us all and told him if her children died, she'd leave him and never look back.

After that, everyone was gasping. Might I add, I believe her and I think I feel the same. If Musa doesn't make it back, I'm out. I

have the baby I'm carrying to protect. He or she is not staying in this family if Musa doesn't come back. In fact, any of the boys.

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I don't think I'll sleep. It's already three in the morning and I don't think sleep is even close. My usually tired ass is just not that tired right now. I'm worried. Stressing over this whole thing and the guy who's about keeping me calm is the reason for it. How can he think I won't be stressed during this? I'm supposed to go to the doctor we're using here with him in four days. He's really just ditching me like this.

"Nonhle go to sleep, please." Khule says and I almost freeze. I thought he was asleep!

"You fucking scared me!" I say half panting.

"You're swearing. Nonhle." He says in that irritated but calm tone he does with me.

"So?" I'm literally rolling my eyes. He scared me.

“You need to kick the habit.”

Oh please!

“You have no right. Not when you won’t even listen to me and stay here.”

“Stay here and do what? Let some trigger happy idiot near my family? Let him think I’m afraid of him? Do I look like a man who would be scared by some punk?”

“Well, no. However, if he’s a punk, you can get your guys to take care of him.”

“You don’t understand.”

Of course not. He didn’t explain it to me.

“Okay make me.”

“He sent a message.”

“Yes and?”

“And he said I have three daughters. He’d love to hear them scream...” He takes a deep breath and clearly it’s hard for him to say this but I wait for him to finish, “He said he’d love to hear them scream as he... violate them.”

“Khulekani!” My mouth goes dry and I turn to try look at him.

“No, that’s not all. He said...”

I don’t want to hear this anymore so I interject, “Don’t tell me anymore.”

“No Nonhle. Let me make you understand. He said, they’re all virgins, he knows and he’ll break all of them before letting his men have a go.” I don’t know when I started to cry but I feel the tears when they roll down my nose because of my skewed position.

“He said, my niece is into girls and so he’ll show her how to be a real woman.” His voice is still stern but from the little I see of his face, I can tell just how angry he is just saying this.

The niece must be Khwezi. She’s bisexual but of course whoever this man is, is just a bastard who wouldn’t understand that.

“He said, Mike’s sister-in-law in-law lives in Camps Bay, said she’s a little old for him but maybe his boys will want her spinster ass. Nonhle, he disrespected all the women we love and would protect with everything in us. Our daughters. I don’t care if you all don’t want us to go, I will go back even if it means swimming.” He says and I think that’s it. I think that’s all he’ll say and I move closer to try hug him as best as I can on a bed.

I can’t believe I tried to talk him out of it. Honestly, I feel so bad. I understand him completely and now, now I support their going away. This man goes through so much trying to protect us, they all do and you know what? They deserve our support. Not sure about the boys going but I guess if their fathers can go, they should be allowed too. I want them to go kick some ass.

“Go, and wipe the motherfucker out.” I say in his ear.

Nonhle

I never thought that the next time I'd be in Johannesburg I'd hate it so much. I wish I didn't have to be here, not this way at least. I'd normally be so fascinated to be in Khule and Banele's Sandton home but instead wish I wasn't being left at here because I'm pregnant and can only go on Friday to Zendaya's home in Pretoria. It's not that I particularly want to see her right now either though, it's just that I want her to know I'm supporting her through this difficult time.

Khule and the others had only left for three days when we got the call that it was safe to go back home. What they didn't say though, at least not to me was that Zendaya's husband and one of her twins got shot. Luckily for the child it was a flesh wound but Connor, his dad wasn't so lucky. He had been shot close to his heart and though doctors tried, by the day we arrived back home he was gone.

I've never seen Zendaya down in the short time I've known her. As I've been told she's a lot like me and I don't think I want to

see her sad. I turn around when I hear a car outside, it's Musa's car and he parks in the front yard. Luna walks out of the car looking red around the eyes and I can tell she cried. Musa gets out on his side wearing a defeated expression.

They went to Waterkloof with everyone and promised to come back soon to stay with me and I guess they're back now. Luna pulls out takeouts from the car and they walk towards the front door, Musa opens it for her and she walks in first. He follows behind.

"Mom we're back and we got dinner. " Luna says walking past me to the kitchen. Musa closes the door and comes to sit on the couch with me.

"How is your aunt?" I ask to no one in particular.

"Same as yesterday. Shattered. I've never seen her like that."
Musa.

"I'm sorry you had to come back here Musa."

“No ma, I’m happy to be here for you and besides, being at my aunt’s house is just... Heartbreaking. Tanner and Tyrone are sad and confused. Uncle Connor’s sister had to be the most annoying person on earth. She hates everyone of us and really if there was no reading of the will after the funeral, she’d be back in Benoni already. She’s so racist and doesn’t even hide it.” He replies.

“Good thing I’m only going there for the funeral because we’d probably clash and I don’t mind whooping a racist’s ass.”

“Yes well I know if we get through the funeral without my aunt coming for her throat it’ll be a miracle.” Musa.

“Do you think she’ll stay here?” I ask about his aunt and he understood because he replies,

“In Pretoria? Yeah. I think so.”

“And you Luna? Any encounters with the Benoni racist?”

“Barely. Mama stared her down when she tried to have us removed from the kitchen.” Luna.

“That’s interesting, what happened?”

“She came into the kitchen as we were making refreshments and said she’d call security to have rats removed from her brother’s kitchen because she didn’t even know what we were doing in there. Mama just gave her a look and she didn’t utter another word.”

“I didn’t know about that.”

“That’s why she went upstairs to sulk.” Luna

“Oh! Mom deserves nice things.” Musa.

“I agree.”

We laugh in unison. It's good to be able to do this. The past few days have been so grey and sad. Khule was like a wounded wolf when his nephew was still in hospital, sad as he is about Connor, I'm sure he's even happier his nephew made it out. In fact, I'd say the same for everyone but Zendaya. I mean for her it's terrible and I'm sure she's glad to have her kid back but it certainly doesn't make her feel any better.

I won't lie the funeral, or memorial service rather was quick. It was sad and I could tell it tore the family up when Zendaya was up the little church stage clutching her boys in her arms and speaking about the love of her life. I don't think she'll ever really be the same after this. Losing your husband must be hell on earth and I never want it to happen to me. I'd much rather die first thank you very much.

We're already back at Zendaya's house and it feels like an intimate tea party, only people are wearing black. I've seen the racist Benoni woman. She's definitely Connor's older sister. Apparently they were the last ones in their family alive. I'd say before Zendaya and Connor had the twins but from the way the racist looks at them, she doesn't consider them family.

I'm sitting on a couch with Nami and she's been giving me all the hot gist. Apparently Zendaya was stopped by Khule with a gun going up to the racists' room. Why? Apparently the racist told a white neighbor that she hates Connor's monkeys. She didn't count on the neighbor actually not being racist. It was a whole mess and Zendaya requested the will to be read immediately after the guests leave, that's not including us who are family, we may be in the house since the will is being read in the library slash office with just the sister and Zendaya present.

All that I heard during Nami and I's gossip session is that Zendaya and I are definitely birds of a feather. I too would attempt murder for my kids. These fully grown ones, their little siblings and this little one in me.

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26, 0.3); -webkit-text-size-adjust: auto;">I feel tired so Nami takes me to a bedroom she was using and I go to sleep. I doubt me and the family are leaving anytime soon.

MaNdosi is being a grandma to the twins right now and maybe she'll even stay the entire week.

It made me think of my mom and the pregnancy. My sisters too. I've been kind of distant because they just seemed to fully

embrace mom and it's harder for me. Maybe it's time I went to see her.

I'm woken up by Kai coming inside the room with food and some juice. She places it on the side table and sits on the bed.

"Ma, you've been asleep for a while, please eat something."
Kai.

"When you beg me like that I feel like I was purposely avoiding food when I wasn't."

She giggles and shakes her head. "No it's just important that you take your vitamins and have enough nutrients."

"Yes Dr Ngubo, loud and clear."

She smiles and gets up to the door. After she walks out I start digging in my food and Nami walks in. I swear she was waiting around the corner.

“You’re up ma. I have tea!” Nami says.

I laugh at that. Nami is really so much fun. I can’t wait to hear what she has for me, just hoping it includes a racist woman being beaten to a pulp by her sister-in-law.

I knock at the door and hold my breath. I came here alone by choice. Khule wanted to support me and when it was clear that wasn’t happening, Banele too tried. I opted to go alone. The two of them would get all my mother’s attention. They’re her king and queen, she’d probably care more about their presence than talk to me.

I knock and she gets the door almost immediately and she cries and laughs when she sees me.

“My daughter! My beautiful Nonhle.”

I didn’t expect her reaction so I’m frozen when she hugs me and pulls me inside. She offers me a seat and begins asking if I’d

like anything. I shake my head so she sits opposite me, I give her the fruit basket I got and she thanks me.

“You look so beautiful my baby. Pregnancy suits you.”

I am showing now so I’m not surprised she noticed. I smile and mouth a thank you. It’s funny how much shit I planned to say to her. How much I wanted her to know she was trying to protect me but instead she killed me slowly. Now I’m just not sure why I thought I was ready to be here.

“How is my granddaughter?”

“Lunathi is fine.”

“Umkhwenyana yena?”

“Shouldn’t you know? You’re living in his house.” I reply. She doesn’t say anything but I can tell she’s shocked. Well I’m not the forgiving type. “I actually can’t believe you. You used my husband to escape, then you had the audacity to say I’m the

reason you would get beaten up by your good for nothing husband?”

“*Mntanami* maybe I never should’ve told you.”

“Isn’t it too late for that? *Angithi* I’m the unruly and hard headed Nonhle? I don’t feel pain mos. Otherwise why else would my own mother not think using me as an excuse for her husband’s battery would hurt me?” Tears are falling down my cheeks but I let them. I’ve held on to this long enough.

“I’m sorry Nonhle. *Phephisa mntanami*, that was never my intention.”

“Of course not Ma. You just thought it would earn you brownie points as a mother.”

“Nonhle...” She sags her shoulders and clearly doesn’t know what to say.

“It’s fine. I forgive you but not for you. I forgive you for my child. They may never know their grandfather but they’ll at least know their grandmother. If you want to know my child.”

Her face lights up, “Thank you my child and of course I want to know my grandchild.”

I stop myself from rolling my eyes. I’d have gotten Khule to chase her out of this house if she said no. That would’ve been some kind of audacity really. I make us tea and we talk a bit before I ask to leave. Richards Bay to Ballito isn’t a short drive in my state. Especially because if I don’t tell Khule I’m on the way home by three, he’ll send a driver and I’d be forced to leave my car here.

Speaking of cars, how does one ask for a Bentley? I really liked Banele’s one and I want my own now.

Banele

There's no one on this earth who can understand the joy in my heart when I get the first hug from Mane whenever he gets back home. He's usually sweaty and needs a bath but still, you would probably understand if like me you had three kids prior to this one and they all started with their dad and their dad rubbed it in your face. Mane is my revenge for all those times Khule would wink at me every time his kids hugged him first or asked me where he is if they happened to be hugging me first only because they didn't know where he was.

Mane, is my boy. However as much as I've tried every tactic to try get him to tell me what goes on at MMA practice, he doesn't tell me. Now see I don't know when they do it but at a certain age, Khule and Mike teach our boys how to handle guns. I'm just hoping they at least wait for them to become teenagers. I get up to go make breakfast for Mane and I, Thami still only does breast milk so maybe I can pump some for storage later on. Their dad is at Nonhle's this weekend and it's

a good thing too because I just want to relax and spend time with my babies.

I go downstairs and find Mane watching cartoons. He says good morning and runs to give me a hug before running back to sit in front of the television again. I notice the cereal bowl on the floor so I guess our helper made him some so I start with breakfast. I know he loves eggs so I'm making us omelettes. When I'm done I clean up his cereal mess and give him a plate with an omelette before sitting down with my own. I don't care for the cartoons so I check on Kai and Luna. They live together now, Kai decided to study further and become a neurosurgeon, Luna is studying Development Economics or something like that.

After the girls I check in on the Cape Town two. Musa mentioned something about a yacht party while Nami is doing photography for some magazine. All my babies are okay, now to focus on the babies here. Of course there isn't much I can do with these two because the other one is asleep and this one is glued to some cartoon that seems to run all day.

I decide to check on Lango. I wish she'd move back to Durban now that Connor is gone but I doubt she'll do it. She mentioned coming here after a year to pour his ashes out in the dam he helped build in Magobeni. Where they met. For now though she's just not thinking about coming here and says her life is in Pretoria and I shouldn't worry. That's my whole job to worry about her and everyone in this family.

Now for Zama. I call her and Ndu picks up her phone saying she forgot it when she went to Dee's house. Dee is her friend and she's been around with them before. I decide to ask Ndu how they are and he says they're okay though it's hard dealing with teenagers. I tell him at least they only have two and he asks about us before we say our goodbyes and hang up.

It's close to an hour now of making calls but I have to check on everyone so in the end I've FaceTimed Khulani, Nosigcino, Ntombi, Yonela, Yandisa, Lungile, Azola, Raina, Thabisile, Thandolwethu, Thatho and Thabang. There are a lot of Ngubo relatives I cannot even begin to mention what it's like when they're all at the palace plus their families from those who are married. I haven't even checked on Akin and Sphe yet. Akin is Khule's little brother. A lot older than Khulani though who is their baby brother.

I don't do these calls because of anything other than that I love these people and as much as there's way too many of them, I married their brother for some a cousin and I became a part of their lives. That's why they also call me for advice sometimes as if I know a lot. I think for some of them I represent a wise person. However to be honest, that's not me, I'm just winging it in this life as well.

I decide to get Khule a gift. He bought me some new jewelry for our anniversary and took me to dinner. I was too stressed with everything that happened in December, losing Connor too so I didn't get him anything and now I have to get him something. Not too big his birthday is coming up but not inexpensive because he doesn't compromise on that for me. I've never felt the need to buy Khule a car, he has a collection that nobody even drives at an underground car garage in this house. I've bought him so many watches too. I think I'll just see what to get him when I see it.

"Mommy can I go to Eli's house?"

"Baby you'll see Eli at school."

“I want to play with him mom.”

“Okay I’ll drive you, let me ask MaYengwayo to look after your brother.”

“I love you so much mommy!”

I smile and tell him to go put his shoes on as I grab the car keys for whatever car I’m driving. He comes back and takes my hand.

“The Porsche mommy.” He says when I grab Mercedes keys. He pronounces the word Porsche correctly which I only learnt after I owned one. I change the keys and we walk out to the garage and get in the car.

I call Lwazi to warn her that we’re on the way. She tells me it’s beach day and we’ll just buy new swimwear there but we should join in. I decide to only leave Mane despite really wanting to go to the beach, I have a three month old at home and I have all the help I need but Thami deserves my time. I

drop Mane off and go grab myself lunch at my restaurant and drive back home while listening to some Charlotte Day Wilson and singing to myself.

When I get back security stops me at the gate and says a young girl is here to see Khule, they couldn't let her in because they don't know her. I tell them to drive her up the driveway and make sure to search her for any weapons and also ask to see her identification. Then I ask if they called Khule but they're only allowed to call for an emergency so I say okay and drive up to the house.

I wonder who it is and why they're here. I get muffins I baked yesterday and some juice for her. As I put it on the dining table I wonder if this is a guest I'll even be happy to have here. She knocks on the door and I get it. The moment she walks in the smell hits me and I can tell she's conscious of it because she's trying her best not to move her arms and her face isn't even looking up. She's so thin and her hair is dirty from what I can see coming out the sides of her hoodie.

The hoodie was grey but now I'm not sure I think it's going brown. She's barefoot and my heart just breaks.

“Please let’s sit in the dining room.” I say pointing her there.

“I’m dirty.” She replies in a very hoarse voice. I don’t know if it’s natural or she was just afraid to speak.

“You are aren’t you. Okay let’s get you in a bath tub” I reply because I think a shower just won’t cut it. Luckily there’s a guest bedroom on the other side of this floor with towels.

“Follow me.” I tell her and lead her to the guest bedroom, it’s the closest downstairs but it’s quite a walk there because this house is quite big. When we get there I lead her to the bathroom and tell her she can bath, I’ll get her clothes and put them on the bed, she can leave hers in the basket in the bathroom.

I go upstairs on the stairs this side and take a walk to Kai’s bedroom then I change my mind and go to Nami’s because she’s smaller than Kai a little and the girl in that bathroom is smaller than her. Funny how I have a whole stranger in my bathroom, I haven’t even seen her face properly all I know is she’s dark skinned with nice thick curly hair that’s actually long but dirty.

I grab sweats from Nami's closet. Blue because she has so many in that color since it's her favourite. I grab her flops too and hope this girl is also a size five. I head back to that bedroom and put the clothes on the bed but she sounds panicked as she asks,

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"Who's out there?"

"It's just me honey, I brought you the clothes on the bed. Feel free to use the towels in there"

"Thank you." She replies. Her voice is clearly naturally hoarse.

I leave but tell her I'll be back to check in on her. I don't think she'll remember the way from here back to the living area. I want to call Khule but I know he'll call me stupid for having a stranger in his house where his child is and he'll come running back, can't be having Nonhle think I'm taking him from their quality time.

I don't know why but I don't feel like I'm in danger with that girl. She looks like she's just in need of help and whatever it is she wants from Khule is most probably a job, and if it's not, she deserves it. Heck I'd get her into school if she needs that. I got myself lunch and luckily it will be enough for us both so I'll just give her that. I throw out the muffins that have been on the table because it was too long and it wouldn't be nice to give them to anyone when I wouldn't eat them myself.

I go upstairs to check on my baby. I wanted to spend time with him but here I am not doing that. I go upstairs to play with him and put him to bed then after this I'll go back to the girl.

It's actually getting late and luckily Lwazi sent a text saying she's keeping Mane overnight. Thami is in bed and I walk downstairs to check on the girl. When I get there she's sleeping and so I shake her a bit.

If anything she needs to eat something and then sleep. She gets up and her eyes are literally shut. Her face is so gorgeous and somehow she looks familiar like I've seen her face before.

“Come eat, you can come back and sleep after.”

She nods, eyes still closed and follows me. I think they're slightly opened but she's clearly just sleepy. I keep looking behind me to check if she's not bumping into walls. When we get to back to the living area I put her on a chair in the dining table and fix our plates. I put her food in front of her then sit opposite her. I say a grace and when I lift my eyes to look at her I drop my fork involuntarily. Her eyes are the same eyes I've seen around me since I met Khule. They're the eyes that my children have. Eyes that my husband and all his siblings have. Brown, a light brown.

"Who are you?"

I've never thought Khule could cheat on me but in this moment I know this child could only be his or Akin's. I don't know what would be worse, knowing Akin cheated on my sister or knowing my husband cheated on me because she can't be Khulani's.

"Thulisa. My name is Thulisa."

“Thulisa, I’m Banele. Khulekani who you came looking for is my husband.” I tell her and she nods but instead of explaining who she is, she just eats. So I continue, “You can talk to me honey.”

She looks at me and nods again before beginning to talk but not before my mind reminds me that Lango too has a hoarse voice.

“My mother told me that my father didn’t want me. She said he told her to get rid of me and paid her a lot of money for that. She took the money but clearly never aborted me. She said nobody in his family knows about me therefore I must not go there to hurt people but I couldn’t stop myself when I found his name and I looked him and his other children up. I had to come here.” She says.

I’m surprised to find out she has a mother and a home really. I’m also disappointed that I don’t know who her father is yet but I don’t want to push her.

“What happened to you? On the way here?”

“My mom has never let me go far on my own. She is protective and I didn’t tell her when I left, I just did. Got into a taxi to

Durban and never looked back. I just didn't bank on her taking my money out of my bank account. When I got to Durban, I didn't know where to go so I decided to go and sleep at some cheap hotel, I looked for information online and all I could find was a company in Umhlanga so I went there.

I had everything I brought with me in a bag and not much money so I had to find something there. I couldn't get in at all but a nice lady at security called me aside and told me Khulekani Ngubo lived here in Zimbali and gave me an address, she asked me not to ever reveal her identity or she'd lose her job but she said I definitely was related to the Ngubo's. With my last coins I came to Ballito..." She looks up clearly avoiding tears. I give her the tissue box and wait for her to continue.

"I had to walk here from then but I didn't know how to get here. I almost got raped at one point but this nice guy who stands on the streets asking for coins helped me out so much. The guys who tried to rape me, they took my sneakers and my bag so I was left with nothing. I spent like two days sleeping out in the forest afraid of snakes with the guy who helped me out. He was just sweet and on the third day he said I should come beg on the streets. I was ready to do it really but I saw him. I saw Khulekani Ngubo drive by so instead I just asked the man if he knew how to get inside the fences. I knew the street

address, I just didn't think anyone would let me in with the way I was looking.

The nice man agreed to help me but he said it would have to be late at night and warned me about the pythons because he said the only way we can climb a fence is if we go to one through the thick forest. He also warned me I might jump the wrong fence but I took a chance. I jumped the fence and ran across someone's property but luckily it was practically a jungle. I made it to the street and started jogging so I don't look suspicious. I knew I was dirty and smelly but I also knew the houses were far enough that I didn't have to worry about anyone indoors noticing, the issue was anybody driving so I kept my head down and paid attention to street names. It took me a few hours but I made it here. Your security gave me side eyes but I guess they also thought I looked like a Ngubo because they let me stand by their security house and wait for you."

I think I'm dizzy. So much stuff happened to her that it could literally become a motion picture film. Her story is just sad to be honest because her mom is evil for taking her money out just to try and get her to come back. Now she lost her phone and I'm sure her mom regrets it because now, she can't even reach her.

“That is quite the journey, I’m sorry you had to go through all that.”

“It’s okay. At least you were kind enough to let me in and get me looking decent.”

“It’s nothing really.”

“Can you tell me about my dad?” She asks and I don’t know how to answer that without being certain if I’m talking about my husband or my brother-in-law but the latter is seeming like a stretch because really, why wouldn’t she go to Akin’s house?

“About that... Who exactly is your dad?” I finally ask because as much as I’m afraid, there’s nothing I can do if it really is Khule.

Banele

I open my eyes and immediately dread this day. It's not like I slept much knowing Khule and I going to fight and I'm not sure I want to stop it from happening. I get up, brush m teeth and go check on Thami. When I'm done I go wake up Mane for school. He may be "my boy" but clearly he has no issues waking up for school. I may be dumb enough to keep Thulisa here, but at least I kept her away from "Khule's kids". I bathe Manelisi, who's really awake for a boy who just woke up really. I take him to his room and let him get dressed, he does that himself and actually, he's better than me. I thought my kids wouldn't be like Khule with the perfect movement thing but I swear Thami is growing with it. Ironic right? Of course he'd be the one to be like Khule.

I go downstairs to make his oats and a lunchbox. He runs downstairs with his backpack on and I give him a look,

"Sorry my beautiful mommy." He says and he knows I'll forgive him for running in the house so I roll my eyes and smile at him.

“It’s okay baby, give me your backpack so I can I pack your lunch.” I reply as I place the oats in front of him.

He does as I say and he starts eating after. I pack his lunch, double check his weekend homework that he did at Lwazi’s then I go back upstairs to grab his brother then I change my mind, I haven’t had Thami downstairs since our guest got here and Khule is coming to pick up Mane for school. The drive from Nonhle’s Estate isn’t long. I decide to ask MaYengwayo to help me with Thami because I have to be downstairs when Khule gets here. I did good by getting Thulisa a new phone too because she’ll only come this side after I text her that she can. Khule will be coming back to the house after dropping Thami off and then he’ll meet Thulisa. It’s important to me that today goes as normal as possible. I’m hoping no one in security told him about this. It’s likely they would do it today but I’m hoping they don’t.

I have a talk with my boy while waiting for Khule. It’s a conversation about nothing really but it entertains me how much my little eight year old tries to sound grown up sometimes. He’s so cute with the deep dimples. His face when he’s focusing reminds me of Khule so much. I thought Kai was

like her dad a lot but it seems Mane will be worse. I don't think Nami is like me or Khule and Musa acts like both of us.

“Mommy, I think I hear dad's car. It's the Mustang.” Mane.

I can hear the car outside too. He gets up, takes his dish to the kitchen sink. I'll put it in the washer myself but he knows not to leave it here on school days. Weekends... I think he's a kid again then..

I whip my head around quickly to look out the door when my brain registers that my son said the car outside is a Mustang without seeing it.

Khule walks in with him and I get up to give him a kiss and tell him I love him but Mane of course interrupts us by saying it's not how he wants to start his day. We both just end up laughing and Khule tells Mane to grab his bag and go wait in the car. Soon as he's out I tell Khule what just happened a few moments ago.

“Khule your son said you're driving the Mustang.”

“And he’s correct.”

“Khule, he hadn’t seen the car, he only heard it.”

“Smart boy.” He says and I realize he’s not taking me seriously. I know it sounds ludicrous but it’s real.

“Khulekani that can’t be normal.”

“Don’t worry about Manelisi, I’ll speak to him.”

I eye him but still let it go, “Okay good. Drive safely.”

“I’ll be back in a few minutes, I’ve missed you.” He says and gives me a kiss before walking out.

I hear him drive off and then I text Thulisa to come this side. When she gets here I give her some muesli and we wait for Khule while eating and sitting in the breakfast nook.

“Do you think he’ll want nothing to do with me?” Thulisa asks and I wish she didn’t ask because really, I’d rather not even think about that right now.

“I understand my husband, however I’d be lying if I said I can predict him. I don’t know.” I reply honestly. He might yell, which is never an easy thing because it scares the crap out of me. He might be silent which isn’t good either because then I won’t know if he’s thinking of doing something terrible. Or he might take it well... I realize as soon as I think about it that the last one will never happen.

“If he doesn’t want me in his family I’ll actually understand. I mean...” she says and we’ll I too would understand but I won’t let her suffer needlessly.

“That is not up to him. He may be king in Magobeni, the leader of the family but he’s not the only person in the family. I’ll personally protect you.”

“You will? Why?”

“I don’t know. I guess you also deserve to be a part of your father’s family.” My stomach churns as soon as I say that.

I’ve been nervous the entire morning but right now it’s crazy. The fact that he’ll be back here any moment now and find her here is sinking in. I’m dreading the fight we’re going to have either after they’re introduced or even during the damn introduction. I go over what I’ll say to him in my head. The fact that this girl’s mother is that woman is what makes everything worse.

I hear his car again and take a deep breath. It’s about to go down and every second feels prolonged. It’s like everything is just delayed.

He finally gets inside and he doesn’t even close the door behind him, instead he walks over to us slowly. His eyes are fixed on Thulisa.

I'm not going to say anything until he asks so I wait for him. He sits opposite her and stares at her like he's trying to understand something, something that makes no sense to him.

"I see her in you." That's the first thing he says and my heart almost stops. "I see that witch Okuhle, it doesn't make sense be I also see... me."

I exhale in relief because he said witch but then again I remember and decide to interrupt him.

"Khulekani you can't say that, that's her mother." I say and he narrows his eyes at her but clearly he's not surprised to hear it.

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"Banele who is this and why does she look like, this?" He asks pointing at her with his hand and still just staring at her. Thulisa just looks scared so she's darting her eyes between us both. Well her brother is weird, she'll get used to it.

“Her name is Thulisa Nxumalo. She’s your little sister.” I reply confidently. I’m almost a hundred percent sure I’m right about this. Khule wouldn’t cheat on me.

His eyes finally peel away from Thulisa and he looks at me like I just said the craziest thing ever. “My little what now?” He asks. I know he heard me.

“Your father had something with her mother.”

“My father had... I’m sorry, what?” He asks and I know he understood me fully the first time.

“Look, Okuhle told her she was your daughter and said you asked her to abort hence she kept Thulisa away.”

“Me? This child can’t be older than Kai so there’s no way. In fact I’m too old to have such young siblings.” He replies and my heart relaxes. I’m really in the clear. He’s right about her being young too but she’s just a few weeks older than the twins.

“Yes well I figured it out too. It was way too out of character for you to do that.” I omit the fact that I even thought he had cheated because I’m sure it’ll make him angrier right now. “You would never suggest anyone abort your child. So I asked her about the information she found in her mother’s things and she said there was a lot of information on this family but more on Thamisanqa Raymond Ngubo. So I put two and two together.”

“You know what, our son will have his names changed, we’re removing Thami from his birth certificate.” He says that and gets up, then he walks away from us and clearly he’s going to the gym. That’s okay and all but my problem is that he’s clearly angry and we haven’t had our fight. I brought a stranger in here and I’m in for it I know.

“I’m sorry Thulisa.”

“No, I’m sorry for bringing all this to your doorstep.” I squeeze her hand to reassure her before taking the dishes to the kitchen and putting them in the washer. “Sis Banele if he’s my brother and not my dad, shouldn’t he not know my mother?”

“Yes well he too has a history with her.”

“Really? But that’s disgusting.”

I want to agree with her but I don’t want to talk about Okuhle to be honest.

“Sweetheart, can we please not talk about this? Not right now anyway, I have to go upstairs and check on my baby boy.” I almost said Thami but according to Khule we’re not using that name anymore. Well let’s just thank God it’s not Mane who’s already in school. A change in Thami’s names only means a change in his birth certificate and passport.

I want to make Khule his post workout breakfast and shake and all that but I’ll just ask someone else to do it. I leave the television on for Thulisa and go back upstairs.

I have spent the last few hours with Thami in his nursery and I don’t know when I’ll go downstairs. I’m dreading this pending fight with Khule so much. He walks in the room just as Thami falls asleep. He comes to stand next to me and stare at him. He smiles at him then takes my hand and leads me out the room.

I exhale and anticipate what he'll say. He takes me to our bedroom and we sit on the couch here.

"Banele, how did this girl find us? This house particularly." He asks and I don't detect any anger from his tone.

I sigh and tell him Thulisa's story, at least the version she gave me. He nods after that and takes his phone to text someone. I'm almost certain he's having this girl investigated along with her mother.

"I don't want Okuhle in our lives." He says after sending the text.

"Neither do I. We can't turn her away though. She's your sister."

"I'm not going to turn her away. I just want Okuhle to know that this doesn't mean she's now in our family."

"I wonder if Thandi knew about this child."

“You think she wouldn’t have told you?”

“If she didn’t realize the child was from this family yeah.”

“That child looks like she’s Nosigcino, only darker and younger.”

He’s right actually. She looks like Nosi. I actually find Thulisa’s skin tone perfect especially for her eyes. Most people in this family are a little lighter than me, I’m caramel toned. Yet for her, she just decided to take her mom’s color and showcase how beautiful it is with light brown eyes. I’d make her a model in an instant.

“Well, I doubt that Thandi would hide such from me. I think she doesn’t know about her niece either. I mean, I hope not.”

It seems I’m not in any trouble for bringing her in this house. So I sit back and relax my body. I almost scream when I feel his hand on my neck. He’s not squeezing but he’s using enough force that he makes me stand up. Fuck my life he’s decided to fight using bdsm and I’m fucking horny so I’ll consent.

“You didn’t think you’d get off that easy right?” He asks and I nod. I want to touch him but I don’t want to dig a deeper hole. He doesn’t want to be touched when he’s dominant. He kisses me quickly then let’s me go. He walks to the bed and pulls off his shorts then his t-shirt and I can see he’s rock hard so I swallow.

“Come here, on your knees.” He says and I drop because I’m an obedient little sub right now. I’m looking forward to my treat at the end of the orgasm denial torture.

Nonhle

“I’ve seen it but I didn’t think you realized it so I just looked. Nonhle you don’t need a new car, you don’t need a Bentley. Of course you love cars but I’m almost certain you’d prefer sport cars, am I right?” I nod because I can’t find the words to reply to this, “See? So you only want a Bentley because of Banele. Nonhle you don’t have to be like her. I have her, she’s mine and she’s perfect for me. I want Nonhle. You in your wild nature because you are unapologetic. I don’t know if you know this but I like that you curse. I love it because it’s you, your thing. However you’re also a queen and that’s the only reason I need you to learn how to control it.”

I smile for the first time since he started scolding me for asking for a car. He likes me? To be honest he likes something about me but I’ll take it as a win.

“I’m sorry I asked... I guess you’re right I bought some expensive sneakers the other day because I saw hers.”

“You are Nonhle Ngubo. You don’t need to be Banele Ngubo. I like that you’re different from each other.”

“Yeah the same wife twice would be kind of weird hey.”

“Redundant is more like it.”

“You talk to me now.” I regret it the moment I finish the sentence. I mean it’s true. Maybe we don’t discuss the future or how business is going for him or all that stuff, but we do talk now and I’m afraid pointing it out will make him pull back.

“I trust you now.”

“So you didn’t trust me?” I ask with my hand on my chest acting hurt.

“Definitely not without a thorough background check.” It’s definitely his honesty for me.

“I won’t even ask what you found... Our waitress has been staring at you since we walked in and I might just curse her out.”

His whole demeanor changes and it’s chilling how quickly he did it.

“If you embarrass me and yourself that way, this is our last date ever and you will be punished for it.”

I take a deep breath and sit back. I don’t give a fuck about being punished because I’m at the stage of pregnancy where he won’t do it with all night rough sex, which I won’t lie I enjoy.

However I do want to still go on dates and that’s the only reason I won’t be telling this thot that she’s a thot. We have the rest of our dinner talking about his newly found sister and how he feels it’s weird to be having a sister younger than his first born and by his ex.

“I think that Okuhle lady is crazy.”

He looks at me and shrugs,

“She always has been. I just never thought she’d be with my dad. I mean he was with my mom when he got cancer so she must’ve lost contact with him after that and read about his death in the papers.”

“While she had his child too. I think I kind of understand why she didn’t come forward.”

“Excuse me?”

“It must’ve been hard for her to come to your family with this. Can you imagine it?”

“For twenty-two years? Nonhle please don’t defend that harlot.”

I raise my hands and retreat. I can tell he really doesn’t think that she deserves any sympathy.

“So has she come to take her daughter back?”

“Come where? To pick up whose daughter? Okuhle knows not to annoy me, not when she owes my family so many years of Thulisa’s life.”

“But she has to agree to accept the inhlawulo and...”

I stop because he’s giving me a look like I’m crazy. Clearly Okuhle knows not to deny him that right either. I don’t know much about their history, I just know it’s not a nice history. He basically doesn’t see the need for her to be alive even.

When we get home Khule and I take a shower together, go to bed and he fucks me to sleep.

As soon as I wake up I can tell there’s something going on. I don’t know how but I feel like I’m on my period. I go into the bathroom, Khule isn’t even in bed because he’s the type to wake up early and go gym.

I see some blood after I wipe and tears threaten my eyes. I take a deep breath and try not to panic. I walk out slowly and sit on the bed before taking my cellphone and calling him so he can come to me. I let it ring twice before dropping. I'm afraid if I speak I'll alarm him prematurely by crying. I need to see him when I say it.

He walks in through the door with a cup of hot chocolate. I know because I can smell it already and it's the only thing that's hot I want. So since he doesn't want me cold

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he makes it for me regardless of thinking it has too much sugar and I love him for it. I love him for his ability to bend just to make sure me and this baby are okay. I think I fell for him, truly in Seattle a few hours before he had to leave me and protect his family.

I don't know if he even knows it, heck I didn't realize it for a while but after that things between me and him changed.

"I am bleeding." It's all I say. All I had to say and he tossed everything aside, picked me up and carried me all the way downstairs. We're now driving to the hospital. No words between us. No questions. I'm numb by the time he has me in a

wheelchair being pushed inside the hospital and talking to doctors who seem to know him as well. They address him as doctor so I guess he worked in this hospital before.

I'm pushed into an ER, I still can't speak, just tears, no pain yet either. All I can't do is answer the questions I'm asked all about how I'm feeling and when this started as far as I can recall etc. I just want them to tell me what is going on with my baby. That's all. I sit up when I hear the doctor say, "Let's prep her for a c-section. The baby is in distress."

"Does that mean my baby is alive?"

"She's alive but we have to take her out soon as possible or her heart rate will decrease and that may be fatal."

She. I'm having a girl. I want to be happy with the information but it doesn't really matter to me. I just want her to be healthy. That's all.

“Anything you have to do to save her, please do it. I can’t lose my baby doc... I can’t lose her.”

He looks at me and nods once. My baby’s life is in his hands, I have to just let go and trust him.

When I wake up I’m tired and I know it’s the next morning because last thing I remember is the doctor saying I have to be sedated while in theater. I look around the room and I see Khulekani, he has a baby in his arms. I clear my throat and try to sit up.

“Nonhle! You’re up Maka Khosi!”

I smile. He named her Khosi. “Can I?” I ask opening my arms. He smiles and comes to hand her over.

“I’m sorry but she looks like me.”

“Of course she does.” I reply smiling and rolling my eyes.

She's so precious and tiny with her pink skin and barely open eyes. She's honestly stolen Nami's entire face. She'll surely appreciate and love that. My goodness Khosi is so precious, and calm and absolutely beautiful. My heart is swelling with love for her, more than I imagined it would when I was pregnant and more than I already felt.

"I have to tell you something Nonhle. Please just understand it was up to me as your next of kin and I tried to make the best decision for you and Khosi." He says and I look up from Khosi to him.

It sounds serious and he looks serious so I panic a little. Is my baby okay? He sits on the chair by my bed and puts his one hand over mine.

"Listen, Nonhle you can't have anymore children."

"What did I do wrong?"

"Nothing! There's nothing you could've done to avoid it either, I'm so sorry baby."

I don't know how to feel. I'm happy to have my baby in my arms and she's healthy but I can never give her anymore siblings? I don't know how I feel about that. I was looking forward to possibly having more kids in future.

Nonhle

It's literally been just twenty minutes since I left her at home with her brother and a nanny but I'm already getting separation anxiety. I miss Khosi so much it's hard to even concentrate on the beauty of this wedding. Khulani is finally making things official with his high school sweetheart Rendani. She's pretty, a bit of a spoiled brat really but she's a nice girl. Banele really doesn't like her. She told me just yesterday that she thought they'd break up eventually but they just kept staying together.

"I don't even like her parents. Yet her mother thinks we're besties." She said and I was just shocked but trying to hold a laugh in at the same time. The girl's mother is a little out there.

"Banele!"

"What? I don't trust them. I don't trust their daughter's intentions with my baby and I sure as hell don't trust how they're always looking at the most expensive pieces in my homes."

“Khulani is literally your brother in law.”

“I’ve known him since he was a kid. When Ma passed on she asked me to take care of him. So he’s my baby.”

“You know you can’t be mothering them forever right?”

“I don’t even do that. It’s only that I don’t trust this girl and her family but it seems even Khule doesn’t see anything wrong with them.”

“Because maybe there isn’t.”

“Please go to your husband if you’ll be on his side. I will stay here with the babies.” She said and we looked at each other and laughed. Of course sensitive Khosi started crying but it was a moment between us. Banele being stand-offish is hilarious to be fair.

We are all asked to rise in honor of the bride so we get up, and look back at her entrance. My face drops and I turn to look at Banele who is just shaking her head. Rendi is in the riskiest wedding ensemble I've ever seen. The top is a white corset and the bottom is lacy pants and pretty much see through really.

Banele takes a deep breath and looks at Khulekani as if to say she told him about this girl. He looks away. I'm just still shocked that's what she chose to wear, but I love it for her. Go on little girl, be the daring princess.

The ceremony was good, and lovely now we're at the reception. Banele is still not into this wedding, Khule isn't sure any longer either but it's too late for all that now, the bride did a little strip dance performance for her husband, needless to say, he wasn't happy with that as much as everyone else wasn't. Khule is sitting in the middle of Banele and I, Lwazi and Mike also on Banele's side.

"She's always been such a nice good girl. I thought she understood our family." Khule

“She still is.” I feel the need to kind of stand up for her, I know what it’s like marrying into such a family, and I’m not mad at her for trying to keep some of who she is.

“You don’t get it, it’s not about the dress or whatever that thing she wore was, it’s about her lying to Banele.” Khule.

“Wait she showed you a dress?” I ask trying to look at Banele over our husband

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he luckily sits back some more so we can see each other.

“Yes!!” Banele says and her eyes open wider to emphasize on her words.

“Oh snap!”

“Yes! And it’s not like I ever stopped her from doing anything but this dress? Wow.” Banele.

“Well maybe that’s why she didn’t show you. I don’t know maybe she just knew you wouldn’t like it.”

“Probably. Anyway, I never would’ve said no, I would’ve hated it, but still prepared for the shock and prepared the moms.”

Banele.

“Yeah MaCele looked pretty mortified especially by the dance.”

Lwazi.

“As she should’ve been!” Banele.

“The girl has guts, I’ll give her that much.” Lwazi.

“Me too.”

When we get home Khule decides I’m not going home this late with his five month old daughter, regardless of that my house isn’t even that far so we’re spending the night. We’re having a chat in their pool house when Khule drops a bomb on us,

“The seer said there’s a storm coming for Khulani’s marriage.”
Khule.

“The marriage that literally begins tonight?” I mean all marriages face tests but this one just started.

“Did she say what’s going on?” Banele.

“No. She just said that a storm is coming.” Khule says and he downs the rest of his whiskey.

“Oh my poor baby. He’s such a sweetheart I hope she doesn’t hurt him.”

“Baby you don’t know if he’ll hurt her.” Khule says and I spot Banele rolling her eyes a little so I almost laugh out loud. She’s so biased it’s hilarious.

My Khosi is six months old today, she’s honestly the best thing to ever happen to me. I cannot get enough of spending time with her. Today we’re going to see her grandmother for the

first time since she was born. I've let mom see her through video calls and pictures but it will be the first time that they meet today. My sisters are going to be there as well so I'm pretty excited. Khule will drop us off himself and everything.

I buy groceries and pick up Hle and her youngest. We find Sbahle already at the house. Khule greets and leaves us to it. I carry Khosi to my mother and let her take her from my arms.

"Oh! Wamuhle uMaNgubo! She is so precious my daughter."

I smile and nod before sitting down next to them.

"She's her father's daughter I'll say." Hle.

"True, there's nothing of me yet. I'm hoping I make it as she grows."

"I see you my baby. I do. Her eyes may be brown but they're the same shape as yours, her head as well, definitely you."

I can't help but think that means she's seeing some of my father as well. I smile briefly.

"So, when are you having a little prince sis?" Sbahle.

I take a deep breath. I haven't fully accepted this but it is what it is.

"I won't be having a little prince. I had to have a hysterectomy. Something about excessive bleeding. Khosi is my first and last child."

The mood literally drops. Clearly they don't know what to say,

"I'll start dishing up for everyone." I say just to get away from them and avoid crying. I don't know how many conversations Khule and I have had about it. I don't know how many times I've thought I should be grateful I have one child but still it hurts me every time it hits me. I just don't understand why it had to happen to me.

I bring them the food and luckily the conversation is now about something else. I don't even know what but I'm grateful that they realized it was best not to try and comfort me because I honestly don't want it. Banele told me I could speak to someone but I don't think I'll do that. I mean what do I say? "I have a beautiful bouncy baby girl but I'm also sad I won't have any more children? Oh and my sister wife has five. Her last one she just had in her forties. Hahaha."

I just can't. I don't know how to deal with this but I don't think I want to talk about it with a shrink either. Because I already know I'll be told not to compare blah blah but it's not even about Neleh. It's about my inability to have more kids and feeling like I'm incomplete. It's about me, feeling like what the hell was the reason I was even chosen to be in this polygamous marriage when I can't even give Khule more kids?

"Sis? Come back, what are you thinking about?" Hle.

"Oh sorry, I just got a little distracted. Mom let me feed Khosi."
I reply taking her back.

Nonhle

There's something about a man who loves his child. Even better if he loves his child with you. My husband is truly obsessed with his daughter and it's the best thing to see. He's started taking her and her brother with him so he gets to see them both. Thami and Khosi are a package deal now. Lunathi came to spend time home with me and Khosi only to find that Khosi lives wherever her dad lives along with Thami.

There was a time when Khule was determined to change Thami's name but the seer intervened so he kept it. Khule is dramatic and honestly quite petty. I'm watching him and all his kids in the yard playing. Even the older kids are with him. We're at the palace in Magobeni for Thulisa's ceremony. The talks with her mother's family were lengthy and her mother was trying to sabotage things but today has finally come. Thulisa is fully a Ngubo and knowing Khule, he has a huge gift for her to welcome her.

I must be washing my eight hundredth dish looking out the window while Lwazi helps me by rinsing them. Banele cooked

and now she's with Thulisa somewhere in this house.
Nomalanga walks in the kitchen and I'm a little taken aback by how much she looks like Banele with her natural hair out.

"Ladies! I've been looking for someone to talk to in this house who won't ask me about missing Connor and how the boys are." Lango.

"They care Zen." Lwazi.

"Of course they do. I just don't want to talk about it all day."
Lango.

"I definitely understand you. I don't want to think about how I can't have kids anymore either."

"I'm sure Khule wouldn't mind adopting if you feel the need. Look at him out there." Lwazi.

"She's right you know. My brother loves children." Lango.

I catch a moment where he's helping Lunathi out of the pool Kai and Mane threw her in and I smile. They're right. Khule does have the heart for adoption. Then I look out again and remember he has seven children and very grown. Maybe he's happy with the kids he has. Am I being greedy?

"Anyway, where is Mike and his boys?"

"Ghana to see their grandmother and aunt. Don't ask me why I'm not there because I don't know either. My joy is in just knowing I'm not being cheated on." Lwazi.

"Mike? Cheat on you? Never!" Lango.

"Yeah, he looks at you like you're the center of his entire being. It's beautiful."

"Well Khule wouldn't cheat on you and Banele either you know." Lango.

“Duh! We’re enough stress.”

They both laugh.

“You’re right about that. Khule told me snout you being fiery.”
Lango.

“I’m fiery? Honestly I just mind my business.”

“What’s your star sign?” Lango.

“Not you being a chakra hun...”

My phone rings and I excuse myself from them to take the call,

“Hle, hi sis.”

“Nonhle it’s dad. He’s gone.”

“What? Gone where?”

“He’s passed on Nonhle he was found dead by his bedroom window.”

“I haven’t told him he’s scum yet. He can’t die without knowing that Hle.”

“He’s still our father Nonhle you can’t...”

I hang up on her and go back into the kitchen.

“Yes so, I’m a Sag by the way.” I say to Lango and start making myself a cup of tea, some chai tea mix Banele swears by.

Later when we’re all heading back to Zimbali in the same family bus I am ignoring texts from my sisters and calls from mom. There’s no way I’m entertaining talking about that man. I have a daughter to celebrate and take care of. He is the least of my problems. Thulisa is driving back in her own car

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a new one bought by her big brothers, all three of them. There's also designer bags in there. I'm sure she got bags and shoes plus jewelry.

When we get back instead of driving to my house first Khule takes us to his and Banele's house, as I get out of the car he stops me, then he takes Khosi out and gives her to Kai before getting back in the car and having us driven to my house.

I want to ask why I'm going without Luna and Khosi but he doesn't look like he's in the mood for questions at all. As soon as we get in the house he asks,

"Why didn't you tell me about your father's passing?"

"Because it's not something I want to think about. I can't suddenly care about him just because he died."

"Alright. I'm going to your home tomorrow because my wife's family needs support right now. Not because of her father."

I look at him. He's saying I'm being selfish. I know he's saying it but if I tell him as much I have a feeling he won't deny it and that will piss me all the way off.

"Okay. Go. Can I have my child driven to me tonight?"

“No. You’ll have your husband on your bed tonight.”

I smile and try to suppress it. He knows I’m still sleeping with Khosi whenever he’s not here and we’ve fought because of it since she will at times want to be in bed with us.

“Well, alright... Khulekani...”

“Yes Maka Khosi...”

“Thank you. You don’t owe anything to my family but... Thank you.”

“Thank me on the bed. Come.” He says giving me his hand to hold.

I laugh and take it. He swiftly picks me up bridal style and gives me a kiss before walking with me to the kitchen island. He puts me on it and kisses my neck while untying the wrap around dress I have on. I use my fingers to unbutton his shirt and he steps back, smiles at me and steps forward again and kiss me so passionately I forget to breathe. I try to help him with his pants but he takes over and they’re down in seconds along with his boxers. He uses his fingers to rub on my clit and finger me with one and he’s looking straight into my eyes as I squirm, he takes his fingers out and licks one before giving me the other one and I put it in my mouth. He smiles at me and positions me then I feel him enter slowly as I gasp. It’s amazing how good he feels all the damn time.

“I love you MaGasa.” He says with our foreheads pressed on each other and in the moment I tell him I love him too, because it’s true. I love Khosi’s father and I can’t imagine my life without him. He smiles and kisses me once more. I needed this. I needed this moment between us and I didn’t even know how much until it occurred.

.....**THE END**.....

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